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ROMAN LEAD-GLAZED POTTERY TRADE FROM ITALY TO SOUTHERN GAUL AND ITS INFLUENCE ON LOCAL PRODUCTION: THE EXAMPLE OF THE CAPITOU WORKSHOP (FRANCE)

The Capitou workshop in Servian (Hérault, France) is one of the few workshops in southern Gaul to attempt to produce lead-glazed ceramics during the 2nd century AD. This period is marked by regular imports of lead-glazed ceramics from Italian workshops in the Lazio region, and especially from Rome. Recent studies have highlighted the existence of real trade, although on a small scale, from Italy to Gaul. Various forms of lead-glazed pottery from central Italy are found on several consumption sites. The lead-glazed ceramics from Capitou and the Italian workshops show great technological, typological and decorative similarities. This is particularly the case for products of the Janiculum workshop in Rome. The technique of lead-glazing seems to have been imported directly from Italian workshops. These new data highlight the principal questions about trade in lead-glazed ceramics during the High Empire and about the transfer of the glazing technology.

1. Introduction

Recent studies have highlighted the presence of lead-glazed ceramics from a variety of sources in southern Gaul between the 1st century BC and the 3rd century AD¹. Examples discovered on consumption sites come from north Italy, Asia Minor and central Gaul². However, the most common category from the second half of 1st century to the 3rd century AD comes from central Italy (fig. 1). It makes up almost 78% of all lead-glazed ceramics found in southern Gaul³. This trade is particularly important during the 2nd century.

The period is also characterised by a workshop making lead-glazed wares at Capitou, located in Servian in southern Gaul (Hérault)⁴. The explanation for the presence of this type of production is probably related to the influence of imported lead-glazed ceramics from the Lazio region. As a matter of fact, the lead-glazed ceramics from Capitou and from Italian workshops show great technological, typological and decorative similarities. The technique of lead-glazing seems to have been imported directly from Italian workshops.

2. Central Italian lead-glazed ceramics in southern Gaul

The central Italian lead-glazed pottery is characterised by a green glaze covering the outside and by a yellow glaze on the inside. The fabric is generally beige or yellow with fine black grits, and always with white ones. Its origin is central Italy, especially in the region of Rome⁵. These ceramics have a wide

distribution around the western Mediterranean, particularly in France, Italy and the Iberian peninsula. The production consists mainly of tableware: some dishes and vases, but more generally bowls, cups and jugs. Inkwells and lamps are also known. The four most recurrent types of lead-glazed pottery in southern Gaulish contexts are presented in this paper.

Dishes, with a flat rim and curved body, are well known in Gaul. One found at Aix-en-Provence is dated between the end of the 2nd century and the beginning of the 3rd (1). Another fragment is present in Arles, dated between the mid-1st century and the mid-second century (3). A further dish is currently stored in the museum of Vienne⁶ (2).

Large handled vases, with a triangular rim with an internal groove, are more common in southern Gaul. Examples are found in Arles from the end of the 1st century to the beginning of the 3rd century (4). The most complete vase comes from the cargo of the Aléria 1 wreck, found off the coast of Corsica, dating from the late 1st century AD or the beginning of the 2nd century⁷ (7). Some vases were also discovered at the ancient port of Toulon (5) and in Lyon (Capucins/Hauts-de-Saint-Just) from the beginning of the 3rd century⁸. One large example was discovered in the gulf of Fos (6). In Italy, one vessel comes from the sanctuary of Cybele in Rome⁹. Five vessels of this type are present in Ostia: two of these were discovered in the sector of the Terme del Nuotatore¹⁰, two are stored in the Ostia museum¹¹ and one fragment was found at the coastal villa at Procoio¹². This form is also found at Settefinestre during the 2nd century¹³ and in Genova in the 2nd

¹ Studies undertaken in the context of a PhD in archaeology in Aix-Marseille University by Pauline Gohier. Thank to K. Greene for the review of this paper.

² GOHIER ET AL. 2016.

³ PH.D data.

⁴ Site and ceramics studies by J. Guerre (GUERRE 2006).

⁵ DESBAT/PICON 1986; GOHIER ET AL. 2017.

⁶ DESBAT 1986b fig. 2,6.

⁷ CIBECCHINI 2014, 14.

⁸ DESBAT 1986a fig. 6,1.

⁹ COLETTI 2004 fig. 19.

¹⁰ MARTIN 1992 fig. 9–13.

¹¹ MENEGHINI/STAFFA 1992 fig. 1,3–8A.

¹² PANNUZI 2003 fig. 5,23.

¹³ CARANDINI/RICCI 1985 fig. 44,2a.

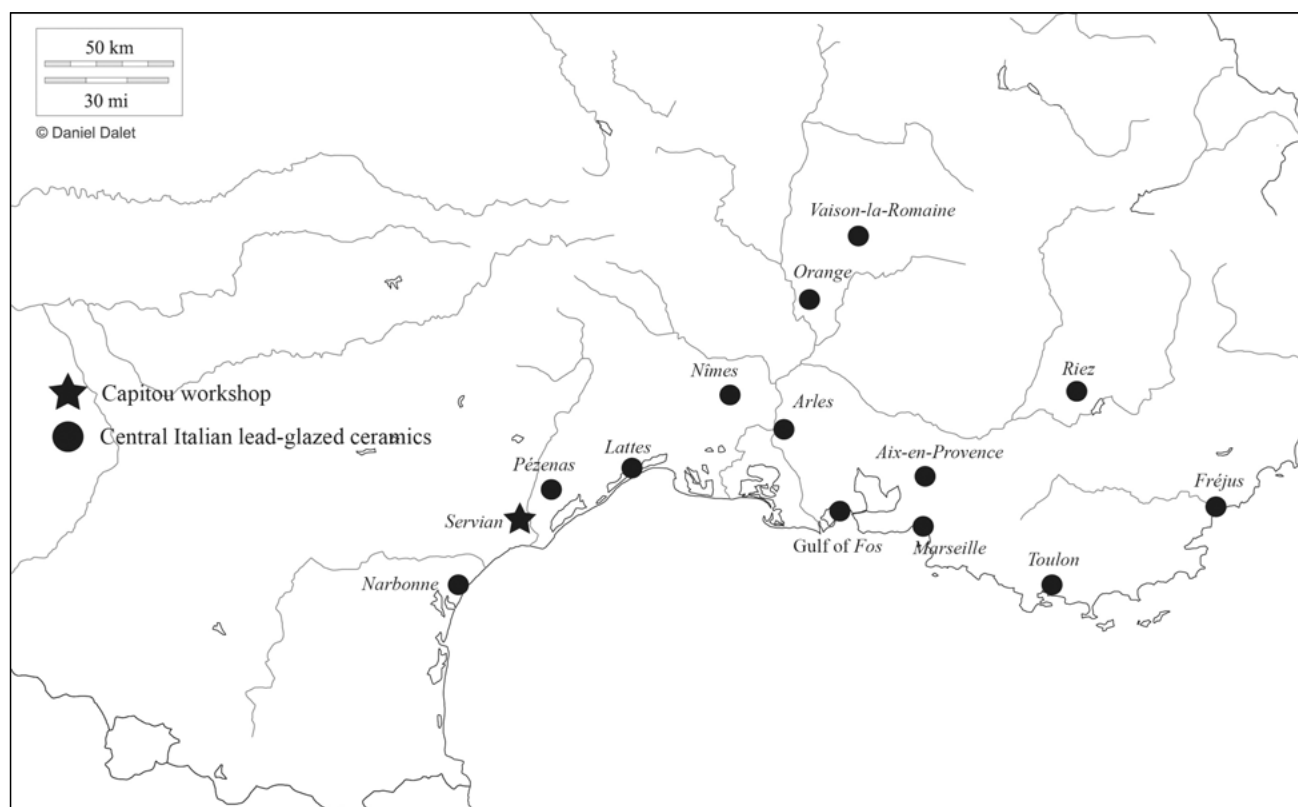


Fig. 1. Distribution map of central Italian lead-glazed ceramics in southern Gaul and localisation of the Capitou workshop.

and the 3rd centuries¹⁴. One fragment is also recorded from Segóbriga in the Iberian peninsula¹⁵.

Beakers with barbotine pinecone motifs are probably the commonest form, with the widest distribution in the western Roman Empire. They are particularly well represented in France during the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. The first examples appear in southern Gaul between the end of the 1st century and the beginning of the 2nd century. These beakers are normally made with a single handle. One example comes from Lyon¹⁶ (8), and another was found in a burial in Marseille dating to the first half of the 2nd century (9). A further beaker was present in the underwater dump in the Rhône at Arles, dated between the second half of the 1st century and the middle of the 2nd century (10). A complete beaker was discovered in the cargo of the *Aléria 1* wreck (11). In Italy, two beakers of this type are stored in the collections of the Museo Nazionale Romano¹⁷. Single-handled beakers are also recorded in Spain at Empuries, Mataró, Rubí, Centcelles and Ibiza¹⁸. Three beakers are present in Tolegassos. The first, discovered in a level of the mid-2nd century, is decorated with two lines of barbotine pinecone motifs framed by a vegetal decor¹⁹. The other two come from a context dated between the second half of the 2nd and the beginning of the 3rd century. One beaker has

also been found at *Farrobo* in Portugal²⁰. A complete example is present in a burial in Lachmirowice (Poland), dated to the end of the 2nd century²¹.

Lead-glazed jugs often have a twisted handle, or an appliqué motif with a face shape at the base of the handle. One jug with a twisted handle comes from Lyon²² (12). This type of handle is known in Aix-en-Provence between the end of the 1st century and the beginning of the 2nd century (13). Twisted handles are found in the gulf of Fos and in the underwater dump from Arles²³. A jug with a twisted handle is present in the Terme del Nuatatore in Ostia, dating to the 2nd century²⁴. Lead-glazed jugs with appliqué faces at the base of their handles are also very common. One jug from the gulf of Fos (15) is decorated with vegetal barbotine and geometric motifs. Another jug with moulded grooves on the body has been discovered in Arles, dating to the mid-3rd century (14). This type of decoration is also present on two jugs found in Lyon (Rue des Farges). One has a trilobal spout and rim, while a streamlined form (16) is dated to the end of the 2nd century²⁵. A large jug from Saint-Romain-en-Gal with an appliqué face is stored in the Musée de la civilisation gallo-romaine²⁶. A further example was discovered in Pollentia in a burial dated to the Neronian period²⁷. Finally, two jugs moulded grooves

¹⁴ BIAGINI/MILANESE 1993 fig. 52,21–49.

¹⁵ SÁNCHEZ LAFUENTE PÉREZ/FERNÁNDEZ FREILE 2003 fig. 1,13.

¹⁶ DESBAT 1986a fig. 4,7.

¹⁷ DI MINO/BERTINETTI 1990 photo 80-1, 100.

¹⁸ CASAS I GENOVER 1990 fig. 4,14; LÓPEZ MULLOR 1981 fig. 1,1-b, 205–506.

¹⁹ CASAS I GENOVER ET AL. 1993 fig. 8,30–32.

²⁰ LÓPEZ MULLOR 1981 fig.1,1-b, 205.

²¹ DOMZALSKI 2003 fig. 6–7.

²² DESBAT 1986a fig. 10,1.

²³ PH.D data.

²⁴ PANNUZI 2003 fig. 5,28.

²⁵ DESBAT 1986a fig. 6,3; DESBAT 1986b fig. 3,7.

²⁶ DESBAT 1986b fig. 3,8.

²⁷ ALMAGRO/AMOROS 1954 fig. 10,1.

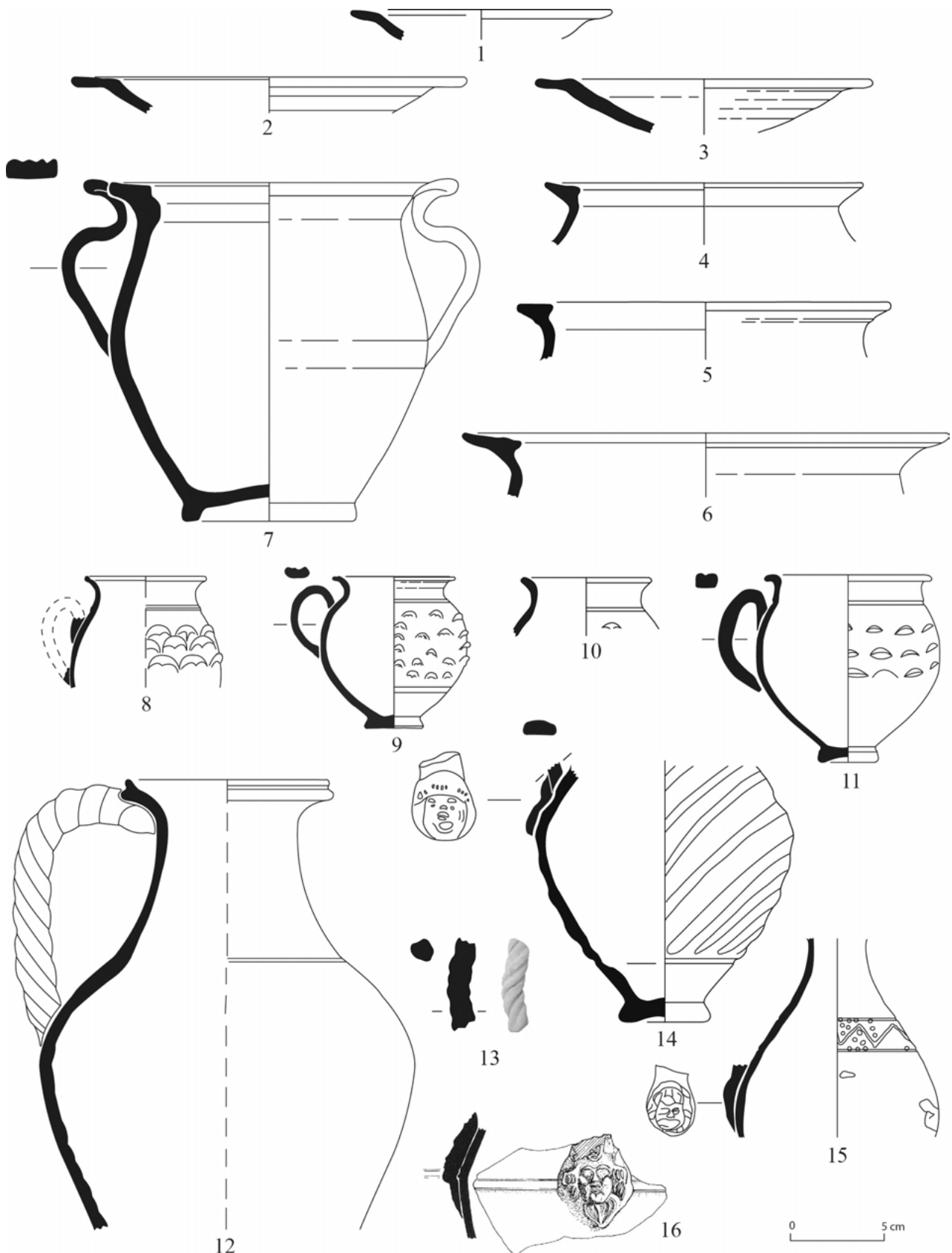


Fig. 2. Central Italian lead-glazed ceramics. **1** Aix-en-Provence, Notre-Dame de la Merci 2011; **2** Vienne, Vienne museum (drawing by A. Desbat); **3** Arles, Circus; **4** Arles, Circus; **5** Toulon, ZAC Besagne Dutasta; **6** Gulf of Fos; **7** Aléria 1 wreck (drawing by M. Chanas); **8** Lyon, Rue des Farges (drawing by A. Desbat); **9** Marseille, Sainte-Barbe; **10** Arles, Arles-Rhône 3; **11** Aléria 1 wreck; **12** Lyon, La Solitude (drawing by A. Desbat); **13** Aix-en-Provence, ZAC Sextius Mirabeau 2004; **14** Arles, Cimetière de Trinquetaille; **15** Gulf of Fos; **16** Lyon, Rue des Farges (drawing by A. Desbat). –Scale 1:3.

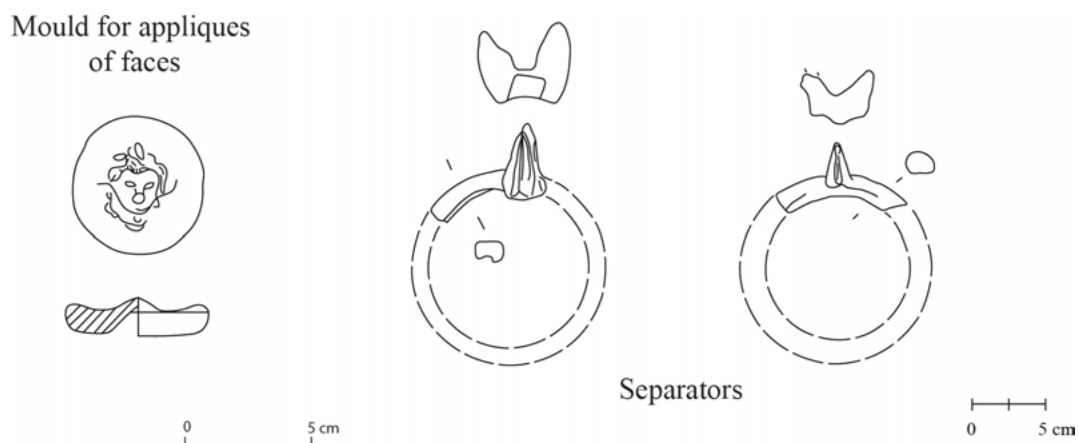


Fig. 3. Moulds and separators from the Janiculum workshop. – Scale 1:3 (drawing FILIPPI 2008).

also have been found in Colchester, dating to the 3rd and 4th century²⁸, and in Ostia, probably 2nd century²⁹.

These four forms were probably manufactured in the Janiculum workshop in Rome. Recent excavations have highlighted the production of lead-glazed ceramics at this site³⁰. A dump dated to the Antonine period, probably located close to the workshop, has revealed around 200 fragments of lead-glazed pottery and 100 elements related to the shaping and firing processes (**fig. 3**). Dishes with a flat rim and curved body, large handled vases, beakers with barbotine pinecone motifs, and jugs with a twisted handle or an appliqué motif at the base of the handle were found in the dump or in old excavations³¹. Several forms of ceramics from the Janiculum workshop have been found in consumption contexts in southern Gaul.

Recent archaeometric analyses confirm that Rome was the origin of lead-glazed ceramics discovered in southern Gaul³². Large handled vases present in the underwater dump in Arles probably came from the Rome area. The Italian source of the lead-glazed ceramics of southern Gaul is also implied by the cargo of the Aléria 1 wreck, which was found lying at a depth of 300 metres near Corsica. The ceramic samples collected in 2013 include one Deneauve VIIa lamp with the potter's mark LMVNPHILE, one Mayet 32A cup in thin-walled pottery, one incense burner in common ware, and two lead-glazed vessels – a large handled vase (7), and a beaker with barbotine pinecone motifs (11). The wreck of the ship is dated to the late 1st century³³. The presence of lamps produced in the *Lucius Munatius Philemo* workshops show that part of the cargo comes from Rome and, in particular, from a Janiculum workshop where production of these lamps is attested³⁴. The cup Mayet 32A in thin-walled pottery and the incense burner in common ware could have been produced at the La Celsa workshop located north of Rome³⁵. The cargo was certainly assembled in the port of Ostia, and the ship probably sank on its way to Gaul³⁶.

The occurrence of these lead-glazed ceramic types in southern Gaul, combined with the composition of the cargo of the Aléria 1 wreck, seems to indicate the existence of trade – although small in scale – between central Italy and Gaul from the end of the 1st century AD. This trade was particularly important during the 2nd century, which was marked by a great diversity of forms and decors. Lead-glazed pottery continues to be found in southern Gaul up to the 3rd century.

3. The Capitou workshop

During the 2nd century, a workshop at Capitou produced lead-glazed ceramics³⁷. The archaeological excavations carried out in 1988 and 1989 uncovered the remains of two kilns and a dump. The finds associated with these kilns are mainly common ceramics (*Brune Orangée Bitteroise*) whose production, in this area, is well documented³⁸. Lead-glazed pottery was only a minor part of the output. Finds from the workshop also included some biscuit-fired ceramics and various items used during the firing process (**figs. 4–5**). The Capitou workshop is the only workshop producing lead-glazed pottery known in Gallia Narbonnensis.

The fabric of the Capitou lead-glazed or biscuit pottery is generally orange or grey. The glazes are green or yellow. One fragment has a yellow glaze covering the outside and a green glaze on the inside (27).

The most complete vessel is a large biscuit-fired handled vase (18). The top of the rim has four grooves. The large handles are folded. One biscuit-fired lid with a curved rim but no handle may be associated with the large handled vase (17). Another curved rim, with two grooves on the outside, was probably part of a beaker (27). Two other rims and one handle may also come from beakers (23–25). One unglazed biscuit fragment comes from a beaker with barbotine pinecone motifs (26). One belongs to a beaker or a jug (21). Two rims of jugs can also be identified. The first is biscuit-fired, and has a rim with a groove on the outside (19). The second

²⁸ SYMONDS/HATCHER 1989 fig. 1 RG83/P 850.

²⁹ MARTIN 1992 fig. 18.

³⁰ FILIPPI 2008.

³¹ GAUCKLER 1912; FILIPPI 2008.

³² GOHIER ET AL. 2016.

³³ CIBECCHINI 2014, 14.

³⁴ PUPPO 2008, 183–187.

³⁵ GOHIER ET AL. 2016.

³⁶ CIBECCHINI 2014, 14.

³⁷ Works by J. GUERRE 2006.

³⁸ GUERRE 2006.

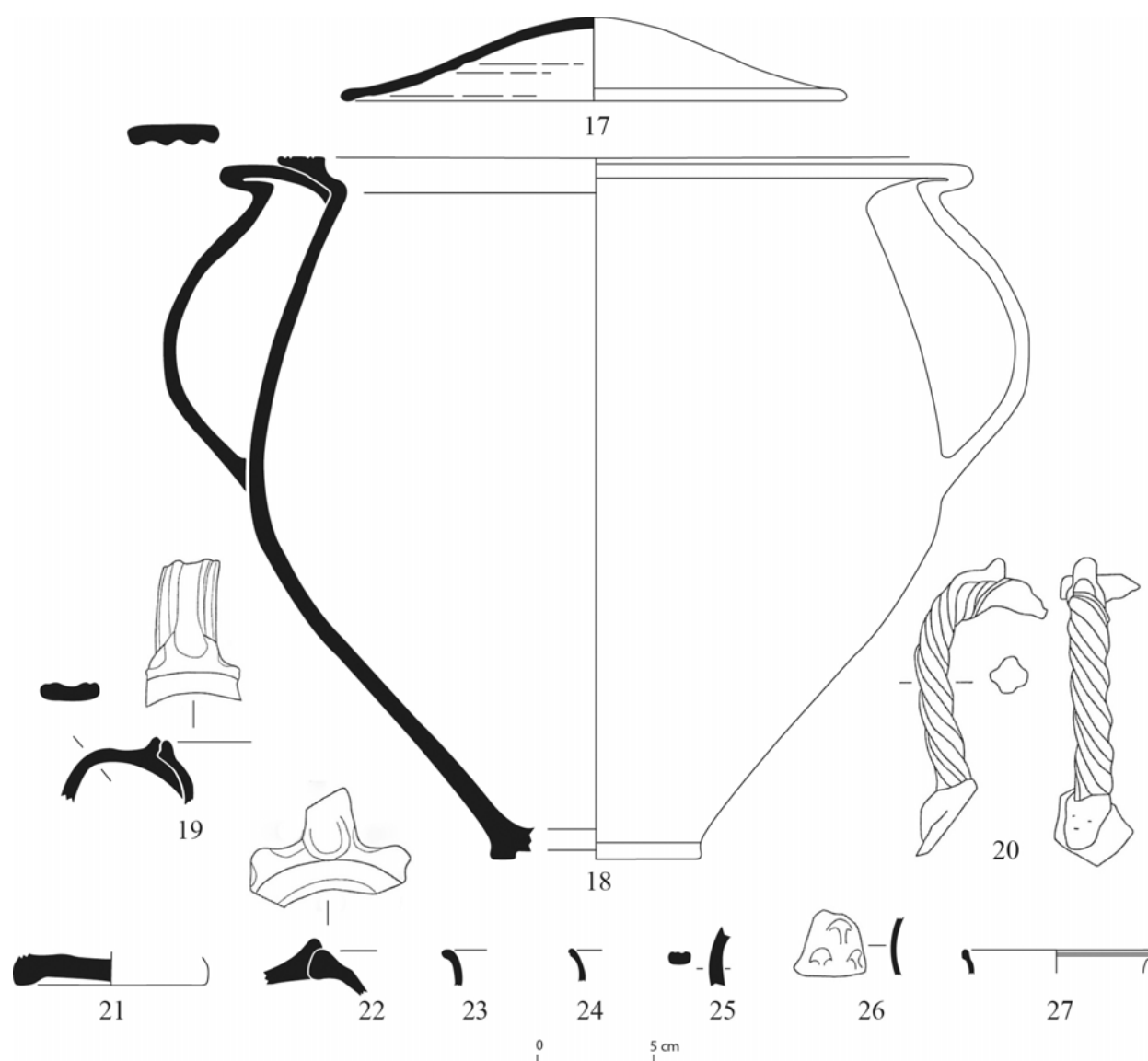


Fig. 4. Lead-glazed and biscuit-fired ceramics from the Capitou workshop. – Scale 1:3 (drawing GUERRE 2006).

has a trilobal handle (22). Lastly, the workshop produced a twisted jug handle with an appliqué face motif at its base (20).

The site has also revealed several separators for firing lead-glazed pottery, demonstrated by the presence of traces of glaze on several of these items (fig. 5). Three moulds for appliqué faces have been found (fig. 5). Four moulds for casserole handles from the Capitou workshop have the graffito CVS inscribed in cursive script on the top (fig. 5).

4. The influence of central Italian lead-glazed pottery production, and technology transfer

Lead-glazed pottery production in Servian can be linked to the importation of lead-glazed pottery from central Italy at the same time. The technological, typological and decorative similarities between the Capitou and Lazio products all suggest that the technology was transferred directly from Italy.

The lead-glazed ceramics of the Capitou workshop clearly borrowed the repertoire of central Italy and especially of

the Janiculum workshop in Rome. The forms copied by the Capitou workshop are among the commonest of the Italian lead-glazed forms found on consumption sites in Gaul. The large biscuit-fired handled vase (18) is related to the pottery produced at the Janiculum workshop³⁹ and to finds from sites in southern Gaul (4–7), and also in Italy and the Iberian peninsula. The lead-glazed dishes could in reality be lids associated with the handled vases (1–3) as suggested by the Capitou finds (17–18). Beakers with one handle and barbotine pinecone motifs are well attested in Gaul (8–11) and more widely in the western Roman Empire. The twisted handles and appliqué faces are also typical of central Italian jugs⁴⁰ (12–16). One jug with an appliqué face at the base of its handle was discovered in the Janiculum dump⁴¹.

³⁹ GAUCKLER 1912, 237.

⁴⁰ No central Italian lead-glazed jugs has discovered with these two particularities together.

⁴¹ FILIPPI 2008 fig. 4,20.

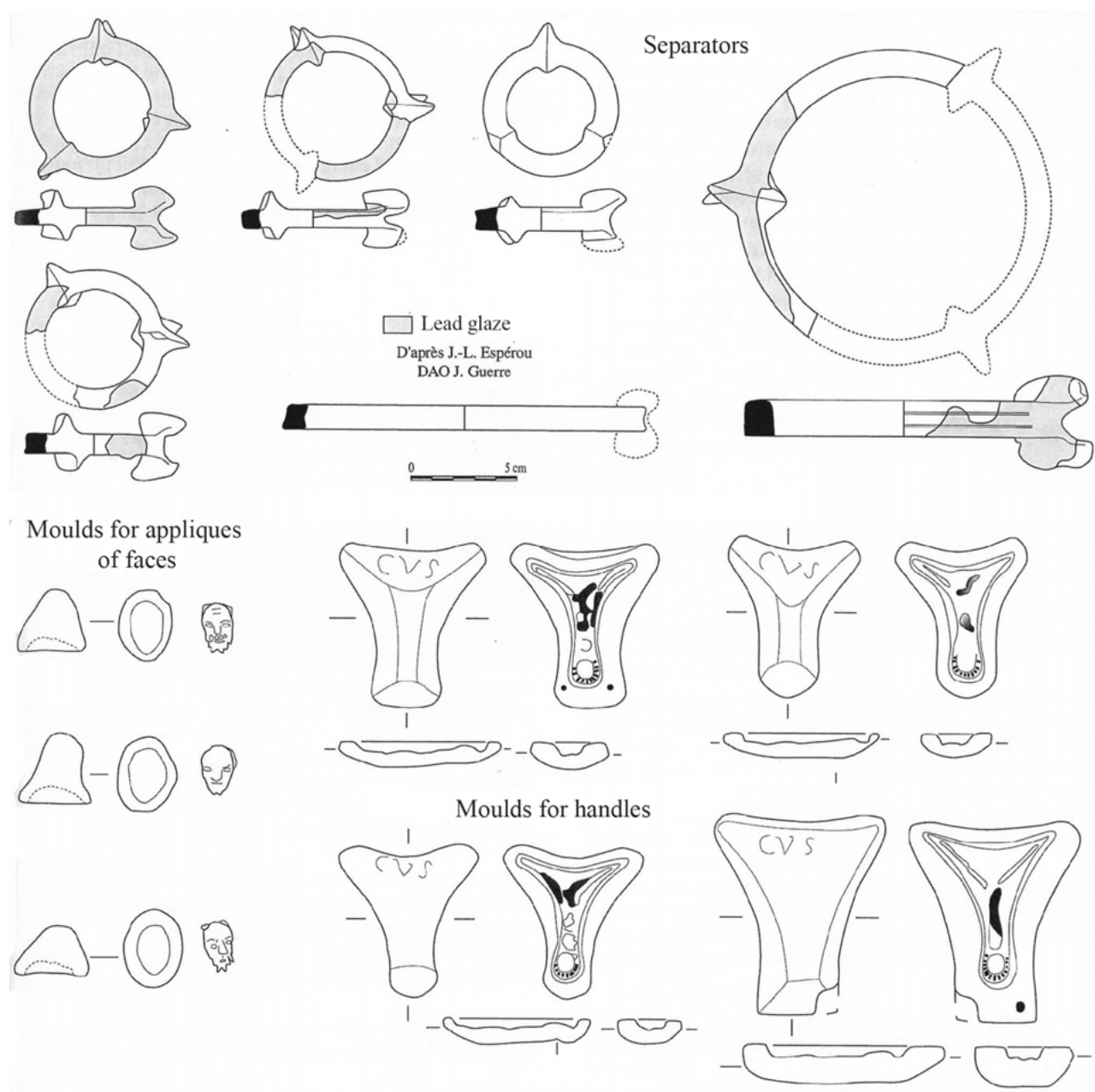


Fig. 5. Moulds and separators from the Capitou workshop. – Scale 1:3 (drawing ESPÉROU/ GUERRE 2006).

The similarities between the Capitou and the Janiculum products are strengthened by moulds discovered on the two sites (figs. 3–5). The moulds for appliques of faces were probably used to decorate the base of the jug handles. In addition, moulds for casserole handles imply the production of lead-glazed casseroles. Up to now, only one Italian lead-glazed casserole is known, and comes from underwater excavations in the Rhône at Arles, dating to the 3rd century⁴².

The practice of glazing with two colours found on one vessel from Capitou (27) is similar to that found on ceramics from Italy, which are normally green on the outside and yellow on the inside, although the external and internal colours have been reversed on the Capitou example.

The practice of biscuit firing was also copied. The Capitou and the Janiculum workshops have both revealed ceramics awaiting a glaze. The two-phase firing procedure used for the central Italian lead-glazed pottery, in particular for that from the Janiculum, has been confirmed by archaeometric analyses⁴³.

The Capitou workshop not only reproduced the forms of lead-glazed pottery from Lazio but also adopted their manufacturing techniques. The separators are quite similar to those found on the Janiculum site in Rome (figs. 3–5). These separators are of various sizes, circular in shape with spikes located on top and underneath. The spikes are slightly horizontal and flared. The tips of the spikes have usually broken off at the level of the contact point between the device and

⁴² GOHIER 2016 fig. 3,6.

⁴³ GOHIER ET AL. 2016; GIARDINO/TROJSI 2008.

the glazed pottery. These devices allow the firing of several vessels at the same time. Lead-glazed pots can be fired either on their sides or upside down. The presence of glaze drops on the rims of Italian vessels seems to indicate that the firing position was mainly upside down. Lead-glazed pottery can be fired in the same kiln as other kinds of ceramics, as is shown by the presence of glaze drops on common ceramics from the Capitou workshop⁴⁴.

5. Conclusion

The existence of a real trade from Italy to Gaul has been highlighted by the occurrence of Italian lead-glazed pottery on consumption sites in southern Gaul and also by the cargo of the Aléria 1 shipwreck.

The Capitou lead-glazed products are similar to those of central Italy, more precisely to those exported in the early years of the trade. The presence of a handled vase and a beaker with pinecone motifs (7–11) in the Aléria 1 cargo, dating between the end of the 1st century and the beginning of the 2nd century, seems to support this hypothesis. It is thus possible to confirm that the production of lead-glazed ceramics of the Capitou began in the 2nd century.

The similarities with the Janiculum workshop could indicate that the Capitou potter was trained in Italy, and some of the moulds may also have come from Italy. The potter with the initials CVS has no known equivalent in the southern part of France, implying that these moulds came from Italy, but archaeometric analysis would be necessary to confirm this hypothesis.

The production period of lead-glazed ceramics in the workshop at Capitou coincides with the peak distribution of Italian ceramics in southern Gaul. The Capitou lead-glazed pottery does not seem to have been distributed beyond its local area, in contrast to the common ware from the site⁴⁵ (*Brune Orangée Biterroise*). However, this local attempt at lead-glazed ceramic production demonstrates that a definite demand for this kind of pottery existed among the local population. The Capitou production site is important because it is the only known example of technology transfer from Italian lead-glazed pottery workshops to *Gallia Narbonnensis*.

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⁴⁴ GUERRE 2006, 151.

⁴⁵ GUERRE 2006.

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