

ROULETTE WARE

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Summary

The article discusses a type of bowl form characterised by rouletted decoration on the exterior which has been found in Greece and in Italy. Morgan, who first drew attention to this pottery, defined it as a type and called it Roulette Ware, dating it to the Turkish period. Stillwell Mackay studied the group further and dated it to the 13th-14th century. It seems, in fact, that Roulette Ware is not a discrete pottery type but a form of decoration which occurs on a number of vessels (glazed, slipped, painted, sgraffito). The production centre is thought to be Italian rather than Byzantine. The presence of kiln wasters and results from mineralogical analysis suggests a centre around Venice. The chronology proposed by Stillwell Mackay has been confirmed by the dating of bacini and discoveries from excavations in north-eastern Italy.

Introduction

In the post-Byzantine pottery found at Corinth (Greece) Charles Morgan identified and briefly described a type characterised by a simple stamp decoration on the outside, made with a rotating instrument which produces a series of well-arranged indentations in parallel lines (Morgan 1942, 173-74). He defined this type of pottery as Roulette Ware and illustrated an example, a bowl with a high, carinated body, with a thin rim and a ring base added to the bottom of the vessel (Morgan 1942, fig. 156, and possibly the profile illustrated in fig. 155, the fourth from top on the first line). Morgan described it as 'a red, slipped ware, glazed yellowish-brown, of a fine type of manufacture. The marks of a firing tripod are always discernible on the interior' (1942, 174) Figure 1

As Stillwell Mackay noted (1967, 254-55) 'the name is somewhat misleading, since not all the bowls of this ware are so decorated'; in fact she had noticed some variation between the forms and decorations, although the type is made of a clay which is 'considerably micaceous, flower-pot red and hard' and 'usually rough on the inside of the foot' (1967, 254). Of the three examples published by Stillwell Mackay only one has the characteristic decoration on the outside, a fairly deep carinated bowl with a thin upright rim that is slightly out-turned and has a high ring base added to the bottom (Stillwell Mackay 1967, no. 11, 255 and 269, fig. 1 and pl. 62; my fig. 2, no. 1). This example differs from the type published by Morgan as it has a lightly trailing decoration in manganese above the green glaze. The other two vessels are a bowl similar to one of Morgan's covered with a deep green glaze (Stillwell Mackay 1967, no. 12, 255 and 269, not illustrated), and one bowl with a short, slightly angled body, a sharpened rim and a large capacity though rather shallow, and a ring base (Stillwell Mackay 1967, no. 13, 255 and 269, fig. 1; pl. 62). This latter vessel is also decorated, like number 11, with trailing dark manganese on green glaze. Stillwell Mackay noted how the form of number 11, with the flat rim sharply pronounced outwards, seems close

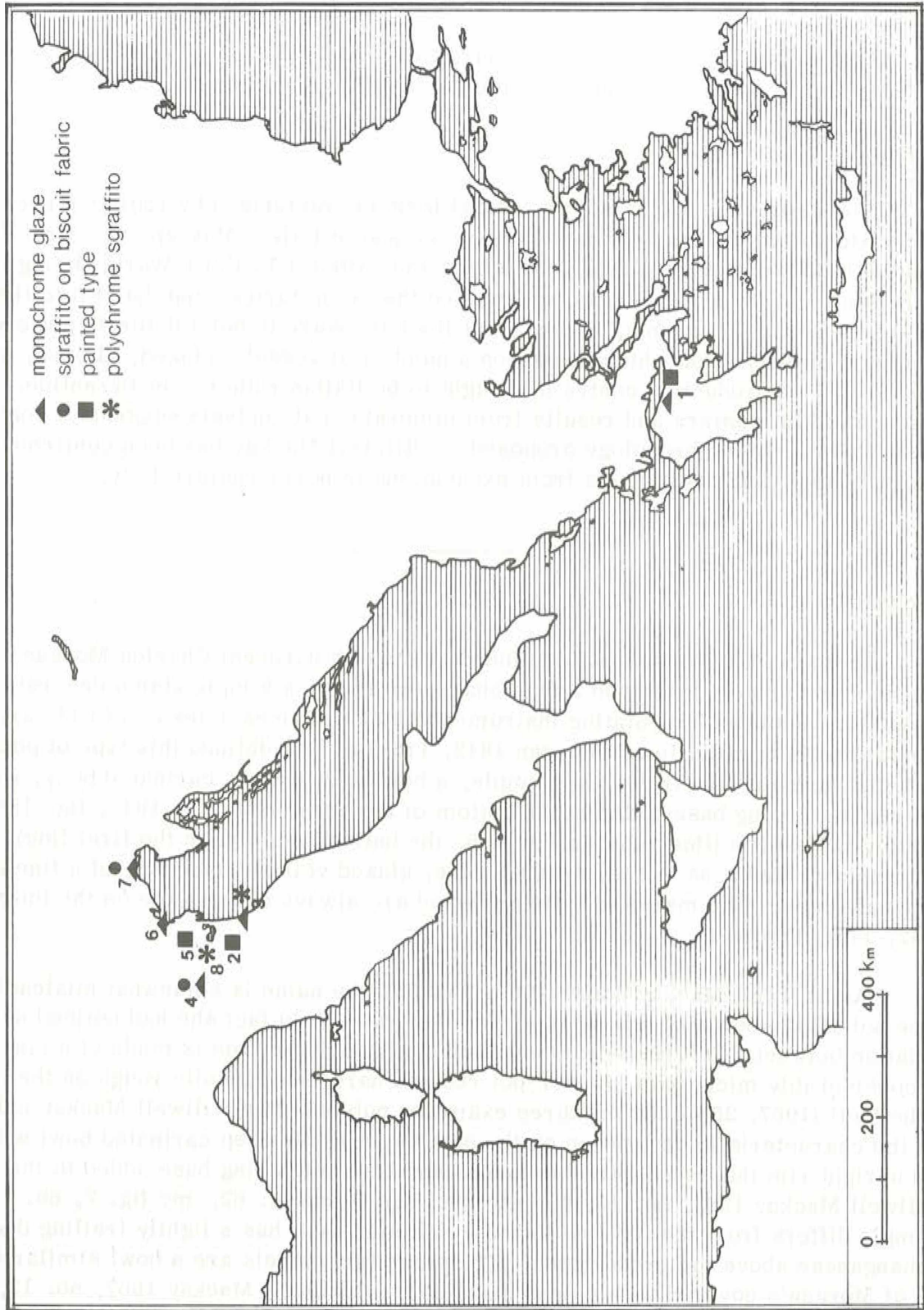


Fig. 1. Distribution of roller-stamp decorated wares: 1. Corinth;
 2. Faenza; 3. Rimini; 4. Finale Emilia; 5. Carrara S. Stefano;
 6. Venice; 7. Aquileia; 8. Ferrara: San Bartolo

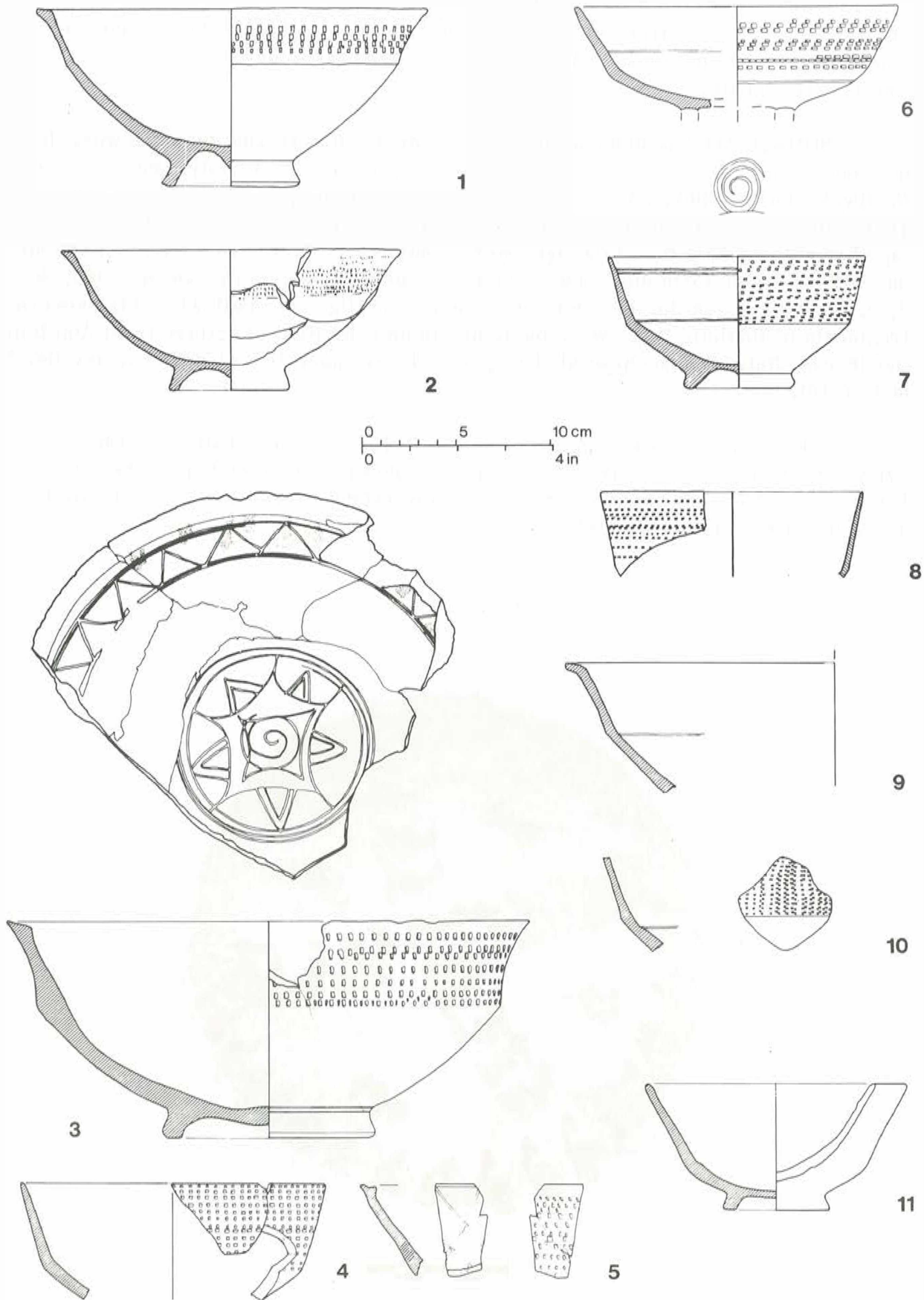


Fig. 2. 1. from Corinth (after Stillwell Mackay); 2. from Faenza (after Liverani); 3. from Rimini; 4-5. from Finale Emilia; 6. from Carrara S. Stefano; 7-10. Aquileia; 11. Finale Emilia

to a 13th century form (Morgan 1942, fig. 45a: 'Undecorated Red ware) and rightly emphasised that this parallel was not too surprising now that the two industries were contemporaneous and Roulette Ware was not, as Morgan had originally believed, of (later) Turkish date.

Stillwell Mackay made a mistake, however, in asserting that 'the ware does not seem to have been reported from the other side' (of the Adriatic Sea, i.e. Italy); (Stillwell Mackay 1967, 255). Giuseppe Liverani, in fact, had published a major review of 14th century pottery from Faenza in 1960, (1960, 31-51), within which, together with archaic maiolica jugs, were a number of open forms and, in particular, one with the same form and decoration as that found at Corinth (Liverani 1960, 40-41, C; 2, c, pl. X, a-c, on the left; my fig. 2, no. 2 and fig. 3). Following this, several fragments of Roulette Ware were published in an exhibition of pottery from Aquileia (north-east Italy) Bertacchi et al 1977, no. 21, 31, nos. 160-61 a-b, 64; my fig. 2, nos. 7-10).

The type, therefore, appears to exist in Italy, besides Corinth. On this evidence we have made a survey of museums containing material from the Adriatic littoral and, thanks to some new material from recent excavations, we can produce a new interpretation of the problem.



Fig. 3. Painted glazed ware from Faenza (fig. 2, no.2)

Roulette Ware

As has been noted already, Stillwell Mackay used the term 'Roulette Ware' for products employing different techniques and decoration. The aspect that distinguishes this material in her opinion, therefore, is not always the decoration on the outside of the vessels, but the fabric, the form and, we assume, the colour of the glaze (nearly always a yellowish-brown or green), and finally, in the case of the pieces from Corinth, a fine slip.

Instead we have aimed, using the new material from Italy, to sub-divide the wares on the basis of their technological characteristics, and as a result it has become possible to define the following categories:

(a) a monochrome glazed ware - yellowish-brown or green in colour. The prevalent form is that described by Morgan (1942, fig. 156): a bowl with high sides, a sharpened rim, a deep profile and a ring base. The glaze covers all the outside except the base. The diameter of these vessels varies between 14-16 cms across; in height they are between 9-11 cms. The fabric is fairly hard, relatively full of inclusions that are mostly minute and sometimes iridescent; the fabric tends to be reddish-brown or deep red in colour. Vessels of this type have been found at Finale Emilia (Mo) (Gelichi 1983, 22; my fig. 2, no. 4 and fig. 5), Rimini (Fo) (excavations in the church of Santa Maria ad Nives: Gelichi 1984a, 23), Aquilea (Ud) (excavations south of Natissa: Bertacchi *et al* 1977, 64, no. 161 a-b; my fig. 2, no. 8 and 10). It seems that this type was widely distributed, further than those forms without the roller-stamped decoration on the outside, though the two occur together at the following places: Finale Emilia (Mo) (see above), Rimini (Fo) (excavations in the church of Santa Maria Faenza (Ra) (found in the area of the cemetery: Liverani 1960, 36, C, I, d, not illustrated, inventory number 11386); Rocca di Rivoli (Vr) (Hudson and La Rocca Hudson 1982, 48, fig. 11, nos. 4-5), Aquilea (Ud) Bertacchi *et al* 1977, 64, no. 159), Split in Yugoslavia (Buerger 1979, 96, tav. 8, GIV 29).

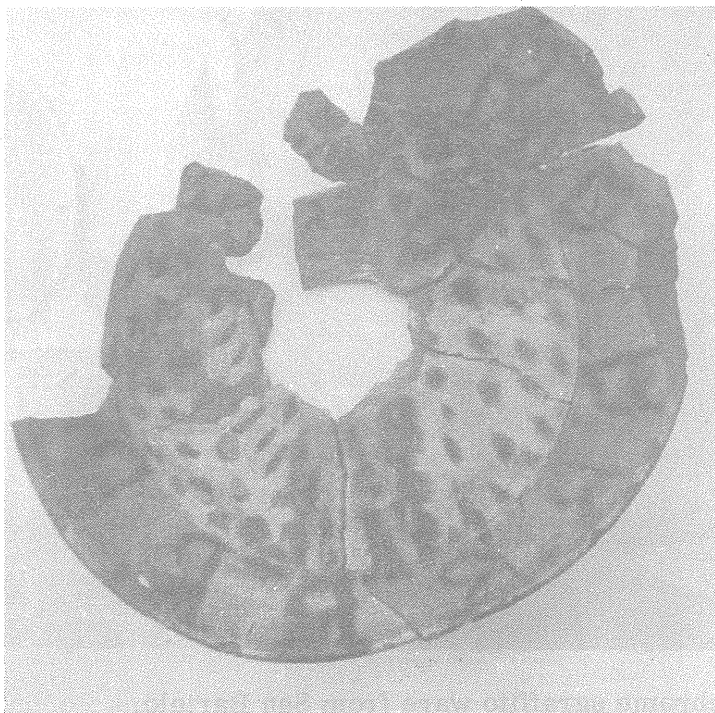


Fig. 4. Painted glazed ware from Carrara S. Stefano (=fig. 2, no.6)

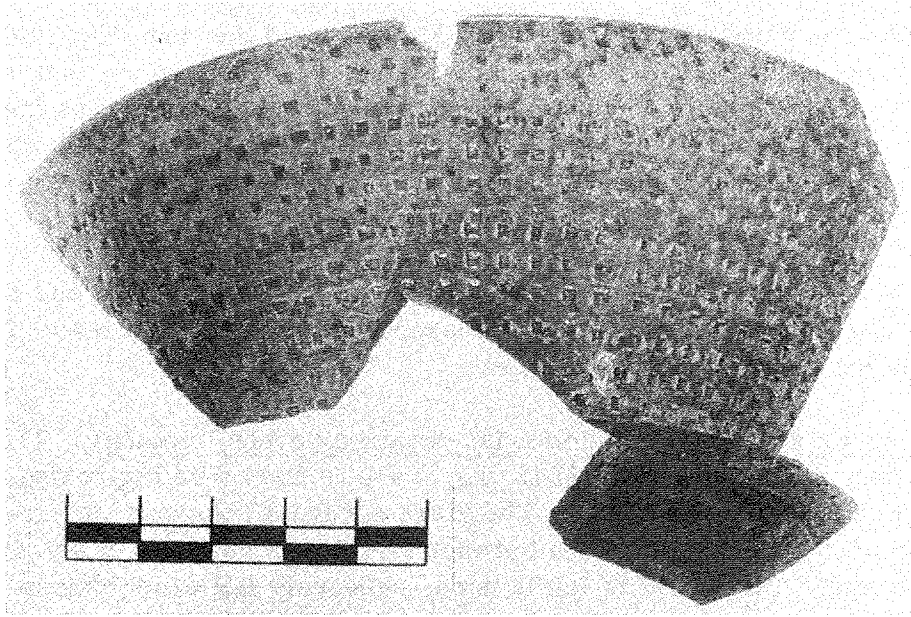


Fig. 5. Yellowish-brown monochrome glazed ware from Finale Emilia (=fig. 2, no.4)



Fig. 6. Polychrome sgraffito ware from San Bartolo, Ferrara (bacino no55)

(b) vessels with a yellowish-brown monochrome glaze, with a painted decoration directly upon the fabric. Dishes of the same general form illustrated already have incisions into the fabric at the point of carination on the outside. There are, however, some large carinated bowls with out-turned flat rims and thin walls, that also have an incision at the point where the vessel is carinated (at Aquileia: Bertacchi *et al* 1977, 64, no. 160: fig. 2, no. 9) or with an incised decoration on the inner walls (a motif showing a wide-meshed net on a fragment of a bowl in the same form, though in this instance from Finale Emilia (Mo) the vessel has a flat, slightly hollowed rim: fig. 2, no. 5). These bowls have larger dimensions than those described above with internal diameters of 28 cms.

(c) monochrome glazed and painted type. The forms are like those illustrated above for groups (a) and (b). The decoration, in deep manganese, consists of spots in a line made with a fine brush, or else trailing in lines that intersect to form crosses. This type of decoration is fairly well distributed (often in association with the green glazed wares) and occurs on undecorated vessels in diverse forms (Gelichi 1984b, *in press*). Two of the examples published by Stillwell Mackay should be included in this category, one of which is roller-stamp decorated (1967, no. 11 and 13, see above; my fig. 2, no. 1), though in her opinion they are also slipped and in this case should be included in category (d) below. A bacino (large bowl) removed from the tower of the church of Carrara Santo Stefano (Pd) (Siviero 1973, 4, no. 13; see my fig. 2, no. 6 and fig. 4) has high sides, a ring base decorated with a sequence of B's and diagonal bands with dots in the middle on the inner walls, all in manganese. The piece does not seem to have any slip. A bowl, also with high sides but a flat, pronounced rim, a deep volume and ring base, also found in Faenza, has a sequence of lines on the inner side forming a cross in the bottom (Liverani 1960, 40-41, C) 2, c, tav. X, a-c on the left; see my fig. 2, no. 2 and fig. 3).

(d) vessels with a monochrome slip. The examples from Corinth, in Morgan's opinion, must be included in this category (Morgan 1942, fig. 156; Stillwell Mackay 1967, no. 12, see below). A bowl from Aquileia with a sharpened rim (Bertacchi *et al* 1977, 31, no. 21 from the excavation inside the church tower of the cathedral) has a thin slip and a spiral motif is incised onto the base; beneath the rim are two parallel lines while the carination is emphasised by a single line in the interior (fig. 2, no. 7). A bacino from the church of San Bartolo (Fe) (Siviero 1972a, 193-94; *idem*. 1972 b, 70-78, no. 66; *idem*. 1974, 72-73) documents a form in this category with high sides, a flat rim (24.5 cms in diameter), decorated with green bands, using a large paint brush on the slip.

(e) slip and sgraffito polychrome wares. A carinated bowl with a hollowed, slightly everted rim, a large capacity, a ring base (27 cms in diameter; 11 cms high), and thick walls is typical of this category. This is covered with a fine slip and bears a sgraffito decoration of triangles outlined in a band on the inner walls of the vessel, as well as a medallion beneath it. Within the medallion is a closed spiral which in turn has a square and a pentagon with concave sides in which there are double triangles, coloured with green brushwork (fig. 2, no. 3). This was in unstratified material found at Rocca Malatestiana at Rimini and must be included in the category of slipped and sgraffito polychrome wares of Italian production belonging to the 13th-14th centuries, earlier in date than the typical 'graffito archaico' wares of the Po valley (Gelichi 1984b, *in press*).

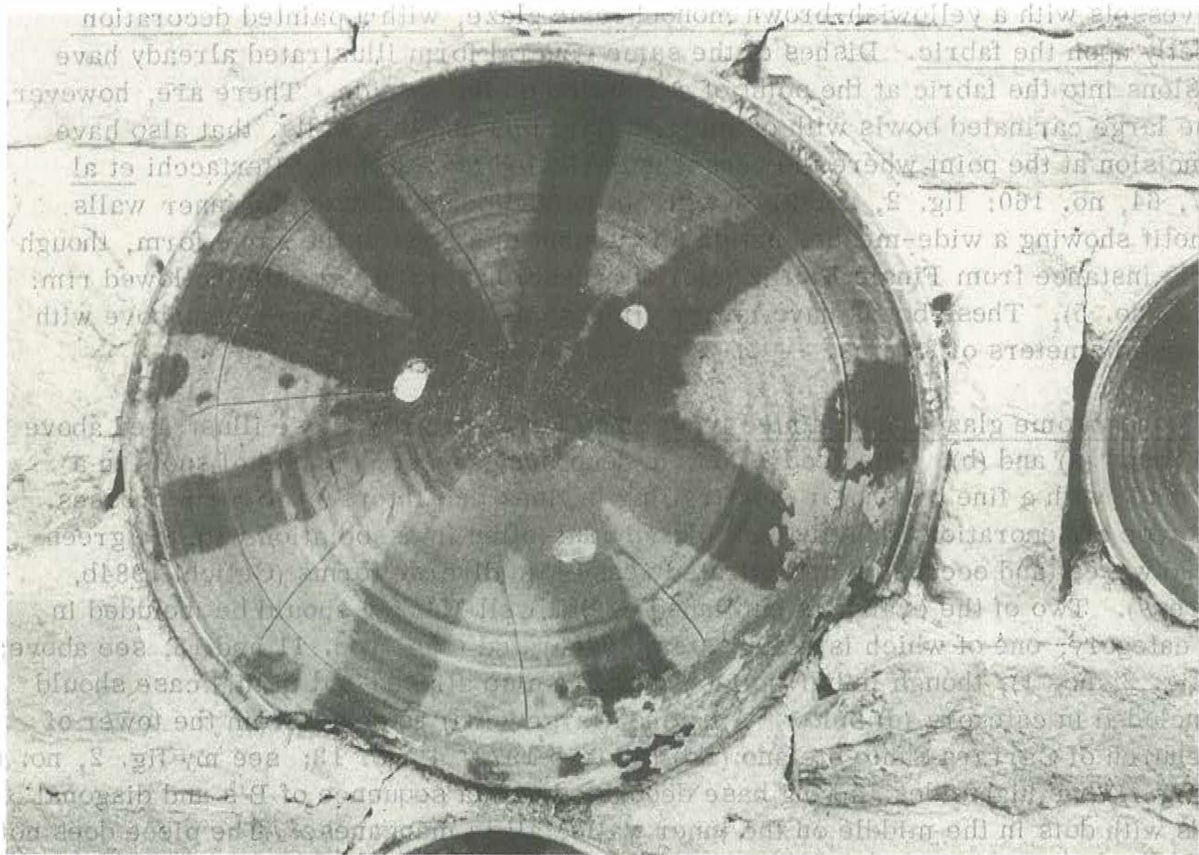


Fig. 7. Polychrome sgraffito ware from San Bartolo,
Ferrara (bacinella no.59)



Fig. 8. Polychrome sgraffito ware from San Bartolo,
Ferrara (bacinella no.73)

Three bacini from the church of San Bartolo (see above) of similar form (Siviero 1972b, no.55, 59 and 73) bear roller-stamped decoration on the exterior and a sharply drawn sgraffito decoration on the interior (rather large like the example from Rimini), and characterized by radial lines alternating with a sinuous line that was drawn over a central medallion (Siviero 1972b, no.55 and 73; my fig. 6 and 8) made with green brushwork emphasised by incised lines (Siviero 1972b, no. 59: my fig. 7). With the exception of no.55 which has a diameter inside of 34 cms, the dimensions of the other two bacini are similar to the pots from Rimini (no. 59: 26 cms in diameter; no. 73: 25 cms in diameter).

As we have seen the roller-stamped decoration on the outside is not exclusively characteristic of one type of pottery, but was used indiscriminately on products which are technologically and, in terms of their decoration, different, though they can be assigned as a result of their forms and fabrics to a single area of manufacture. If anything it seems that the decoration may be linked to specific forms, such as the carinated ones, where it was deemed appropriate to decorate the upright or slightly angled walls of the vessels. Some of these forms, though, do not bear this type of decoration and, we presume, these were made at the same time, occurring today in association in excavations (see above).

Hence, Roulette Ware is not a type of pottery, as was believed by Morgan and Stillwell Mackay, but only a decoration that pertains to various glazed and slipped decorated and sgraffito wares.

The chronology

Morgan attributed Roulette Ware to the Turkish period but more recently Stillwell Mackay has demonstrated that this chronology is wrong; in fact, she dated her material on the basis of its association with coins as well as other ceramic typologies, between the end of the 13th and the very beginning of the 14th centuries.

The bell tower of the church of Carrara Santo Stefano (Pd) on which was found a roller-stamped vessel (fig. 2, no.6 and fig. 4), bears an inscription with the date 1293. The church of San Bartolo near Ferrara, in which several decorated vessels of slip-painted and polychrome sgraffito types occur, in association with bowls decorated with monochrome green, yellowish-brown and polychrome glazes, and polychrome sgraffito dishes, was constructed in 1294, according to an inscription over the door into the front of the church.

The material from Faenza (fig. 2, no.2), although it does not come from a stratigraphic excavation, seems to belong to a fairly sound context dating around the middle to third quarter of the 14th century. At Rimini the vessels with roller-stamped decoration occur in a layer before c. 1370 (in the excavation of the church of Santa Maria ad Nives), and in the bell tower of the cathedral of Aquileia a decorated dish is in association with material which is again of 14th century date (jugs with a monochrome glaze, archaic maiolica and cooking wares).

At Finale Emilia a dish (fig. 2, no.4, and fig. 5) and a bowl with roller-stamped decoration (fig. 2, no.5) are only in association with archaic maiolica, or else monochrome glazed wares and cooking pots.

Wares decorated with impressed roller-stamping on the outside would seem to be appearing in the last quarter of the 13th century and they continue more or less until about the middle of the 14th century. It is likely that these products appeared alongside at first and then replaced types of the same form without decoration.

The source of Roulette Ware

Tiziano Mannoni has analysed several examples of all these wares: the slipped type, the polychrome sgraffitos, painted glaze types, monochrome glaze wares and decorated wares as well, all occurring in various parts of Emilia Romagna, though only one undecorated fragment of a bacino from the complex at San Bartolo (fa) was available (the San Bartolo complex seems, however, to contain one type only) (D'Ambrosio Mannoni and Sfecola 1984, in press; Gelichi 1984b, in press). These analyses indicate that the group as a whole is characterised by the presence of a clay that is poor in or entirely lacking carbonates and, by contrast, rich in alpine minerals, which points to an area of production in the Veneto region (close to Venice). Remains of kiln wasters (half-fired wares lacking glaze) mostly in a carinated bowl form with a sharpened rim and ring base, bearing a fine slip, occur in the Conton collection now mixed together in the Museo della ca'D'Oro at Venice and said to have been found in the Venetian lagoon area. This seems to confirm the Venetian origin of these products.

Conclusions

Roulette Ware is not a pottery type, as Morgan defined it, but a particular kind of impressed decoration that is found on fairly standardised forms which occur in several sizes. This pottery is distributed mainly along the Adriatic coastline from Friuli to the regione of Marche (where for the moment a type without the roulette decoration in a similar type-series is known) (Gelichi 1984b, in press) and it should be proposed that the pieces found in Corinth originate from the Venetian area until there is evidence to prove otherwise. The chronology of these wares is linked to the introduction of the technique of adding a slip to wares in north-east Italy and should be assigned, in the light of present research, to some time in the last quarter of the 13th century.

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Italian summary

L'articolo prende in esame una serie di recipienti caratterizzati da una decorazione a rotella sull'esterno, rinvenuti in Grecia e in Italia. Morgan, il primo che segnalò questi esemplari, riconobbe in essi un tipo e lo definì 'Roulette Ware', datandolo ad epoca turca. La Stillwell Mackay ampliò le conoscenze su questo gruppo e rialzò la datazione al XIII-XIV secolo. In realtà non si tratta di un vero e proprio tipo, bensì di una decorazione caratteristica di diversificati tipi ceramici (invetriati, ingubbiati, dipinti, e graffiti). Questa produzione, inoltre, non è bizantina ma italiana. Scarti di fornace e analisi mineralogiche consentono di attribuirle a Venezia. Per quanto concerne la datazione, infine, le cronologie della Stillwell Mackay sono state confermate dai dati dei bacini e dei rinvenimenti in scavo dell'Italia nord-orientale.

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