

Specialisation, Exchanges and Socio-Economic Strategies of Italian Bronze Age Elites: The Case of Aegean-Type Pottery



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To Lucia

Introduction

The circulation of specialised pottery of Aegean and Cypriot origin is one of the most significant indicators of the development of social complexity in the Central Mediterranean during the local Middle and Late Bronze Age¹ (MBA, LBA) (17th–11th c. BC). Mycenaean pottery has been found at more than 100 sites throughout peninsular Italy and its neighbouring islands, including Sicily and Sardinia (Vagnetti et al. 2014) (Fig. 1).

In recent years the progress of research has greatly increased the evidence of inter-relations between the local communities of protohistoric Italy and the Mycenaean people. In addition to already known areas, such as south-eastern peninsular Italy with the walled sites of Roca Vecchia (Pagliara et al. 2007, 2008; Scarano 2012), Coppa Nevigata in Apulia (Cazzella et al. 2012) and Broglio di Trebisacce in Calabria (Peroni and Trucco 1994; Peroni and Vanzetti 1998), very important new evidence has been located in the eastern Po valley (Bettelli et al. 2015, 2017) and in the central Tyrrhenian and Adriatic regions, including sites not just limited to the coast (Jones and Levi 2014; Barbaro et al. 2012; Bettelli 2019).

Archaeometric analyses, most of the chemical (using AAS, INAA and ICP-ES) for information regarding provenance, have been carried out on nearly 500 samples of Mycenaean pottery—about a quarter of the published corpus—from nearly half of the above-mentioned sites. There have been some 850 analyses featuring not only

¹ This “label” of relative chronology includes here both Recent and Final Bronze Ages (RBA, FBA).

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chemical but also petrographic and mineralogical analyses of specialised wares, such as Grey ware and *Dolii* in addition to, for reference purposes, the local indigenous hand-made burnished ware (*impasto*) (Jones and Levi 2014). A technological component of the archaeometric work has assumed increasing importance, using the scanning electron microscope for information regarding decoration and firing conditions (Levi and Jones 2014).

Collectively, the analyses indicate that the majority of the pottery examined was produced in Italy (hereafter this pottery will be referred to as “Italo-Mycenaean”) and that while the main source of the imported pottery was the Peloponnese, imports from elsewhere in the Aegean were also present, as were imports from Cyprus and the Levant (Jones and Levi 2014).

In summary, the chronological trend is evident: in the earliest phases all Mycenaean pottery was imported, while later phases saw an increase in local production; this may imply the presence in Italy of Aegean craftsmen, even if possibly on a temporary basis (Jones et al. 2014a)

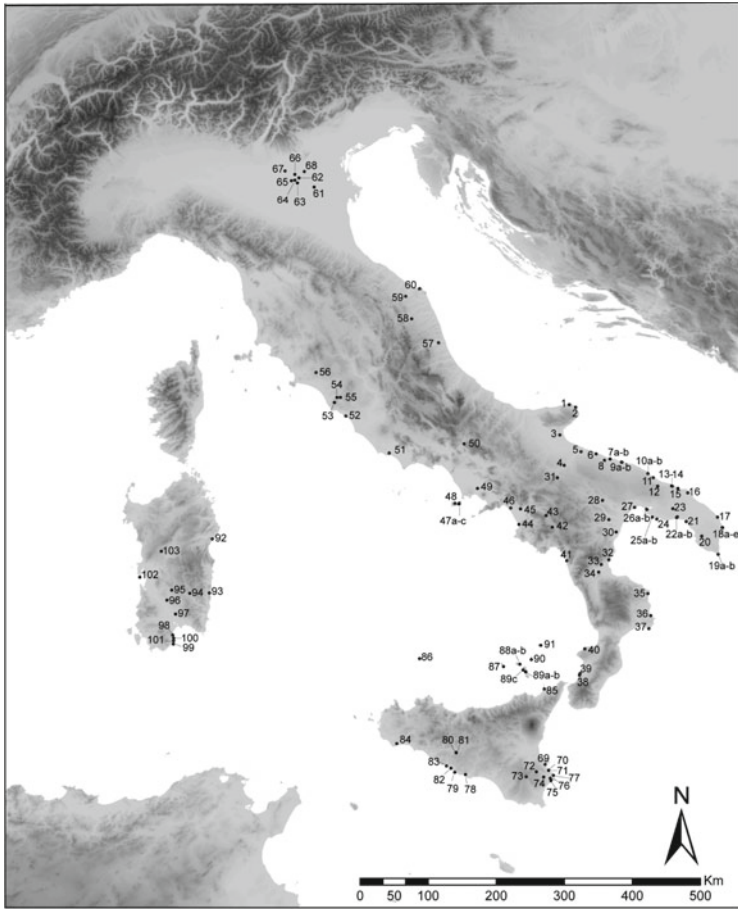
The Archaeological Framework

Local Pottery Technology

The typical Bronze Age Italian pottery production is the so-called *impasto*. The main characteristics of this production group are the use of specific raw materials: coarse; a mixture of non-calcareous clay, silt and intentionally added temper (Levi 2010; Borgna and Levi 2015; Bettelli et al. 2018a). The manufacturing technique is hand-made (with the use of molds or coils); the surface treatments are based on smoothing or burnishing. Decoration is mainly geometric, impressed or incised before firing, which is performed in single chamber kilns.

There was a limited circulation of *impasto* pots, and those exported were medium- to large-sized closed vessels that were used as containers. The circulation of raw materials is rarely attested for this period and mainly included specific tempers or high-quality clays. The social organisation of *impasto* production ranges from household to workshop level, the latter type particularly in later periods (van der Leeuw 1984; Levi et al. 2006; Levi 2010; Levi and Muntoni 2014).

Scholars have tried to distinguish a number of characteristics and trends in ceramic production especially during the RBA (13th–12th c. BC). These primarily concern ceramic style, and, in some cases, the technology used. Some specific, extensively studied cases (*e.g.* Coppa Nevigata and Broglio di Trebisacce) have shown that 13th c. BC *impasto* is characterised by an even greater standardisation of fabrics and manufacturing techniques when compared to previous periods (Levi et al. 1995, 1998; Cannavò and Levi 2018) (Fig. 2).



- | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Manaccora | 27. Cozzo Marziotta | 53. Monte Rovello | 79. Monte Grande |
| 2. Molinella | 28. Timmari | 54. Luni sul Mignone | 80. Mìkera-Monte Campanella |
| 3. Coppa Nevigata | 29. S. Vito | 55. S. Giovenale | 81. Milena-Serra del Palco |
| 4. S. Maria di Ripalta | 30. Termito | 56. Scarceia | 82. Cannatello |
| 5. Madonna del Petto | 31. Toppo Daguzzo | 57. Trezzano di Monsampolo | 83. Marina di Agrigento |
| 6. Trani - Capo Colonna | 32. Broglio di Trebisacce | 58. Tolentino | 84. Erbe Bianche |
| 7. Giovinazzo | 33. Francavilla Marittima | 59. Jesi | 85. Milazzo |
| 8. Giovinazzo - S. Silvestro | 34. Torre Mordillo | 60. Ancona-Montagnolo | 86. Ustica |
| 9. Bari | 35. Motta di Ciro' | 61. Frattésina | 87. Filicudi |
| 10. Monopoli | 36. Crotone | 62. Lovara | 88. Salina |
| 11. Egnatia | 37. Capo Piccolo | 63. Fabbrica dei Soci | 89. Lipari |
| 12. Chiancuccia | 38. Grotta Petrosa | 64. Fondo Paviani | 90. Panarea |
| 13. Torre S. Sabina - C. Morelli | 39. Taureana di Palmi | 65. Castello del Tartaro | 91. Stromboli |
| 14. Torre S. Sabina-Tumulo | 40. Punta Zambrone | 66. Terranegra | 92. Orosei |
| 15. Torre Guaceto | 41. Grotta Cardini | 67. Bovolone | 93. Nuraghe Nastasi |
| 16. Punta le Terrare | 42. Grotta del Pino | 68. Montagnana | 94. Nuraghe Arrubiu |
| 17. Rocavecchia | 43. Grotta di Polla | 69. Mulinello di Augusta | 95. Su Nuraxi |
| 18. Otranto | 44. Paestum | 70. Thapsos, settlement | 96. Nuraghe Corti Beccia |
| 19. Capo S. Maria di Leuca | 45. Eboli | 71. Thapsos, necropolis | 97. Monte Zara |
| 20. Parabita | 46. Pontecagnano | 72. Pantalica | 98. Nuraghe Antigori |
| 21. Scalo di Furno | 47. Vivara | 73. Buscemi | 99. Nuraghe Domu s'Orku |
| 22. Avetrana | 48. Castiglione d'Ischia | 74. Floridia | 100. Nuraghe Is Baccas |
| 23. Oria - S. Cosimo | 49. Afragola | 75. Cozzo del Pantano | 101. Nora |
| 24. Torre Castelluccia | 50. Monteroduni | 76. Matrensa | 102. Tharros |
| 25. Porto Perone-Satyrion | 51. Casale Nuovo | 77. Siracusa | 103. Duos Nuraghes |
| 26. Taranto | 52. Vaccina | 78. Madre Chiesa | |

Fig. 1 Distribution map with the list of Italian sites with Aegean pottery (after Vagnetti et al. 2014, Fig. 2.1)

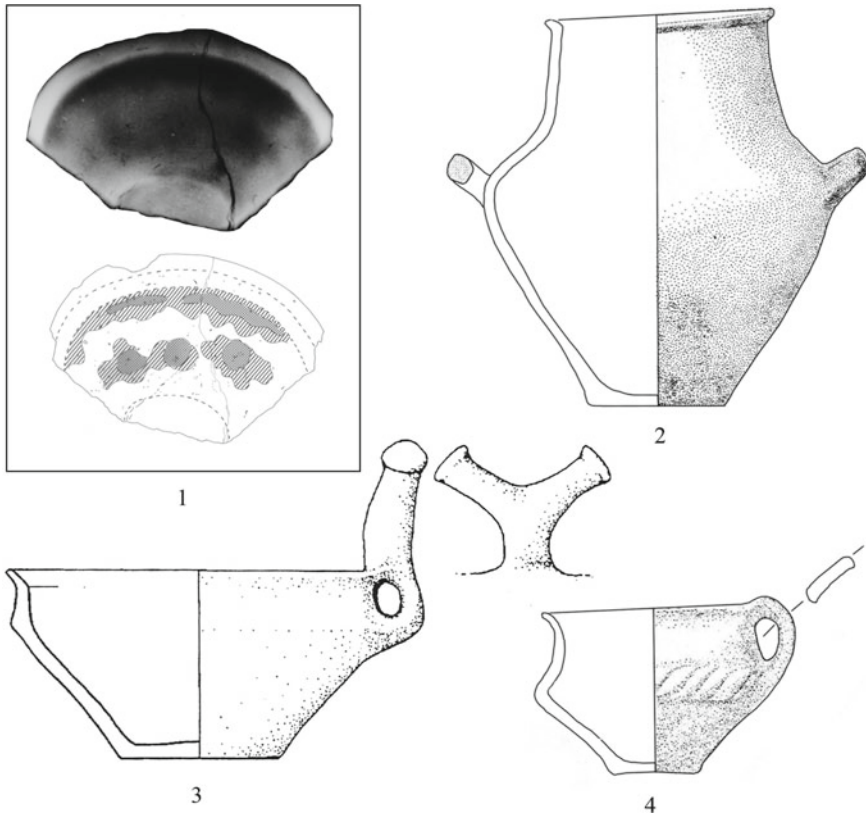


Fig. 2 1. X-Ray and X-Ray drawing of an impasto carinated cup manufactured with pressure (after Levi and Jones 2014, Fig. 5.5a); 2, 4. FBA Impasto necked jar and necked cup from Rocavecchia (after Malorgio and Maggiulli 2011, Figs. 9 and 7; scale 1:6 ca. and 1:4 ca.); 3. RBA impasto carinated cup from Broglio di Trebisacce (after Damiani 2010, tav. 61.B2; scale 1:3 ca.)

Aegean and Italo-Mycenaean Pottery

As mentioned above, starting from the 17th c. BC a new kind of pottery of Mycenaean and Late Minoan style spread in the Central Mediterranean. These productions of Aegean origin are characterised by the use of levigated calcareous clay (*figulina*), a potter's wheel, dark on light painted decoration and firing in double-chambered kilns, in order to obtain homogeneous colours on surfaces and painting. The result was a specialised ware manufactured at workshop level in Greece and Crete (Evely 1988, 2000; Mountjoy 1993; Berg 2007, 2013). As already mentioned, in the initial periods of contact between the two areas, exotic pottery was systematically imported in Italy from various regions of the Aegean, but above all from the Peloponnese. Imports continued for the entire duration of these relationships. Results of the archaeometric analyses demonstrate that, starting from an advanced phase of the local MBA (14th c.

BC), Mycenaean and Late Minoan-type pottery began to be locally made in different production centres in the Central Mediterranean with the same technologies used in Greece and Crete (Jones and Levi 2014; Jones et al. 2014a). Italo-Mycenaean pottery production continues and intensifies in the later periods of the Bronze Age, representing—in particular areas such as the Ionian Arc—almost the totality of this type of findings (Figs. 3 and 4).

Technological Transfer

The use of new technologies of Aegean origin involved a transfer of know-how and specific skills that were hitherto unknown to local communities of the Central Mediterranean. Such a technological transfer certainly took place—at least at the beginning—via specialised craftsmen travelling from the Aegean. The styles of exotic pottery found in Italy, both Mycenaean and Late Minoan, indicate that these craftsmen probably arrived from various regions (Jones et al. 2014a). Considering some specific aspects of Italo-Mycenaean pottery often not conforming with Aegean models (Bettelli 2014), it can be assumed that from a certain period onwards even native artisans were involved, through training, in the use of these specialised technologies of foreign origin (Jones et al. 2014a; Cazzella and Recchia 2018). Italo-Mycenaean pottery can in turn be expressed in various stylistic sub-sets characterising the different production centres (Bettelli 2014) (Fig. 5).

Italo-Mycenaean Pottery and Other Wares of Aegean Derivation

Italo-Mycenaean pottery, completely innovative within the local cultural framework of its time, was essentially used as sophisticated tableware mainly for drinking and pouring/containing (Bettelli and Levi 2014; Bettelli et al. 2021). In the south-eastern regions of the Italian peninsula the new pottery technologies of Aegean origin were also adopted for the production of further innovative ceramic categories, such as Grey ware and *Dolii* (Jones et al. 2014b, Tab. 1.2; Bettelli and Levi 2003). The former served as tableware (Belardelli 1994; Bettelli 2002, pp. 198–233; Castagna 2002); *Dolii* were used for the conservation of particularly valuable goods, usually foodstuffs (Tenaglia 1994; Guglielmino 1999; Levi 1999a; Levi and Schiappelli 2004; Schiappelli 2006, 2015). Technological and stylistic features both of Italo-Mycenaean pottery and Grey ware support the hypothesis that these were valuable productions intended for the social representation of their consumers. This idea is further corroborated by the fact that these ceramics are in any case in the minority within the local archaeological record, whereas *impasto* pottery is always largely predominant.

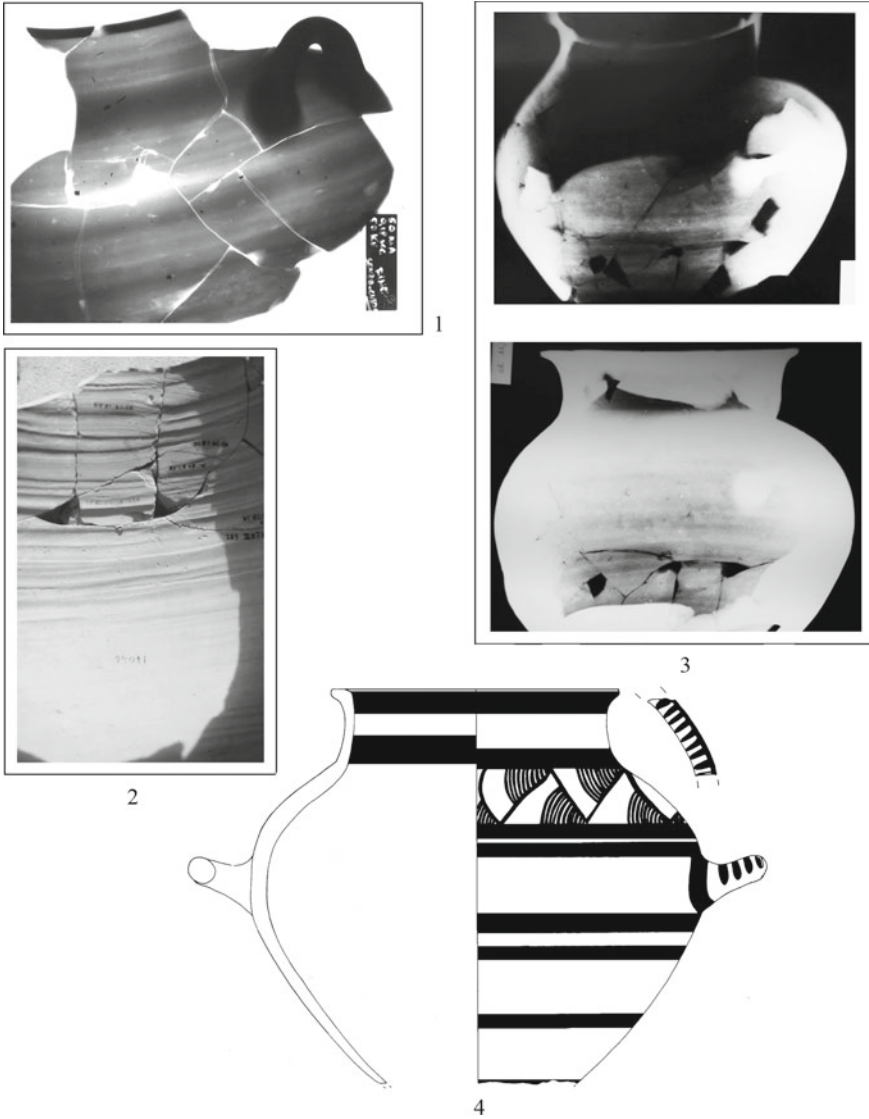


Fig. 3 1, 3. X-Rays of Italo-Mycenaean necked jars from Broglio di Trebisacce manufactured with a potter's wheel (after Levi and Jones 2014, Figs. 5.2c, 5.2d); 2. Internal surface of an Italo-Mycenaean closed vessel from Broglio di Trebisacce, clearly showing the use of potter's wheel (after Levi and Jones 2014, Fig. 5.2f); 4. Italo-Mycenaean necked jar from Broglio di Trebisacce (after Vagnetti 1984, tav. 46:3; scale 1:4 ca.).

Fig. 4 Double-chamber kiln from the Bronze Age settlement at Kommos, Crete (after Shaw et al. 2001, Fig. 9)



In the FBA (mid-12th–10th c. BC) Protogeometric ware—a further specialised ceramic production which inherited many technological and functional aspects of Italo-Mycenaean pottery—widespread especially in south-eastern Italy (Bettelli et al. 2018a) (Fig. 6).

Technological Specialisation and Social Organisation

Within this framework the problem arises of the link between producers and consumers of these specialised ceramics of foreign origin but local (Italian) production (Bettelli 2021). It seems evident that this was based on production relationships which differed from the traditional ones. Ethnographic studies on this subject—which has also inspired archaeologists—suggest that technological specialisation

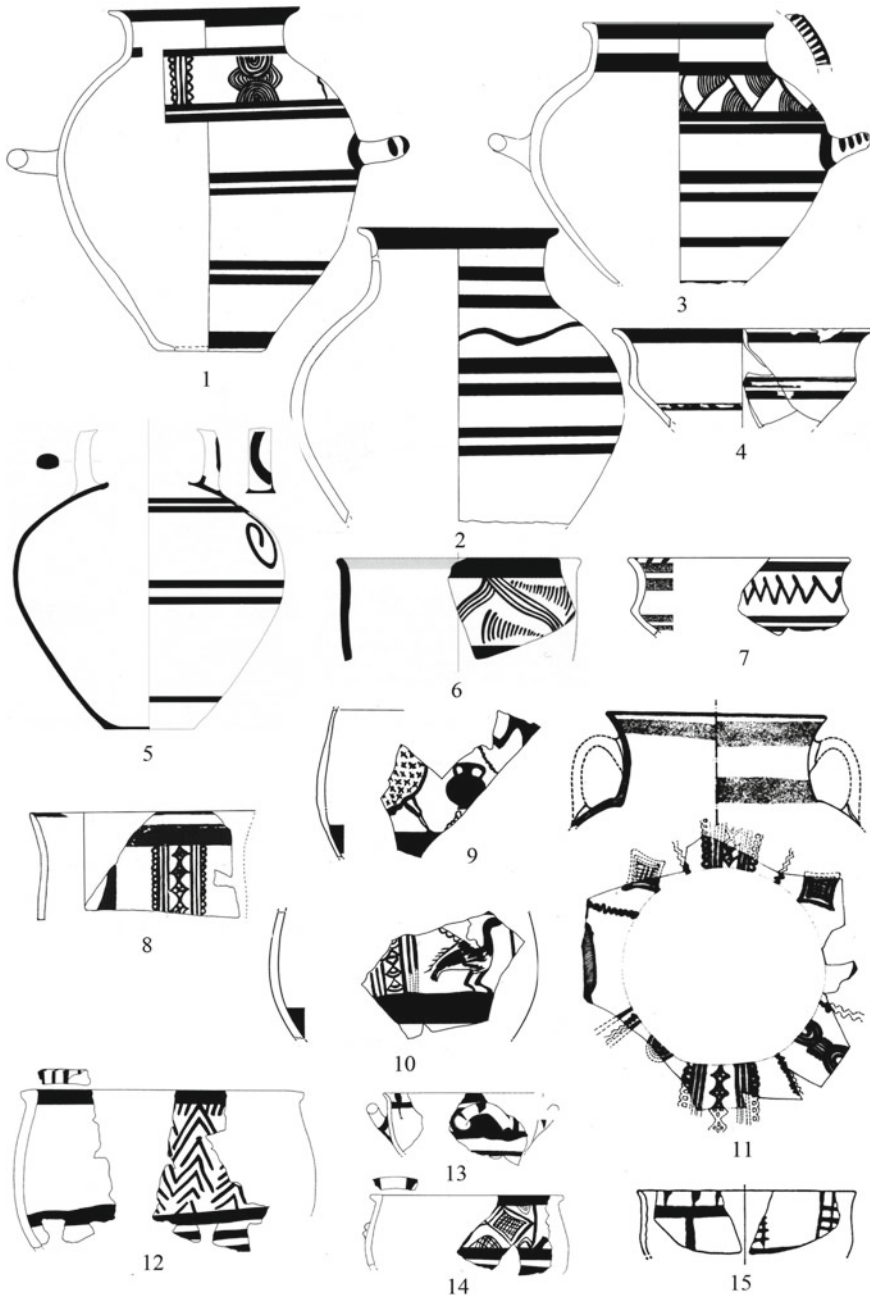


Fig. 5 Different styles of Italo-Mycenaean pottery: 1–4. Broglio di Trebisacce; 5–6. Rocavecchia; 7. Porto Perone-Satyrion; 8–11. Termitito; 12–15. Antigori (after Bettelli 2015, Fig. 2; 1–3. 5. 11 scale 1:6 ca.; 6–10. 12–14 scale 1:4 ca.; 15 not to scale)

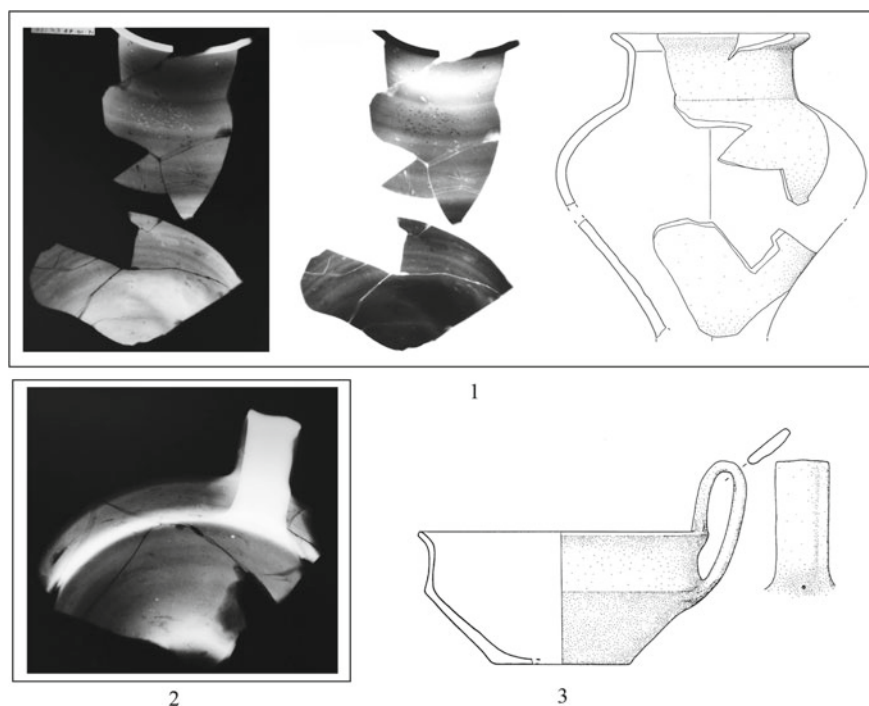


Fig. 6 1. X-Rays and drawing of a RBA Grey ware necked jar from Broglio di Trebisacce manufactured with potter's wheel (after Levi and Jones 2014, Fig. 5.4a; Castagna 2002, Fig. 104:33; scale 1:6 ca.); 2. X-Rays of a RBA Grey ware carinated cup from Broglio di Trebisacce manufactured with potter's wheel (after Levi and Jones 2014, Fig. 5.4e); 3. RBA Grey ware carinated cup from Broglio di Trebisacce (after Castagna 2002, Fig. 103:26; scale 1:4 ca.)

emerges in specific socio-economic conditions. According to E. Brumfiel and T. Earle (1987), specialisation can be expected when natural resources are unevenly distributed or when the production process involves some gradually acquired skills. Specialisation involves economic differentiation and interdependence: the existence of individuals who produce goods or services for a broader consumer population. It encompasses a number of dimensions: the affiliation of the specialist (independent or attached); the nature of the product (subsistence goods, luxury items or services); the intensity of specialisation (part-time or full-time); the scale of the production unit (individual industry, household industry, workshop industry, village industry or large-scale industry).

According to the models proposed in the above-mentioned studies, independent specialists produce goods or services for a broad group of consumers that varies according to economic, social and political conditions. They operate within a framework with an increasing population density, in which urbanisation and market development can also be present. Attached specialists, instead, usually produce goods for a patron, either a social elite or a government. In this case specialisation arises from

the explicit desire of the ruling elites to control the production and distribution of certain politically significant commodities. Attached specialisation develops largely as a function of elite coercive control and elite income (Brumfiel and Earle 1987; Roux 2010).

It is worth noting that patron/client relationships in terms of acquisition of prestige goods may also be formed in simple societies, not necessarily in the presence of specialisation, as ethnographic studies suggest.² That is to say that structures of patronage of this type may also exist in societies which are not extremely hierarchical, or in which a process of social stratification has recently begun.

The specific interconnections between social organisation and technological innovations in the field of pottery production have been thoroughly studied by V. Roux (2008, 2010; Roux et al. 2013; Baldi and Roux 2016). Among other important concepts, she proposes that, in traditional societies, discontinuous innovations—such as the wheel-coiling and the wheel-throwing techniques—are promoted by individuals having some form of religious, political or financial power; they are changed not for practical or techno-economical convenience but for symbolic and social reasons connected to the elite's demand. In other words, these kinds of technological innovations take place in an elite context, and they spread only later to other social strata; this is because only elites have the material resources necessary to face the possible failure which a new practice always entails.³

Continuous and Discontinuous Technological Innovations: Disappearance and Reappearance of Technological Innovations

In this section the concepts of continuous and discontinuous innovations in the field of pottery technology, as proposed by V. Roux, will be briefly explored; together with the phenomena of end consumption and the reintroduction of specialised techniques in a given territory. Roux, who has studied the introduction of the potter's wheel in some areas of the Levant between the Chalcolithic and the Bronze Age (IV-III millennium BC), takes up some concepts from R. Creswell (1996) concerning the relationship between technologies and socio-cultural phenomena. In the evolutionary perspective embraced by the French scholar, technological innovations can be continuous or discontinuous (Roux 2013; Roux and Courty 2013). The former ones are characterised by a continuous process of social learning between generations or peers. The latter takes place with a complete cessation of cultural transmission processes; for instance, in the case of a total population substitution in a given territory, or when—within the same community—one or more transmission units corresponding

² Douglas (1967), quoted in Brumfiel and Earle (1987, 7).

³ Roux (2010, 225–228). In this regard see also the important considerations by R. Peroni concerning the production of Italo-Mycenaean pottery and Grey Ware in the Plain of Sybaris (Peroni 1994, 846–847). See also di Leo (2018, 104).

to social or institutional components disappear or emerge. Within this framework, in addition to the new needs of the elite in stimulating the introduction of technological innovations, figures and social groups able to realise these needs are fundamental (di Leo 2018: 104), in this case specialised potters.

According to V. Roux (2008, 2010), the study of the interaction between technology and society also helps to understand why in many cases, over the course of history, important technological innovations, such as the potter's wheel, have appeared, disappeared and reappeared again in the same area, even after a long time, in different chrono-cultural contexts, such as the Chalcolithic and the last phases of the Early Bronze Age in the southern Levant. According to her studies, in both these periods the use of the potter's wheel remained the prerogative of a small circle of specialists employed by an elite for the production of politically significant artefacts and did not invest the majority of the ceramic repertoire that continued to be produced with traditional techniques by other categories of craftsmen. This specific organisation of work, restricted in terms of learning and transmission, would have created a fragile productive system which did not react to the profound changes in the economic and social structures that marked the final phases of both these periods (Roux 2008, 2010). On the contrary, in other Near Eastern chrono-cultural contexts when the use of the potter's wheel was extended to the totality, or near totality, of ceramic production by specialised workshops, this technology persisted in a long time. In other words, according to Roux, the more restricted the transmission network is, the greater the chances that it can be interrupted in periods of systemic crisis, causing the loss of the involved technologies.

Back to Italy

The results of our research suggest some answers and considerations: the local production of Italo-Mycenaean pottery, as we have seen, implies the introduction of new and sophisticated skills from the Aegean which were probably acquired gradually by local people; the innovative character of Italo-Mycenaean pottery in comparison to the Aegean repertoire could be an indication of this.

It is reasonable to assume that, due to its technological complexity, sophistication and exoticism, Italo-Mycenaean pottery, as well as Grey ware, belonged to the category of luxury items.

S. Levi and R. Jones categorise this kind of production as workshop industry (Levi 1999b: 259–260; Levi and Jones 2014) and this notion is important in that it implies the existence of masters and apprentices (Roux and Corbetta 1989), once again with the very probable inclusion of local people in the manufacturing cycle.

Some points remain to be clarified: even in the presence of socio-economic structures capable of maintaining specialised craft productions, part-time or full-time intensity of specialisation may depend on the fluctuations in supply and demand, so it is difficult to consider it as a priori.

Also, it is not easy to establish the specialists' affiliation. It is difficult to consider the figure of the specialised potter who, either full-time or part-time, produced Italo-Mycenean pottery—or other wares of Aegean inspiration—as an independent specialist in the sense described above, given that the socio-political and socio-economic framework of LBA Italy was far from concepts such as “market” or “urban society”. The definition of attached specialists working for the needs of a patron member of the social elite is undoubtedly more fitting, although it would need to be further detailed in the light of specific socio-economic contexts, which are not always clear.

So, what we observe is the existence of a specialised pottery production, realistically the result of the work of specialised artisans. As already mentioned, there is an almost unanimous agreement in considering the function of this pottery for purposes of social display (Peroni 1994, 847; Levi 1999a; Cazzella and Recchia 2009, 32; Jones et al. 2014a, 456; Vanzetti 2014). Although it is still controversial to define the specific character of the segment of the community that acted as customer to this commodity,⁴ we may think about the direct involvement of the socially emerging groups. It is also difficult to determine whether and to what extent there were relationships of dependence between producers and consumers, especially at the beginning of the local production of this pottery, when craftsmen were coming from the Aegean and therefore were not integrated in native social systems.

Conclusions

Considering the models proposed by V. Roux, the introduction of the potter's wheel in the Central Mediterranean—together with the technological package of which it is part: fine calcareous clay, painted decoration and double-chamber kilns—seems consistent with the category of discontinuous innovation. This is because it appears to be linked to the emergence of new social components both on the side of consumers (social elites) and producers (specialised artisans).

Regarding end of use phenomena and the reintroduction of the potter's wheel, as discussed by V. Roux, it is worth noting that they also occurred in the Central Mediterranean between the LBA and the Early Iron Age (EIA) (11th–8th c. BC).

As already discussed, the use of the potter's wheel, introduced towards the end of the MBA in south-eastern peninsular Italy, spread throughout different regions of the centre up to the north-eastern Po Plain. While in central and northern Italy the phenomenon had a relatively short duration, in the south-eastern sectors of the peninsula, although with phases of contraction, the use of the potter's wheel—and of fine calcareous clay, plain or painted—was never completely abandoned. It must

⁴ See, for example, Bietti Sestieri (2008, 22–27); according to this scholar Italo-Mycenean pottery was produced by Aegean craftsmen who moved to the central Mediterranean and settled in the local communities, just for their personal consumption. For a critical discussion of this issue see Bettelli (2011, 113–114) and Jones et al. (2014a, 453–454).

be said that in central and northern Italy it remained substantially limited to the manufacture of Italo-Mycenaean pottery. In south-eastern Italy, instead, it extended to the production of other ceramic categories: tableware, such as Grey ware, and productions functional to specific economic activities, such as *Dolii*. It is certain that everywhere the majority of ceramics continued to be manufactured according to traditional methods, likely by different and generally not specialised artisans.

The model proposed by V. Roux may help to explain why the potter's wheel disappeared in the areas of central and northern Italy, while in the South it lasted for centuries. During the LBA in both areas, this technology was used by a small circle of specialists for the production of ceramics aimed at an elite consumption. Although the spread through the south-eastern peninsula of various wheel-thrown (or wheel-formed) specialised wares suggests a more complex productive system—with the presence of different specialised potters for the large *Dolii* and tableware, both Grey and Italo-Mycenaean—in any case the craft network must have been restricted. A possible explanation could be proposed by considering the aspects of the organisation of ceramic production within the different historical scenarios in which the different communities acted.

It is well known how both the Po Plain and the Marche region in which a significant local production of Italo-Mycenaean pottery developed were hit by a series of turbulences and radical transformations during the Recent Bronze Age (RBA) and FBA (late 13th–11th c. BC), first and foremost the collapse of the *terramare* system south of the Po river (Bernabò Brea et al. 1997; Cardarelli 2009, 2015; Cardarelli et al. 2017; Bettelli et al. 2018b). In both regions, although in very different ways and with very different outcomes, settlements and socio-economic systems underwent prolonged periods of instability, transformations and restructuring. For instance, in the eastern Po Plain north of the Po river—the only area in which the *terramare* system persevered—important changes in settlement organisation took place towards the end of the RBA (mid-12th c. BC), with the progressive abandonment of the central place of Fondo Paviani and the development of the important *emporio* of Frattesina along the Po river, which in turn would have a relatively short duration (Balista and De Guio 1997; Bietti Sestieri 2008, 2010; Bietti Sestieri et al. 2015; Cupitò and Leonardi 2015; Cupitò et al. 2015; De Guio et al. 2015). In the Marche region evidence of this process includes the abandonment of important settlements such as Tolentino and Moscosi di Cingoli and those of the Arcevia area, as well as the subsequent foundation in the same area of the large settlement of Monte Croce Guardia, the life cycle of which was substantially limited to the FBA (12th–10th c. BC); a series of events which occurred in rapid succession (Cardarelli et al. 2017). In southern Etruria as well, another area where locally produced Italo-Mycenaean ceramics are attested, the period between the MBA and FBA (14th–10th c. BC) is marked by dynamism and rapid evolution of settlement patterns, which would soon lead to the structuring of the earliest proto urban centres between the end of the FBA and the EIA (10th–9th c. BC) (Pacciarelli 2001, 93–108).

The instability and dynamism that characterised the aforementioned regions may have contributed to the further weakening, and eventual disappearance, of the production networks—fragile according to V. Roux—which had produced the wheel-thrown

(or wheel-formed) and painted pottery used by the local elites in the LBA (Barbaro et al. 2012; Jones et al. 2014a).

The situation in south-eastern Italy, especially in some specific areas such as the Plain of Sybaris or Ionian and Adriatic Apulia, is completely different. In these zones, centuries-long settlement continuity is attested, at least in the case of the major coastal centres, which would only be interrupted by the foundation of the Greek colonies towards the end of the 8th c. BC (Peroni 1994; Radina 2010; Vanzetti 2014). This long-lasting settlement continuity was probably associated with a greater stability of the socio-economic and socio-political structures of those communities, as well as different capabilities, or possibilities, of exploitation of local territorial resources. In this sense, the probable LBA development in those areas of a specialised arboriculture, such as the cultivation of olive trees for the production of oil, must be highlighted (Peroni 1994; Terral et al. 2005; Fiorentino 2010; Vanzetti 2014; Primavera and Fiorentino 2021). It is also possible that such specialised agricultural activity could in turn have contributed to a greater settlement stability, considering the long investment in terms of time necessary to obtain optimum production. Olive oil production probably took place on a significant scale, if the surplus produced was stored—possibly together with other commodities—in storerooms within settlements inside the large wheel-turned (or wheel-formed) *Dolii*, as we will discuss below (Peroni 1994; Levi 1999a; Levi and Schiappelli 2004; Schiappelli 2006, 2015; Bettelli 2011; Vanzetti 2000, 2014; de Neef et al. 2017) (Fig. 7).⁵

Therefore, we can suppose that—although the productive network of specialised potters and its technological correlates was limited, and therefore fragile according to V. Roux—in these zones of southern Italy it was not hit by systemic crises or radical socio-political transformations as had happened in the central and northern regions.

This is a possible explanation of the phenomenon as pertains to craftsmen, but what about the consumers? It should be noted that in south-eastern Italy at the end of the Bronze Age, the use of the potter's wheel was mainly concentrated in the production of Aegean-inspired large containers for food—the *Dolii*—, which began as early as the RBA. As mentioned, they were often collected in storerooms linked to specific houses within the settlements, as happened at Broglio di Trebisacce, Rocavecchia and Santa Maria di Leuca (Peroni 1994; Schiappelli 2006, 2015; Orlando 1990; Guglielmino 1999) (Fig. 8). Thus, in these areas, there seems to be a direct link between a specific socio-economic organisation and the establishment and development over time of a particular ceramic technology (Peroni 1983, 250–251; Vanzetti 2000). In no other area where local production of Aegean-type ceramics was taking place, the storage practices included large containers of this type.

Regardless of the socio-economic complexity that they represent, the containers must have been used for specific economic practices probably related to specific

⁵ The recent discovery of an important FBA site at Contrada Damale, in the internal region behind the Plain of Sybaris, adds important elements to the patterns of circulation and consumption of the wheel-turned *Dolii*, although the excavation data are still too scanty to formulate a new interpretative framework (de Neef et al. 2017).

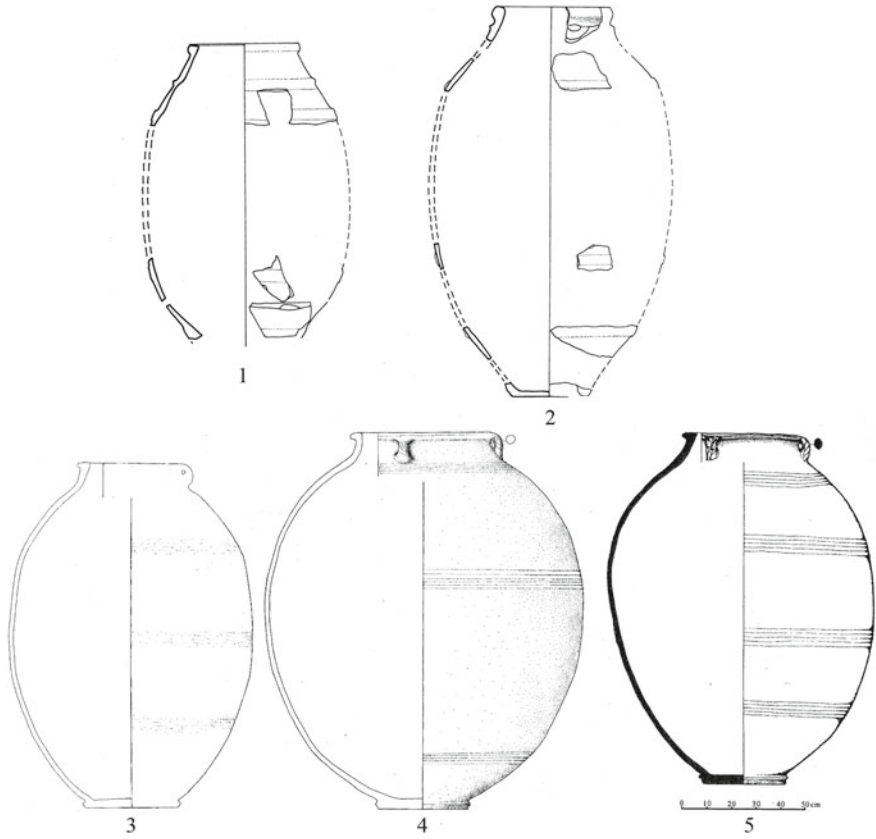


Fig. 7 1–2. RBA Levigated clay Dolii from Broglio di Trebisacce (after Tenaglia 1994, Fig. 126; scale 1:16 ca.); 3–4. FBA levigated clay Dolii from Broglio di Trebisacce (after Tenaglia 1994, tav. 66; scale 1:20 ca.); 5. FBA levigated clay Dolio from Rocavecchia (after Guglielmino 1999, Fig. 3)

social figures. If these social figures correspond to the elites of the communities, it could be argued that the continuity of use of Aegean-inspired ceramic technology occurred here also because it was soon directed not only towards productions destined for social representation, but towards those aimed at technological improvements to the advantage of the economic activities managed, probably, by the same elites who self-represented through the “ceremonial” use of tableware technologically and stylistically exotic and sophisticated.

Regarding the elites of the communities living in central Italy and the Po plain, they probably based their distinction on socio-economic structures different from south-eastern Italy. For instance, it is important to stress the economic characters of the communities living in the Monti della Tolfa area and along the valley of the Fiora river, both in southern Etruria, and with important metal resources. As pointed out by several scholars, the period between the RBA and FBA is crucial for the development in this area of an increasingly intense exploitation of those resources and flourishing

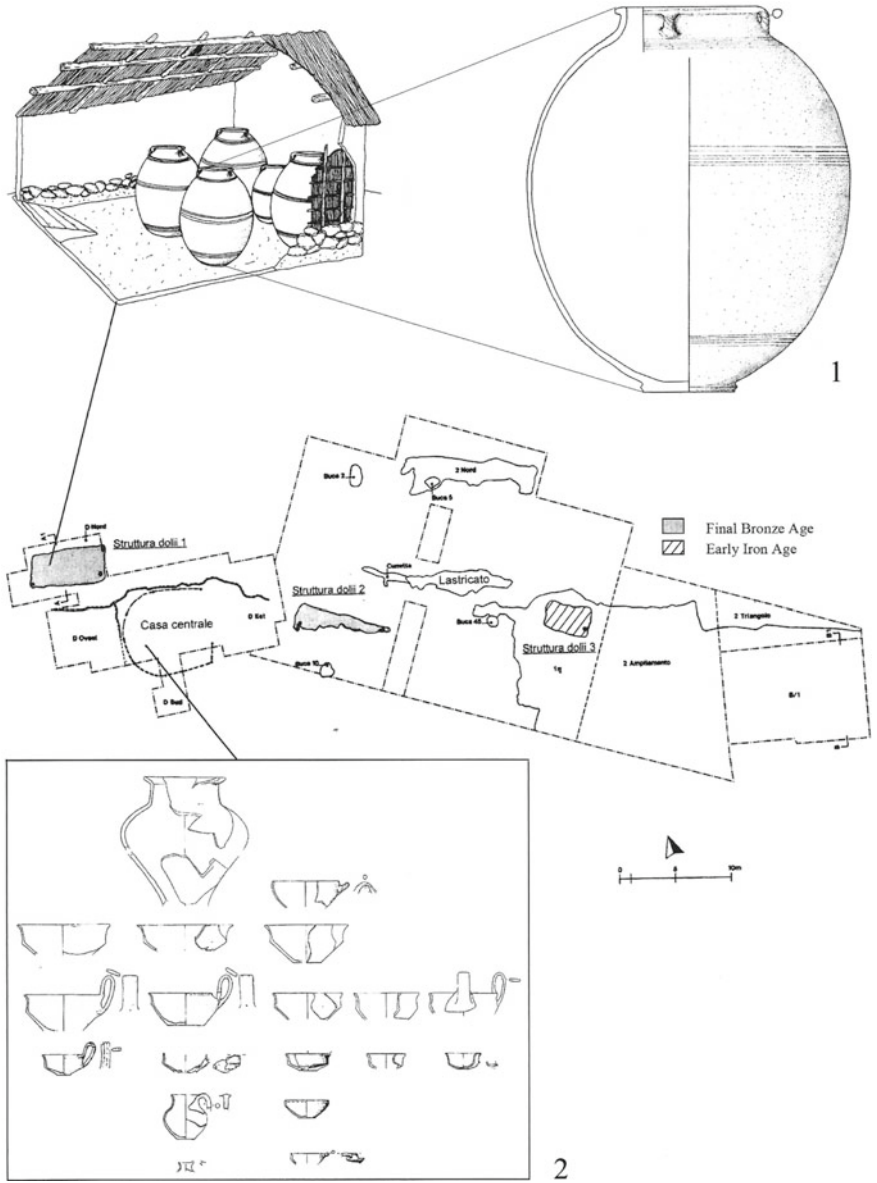


Fig. 8 Broglio di Trebisacce. Map of a sector of the excavation showing the RBA “Central hut” with the Grey ware pottery set as reconstructed by A. Castagna (2), and two FBA storerooms with Dolii, with the proposed reconstruction (1) (after Bettelli 2011, Taf. 21)

of metal-based crafts (Bietti Sestieri 1981, 1988, 2008; Peroni 1983; Giardino 1995). At Scarceta fragments of Mycenaean pottery have been found in levels related to an outstanding structure connected to metallurgical activities. In southern Etruria, strategic economic activities therefore seem to have focussed on the exploitation of metal resources, accompanied by other types of specialised crafts. It is possible that those who were responsible, directly or indirectly, for these metallurgical activities occupied a role in the community, the importance of which was determined by the strategic centrality of this economic branch.

Notably, also the settlements in the Veneto region and some of those in Marche were sites of specialised craft activities, probably to a greater extent focussed on bone and ivory, glass and amber production, together with metalwork. The development of these activities in the settlements of Veneto is evident at the important site of Frattesina towards the end of the Bronze Age where a number of specialised crafts—in metals, glass and exotic materials such as amber and ivory—are attested, which were then distributed over a wide area (Bietti Sestieri 2008, 13, 30–34; 2010; Bellintani et al. 2015; Bietti Sestieri et al. 2015). The analysis of the FBA necropolis at Frattesina has highlighted how a well-structured elite was recognisable by cremation burials of warriors with swords (Bietti Sestieri 2008, 14–15, 31, Fig. 4; Cardarelli et al. 2015).

In all the above-mentioned zones there was a relationship between elite status and the management of specialised crafts considered to be strategic for the community, probably since the beginning of the RBA. Such a hypothesis would help to explain, in these areas, the more limited use, and eventual disappearance, of the potter's wheel with its technological correlates (previously intended mainly for the manufacture of vessels aimed at social display) over the course of the FBA (11th–10th). It is possible that such a specialised pottery technology did not root in those communities and social groups that did not consider it economically practical or convenient for activities in which they were involved. In these cases, prestige indicators would relate to different categories of products more closely linked to a specific type of productive economy, such as metalwork, ivory, vitreous materials and amber.

In mid-Tyrrhenian Italy and Campania, the use of the potter's wheel, of fine calcareous clay and painted decoration was only to reappear, after centuries of oblivion, in an advanced phase of the EIA (8th c. BC), thanks to relations with Greek trading partners and colonisers (Bartoloni 1980, 2005). Then, a technology transfer comparable to that of the Bronze Age can be observed and in a very short time, probably a matter of decades, the use of the new specialised pottery technologies spread over a wide area, involving the local communities of southern Etruria, Latium and some zones of Campania. Scholars agree that this technology transfer to Italy took place thanks to the presence of Greek potters in the Villanovan and Latin communities from the first decades of the 8th c. BC on, in terms of traditional chronology (La Rocca 1978; Bartoloni 1980, 2005; Anzidei et al. 1985, pp. 177–194).

Archaeometric analyses (Ridgway et al. 1985; Jones 1986; Table 8.12) have confirmed the presence of local products, as well as (Euboean) imports at the Veientine cemetery of Quattro Fontanili. Evidence from other mid-Tyrrhenian contexts dating to the EIA suggests that both local and Greek shapes were immediately

produced together. In the Esquilino cemetery at Rome Geometric-type pottery reproducing local shapes is present in burials dating to the first decades of the 8th c. BC (Gjerstad 1956, figs. 187:5, 188:3; Müller-Karpe 1962, tav. 23B:6; La Rocca 1974–75; 1978; Bettelli 1997, tav. 69:6; Bartoloni 2005).

Given the current state of research, it is difficult to say if and when local potters received Greek training. Scholars usually only consider the presence of Greek potters (La Rocca 1978; Bartoloni 2005; Nizzo 2005, 354, 3.28; 355, 3.30); however, judging from the production of painted, wheel-thrown vases reproducing local shapes, it can be assumed that novice local potters trained by Greek potters may also have been present in these workshops (Nizzo 2005, 354, 3.28; Gjerstad 1956, figs. 187:5, 188:3).

There is a general consensus on the fact that these exotic and sophisticated vases were produced for the local elites, as suggested by the relevant tombs at Veio, Tivoli, Osteria dell'Osa, La Rustica, Rome Esquilino and Quirinale (Bartoloni 1980; Anzidei et al. 1985, pp. 177–194).

Of course, it could be argued that a comparison of two apparently analogous phenomena which developed in two different socio-economic and socio-political environments is inappropriate. Yet it is undeniable that examining technology transfer in the field of Iron Age pottery production could clarify similar phenomena which occurred in the Bronze Age. In particular, it can help to better understand the relationships between producers and consumers of these specialised and technologically sophisticated ceramics, and also to further emphasise the structural link between technological innovations and social organisation, regardless of the different historical scenarios.

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