

REVUE DES ARCHÉOLOGUES ET  
HISTORIENS D'ART DE LOUVAIN



LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE

XXV - 1992



# LA MUCULUFA MASTER AND COMPANY : THE IDENTIFICATION OF A WORKSHOP OF EARLY BRONZE AGE CASTELLUCCIAN PAINTERS

The Castelluccian cliff-site of La Muculufa, about 1200 feet above southern Sicily's Salso River Valley, lies approximately 15 kilometers from the mouth of the Salso River at Licata near the center of the southern coast of Sicily (Map). The name is Arabic in origin, meaning camp, and dates from the Arab occupation of Sicily (A.D. 902-1091). In addition to the nearly 200 chamber tombs cut into the exposed cliff faces (empty in recent history), the site also features a village and a sanctuary. The sanctuary, located in a cleft at the eastern end of the exposed crest of La Muculufa, appears to have had more than local significance and to have drawn worshipers from other villages in the surrounding territory.

The chamber tombs, visible on the exposed rock faces, were already known to local archaeological enthusiasts and to the Regional Archaeological Superintendency located in Agrigento, when the site began to appear in archaeological literature in the 1980s. The formal excavations of the village and sanctuary have produced bone and stone artifacts, floral and faunal remains and an immense quantity of ceramic material, particularly from the sanctuary, which provides the basis for the discussion here<sup>1</sup>.

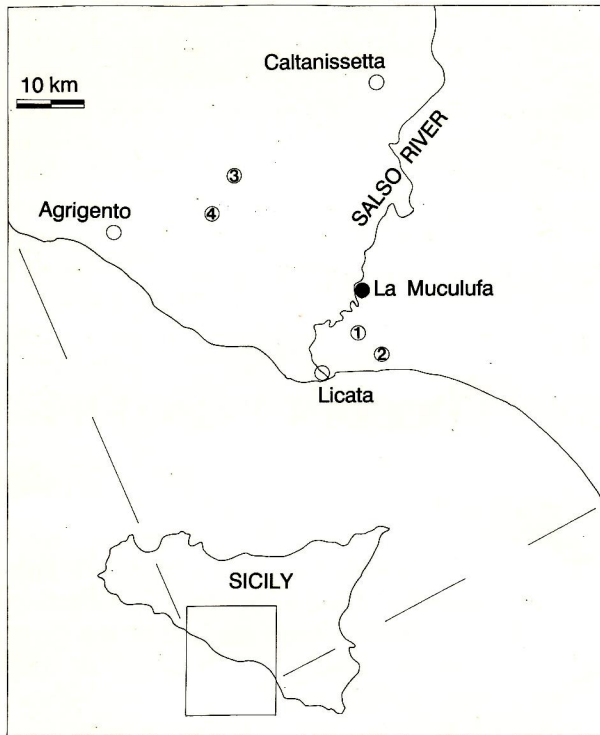
1. I am indebted to Prof. Ernesto De Miro for his permission to study the material from Canticaglione, at the Licata Museum, and to Dr. Graziella Fiorentini, for permission to study the material in the Caltinissetta Museum, and to illustrate the pots from Casalicchio in the Licata Museum. For the photographs of the Casalicchio vases in the Licata Museum, I am deeply grateful to Giuseppe Cavilieri and Brian McConnell. The drawings of all the material presented

The village and sanctuary of La Muculufa provide an important window on the Castelluccian culture that flourished toward the end of the Early Bronze Age around 2200 B.C. The culture derived its name from Castelluccio, located south of Syracuse, and is found primarily in southern and eastern Sicily, and in the area around Mt. Aetna, although sites exist on the west of the island as well<sup>2</sup>. It is known especially by its hand-made pottery, which carries intricate designs in black on a red ware background. To achieve this, a slip

here is the work of Anne L. Holloway and I am grateful to her for giving me such excellent illustrations with which to study the Castelluccian painted pottery. I am, of course, indebted to Ross Holloway and the Center for Old World Archaeology at Brown University for making the photographic and drawing records available. I am also indebted to my colleague at Hofstra University, Professor Joseph Masheck, for his thoughtful reading of this article and insightful suggestions. I am pleased to report that the Licata Museum, Licata, Sicily, which already has a good representation of the material from La Muculufa on display, is arranging a special display of a number of the pieces cited here. It is scheduled to be available to the public in January 1992. La Muculufa bibliography: Full publication forthcoming in *Quaderni Archeologiche Messinesi*. See also R. ROSS HOLLOWAY, Martha JOUKOWSKY and Susan S. LUKESH, *La Muculufa. The Early Bronze Age Sanctuary: The Early Bronze Age Village (Excavation 1982-1983)*, in *Revue des Archéologues et Historiens d'art de Louvain*, 23, 1990, p. 11-67; R. ROSS HOLLOWAY, Martha JOUKOWSKY and Susan S. LUKESH, *Mining La Muculufa*, in *Archaeology*, 41, January/February 1988, p. 40-47.

2. For general discussion of Castelluccian material and sites, see R. ROSS HOLLOWAY, *The Archaeology of Ancient Sicily*, London, 1991, p. 20-30. For general discussion as well as detailed discussion and listing of sites, see S. TUSA, *La Sicilia nella preistoria*, Palermo, 1983, p. 263-383.





Map. Sites mentioned in text and labelled by number: Canicatti (3), Canticaglione (2), Casalicchio (1), Monte San Giuliano – environs of Caltanissetta, Naro (4), Xiboli – environs of Caltanissetta.

was applied over the light-colored clay; firing conditions followed by preservation state, rather than artistic intent, are responsible for the variation from tan to red background we see today. Some of the black lines are bordered in white, a technique seen in the antecedent Serrafferlicchio ware, as is the black on red patterning. The design patterns themselves are quite different and in the most sophisticated are precisely executed, forming a structurally integrated overall pattern. Within the broad spectrum of Castelluccian pottery, regional variations are easily identified. They range from the simplest ware found around Mt. Etna to the developed but restrained pottery from Ragusa, to that recovered from the site of Castelluccio itself which offers a simple tradition for material recovered from the tombs as well as an abundantly decorated pottery from the village context. Bronze metallurgy was known to these people but the remains of bronze objects are rare. The culture is also known for its bone plaques, unmistakable because of the bosses carved on their surfaces,

which have been found on the Italian mainland, in Greece and as far away as Troy<sup>3</sup>. And, finally, Castelluccian culture is known for the architecture of its tombs, especially from Castelluccio where chamber tombs are preceded by porticoes also cut from the same limestone formation in which the tomb is created. Such porticoes are known as well from other sites, although for the most part, the Castelluccian chamber tomb is simply a small cavity cut into a limestone bank, while burial in natural fissures in rocks also occurs.

During the period from about 2200-2100 or so, as established by radiocarbon dates, the sanctuary and settlement flourished at La Muculufa. The site has been tentatively identified as the seat of a cult common to settlements in the lower Sele Valley, perhaps an early instance of political unions based on sanctuaries<sup>4</sup>. The excavations in the sanctuary revealed a very different picture from that found in the settlement. The sanctuary is located in a geological «saddle» on the crest of the mountain, flanked on both sides by steep walls of rock. The saddle is visible at distances of up to 30 kilometers and, viewing it, it is easy to understand how it could become the focal point of religious worship. In this narrow space, the Castelluccians had constructed a terrace some 30 feet in length, from which, on clear days, the cone of Mt. Aetna is dramatically visible over the hills of the horizon. A threshing floor installed during the Middle Ages has obliterated any traces of ceremonies which may have been conducted there over 4000 years ago. In front of the terracing, however, there was ritual activity as well, and here the traces were well preserved by the greater depth of fill over the Early Bronze Age levels. A certain amount of debris had spilled down from the terrace, but below this was a mound packed with pottery fragments, a dense mass of animal bones, and charcoal from fires on which the animal meat was presumably roasted.

The pottery vessels left behind are purely Castelluccian and provide us with one of the first opportunities to identify individual hands in the Early Bronze Age and even prehistoric cultures. An enormous quantity of pottery was recovered

3. For the most recent discussion of these bone plaques, see R. ROSS HOLLOWAY *et al.*, *op. cit.*, in *RAHAL*, 23, 1990, p. 26-27.

4. *Ibidem*, p. 25.



from the sanctuary: of over 20,000 decorated fragments recorded in the computer data bank, 75 % were recovered at the sanctuary. Most were elaborately decorated and carefully executed and one of the vessels recovered is a masterpiece of Castelluccian ceramics (Fig. 1). Much of the material represents cups or dippers, amphorae, and a vessel known variously as «fruit stand», clepsydra or pedestalled vase because of its shape<sup>5</sup>.

The fragments reconstructed in the vase in Figure 1a were recovered over the course of three seasons of excavation. The design filling the body of the amphora, parallel angular bands connected by vertical lines, is otherwise unknown from Castelluccian material, although the pattern of parallel angular bands is quite common. (Three other variations of this pattern were recovered at La Muculufa: one substituted hatch-filled angular bands for the solid black, another vertical wavy lines rather than straight, and the third, combined the hatch-filled bands with the vertical wavy lines. All as if someone were experimenting with variations on a common theme). Both because of the quality of the executions of the design on this amphora as well as the introduction of a new pattern, as we recovered sherds to this vessel we called the artist who executed the pot the La Muculufa Master, a moniker which remains today.

While decorated pottery accounts for 38 % of the finds in the sanctuary, only 22 % of the fragments from the village were decorated. Fine, thin-walled, one-handled cups were more common in the material from the sanctuary than in the village remains, and the character of the decorated pottery in the two areas was different: eight decorative motifs were found exclusively in the sanctuary area, and eight others appeared there in overwhelming proportion<sup>6</sup>. Furthermore, pottery from the sanctuary has connections with material found at other sites in the Salso River Valley (Xiboli, Monte San Giuliano, Canticaglione, and

Casalichio). It is difficult to believe that the village of La Muculufa manufactured pottery for all sites in the Salso River Valley and neglected to keep some varieties of production for its own use. It is far more likely that those who visited the sanctuary brought pieces of decorated ware made by their own potters. That prehistoric peoples traded in pottery and were influenced by pottery vessels from others is well known, as evidence of the ubiquitous Mycenaean sherds across the Mediterranean attest. Close to this place and time we can also cite, for example, the article, *Ocher Containers and Trade in the Central Mediterranean Copper Age*, by Laura Maniscalco<sup>7</sup>.

Archaeologists who study the similarities and differences among recovered artifacts are intent not only on identifying the meaning of these differences and similarities but also on understanding the relationship of these differences and similarities to the network of communities from which the objects were drawn. On one hand, we may believe in ceramic variability as a measure of community variability, as Wobst, who sees ceramics as playing an important role in information exchange, and for whom «style reacts with great sensitivity to changes in other culture variables and, of itself, actively supports other cultural processes, such as cultural integration and differentiation, boundary maintenance, compliance with norms and enforcing conformity<sup>8</sup>.»

On the other hand, we may be reluctant to ascribe enormous relevance to ceramic variability, as Hodder, who, while considering ceramics as symbols of social and economic relations, prefers to see the extent of their interaction dependent on the strategies and intentions of the interactive groups and on how they use, manipulate and negotiate material symbols as part of their strategies<sup>9</sup>.

At whichever end of this spectrum of interpretation we place ourselves, most of us continue to find ceramic variability an important component in

5. The vessel referred to as clepsydra, fruiteria or pedestal vase warrants special mention since it is a common shape of prehistoric Sicilian ceramic vessels. The first name derives from its hourglass shape, the second from its resemblance to 19th century stands used for holding fruit. The shape is often biconical, although occasionally the top is round not conical; often the lower portion is columnar rather than conical; and the height of the lower portion or foot varies enormously.

6. R. ROSS HOLLOWAY *et al.*, *op. cit.*, in *RAHAL*, 23, 1990.

7. L. MANISCALCO, *Ocher Containers and Trade in the Central Mediterranean Copper Age*, in *American Journal of Archaeology*, 93, 1989, p. 537-542.

8. H. MARTIN WOBST, *Stylistic Behavior and Information Exchange*, in *For the Director. Research Essays in Honor of James B. Griffin. Research Papers of the Museum of Anthropology*, ed. by C. CLELAND (*Anthropology Papers*, IV, 61), Ann Arbor, 1978, p. 335.

9. I. HODDER, *Symbols in Action*, Cambridge, 1982, p. 185.



the understanding of the communities responsible for its creation. Frank Hole, who views much of pot-making as subconscious, sees pot-making as a true information exchanger, believing that pottery can be characterized in a way analogous to dialect<sup>10</sup>. Before we turn to the pottery « dialect » of the Salso River Valley and the identification of individuals responsible for particular pots, let us consider briefly how individuals who have left us artifacts from prehistoric times can be identified.

Although the Castelluccian culture is known and recognized chiefly through its pottery, to date no examples of kilns have been recovered and no temper studies of the wide range of ceramic material has been undertaken<sup>11</sup>. This makes the identification of a common hand and workshop, at this stage, completely dependent on eye recognition. And we turn now to consideration of this recognition.

The identification of individuals responsible for the manufacture of particular art objects has a substantial history. Bernard Berenson, using the painters of the Italian Renaissance, has provided us with the most detailed discussion of the methodology of stylistic identification of individuals<sup>12</sup>. Identification of those responsible for pottery objects has a long tradition: in Classical vase painting Beazley has identified over 500 potters of unsigned pots. In this instance, the tradition of signatures on some pots was an enormous aid, but in no way was it necessary for the attribution of a group of pots to a painter or a school.

10. Frank HOLE, *Analysis of Structure and Design in Prehistoric Ceramics*, in *World Archaeology*, 15, 3, 1984, p. 334.

11. The scarcity of find-spots of pottery-making is not unique to Castelluccian material, as London relates: « For various reasons relatively few ancient pottery production locations are known. Where to look and what to expect are problems exacerbated by the emphasis to excavate non-industrial areas at many sites (71). ... even the larger, heavier material correlates of the pottery industry will not always be preserved *in situ* for several reasons: the seasonality of the industry; the multifunctional use of space; and the reuse or recycling of broken pottery, kilns, and by-products (75) ». Gloria Anne LONDON, *On Fig Leaves, Itinerant Potters, and Pottery Production Locations in Cyprus*, in *Cross-Craft and Cross-Cultural Interactions in Ceramics. IV, Ceramics and Civilization*, ed. by P.E. Mc GOVERN, M.N. NOTIS and W.D. KINGERY (*The American Ceramic Society*), Westerville, 1989.

12. B. BERENSON, *Rudiments of Connoisseurship: Study and Criticism of Italian Art*, New York, 1962 (Published in 1902 as *The Study and Criticism of Italian Art*, Second Series, New York).

The identification of individuals in prehistory has been addressed as well in the American anthropological tradition<sup>13</sup>. Different levels of variability can be isolated: attributes reflecting behavioural or use variability, those reflecting style, and those reflecting individual variability. It is within the last two levels that we focus in order to identify individuals. Based on the work of Berenson, Beazley, Graves, Hill, Hole and others, we can conclude that three points are relevant for the assignment of individual responsibility:

1. The design composition or *structure*, including the number and shape of partitions, the basic symmetry and the juxtaposition of specific motifs. Frank Hole ascribes much of pot making to the subconscious and finds the structure manifest at the most subconscious levels, « those of form, proportion and layout of space, creating fields into which motifs are entered in a highly structured way »<sup>14</sup>.
  2. The selection and interpretation of specific motifs (*form or morphology*); Berenson, following Morelli<sup>15</sup>, teaches that in the identification of particular artisans, it is necessary to look for habitual or conventional patterns when painting unimportant items, for example, the ears in Italian painting<sup>16</sup>.
  3. *Technique* or the execution of specific motifs including the level of ability and attributes of motor performance; here, it has been demonstrated that the attributes of an individual's motor performance in handwriting show relatively little variation through time. Furthermore, while basic structural components of design may be constrained by design information shared
13. Michael W. GRAVES, *Ceramic Design Variations Within a Kalinga Village: Temporal and Spatial Processes*, in Ben A. NELSON, ed., *Decoding Prehistoric Ceramics*, Southern Illinois University Press, 1985, p. 9-34; James N. HILL, *Individual Variability in Ceramics and the Study of Prehistoric Social Organization*, in James N. HILL and Joel GUNN (ed.), *The Individual in Prehistory*, New York, 1977, p. 55-108. John MULLER, *Individual Variation in Art Styles*, in James N. HILL and Joel GUNN (ed.), *The Individual in Prehistory*, New York, 1977, p. 23-40; Frank HOLE, *Analysis of Structure and Design in Prehistoric Ceramics*, in *World Archaeology*, 15, 3, 1984, p. 326-347.
14. F. HOLE, *op. cit.*, in *World Archaeology*, 15, 3, 1984, p. 330.
15. Giovanni MORELLI, *Italian Painters: Critical Studies of their Works (1890-1993)*, translated by Constance Foulkes, London, 1982-1993.
16. B. BERENSON, *op. cit.*, p. 129. See the discussion of Berenson in J. MULLER, *op. cit.*, p. 24-25.



across a community of interacting painters, the *intensity* of interaction has been shown to have little or no effect on aspects of design which represent motor performance<sup>17</sup>.

While many of us are comfortable identifying particular motifs and recognizing individual design configurations, few of us are conversant with the relevance and identification of individual motor performance characteristics. For this reason, Hill's article, *Individual Variability in Ceramics*, is particularly pertinent to the present discussion<sup>18</sup>. His article presents much of the relevant recent discussions of individual variability and motor performance, the evidence of a number of experiments he and his students conducted, as well as his own studies of prehistoric pottery. A few points discussed in Hill's article which assist in understanding the identification of individuals in the assemblage of Castellucian material are summarized here.

Handwriting analyses have shown that handwriting is largely subconscious and that essential motor-performance characteristics of an individual cannot be taught to others. Additionally, an individual's handwriting cannot be copied nor can an individual consciously alter or disguise his own handwriting to the degree that it cannot be recognized. Furthermore, all this is generally true regardless of tools and inks, speed or carelessness of execution, and almost all other conditions. Finally, «the more expert a writer is, the less variability is exhibited in his motor performances, and thus the easier it is to distinguish his work from that of others<sup>19</sup>.» Hill believes, and I concur, that these characteristics are equally true of the motor performance of painters, and, in fact, he demonstrates this in studies presented in this article.

In a hand writing experiment of his own, Hill was able to demonstrate that while «early and latter samples could be discriminated, the discrimination was not as good for the individuals themselves<sup>20</sup>.» This suggests that differences reflecting the change in individual motor performance over time is not as great as difference in

motor performance between individuals. That is, the handwriting of one's older self is more like that of one's earlier self than it is like anyone else's.

I believe that ceramic material recovered from La Muculufa as well as related material recovered from other sites in the Salso River Valley allow the identification of individuals responsible for the manufacture of particular pieces and that this identification can be made based on these three critical points:

1. design composition (structure);
2. selection and interpretation of particular motifs (form);
3. execution of particular motifs (technique).

While Berenson, in attributing works to painters of the Italian Renaissance, and Beazley, in attributing pots to particular potters, were able to rely on morphology (or form), and technique, because the style of Castellucian painted pottery is geometric and leaves less room for individual variation in morphology or technique, the identification of an individual will require our attention to the structure, or design composition, as well. Nonetheless, following Hill, «If we can be confident that we are measuring subconscious individual variability on prehistoric artifacts, we can be confident that the clusters of artifacts we isolate with this kind of variability represent real prehistoric individuals, and not small groups of people, statuses, and so on. This is so because the subconscious attributes of artifact manufacture are presumably rarely, if ever, things that can be shared to an appreciable degree by members of a community; they are almost impossible to teach or even to copy»<sup>21</sup>.

#### CATALOGUE OF MATERIAL FROM LA MUCULUFA

1. The handsome amphora, reconstructed in Figure 1a, the name vase of the La Muculufa Painter, provides an excellent starting point for the identification of individuals responsible for specific pieces of Castellucian pottery. Let us look at this amphora in detail. The preserved height of this amphora is 28 cm; the estimated total height is 32.5 cm. The external diameter of the body at the base of the larger handle is 25.6 cm.

21. *Ibidem*, p. 56.

17. M.W. GRAVES, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

18. J.N. HILL, *op. cit.*, p. 55-108.

19. *Ibidem*, p. 101 drawn from Wilson R. HARRISON, *Suspect Documents, their Scientific Examination*, London, 1958.

20. J.N. HILL, *op. cit.*, p. 90.



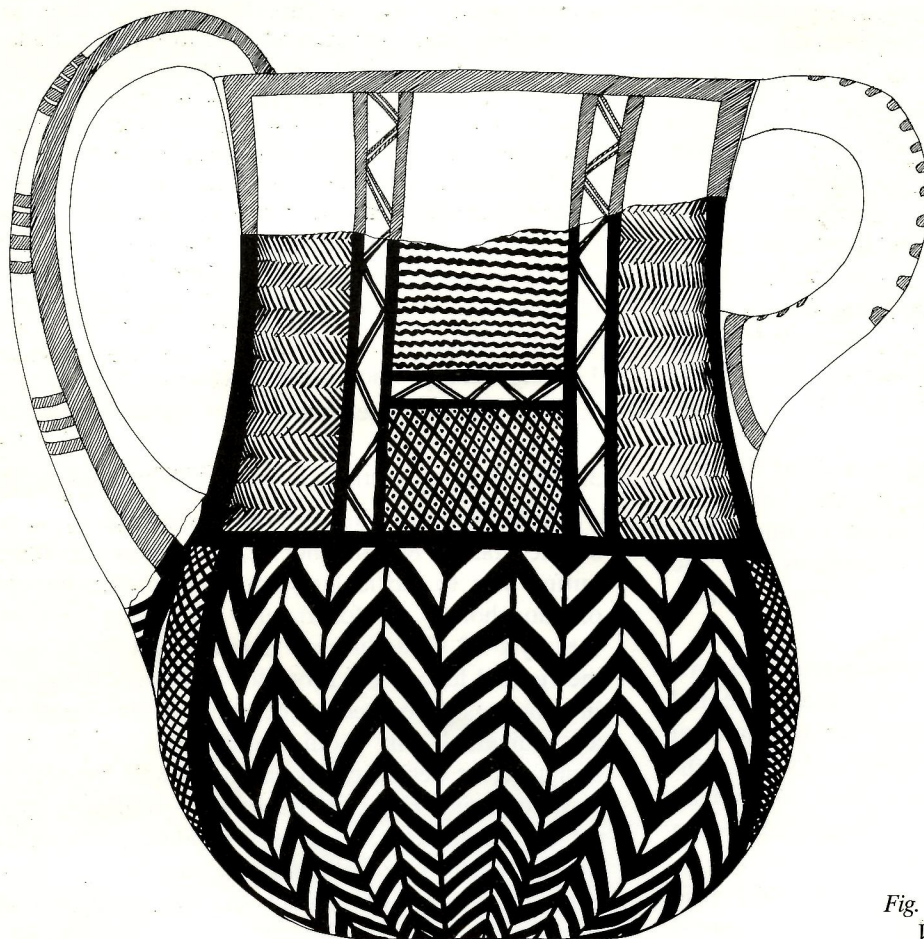


Fig. 1a. *La Muculufa Master Name Vase* — reconstructed drawing.

*Design composition*

The amphora is divided into two primary fields for decoration: a roundbodied lower portion and a slightly concave, long neck. The lower portion is filled with a motif of angular lines which is broken at the sides, where handles join the vessel, by a hatched pattern. The neck is carefully divided into metopes of various patterns, each delimited by a metope filled with a pair of angular lines. The handle zone on the neck is solid black. Each motif used is created from diagonally placed lines — none horizontal or vertical, with the sole exception of the vertical lines joining the angular lines on the round body.

*Specific motifs employed:*

A series of wavy lines which fill the upper central metope on the neck.

A diagonal hatched pattern which fills the lower central metope; in each diamond formed by the hatching a small dot is painted.

A series of vertical zigzag lines, fishbone pattern, which fills the metopes to the left and right on the neck of the vessel.

Two zigzag lines fill the empty spaces separating the panels on the neck - we will refer to this device as a delimiter.

A series of broad zigzag lines, running horizontally fills the (lower) body of the vessel. These broad lines are connected, at each angle, by a thinner vertical line, each of which ends in a solid filled triangle at the solid band encircling the vessel.

A diagonal hatched pattern, itself unfilled, fills a vertical band which tapers to a point and extends the length of the (lower) body at the point of the vessel where the handles are placed. Its counterpart place on the neck is filled with a solid band.

Each of the six motifs is created with zigzag lines (as are many Castellucian motifs), yet each motif is quite distinct and most of them are created in different ways. If we look closely at the motif filling the left and right metopes on the neck (seen also in Figure 1b), we see





Fig. 1b. La Muculufa Master Name Vase — photograph of fragment.

that this horizontal fishbone pattern was painted as if a series of rectangular spaces was filled with diagonal lines, alternating in direction, band by band. The effect is quite different from painting a series of parallel vertical zigzag lines and the execution much more easily controlled to create the dense fishbone pattern. The final impression could be achieved by both techniques but the ability to create such dense patterns is more remote if each vertical zigzag is drawn, one after the other.

In contrast to the fishbone motif on the neck, the pattern on the body was created by painting a series of parallel zigzag bands. These bands are connected by

slender vertical bands or lines. While it is possible that the vertical lines were created first, to serve as guides, the final disposition does not insist on this interpretation. In fact, while there are hundreds of fragments with the similar motif (parallel zigzag bands), lacking vertical lines, this pot remains our primary example of the specific motif of zigzag bands connected by vertical lines.

The hatching motif on the lower body under the handle is enormously popular in Castellucian painted ware and is found on vessels ranging from fine ware cups to pedestalled vases. A variation of this motif, seen in the lower central metope on the neck, with dots placed in each diamond shape, is much less common (another variation, discussed below, fills alternate diamonds completely with black).

The name pot is unusual for the motif covering the lower body, for the well-balanced composition of carefully selected motifs and for the quality of the execution itself. Nonetheless, of the over 20,000 painted fragments recovered from La Muculufa, there are a number which exhibit just such qualities even if, unfortunately, few can be reconstructed to a full pot shape. Let us turn first to a few fragments from vessels which are akin to our name vase in shape, amphora.

2. The fragment in Figure 2 belongs to the neck of a vessel perhaps of the same shape as the name vase. We see a remarkably similar design configuration in which alternating solid-filled diamonds replace those filled with dots, and the wavy line motif is vertical rather than horizontal. To the right is the dark solid band signifying the handle area. As with the name vase, the metopes are separated with bands carrying two zigzag lines.

3. The fragment in Figure 3, again probably from the neck of an amphora, exhibits similar execution, motif selection and design configuration. The vertical zigzag line delimiters are composed of 3, not 2, lines, and an additional zigzag line delimiter is placed at the base of the solid filled hatched pattern. There was no delimiter present on the name vase in this same position but there may have been one on the preceding fragment in Figure 2.

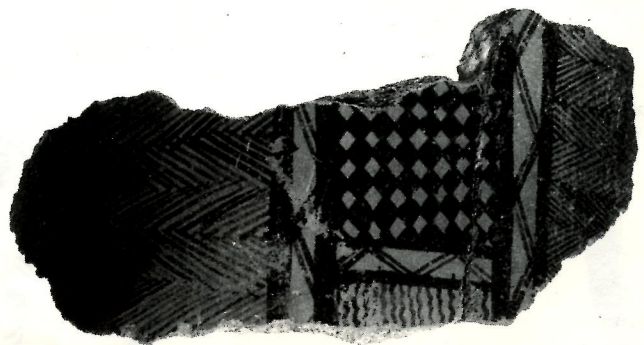


Fig. 2. Photograph of Amphora Fragment, La Muculufa.



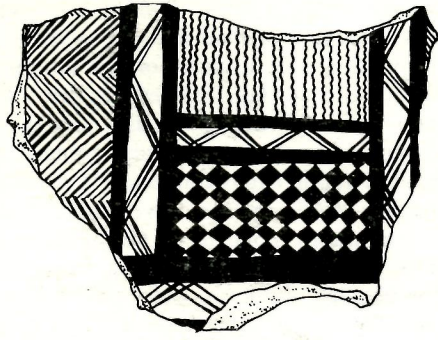


Fig. 3. Drawing of Amphora Fragment, La Muculufa.



Fig. 4. Drawing of (Amphora) Fragment, La Muculufa.

4. The fragment in Figure 4, illustrates another vessel which bears a remarkable similarity to the design composition of the name vase and an equal, if not greater, sureness of hand. It represents a small pot but shows the same solid black fill on the neck and the hatched filled band on the body as on our name vase. We expect that this is the beginning of the handle area. All that remains of the neck displays a similar, even more finely executed fishbone motif, while the body has our multiple zigzag bands without vertical lines.

The fragments in Figure 2 and 3 have the same specific motifs, the same design composition, and a similar quality of execution of motifs as evidenced on the name vase. The third fragment, in Figure 4, differs from the name vase in having even more finely executed fishbone motif and no vertical lines on the body pattern. The fragments are all from different vessels but the

strong similarity suggests a common hand, for the name vase and at least the pots in Figures 2 and 3, if not 4. Three specific motifs and their execution, in addition to the overall conceptual layout of the design, are witness to this: fishbone motif, the multiple wavy line motif, and the angular lines used as a delimiter between metopes. Each instance of this last motif, if isolated from the rest of the decoration of its own pot, would appear to come from the same pot. This may be an excellent example of what Berenson suggests happens when an artist, painting items considered unimportant, falls back into habitual or conventional patterns. The third fragment, Figure 4, may be by the same painter in a more finely executed example; there is not enough evidence to be certain.

5. Figure 5 illustrates a neck fragment with almost the same set of motifs albeit with subtle changes in overall composition. Again, there is no evidence for the decoration on the body of the pot. Rather than stack the wavy line motif over the hatched pattern metope and surround this composition with fishbone motif metopes, each of the motifs is placed so as to touch the rim of the vessel. The diamond or hatched motif seems to extend to the full height of the neck, while it is clear that the wavy line metope was placed above another motif of spirals. On this pot, the angular line delimiter was filled itself with vertical lines. This same motif was used to delimit the fishbone motif on either side of the diamond/hatched motif. To the left of the fishbone motif is the solid black filled band denoting the handle area (although no trace of a handle remains). It is likely that the diamond motif was placed centrally on one side of the vessel, while the wavy line/spiral motif metopes appeared centrally on the opposite side. The changes in composition, it appears, are due to the ratio of neck height to body diameter (making this good-sized pot as akin to the cup/bowl category as it is to the amphora) rather than to a difference in design composition as discussed above. It appears to follow the same set of structural rules, applied to a slightly different shape.

6. Figure 6 illustrates a pot almost identical in shape to the name vase, an amphora. The composition is well laid out with alternating metopes of multiple angular

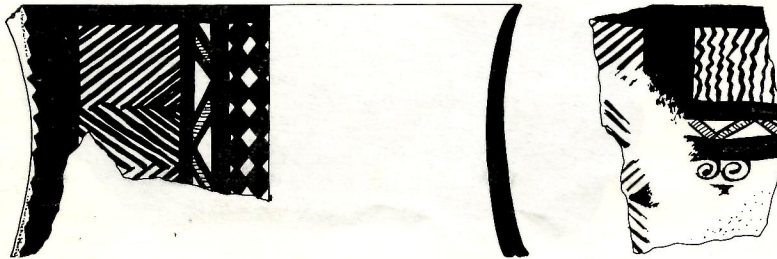


Fig. 5. Drawing of Cup/bowl Fragment, La Muculufa.





Fig. 6. Photograph of Reconstructed Amphora, La Muculufa.

lines and vertically positioned angular lines adorned with spirals rather than «berries». This second motif has three lines in the central panel or metope and only two on the left and right versions. As on the name vase, the handle area on the neck is solid black. The neck and body are delimited by a set of three unadorned zigzag lines; the body is filled with the same multiple line pattern used in the neck metopes; and the handle area on the body carries the hatched band seen on many vases, including the name vase.

The execution of the motifs is less fine and the selection and organization of motifs less complex than on the name vase. In fact, the size of the metopes on the neck which are filled with the same pattern on the lower body, changes the impression of the vessel to one primarily decorated with one motif, occasionally relieved by sets of zigzag lines; this is quite different from the design structure on the name vase. While this amphora was not executed by the La Muculufa Painter, it is

likely that it was created with the knowledge of the name vase tradition and the manufacturer's «shop»; that is, the painter was familiar with the set of structural rules governing the design composition of the pots discussed above, as well as the individual selection of motifs. This amphora was executed much more quickly and less expertly.

The vessels and fragments of vessels discussed above illustrate amphorae, fragments of amphorae, both large and small, and a wide-mouthed amphora or bowl. Let us now turn to consider the same set of characteristics of the name vase in relation to decoration on cups. The selection and interpretation of individual motifs, the design composition, and the technique or execution of specific motifs draw our attention to a group of cups worth reviewing. Figures 7 and 8 illustrate these cups with similar though distinct design compositions, ones that, I believe, follow the same set of structural rules.



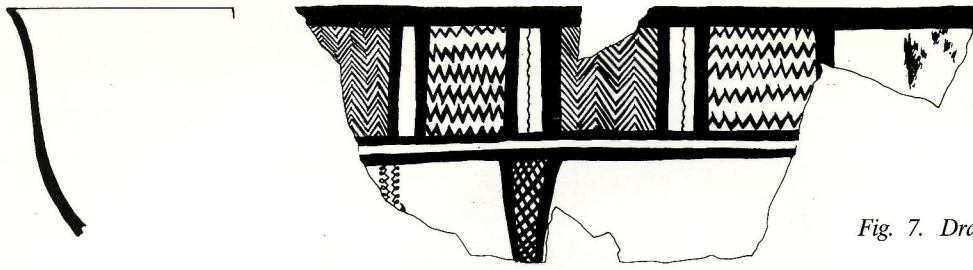


Fig. 7. Drawing of Reconstructed Cup, La Muculufa.

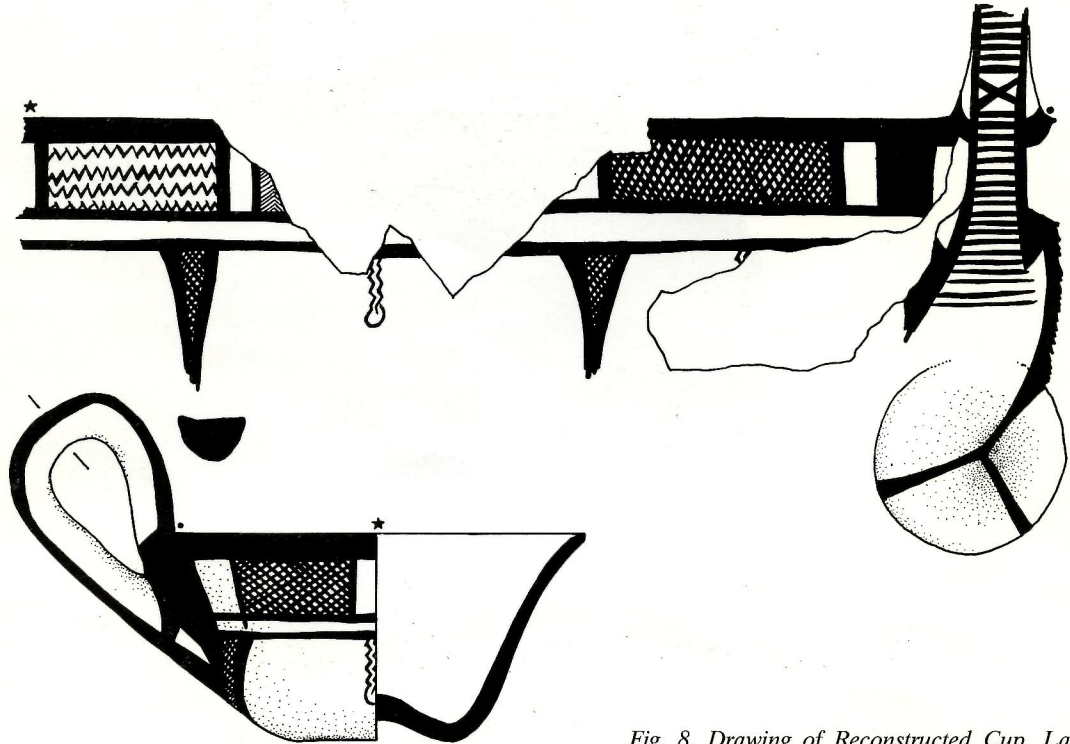


Fig. 8. Drawing of Reconstructed Cup, La Muculufa.

7. On the cup in Figure 7, the neck has been evenly divided into black banded metopes of alternating patterns of fishbone (created by segments of reverse diagonal lines) and multiple zigzag lines — the difference in execution is quite clear. A single, barely wavy line separates one fishbone metope from the zigzag line metope on either side. Otherwise the remaining fragment uses an unfilled band as a delimiter. The metopes on this cup reach to the black banded rim. The base of the cup has a hatchfilled vertical band which reduces to a point as it reaches the base and two vertical spiral lines. What remains of the body otherwise is unpainted.

8. Figure 8 illustrates a cup with alternating metopes of multiple zigzag lines, fishbone and hatched pattern. The delimiting space, vertically and horizontally, is empty. The body of the cup is decorated with hatch-

filled triangles and a small two-lined motif, similar in concept but different in execution from the one in Figure 7.

On these cups, in addition to the selection of motifs, the design composition and the technique or execution of motifs, there is the presence of a strikingly individualistic zigzag line that appears as part of multiple zigzag lines within a metope. The specific execution of this line is, I suggest, more the result of individual motor capabilities than a deliberate, conceptual trait which is readily copied or imitated from one artist to another, and results, in effect, in an individual's mark. While this is surely not as deliberate as a signature, it is as unique as one, and so we refer to it here as the *signature motif*.

If we pursue the investigation of the design composition on pots from La Muculufa, which is one of the



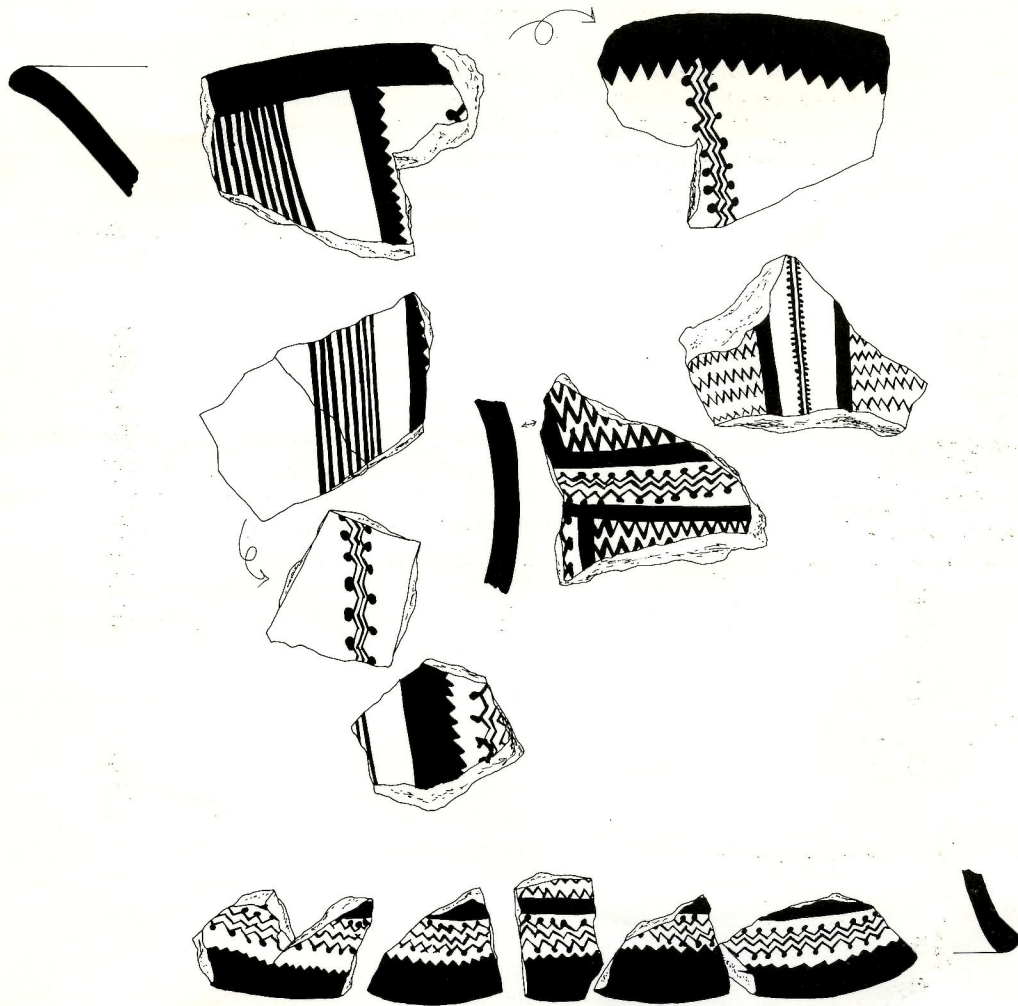


Fig. 9a-b. Drawing of Pedestal Vase, Rim Fragment, La Muculufa.

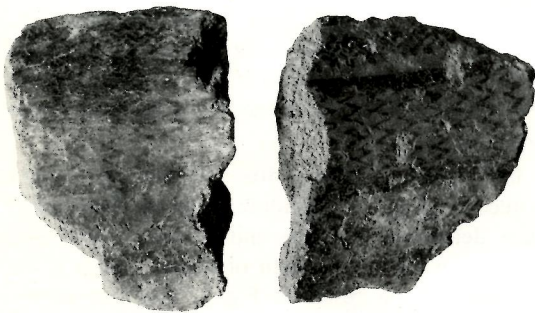


Fig. 9c. Photo of Pedestal Vase, detail with zigzag line, La Muculufa.

notable aspects of the name vase, and which we indicated above would be necessary in the identification of individual hands in the geometric-patterned Castelluccian

ware, there are a number of large pots, or remains of such, which bear review. Furthermore, individual motifs on these pots refer to material discussed above.

9. Figure 9 illustrates the fragmentary remains of a pedestalled vase from La Muculufa. The inside of the vessel displays the standard jagged edge black rim and a typical pattern of parallel zigzag lines, arranged vertically. In this instance, the left and right lines have been adorned with a round dot on each angle, leaving an impression of a «vine with berries». The reverse of this fragment displays solid lines and a band with a jagged edge, both running vertically on the upper portion of the pot (see Fig. 9a). The vertical band with a jagged edge is reflective of the inner rim band. This same band, seen on another fragment with more «vine and berries» motif, supports our interpretation of one pot, an interpretation also supported by the composition of the ceramic material.



Of particular interest are the individual motif and overall organization displayed on the external neck, or narrowest point of the pedestalled vase (Fig. 9b), two black-banded metopes of multiple angular lines flank a pair of mirroring vertical lines (with short horizontal lines). On this vessel, the delimiter is a 3-lined «vine



Fig. 10a. Drawing of Pedestal Vase Fragment, La Muculufa.

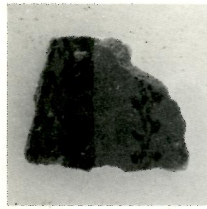


Fig. 10b. Photograph of Pedestal Vase Fragments, La Muculufa.

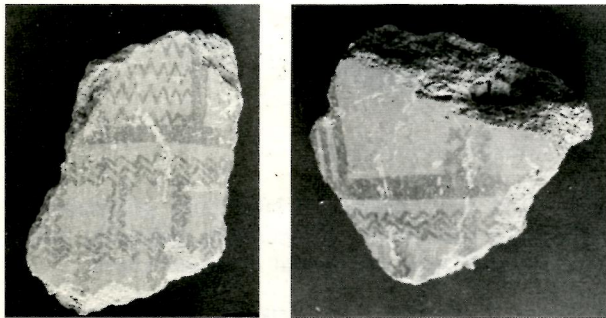


Fig. 10c-d. Photographs of Pedestal Vase Fragments (same vase), La Muculufa.

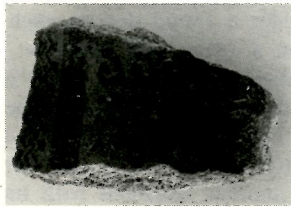


Fig. 10e. Photograph of pedestal Vase Fragment, La Muculufa.

with berries» motif which is used to encircle the mid-section of the pedestalled vase, to provide vertical delimiters on the upper and lower body, and to provide a horizontal delimiter just above the base of the pot. It is the same motif which appears on the internal portion (Fig. 9a).

Throughout, the painter used the zigzag lines and the complementary jagged edge black band to further the overall consistency or integrity of the composition. Recognizing that line drawings may be interpretive, I offer the photograph of the fragment in Figure 9c, although very difficult to read because of the faded paint, and argue that the «hand» recognized in the fragments in Figures 7 and 8 is also responsible for the parallel zigzag lines between vertical bands on this pedestalled vase — the *signature motif*. This recognition connects the painter of cups with large vessels (and thereby, perhaps, may make more credible the relationship of these cups with the fragments illustrated in Figures 1-3); it also connects the decoration of pedestalled vases with the tradition of carefully executed and conceptualized composition.

10. Figure 10 illustrates 5 fragments from La Muculufa which weave additional threads into this narrative. Those in 10a and 10b are probably from the same pot, a pedestalled vase, and illustrate the juxtaposition of two motifs we saw in the pedestalled vase in Figure 9: the metope filled with the *signature motif*, and the «vine and berries» motif, here using only two lines. Figures 9 and 10a and 10b illustrate two different pedestalled vases (based on ceramic material alone) but the motifs selected, the placement of the motifs on the vessel, and the technique employed argue for the same individual.

Figures 10c and 10d illustrate fragments from another pedestalled vase, one of which also displays the *signature motif*. Both fragments illustrate a «new» motif — that is, the use of a set of 2 or 3 angular lines forming right angle patterns. This is the first instance identified to date of this motif; the new motif can be attributed to our identified painter by virtue of the accompanying *signature motif*.

A final fragment, Figure 10e, also from a pedestalled vase recovered at La Muculufa, uses familiar motifs — vertical delimiter of «vine and berries», the *signature motif*, and an additional motif of spirals, which is similar to a motif on the vessel in Fig. 5. This last motif and variations on it are found on fragments from other vessels, although the number of examples to date from La Muculufa is under 30.

Using the *signature motif* again, we argue that the fragments in Figures 9 and 10 illustrate additional examples from a single individual Castellucian painter. In turn, these tie to a few other fragments not from



La Muculufa and discussed in the next section and illustrated in Figures 11 and 12.

From the early stages of the analysis of ceramic material recovered from the terrace at La Muculufa, parallels with material from other sites indicated that much of the material may have been « imported » from other sites<sup>22</sup>. We suggest as well that material recovered from other sites in the Salso River Valley is not simply related material because it is of the Castelluccian tradition but because it is of a tradition and type indicating close familiarity, if not identification, with the painter of the name vase and the painter responsible for the *signature motif*.

#### CATALOGUE OF MATERIAL FROM OTHER THAN LA MUCULUFA

11. The opportunity to study material recovered from Xiboli and Monte San Giuliano (now in the storerooms of Caltanissetta) allowed the identification of a number of cup fragments carrying the same *signature motif*. In addition to the half dozen examples from La Muculufa, there is at least one from Xiboli and five from Monte San Giuliano. Figures 11a and 11b illustrate similar fragments from La Muculufa, each a multiple lines pattern, one banded, the other not.

12. Figure 12 illustrates 2 fragmentary pedestalled vases from Casalichio which are on display in the Licata Museum. The fragments in Figure 12 display a, by now, familiar design composition: vertical metopes outlined with black bands. The metopes are filled with parallel horizontal zigzag lines, vertical lines, and the « vine and berries » motif (clear in Figure 12a and just barely visible at the top center in Figure 12c, where it begins on the handle). New motifs are introduced as well. On one (Fig. 12a), a vertical row of diamonds, filled with hatch pattern, are expanded by an extension of two sides to each of which is added a « brush » effect. This motif and variants on it are found on Castelluccian pottery across Sicily. Variants of the motif have suggested external, eastern origins<sup>23</sup>, but, I believe, as we acquire a larger pool of Castelluccian painted ware, it will come to be seen as an expansion of common Castelluccian motifs. The panel below and continuing on the handle on the fragment in Figure 12b (with handle detail in Figure 12c) is divided into two metopes, the lower filled with filled circles, the upper shows half of a vertical « vine with berries ».

22. R. ROSS HOLLOWAY *et al.*, *op. cit.*, in *RAHAL*, 22, 1990.

23. G. MESSINA SLUGA, *Motivi figurati nella ceramica castellucciana*, in *Cronache di archeologia e storia dell'arte*, 10, 1971, p. 7-15.

The design composition, the selection of the « vine and berries » motif, and the technique or execution of the parallel zigzag lines ties the pedestalled vase from Casalichio illustrated in Figure 12a with the one from

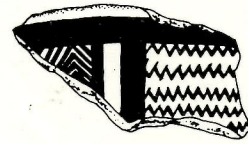


Fig. 11a. Drawing of La Muculufa Cup Fragment.

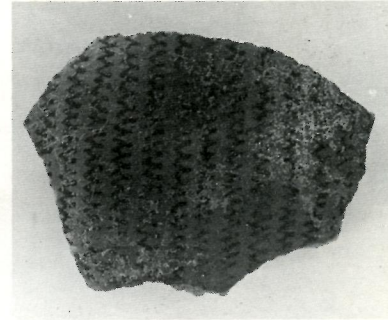


Fig. 11b. Photograph of La Muculufa Cup Fragment.

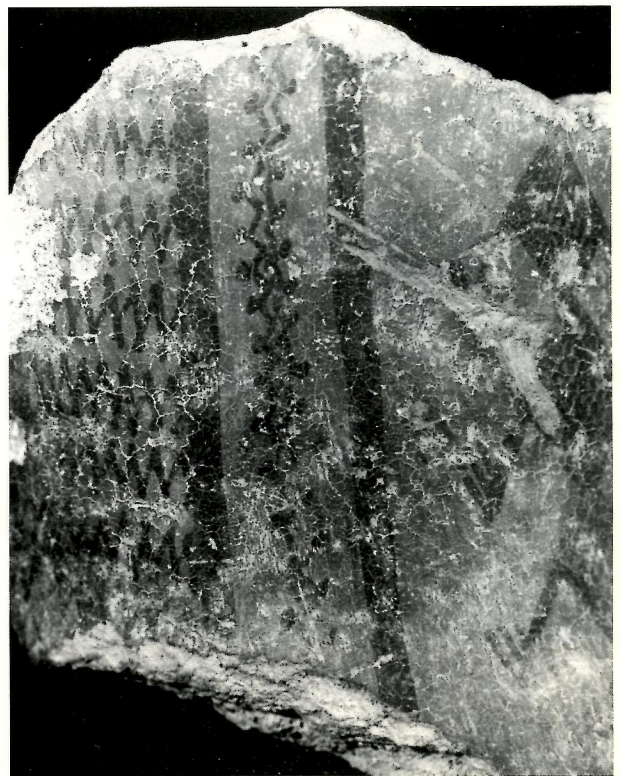


Fig. 12a. Photograph of Pedestal Vase Fragment from Casalichio.





Fig. 12b. Photograph of Reconstructed Pedestal Vase from Casalicchio.



Fig. 12c. Detail of Vase in Figure 12b.

La Muculufa illustrated in Figure 8. Although these vases were recovered at different sites, I suggest they were the products of the same hand. The pedestalled vase in Figures 12b and 12c may also be by the same

hand although the remaining evidence is not as compelling. If not by the same hand, however, I believe the latter to be produced in the same workshop.

Cup fragments from Xiboli and Monte San Giuliano, in particular, illustrate additional decorative patterns which suggest other instances of close relationship among the painters — the same workshop if not the same painter. These are important, although not yet conclusive, evidence and should be considered in our attempt to identify individuals responsible for particular pots among the wealth of material recovered from La Muculufa.

13. Figure 13 displays examples of a motif found on delicate cup fragments: multiple zigzag lines, overlapping at the pinnacle and topped with a small bar. Close to 20 examples were found among the fragments from Monte San Giuliano, a few from Xiboli, and more than a dozen from La Muculufa. While not all suggest execution by the same hand, a number do argue for that. This motif has been found primarily on cups from these sites and the close relationship of the execution of the examples cuts across the three sites. Figure 13 displays the motif as the main component of the neck decoration on the cup; it is separated above and below (where evidence remains) by an « empty » band, between the neck and rim bands. If not convincing yet of the identification of another hand, these fragments add to the growing body of evidence about the close connections



of these three sites in the Salso River Valley and the identification of workshops and painters. A fragment from Canticaglione which displays this motif on the neck band of a pedestalled vase, and now in the Licata Museum, draws this site as well into the close network of pot painters in the Valley.

14. Figure 14 displays a pattern of hatch-filled banding found on variety of cups — horizontal bands on the neck, triangular and on the body, some with angular line delimiters at the neck-body juncture, some with empty bands above or below the horizontal hatching, and some with additional hanging motifs on the body between the hatched triangular bands. The hatched motif found on these cups is common in much of Castelluccian material; cups decorated with the specific pattern illustrated here were found from a variety of sites (Xiboli, Canticaglione, Casalicchio) although the evidence today shows a greater frequency from Xiboli than from the other sites. Another similar cup from Canicatti is now in the Ashmolean Museum<sup>24</sup>.

The frequency of finds of these last two cup patterns might suggest that the painter(s) responsible for the pattern in Figure 13 worked from Monte San Giuliano and the painter responsible for the pattern in Figure 14 from Xiboli. More appropriate, however, may be the identification of a workshop of painters based on the set of structural rules which guide the design compositions. As Graves noted in the study of ceramic material in a Kalinga village, «attributes that comprise the structure of a design system on vessels of the same shape and size appear to be shared across communities of interacting potters who learn their craft at approximately the same time.»<sup>25</sup>

The material reviewed here permits, for the first time, I suggest, the identification of distinct hands among painters of Castelluccian pottery. Beginning with the name vase of the La Muculufa Master, there are fragmentary examples of pots which reflect the same selection of motifs, the same overall comprehension of balance in the composition of the pot decoration, suggesting a common set of structural rules, and even the same technique or execution of motifs. These are strong arguments for the identification of 2 or 3 individual pot painters whose work is similar enough to suggest a «workshop, one in which there was at least one set of structural rules for design composition».

First, the evidence is strong for the identification of a single painter of the pots illustrated in Figures 1-3, based on specific motifs selected, the design composition,

24. Figure 3, 4 in M. PACCI, *Nota su alcuni vasi protocastellucciani della Sicilia occidentale conservati all'Ashmolean Museum di Oxford*, in *I Quaderni di Sicilia Archeologica. La Preistoria in Sicilia. Studi pubblicati dalla rivista Sicilia Archeologica*, s.d., p. 10.

25. M.W. GRAVES, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

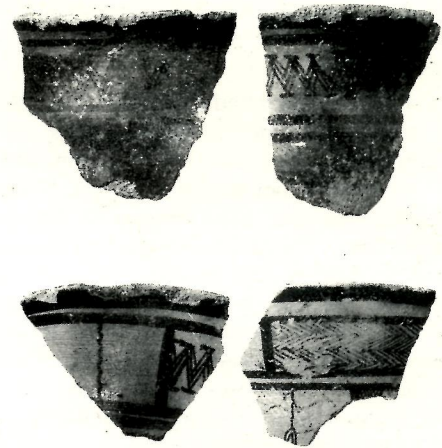


Fig. 13a-b. Photographs of Cup Fragments from La Muculufa.



Fig. 14. Drawing of Cup Fragment from La Muculufa.

and the technique or execution of the motifs. The pots illustrated in Figures 4 and 5 may also be by the same hand, although evidence is not as clear-cut. Size and proportions of these pots may account for the variations in organization of the motifs. The pot in Figure 4 is considerably smaller, while that in Figure 5 has a body diameter to height ratio different enough from the amphorae in Figures 1-3 to warrant a different overall organization of motifs. It can be argued as well that the pot in Figure 5 uses a distinctly different delimiter from the multiple angular lines on the name vase — here an angular band filled with lines. If we ascribe to the idea that the delimiter may be an habitual pattern,



then we have a second artist but one clearly connected to our Master by the set of structural rules that govern the pot composition.

Second, the cups illustrated in Figures 7 and 8 portray a similar selection of motifs, similar composition, and similar technique or execution of the motifs. While the design composition is not identical to that of the name vase, the difference may again be due to differences in vessel proportions. The principles guiding the selection and organization of motifs, however, appear the same, and argue that the two painters belonged to the same workshop. In addition, the cups illustrated in Figures 7 and 8 reveal a highly characteristic motif, or execution of a specific motif, that owes much of its individuality to specific motor characteristics, and hence is called a signature motif. This signature motif is found on cups from Xiboli and Monte San Giuliano as well and testifies to the strong relationship among these three sites.

It is argued as well that the hand responsible for the cups in Figures 7 and 8 was also responsible for pedestalled vases from La Muculufa and Casalicchio, based on the presence of the signature motif. These two pedestalled vases are tied additionally by the presence of the «vine and berries» motif. Furthermore, fragments of pedestalled vases from other sites (Casalicchio, Monte San Giuliano, and Canticaglione) display strong affinity to the pedestalled vases described above and, if not by the same recognized hand, attest to the likelihood of both contemporaneity and close working relationships.

Finally, a group of fragmentary cups was discussed which, while not currently used to identify distinct hands, reinforces the close relationship among painters of pots found at La Muculufa, Casalicchio, Xiboli, Monte San Giuliano, Canticaglione, and Canicatti. Strikingly common presentation on some material recovered at Naro opens yet another window<sup>26</sup>.

Among the 20,000+ fragments of painted pottery recovered at La Muculufa there is evidence of distinct, identifiable hands. Stronger than the use of common themes (which are echoed throughout Castelluccian material across Sicily), stronger than the bounds of the geographical partitions of Castelluccian style, the material offers evidence on which we can base the identification of two or three individual painters: significantly, this evidence for common hands crosses the boundaries of sites within the Salso River Valley. Finally, the structural rules which appear in use on the amphorae, the pedestalled vases, and the small cups

discussed here argue for a close community of potters, a workshop of Castelluccian artists in the Salso River Valley.

The excavation of the site of La Muculufa, composed of a village and a distinct separate «sanctuary» and the analysis of its material already had suggested the interactions of sites in the Salso River Valley, a territory apparently influenced by a regional sanctuary, and one which may be identified as an early instance of a political union based on a common sanctuary. Parallels to material from Canticaglione, Xiboli, Monte San Giuliano, and Casalicchio abound while there is no direct relationship with material from Manfria and only slight hints to material from Castelluccian sites to the west. While it is generally difficult for prehistorians to draw precise boundaries around early social organizations, it may be possible someday to be more exact in the Salso River Valley because of the distribution of the pottery decoration and the identification of individual hands and workshops with definable sets of structural rules.

The evidence presented here goes beyond the identified parallels and argues for the identification both of individuals responsible for particular objects and of design information shared across a community of painters whose boundaries appear to have been the Salso River Valley. This adds to the growing understanding of social organization in Early Bronze Age Sicily and the Salso River Valley and, additionally, suggests the possibility of a limited chronological horizon. This last point opens questions of site longevity as well as the use of painted pottery and style for the determination of chronological sub-horizons. In this instance, the identification of a workshop of contemporaneous painters does not preclude a long history for the sites; the identification simply points to one moment and highlights the value of continuing such research. We are still a long way from explicating the connections across Early Bronze Age Castelluccian Sicily and even the social dynamics of the Salso River Valley. Nonetheless, the beautiful, finely-wrought ceramic material discussed here allows the identification of individuals. Through this, it takes us closer to understanding prehistoric craft specialization and distribution networks in general, as well as identifying a specific network of communities and its participation in the organization of the sanctuary at La Muculufa.

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26. A piece from Naro (N.I. 3996) bears a striking resemblance to one from La Muculufa (MUC0051). See S. TUSA and M. PACCI, *La Collezione dei vasi preistorici di Partanna e Naro*, Palermo, 1990, fig. 77.