

Medieval Painted Pottery in South and Central Italy¹

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DURING the 9th century unglazed pottery decorated with red or brown slip came into production along the middle Rhine. This pottery, known as Pingsdorf ware, was exported in large quantities to the North Sea region and even to the Baltic coast.² By the 12th century red-painted pottery, often imitating Pingsdorf ware, was made at a number of sites in the Low Countries and western France.³

It has long been known that painted pottery was manufactured throughout the medieval Islamic world, including north Africa, and isolated finds of painted ware have been published in Italy and Spain.⁴ Nevertheless, little attempt has been made to explore the possible connexions between painted pottery in the Mediterranean basin and western Europe.⁵ A serious obstacle to such an attempt is the inadequacy of most publications of Mediterranean finds. This paper offers an account of the painted wares in one area of the Mediterranean, peninsular Italy, and suggests that the pottery found there may indeed be related to the earliest painted wares north of the Alps. It must be emphasized, however, that the study of Italian medieval pottery is in its infancy and that the suggestions made here are of an entirely speculative nature.

INTRODUCTION

The earliest medieval painted pottery found in Italy comes from 'Byzantine' contexts in Sicily and Apulia. It may be divided into two types, the first having elaborate, frequently zoomorphic motifs, painted with narrow lines, and the second having simple decoration using broad lines. A third group of early medieval painted pottery, again with 'broad-line' decoration, is represented by two isolated finds from Tuscany and Umbria. Broad-line wares later became established throughout southern Italy. In the 9th century broad-line pottery was replaced in

¹ I have taken the northern boundary of central Italy to be a line between Viareggio in Tuscany and Rimini in Emilia. I have included Sicily but omitted Sardinia. I am grateful to the directors of the Museo Civico at Caltanissetta, the Museo Archeologico at Gela, and the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo at Orvieto for permission to illustrate material in their custody.

² G. C. Dunning, 'Trade relations between England and the continent', in D. B. Harden (ed.), *Dark-age Britain* (London, 1956), pp. 218-233 (esp. p. 226).

³ Dunning in G. C. Dunning, J. G. Hurst, J. N. L. Myres and F. Tischler, 'Anglo-Saxon pottery: a symposium', *Med. Archaeol.*, III (1959), 1-78 (esp. pp. 55 ff.); and K. J. Barton, 'The medieval pottery of the Saintonge', *Archaeol. J.*, cxx (1963), 210-214.

⁴ For north Africa: Alfred Bel, *Un Atelier de poteries et faïences au X^e siècle de J. C. découvert a Tlemçen* (Constantine, 1914), pp. 53-55, and G. Marçais, *Les Poteries et faïences de Bougie* (Constantine, 1916), pp. 25-26. For Spain: Luis Seco de Lucena, 'Las ruinas de Medina-az-Zahra', *Faenza*, XI (1923), 9, and Manuel González Martí, *Cerámica del Levante Español: Siglos medievales* (Madrid, 1944), I, 44 ff.

⁵ One exception is J. S. P. Bradford, 'The Apulia expedition. An interim report', *Antiquity*, xxiv (1950), 84, who suggested that the painted pottery found in Apulia had been introduced by the Normans.

most areas by painted wares with small curvilinear motifs using narrow lines. These remained in use until the end of the middle ages. In the 12th century yet another type of painted pottery, decorated with Islamic motifs, was made in western Sicily.

The introduction of narrow-line painted pottery in the 9th century was roughly contemporary with the Arab conquest of Sicily and the establishment of colonies in mainland Italy. It was also contemporary with the introduction of painted wares north of the Alps. It is suggested that these events were related and that narrow-line decoration was introduced from Arab-occupied north Africa to Italy, whence it was diffused to the middle Rhine area. A plausible context for this diffusion is provided by relations between Italy and north-west Europe during the Carolingian period.

THE EARLIEST PAINTED POTTERY

Pottery with painted decoration was not normally produced in Italy during late antiquity. Some of the largest collections of late Roman pottery in Italy come from the 'Byzantine' (i.e. late Roman and early medieval) cemeteries of Sicily and these have yielded only a handful of painted vessels. Similarly no late Roman painted sherds have been found in the Roman Campagna in the course of extensive surface collecting.⁶ Nevertheless, two types of late Roman and early medieval painted pottery do exist. The first, found in Sicily and Apulia, has elaborate ornament carried out with narrow lines and the second, found only in Sicily, has simple broad-line decoration. A further group of broad-line wares may be recognized in central Italy (FIG. 7).

POTTERY WITH ELABORATE DECORATION

The first group of painted pottery is represented by finds from four sites: Sofiana in Sicily, and Brindisi, Mesagne and Ugento in south Apulia. The finds are as follows:

1. *Sofiana*, 3 miles south of Piazza Armerina (Caltanissetta), Sicily. Jug, 14·5 in. high, with slender body merging into narrow neck, overhanging rim, triangular in section, and handle, oval in section, with stamped mask at base and spur at junction with rim. Base of neck decorated with two roller-stamped cordons. Bright orange ware with purple-brown painted design of two plump birds below two narrow zones filled with ivy leaves. (Gela, Museo Archeologico.)
2. *Brindisi*. Small amphora with roughly globular body, omphaloid base, slightly-flaring cylindrical neck and two strap-handles.⁷ Buff ware with brown painted design on both sides of body consisting of two birds facing one another and separated by stylized plant; arc-shaped border above and series of horizontal wavy lines on neck; vertical stripe down either handle, curving at bottom to underline one of main motifs. (Lecce, private collection.)

⁶ By members of the British School at Rome in the course of a topographical survey of south Etruria. I am grateful to the Director of the School, Mr. J. B. Ward Perkins, for permission to use this material.

⁷ Nicolà Vacca, *La Ceramica Salentina* (Lecce, 1954), pp. 20-21, figs. 16-17.

3. *Mesagne*, 8 miles SW. of Brindisi. Four small amphorae, almost identical with no. 2.⁸ (*Mesagne*, Museo Civico.)
4. *Ugento*, 29 miles south of Lecce. Jug, 7.5 in. high, with biconical body, cylindrical neck constricted at base, and two handles, oval in section (one missing). Coarse cream ware with carmine painted design on both sides of body consisting of hatched oval panel with series of horizontal wavy lines

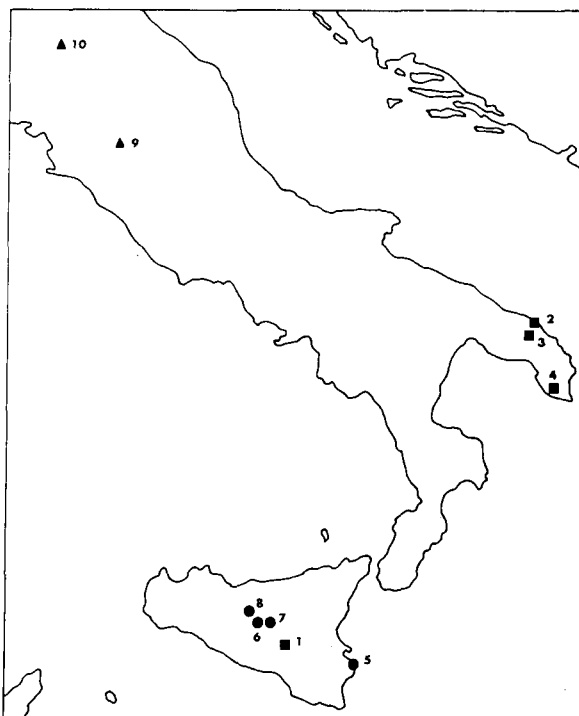


FIG. 7

DISTRIBUTION OF EARLIEST MEDIEVAL PAINTED POTTERY IN SOUTH AND CENTRAL ITALY

Black squares indicate pottery with elaborate decoration (pp. 31 ff.), black circles pottery with simple decoration in Sicily (p. 33 f.), and black triangles pottery with simple decoration in central Italy (p. 34 f.)

on neck; vertical stripe down either handle, curving at bottom to underline one of main motifs. (*Ugento*, private collection.)

The only well-dated vessel in this group is the jug from Sofiana. It was found in grave 42 in the cemetery surrounding a basilical church built between 350 and 400.⁹ The form has been compared with bronze vessels from the treasures of Chaource and Traprain. The closest parallel, however, comes from Budapest on

⁸ Vacca, *op. cit.* in note 7, pp. 20-21, figs. 14-15; and A. Franco, 'Una postilla sulla ceramica salentina', *Faenza*, xxx (1952), 79-91 (esp. p. 88), pl. xx.

⁹ D. Adamesteanu, 'Vaso figurato paleocristiano dal retroterra di Gela', *Bollettino d'Arte*, 4 ser., xli (1956), 158-161.

the Danube frontier and is dated early 5th century.¹⁰ It has been suggested that the amphorae from Brindisi and Mesagne belong to the 4th century and the decoration has been compared with ornament found in the Roman catacombs.¹¹ Their shape, however, suggests a later date. Globular amphorae were not developed until the late 6th century, when they were introduced in the east Mediterranean and diffused thence to Italy.¹² The association of birds with a stylized plant has been discussed in connexion with the mosaics from Antioch by Levi, who shows that the combination was used there at least until the 6th century.¹³ It is possible, therefore, that the painted amphorae from Apulia should be dated 6th century or later. The jug from Ugento may well be contemporary, for it shares with the amphorae a common scheme of decoration on the handles and neck.

POTTERY WITH SIMPLE DECORATION IN SICILY

The pottery with simple broad-line decoration found in Sicily forms a homogeneous group, apparently contemporary with the elaborate painted vessels described above. Like most 'Byzantine' pottery found on the island, it has a soft, fairly smooth fabric which varies in colour from bright pink to orange or red. Only four vessels have so far been recorded:

1. *Syracuse*. Jug, 4 in. high, with piriform body, everted rim and single handle with kidney-shaped section. Light pink ware with design in carmine paint of five vertical stripes on body with a sixth running down handle. (Syracuse, Museo Archeologico, inv. no. 14508.)
2. *Caltanissetta*. Jug, 7 in. high, with piriform body, long slender neck, trefoil mouth and single strap-handle. Orange ware with red-brown painted design of three contiguous curved horizontal lines on body. (Caltanissetta, Museo Civico.)
3. *Monte Sabucina*, 3 miles east of Caltanissetta. Jug, 6·3 in. high, with piriform body, slender bulging neck below plain everted rim, and handle oval in section. Light orange ware with carmine painted design of (abraded) vertical stripes.
4. *Bosco di Mimiani*, 9 miles NW. of Caltanissetta. Jug (FIG. 8, a), at least 5·5 in. high, with globular body, wide neck and handle with thick kidney-shaped section. Pink ware with red-brown painted design of three vertical stripes on body. (Caltanissetta, Museo Civico.)

While there is no direct dating evidence for any of the broad-line vessels found in Sicily, it is clear that they are 'Byzantine' in date. The jug from Syracuse

¹⁰ A. Radnoti, 'Die römische Bronzegefäße von Pannonien', *Dissertationes Pannonicae*, 2 ser., VI (1938), 156-170, pl. xiv.

¹¹ Vacca, *op. cit.* in note 7, pp. 20-21.

¹² For the east Mediterranean cp. wreck III at Yassi Ada, associated with coins of Heraclius (610-41), and Emporio on Chios; George F. Bass, 'Underwater excavations at Yassi Ada: a Byzantine shipwreck', *Archäol. Anzeiger*, LXXVII (1962), col. 537-64. For Italy cp. Paolino Mingazzini, 'Cagliari—resti di santuario punico e di altri ruderi a Monte di Piazza del Carmine', *Not. Scavi*, LXXIV (1949), 213-274 (esp. p. 270), fig. 41 (a); and G. Boni in *Not. Scavi*, XXVI (1901), 41-144 (esp. p. 102 f., figs. 54-5).

¹³ D. Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements* (Princeton, London and the Hague, 1947), I, 590, 596.

is paralleled by a vessel from grave 76 in the 'Byzantine' cemetery at Grotticelli, on the outskirts of Syracuse,¹⁴ and jugs with a bulging neck similar to the vessel from Monte Sabucina are found in the cemetery at Sofiana.¹⁵ None of the finds from these cemeteries is later than the 7th century. In Greece, painted pottery, usually decorated in white, was manufactured between the 4th and the late 6th centuries but not, apparently, later.¹⁶

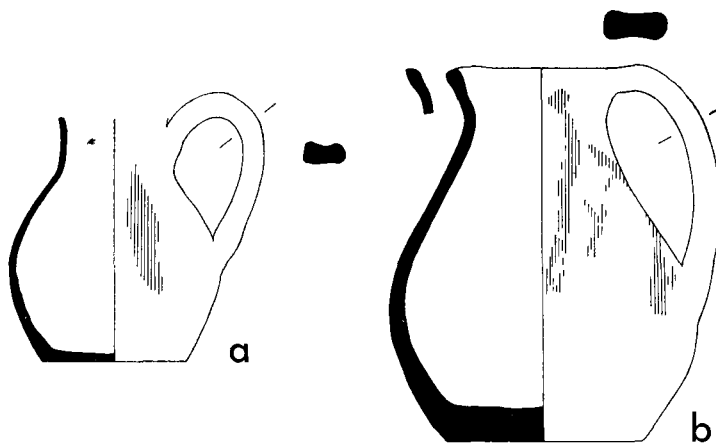


FIG. 8

EARLIEST MEDIEVAL PAINTED POTTERY IN SOUTH AND CENTRAL ITALY. Sc. $\frac{1}{4}$

a, from Bosco di Mimiani, Sicily (p. 33); b, from Orvieto, Umbria (p. 34)

POTTERY WITH SIMPLE DECORATION IN CENTRAL ITALY

The only broad-line painted pottery found in central Italy are two isolated finds from Orvieto in south Umbria and Fiesole in Tuscany. Their date is uncertain, but the vessels from Fiesole have been compared with pottery from Galeata (Forlì) in Romagna, a site associated with the Ostrogothic ruler Theodoric, who died in 526.¹⁷

1. *Orvieto* (Terni). Jug (FIG. 8, b), 8 in. high, with piriform body, trefoil mouth and single handle with kidney-shaped section. Light pink ware with red-brown design of carelessly painted vertical and curving stripes. (Orvieto, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo.)
2. *Fiesole*, 4 miles NE. of Florence. Group of jugs with piriform body, trefoil mouth and single handle. Reddish ware with red painted design of vertical stripes.¹⁸ (Fiesole, Museo Civico.)

¹⁴ Syracuse, Museo Archeologico.

¹⁵ D. Adamesteanu, 'Nuovi documenti paleocristiani nella Sicilia centromeridionale', *Bollettino d'Arte* 4 ser., XLVIII (1963), 259-274 (esp. fig. 18, p. 267).

¹⁶ Henry S. Robinson, *The Athenian Agora, V. Pottery of the Roman Period. Chronology* (Princeton, N.J., 1959), pp. 76 and 117, pls. 16 and 33.

¹⁷ Gaetano Ballardini, *L'Eredità ceramistica dell'Antico Mondo Romano* (Rome, 1964), p. 135, citing D. Mambrini, *Galeata nella Storia e nell'Arte* (Croce S. Casciano, 1936).

¹⁸ Edoardo Galli, *Fiesole, gli Scavi e il Museo Civico: Guida* (Milan, no date), p. 151, nos. 1315-1353, fig. 136.

Fragmentary as the evidence is, it seems clear that pottery with red or brown painted decoration was already being made in Sicily in the 5th century. Two types of ornament were used, zoomorphic and simple broad stripes. The former was decorated in a characteristic late Roman style and probably did not survive much beyond the 6th century. The latter, on the other hand, provided the prototype for broad-line painted wares used throughout south Italy until the 9th century or later.

BROAD-LINE POTTERY IN SOUTH ITALY

With two exceptions, the broad-line pottery found in south Italy (FIG. 9) forms another homogeneous group. It consists of bowls, jugs and amphorae with

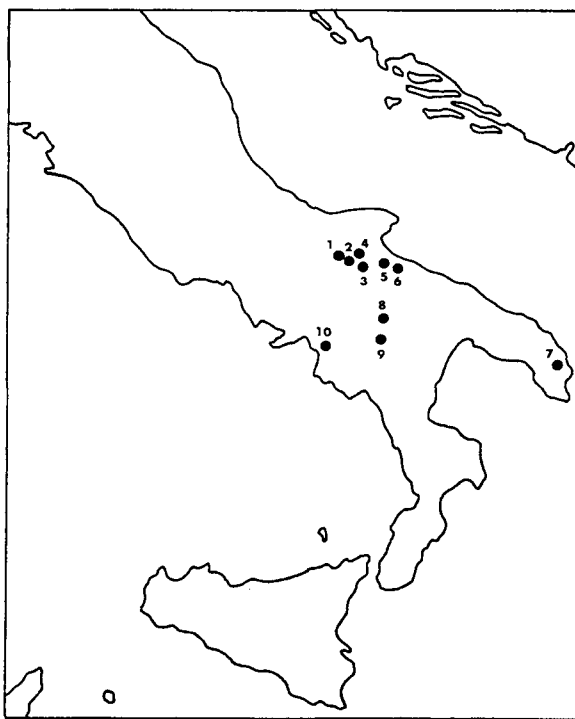


FIG. 9
DISTRIBUTION OF BROAD-LINE PAINTED POTTERY
ON ITALIAN MAINLAND (pp. 35 ff.)

a cream, pink or reddish fabric, sometimes slipped cream, and decoration in brown or red. The most common motifs are simple vertical stripes and arcs. The exceptional pieces come from Matera in Basilicata and Piazza Armerina in Sicily. At the first of these the pottery is decorated with loops and dotted 'rosettes' and at the second it is unusually late. The normal broad-line wares have been found at the following sites:

- Apulia*¹⁹
1. Lucera, 12 miles W. of Foggia
 2. Masseria Seggio Curati, 1 mile E. of Lucera
 3. S. Lorenzo, 3 miles SE. of Foggia
 4. Castiglione, 3 miles NE. of Foggia
 5. Tressanti, 10 miles N. of Cerignola
 6. Canne, 8 miles W. of Barletta (Bari). (Canne, site museum)
 7. Muro Leccese, 3 miles E. of Maglie (Lecce)
- Basilicata*
8. S. Antonio Casalini, 15 miles NW of Potenza. (Potenza, Museo Provinciale, and private collection)
 9. Satriano, 10 miles SW. of Potenza. (Potenza, Museo Provinciale)
- Campania*
10. Paestum. (Paestum, site museum)

Normal broad-line decoration is usually found on thickly-potted vessels, the most common of which are flanged-rim bowls, jugs with an ovoid or piriform body and trefoil mouth, and large ovoid or globular amphorae, such as examples from Lucera Castle (FIG. 10, *a*, *b*). The painted decoration is sometimes accompanied by zones of horizontal or wavy combing. In addition to stripes and arcs on the body, the handles of jugs and amphorae are frequently decorated with short horizontal strokes.

Matera. The pottery from Matera consists of four fragmentary vessels found by the prehistorian Domenico Ridola during excavations under the floor of the 13th-century cathedral. The vessels are a two-handled bowl, two trefoil-mouthed jugs (FIG. 11, *a*, *b*), and a miniature jug with a globular body. All four are in the Museo Nazionale at Matera. The bowl and the trefoil-mouthed jugs are decorated with irregular loops and the jugs also have 'rosettes' made of a ring of dots with one in the centre. The miniature jug is decorated with dots only. Associated with the painted pottery were jars similar to vessels from 8th- and 9th-century contexts in the Roman Campagna and a bowl paralleled by examples found in levels containing broad-line wares at Lucera Castle.

Piazza Armerina. Among the large quantity of medieval pottery found during the excavation of the famous Roman villa near Piazza Armerina are fragmentary cups and amphorae with painted decoration.²⁰ The ornament is simple and usually consists of broad vertical stripes. Most of the medieval pottery belongs to the 12th century and, although the amphorae may be earlier, one of the cups is exactly paralleled by glazed vessels of a type related to Siculo-Norman ware, which was made in Sicily during the Norman occupation.²¹

The chronology of south Italian broad-line pottery is still obscure. The majority is certainly early medieval. In Apulia it preceded the production of narrow-line wares, which in turn came into use before the introduction of tin-glazed pottery at the end of the 12th century. At Lucera Castle, broad-line pottery was associated with a denier of Charlemagne, minted *c.* 800, and a fragment of

¹⁹ Unless otherwise stated, all the material from Apulia was collected in the course of the archaeological survey of the Foggiano conducted by the Apulia Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of London. I am grateful to the committee for permission to publish the painted pottery in this article.

²⁰ For the site: Gino Vinicio Gentili, 'Piazza Armerina—grandiosa villa romana in contrada "Casale"', *Not. Scavi*, LXXV (1950), 291-335.

²¹ Guido Russo Perez, 'Ancora delle ceramiche Siculo-Normanne', *L'Arte*, XLIII (1940), 119-127.

Forum ware, imported from the Roman Campagna, which is now thought to belong to the period *c.* 750–850.²² The jug from S. Antonio Casalini has parallels among the 6th- and 7th-century pottery found at Athens.²³ This information,

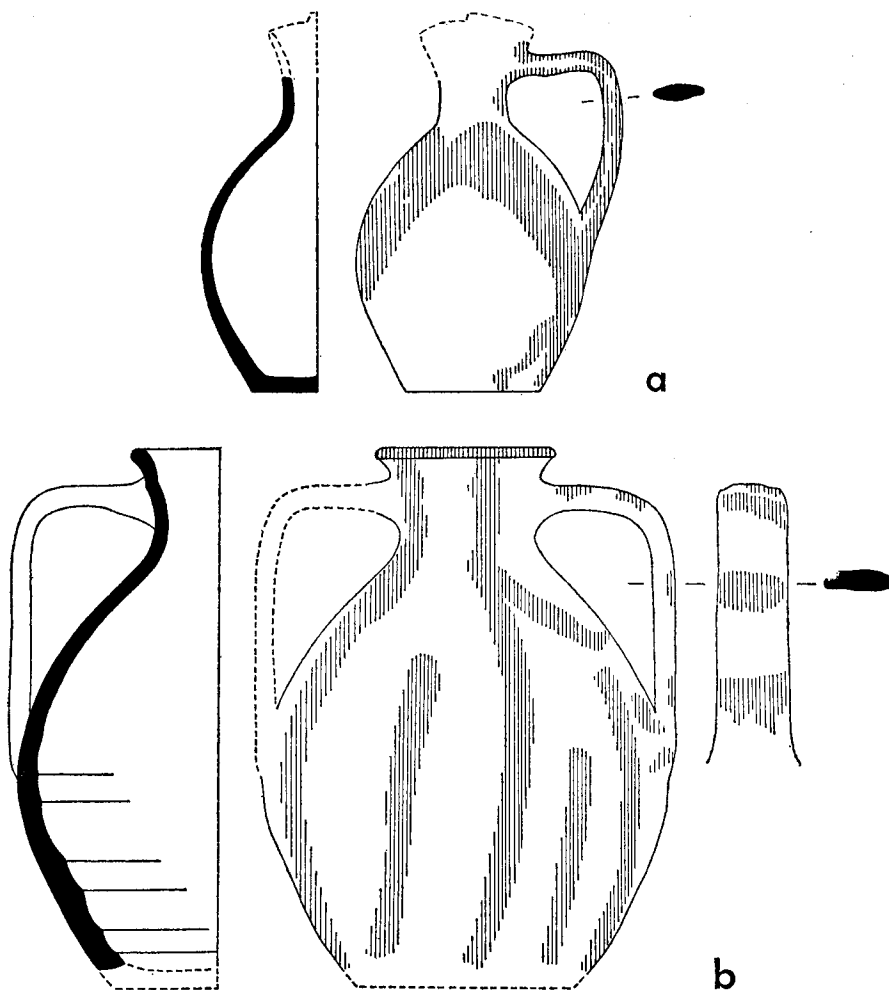


FIG. 10

BROAD-LINE PAINTED POTTERY FROM LUCERA CASTLE, APULIA (p. 36). Sc. $\frac{1}{4}$

combined with the similarity between the broad-line wares of Sicily and south Italy, suggests that they were introduced to the mainland about the 6th century and continued in use at least until the beginning of the 9th. In Sicily, they were

²² D. B. Whitehouse, 'Forum ware: a distinctive type of early medieval glazed pottery in the Roman Campagna', *Med. Archaeol.*, ix (1965), 55–63. It is now certain that Forum ware was used at Santa Cornelia in period 1, which ended *c.* 780.

²³ Robinson, *op. cit.* in note 16, pp. 116 ff. (esp. no. M362) and p. 121 (esp. no. N6).

manufactured at an exceptionally late date, occurring in a 12th-century context at Piazza Armerina.

NARROW-LINE POTTERY IN SOUTH AND CENTRAL ITALY

The narrow-line pottery which replaced broad-line wares in Italy may be divided into four groups (FIG. 12):

1. South Italy
2. Central Italy
3. Lipari
4. Palermo.

The material from south and central Italy shares a number of decorative features. The material from Lipari stands apart from these two groups, and the vessels found at Palermo are different again. It is unfortunate that so little is known of medieval coarse pottery in Sicily. The material from Palermo, like the broad-line wares found at Piazza Armerina, dates from the 12th century and nothing is available for the period between the 8th and the 11th centuries.

1. *South Italy*. Narrow-line decoration in south Italy was usually restricted to jugs and amphorae. The most common form was apparently a large globular amphora with a cylindrical neck and two wide strap-handles. Although no

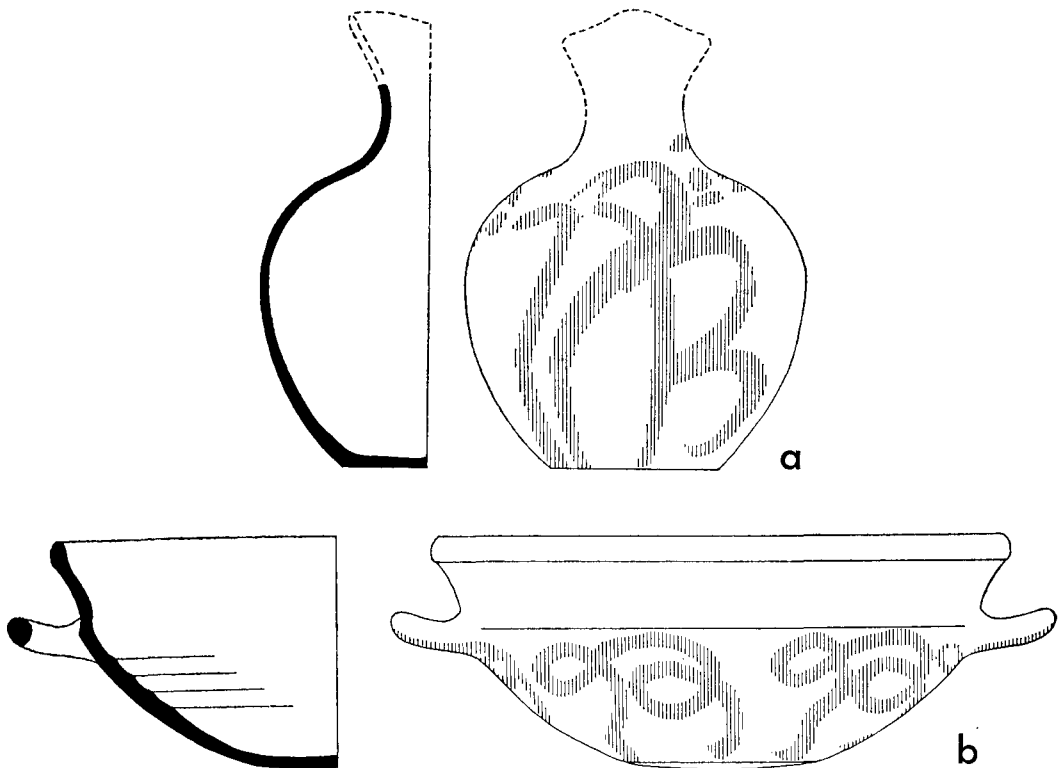


FIG. 11

BROAD-LINE PAINTED POTTERY FROM MATERA, BASILICATA (p. 36). Sc. $\frac{1}{4}$

complete example has been found, the greater part of an unpainted vessel was recovered during excavations at Lucera Castle, and the numerous fragments of painted amphorae from south Italy clearly belong to containers of the same general type. In the 13th century, Sicilian coarse-ware forms such as spouted jugs (FIG. 13, *a*) were introduced to Apulia by Arab settlers transported to the mainland

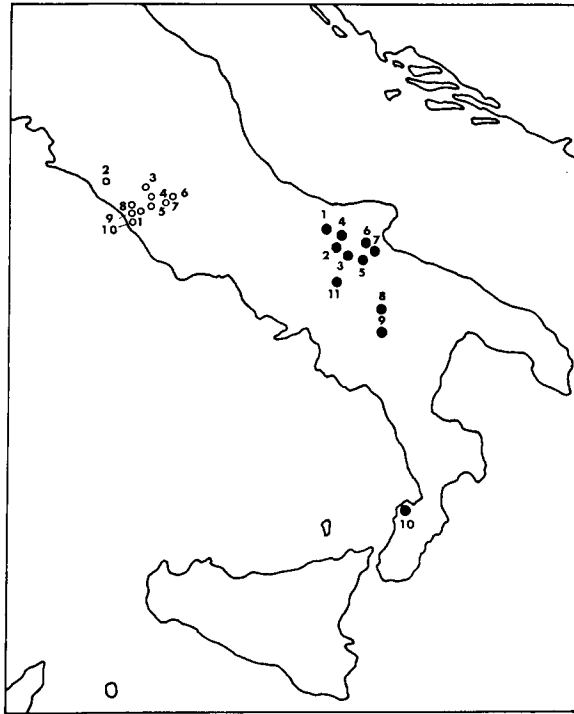


FIG. 12
 DISTRIBUTION OF NARROW-LINE PAINTED
 POTTERY ON ITALIAN MAINLAND
 Closed circles indicate find-spots in S. Italy (pp. 38 ff.), open
 circles in Lazio (p. 40)

by Frederick II. These frequently carried painted decoration. Narrow-line pottery in south Italy has a cream, pink or reddish fabric with red and brown, or rarely black and white, painted decoration of small motifs, usually circles, spirals, loops or crosses. Handles are decorated with vertical stripes or crosses (FIG. 13, *a-d*). The find-spots of narrow-line pottery in south Italy are:

- Apulia*
1. Dragonara, 12·5 miles W. of S. Severo
 2. Lucera Castle (FIG. 13, *a-c*)
 3. Masseria Seggio Curati
 4. Torrione del Casone, 4 miles SE. of S. Severo
 5. S. Lorenzo
 6. Torre di Lama, 7·5 miles NNE. of Foggia
 7. Fazioli, 8 miles NE. of Foggia

- Basilicata* 8. S. Antonio Casalini
 9. Satriano (FIG. 13, *d*)
Calabria 10. Monte Leone Calabro²⁴
Campania 11. Murgione²⁵

2. *Central Italy*. The narrow-line painted wares found in central Italy come exclusively from Lazio. No complete examples are known and most of the sherds are tiny. It appears probable, however, that, as in south Italy, the majority of painted vessels were jugs and amphorae. These have a pink or orange fabric and orange, red or brown painted decoration of circles and loops painted on the upper part of the body and vertical stripes and crosses on the handle. Although there are at present more find-spots in Lazio than Apulia, narrow-line pottery occurs only in small quantities in the former region and was evidently more common in the latter.²⁶ The find-spots in Lazio are (FIG. 12):²⁷

1. Sta. Cornelia
2. S. Giovenale²⁸
3. Bel Monte²⁹
4. Torre Busson³⁰
5. Pietra Pertusa³¹
6. Unnamed site at grid ref. 098656
7. Grotta Colonna
8. Torre Pascolare
9. Unnamed site at grid ref. 812489
10. Unnamed site at grid ref. 765430.

3. *Lipari*. The painted pottery from Lipari consists of three vessels, two jugs and a jar, in the Museo Eoliano. They have a drab red fabric with calcareous inclusions and brown-black paint. The decoration is restrained and comprises simple horizontal bands and loops. Nothing is known of their date or of their relationship with the other narrow-line pottery found in Italy.

4. *Palermo*. The only painted pottery of undoubted Islamic type so far found in Italy comes from Palermo, where 'sixty odd' amphorae with decoration in black and white were used in the construction of a vault in the cloister attached to the church of S. Maria dell'Ammiraglio, the so-called Martorana.³² The cloister was built by Goffredo and Eloisio Martorana in 1193 and the amphorae were presumably part of the original structure. They certainly have parallels among the plain amphorae from Piazza Armerina, where most of the medieval pottery may be ascribed to the 12th century. Many of the amphorae from Palermo have an ovoid body, cylindrical neck, thickened rim and two small handles.

²⁴ Paolo Orsi, 'Le grandi ceramiche di Monte Leone Calabro', *Faenza*, XII (1934), 35-41, with sketches, pp. 40-41.

²⁵ Collected by Mr. Lawrence Barfield, to whom I am grateful for permission to mention the find.

²⁶ While several hundred sherds were found at Lucera Castle, less than 50 came from Sta. Cornelia.

²⁷ Unless otherwise stated, the sherds were collected during the topographical survey of south Etruria.

²⁸ Excavated by Dr. Berggren of the Swedish Institute at Rome.

²⁹, ³⁰, ³¹ Excavated by Dr. Hans Stiesdal of the Danish Institute at Rome; cp. his publication 'The deserted medieval villages in the Roman Campagna', *Analecta Romana*, II (1962), 63-100.

³² Perez, *op. cit.* in note 21, p. 124, fig. 9.

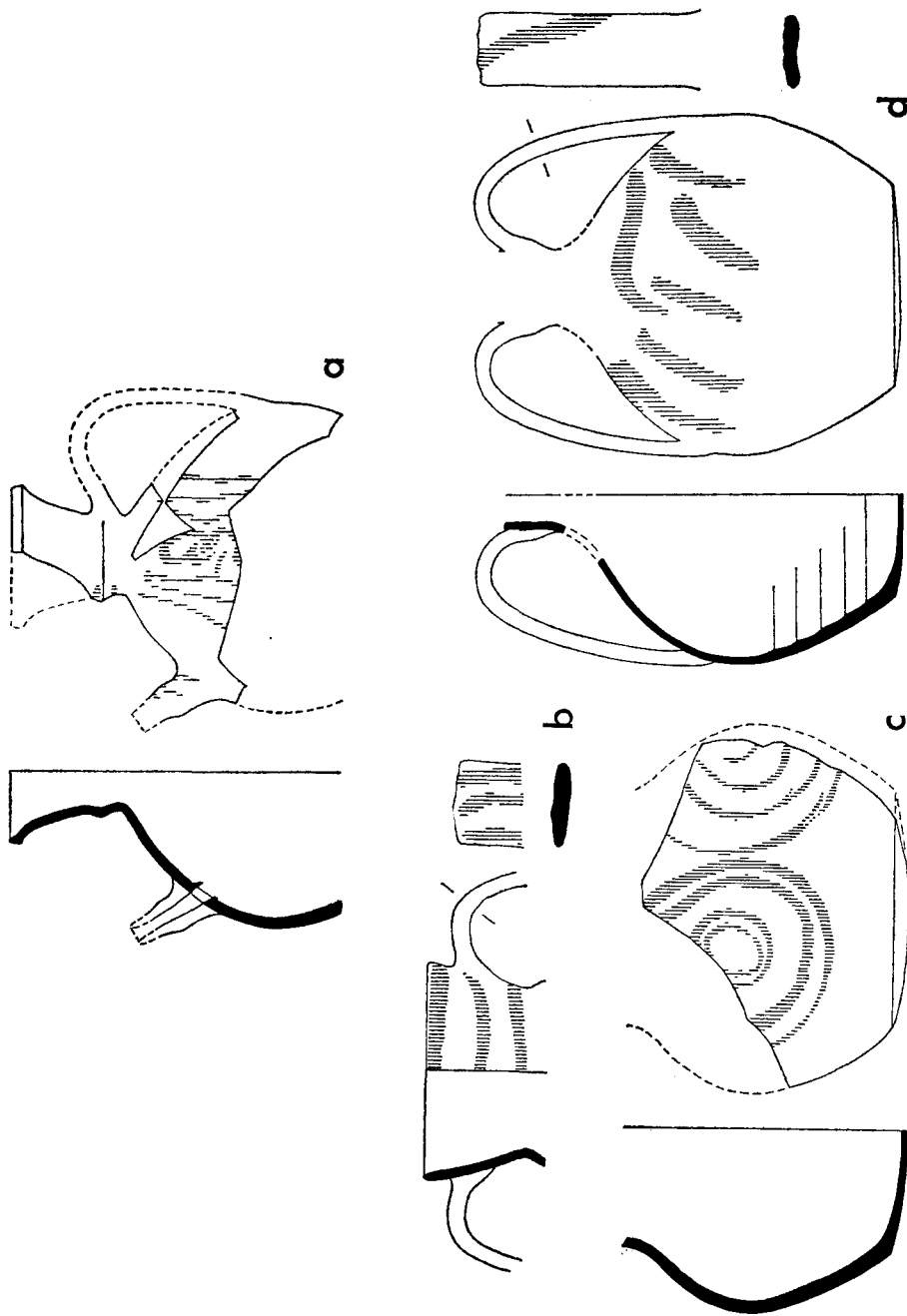


FIG. 13
NARROW-LINE PAINTED POTTERY. Sc. $\frac{1}{4}$
a-c, from Luccra Castle, Apulia (p. 39); *d*, from Satriano, Basilicata (p. 40)

The upper part of the body and the neck are coated with black slip over which spiral and pseudo-Kufic motifs are painted in white.

DISCUSSION

The date of the conventional narrow-line painted pottery is more securely established than that of the broad-line wares. We have already seen that broad-line pottery was still in use in Apulia *c.* 800. In central Italy, where developed broad-line wares are unknown, not a single painted sherd has been found in the 8th- and 9th-century filling of the *Lacus Iuturnae* in the Forum at Rome,³³ in the contemporary rubbish pits at Luni³⁴ or in the deposits attributed to period 1 at Santa Cornelia, which ended *c.* 780.³⁵ Period 2 at Sta. Cornelia began *c.* 780 and had probably ended by the close of the 9th century; it yielded a number of narrow-line sherds. Clearly, therefore, narrow-line wares were introduced to central Italy during the 9th century and, although positive evidence is lacking, it seems reasonable to suppose that they reached Apulia about the same time. The style was long-lived and narrow-line pottery was still in use in Basilicata when the town of Satriano was temporarily reoccupied after its destruction in 1420.³⁶

Unlike the broad-line wares, which apparently derived from late Roman painted pottery in Sicily, the narrow-line wares have no clear prototype in south Italy. No transitional stage between broad- and narrow-line decoration is known and at present it seems likely that the latter was introduced from abroad. Italian narrow-line wares are thus thought to be the result of foreign influences on an indigenous tradition of painting pottery. If we accept this, their origin may be sought in two directions: (a) elsewhere in the Mediterranean region, or (b) in Europe north of the Alps. In both areas painted pottery had come into use before the end of the 9th century. A European origin, however, may be discounted; not only is narrow-line pottery considerably more common in Apulia than in Lazio, suggesting a source in the south, but also most of the cultural connexions between Italy and the Rhine valley were transmitted from south to north and not vice versa. In the Mediterranean region two major cultural units existed outside Italy: Byzantium in the east and Islam in the south. Painted pottery has not been recognized among the medieval coarse wares of either Greece³⁷ or Crete,³⁸ and so a Byzantine origin seems unlikely. Painted wares were, on the other hand, common in the Islamic world throughout the middle ages. Pottery

³³ For the site see Boni, *op. cit.* in note 12.

³⁴ For the site: Carl Eric Ostenberg, 'Luni sul Mignone—prima campagna di scavi', *Not. Scavi*, 8 ser., xv (1961), 103–124.

³⁵ The site was excavated by Mr. Charles Daniels and members of the British School at Rome, to whom I am grateful for permission to publish the material.

³⁶ Giacomo Racioppi, *Storia del Popoli della Lucania e della Basilicata* (2 ed., Rome, 1902), II, 249–251. The material was found in 1965 during trial excavations carried out on behalf of the Soprintendenza alle Antichità della Basilicata. I am grateful to the Soprintendente, Dr. Dinu Adamesteanu, for permission to mention the painted pottery in advance of full publication.

³⁷ Robinson, *op. cit.* in note 16, p. 121.

³⁸ David E. Johnston in W. H. C. Frend, 'The Byzantine basilica church at Knossos', *Annual Brit. School Athens*, LVII (1962), 186–238 (esp. pp. 217–229).

Painted in red and white was used in Palestine in the early 8th century³⁹ and before the 10th century painted wares had been introduced to the Maghreb.⁴⁰ Malta, mid-way between Italy and north Africa, has yielded numerous examples of Islamic pottery painted in red and white with narrow-line decoration.⁴¹

Thus, although the only painted wares with a distinct Islamic character found in Italy are the amphorae from Palermo, which date from the 12th century, the Arab countries of the Mediterranean provide a plausible source for Italian narrow-line pottery in the 9th century. Furthermore, there is an equally plausible context for the diffusion of Islamic features to Italy in the 9th century. By the end of the 7th century, the whole of the north African coast had been brought under Arab control. Twenty years later Spain had been subdued and raiding was extended into southern France. Corsica and Sardinia were occupied about the same time. After repeated raids in the first half of the 8th century, Sicily was invaded in the 9th. Palermo was captured in 831, Messina in 843 and the mountain stronghold of Castrogiovanni in 859. Syracuse, the last Byzantine garrison in Sicily, fell in 878. Meanwhile raiding had been extended to mainland Italy. In 838 Brindisi and Taranto were destroyed. In 840 a combined Byzantine and Venetian fleet was defeated in the Adriatic and the Apulian port of Bari came under Arab control. It remained an Arab town until 871. In the west the Roman Campagna was ravaged in 846. Under Pope Leo IV the region recovered and in 849 the combined forces of Naples, Amalfi and Gaeta defeated the Arabs at sea. This success, however, was short-lived and in the later 9th century the Campagna was again invaded. It was not until 916 that the Arabs were finally driven away.⁴² The distribution of narrow-line wares which, unlike that of developed broad-line pottery, includes the Roman Campagna, thus corresponds closely with the areas of greatest Arab activity.

The introduction of narrow-line pottery appears to coincide not only with intensified Arab operations in Sicily and the Italian mainland, but also with the earliest painted wares north of the Alps. The custom of painting pottery had no immediate antecedents in the middle Rhine area and it is possible, therefore, that the technique was diffused from the Mediterranean. Just as a plausible context existed for the diffusion of narrow-line painted wares from Islamic north Africa to Italy, so a context existed for its further diffusion north of the Alps.

In 754 Pope Stephen II had appealed to the Frankish king Pepin III for help against the Lombards in north Italy. Pepin came to his aid and did so again in 756. Thereafter he consistently supported the Papacy, and his son Charlemagne, who ascended the throne in 768, continued the same policy. In 773, responding to a request from Hadrian I, Charlemagne laid siege to the Lombard capital

³⁹ D. C. Baramki, 'The pottery from Khirbet el Mefjar', *Quarterly Dept. Antiq. Palestine*, x (1944), 65-110.

⁴⁰ Bel, *op. cit.* in note 4.

⁴¹ Valletta and Rabat museums on Malta, and Victoria museum on Gozo.

⁴² For the history of Arab activity in Sicily and on the Italian mainland, cp. Michele Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia* (2 ed., Catania, 1930-39). G. Silvestrelli, *Città e Castelli della Regione Romana* (Rome, 1940), I, 366-369, suggests that two Arab settlements were established near Rome after the Papal victory of 916, at Saracinesco and Ciciliano in the Monti Tiburtini.

Pavia, and when the city surrendered in the following June he assumed the title *Rex Longobardorum*. In 800 he was crowned Emperor by Leo III.⁴³

While the nature of Charlemagne's political position remains controversial, there is little doubt about the cultural effects of his extension of power into Italy. Discussing Carolingian art and architecture, one scholar recently wrote: '(it) cannot be sufficiently stressed . . . that it was the comparatively recent art of Rome . . . which served . . . as a beacon of Mediterranean civilization to the northern barbarian.'⁴⁴ It is possible that the technique of painting pottery was diffused northwards as a result of such contacts between Italy and the former Frankish kingdom.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The earliest painted wares so far known come from Sicily and Apulia and are vessels with elaborate decoration in late Roman style or simple broad-line motifs. They appear to date from between the 5th and 7th centuries. A second group of early broad-line wares exists in central Italy.

2. An extensive group of pottery with simple broad-line decoration developed out of the early broad-line wares found in Sicily. It has been found in Apulia, Basilicata and Campania. The earliest examples may belong to the 6th or 7th century; others were still being made at the beginning of the 9th century.

3. In most regions variety 2 was replaced in the 9th century by pottery with narrow-line decoration. This continued in use, in some areas at least, until the 15th century. Although its affinities are as yet uncertain, two hypotheses may be offered as the basis for future research: i. that the Italian narrow-line wares were derived from Islamic painted pottery made in north Africa; ii. that the custom of painting coarse pottery was diffused northwards from Italy to the middle Rhine area, where Pingsdorf ware came into use in the later 9th century.

⁴³ J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Barbarian West* (London, 1952), pp. 97-116.

⁴⁴ John Beckwith, *Early Medieval Art* (London, 1964), p. 30.