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LATE ANTIQUE CLAY LAMPS FROM CAMPANIA: THE EVIDENCE FROM A SITE ON THE NORTH SLOPE OF MT. VESUVIUS

Current scholarship on the late antique economy of Campania still shows a certain discrepancy between the sites on the coast and those in the hinterland. This problem is noticeable also and especially in the analysis of the pottery assemblages, for which in the majority of the cases only scattered evidence has been published so far. More extensive datasets are available solely for Neapolis, from the earlier studies by Paul Arthur at the Complesso dei Girolamini¹ and Carminiello ai Mannesi² to the more recent works at Piazza Municipio³ and at the Theatre.⁴

This study aims to fill partially this gap by presenting the evidence of the late antique lamps from the Roman villa with baths in Pollena Trocchia on the northern slope of Mt. Vesuvius, in the ancient territory of Neapolis.⁵ Indeed this pottery class has been studied in a quite marginal way, being available for comparison just a few items from the Roman villas in Ponticelli,⁶ Somma Vesuviana⁷ and Lauro.⁸

The Roman villa with baths in Pollena Trocchia, località Masseria De Carolis, is the earliest known site built after the Pompeian eruption of AD 79, since it was set right on top of the volcanic ashes of Mt. Vesuvius. Life continued on site for five centuries until AD 472, when another eruption buried two thirds of the site. Most of the rooms unearthed so far belong to the baths, which at the time of the eruption were vastly spoliated and used as dump and infant cemetery. These activities create a quite flat chronology, because almost all contexts include sherds of the 5th c. AD, although residual pottery is ubiquitous. The excavation of the site is still ongoing and is focusing now on the side of the villa. About 800 boxes of artefacts have been collected so far, and 35,126 pottery sherds have been analysed, making this dataset the currently largest available for late antique Campania.

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the lamps, which sum up to 329 fragments (5.05% of the NMI of all pottery). Many of these are highly fragmented, thus in approaching the study a first division has been made

between African (21%) and Italic (79%) lamps by looking at the fabrics and the slip. Nevertheless, in consideration of the wide chronological range covered, from the Deneauve VII A of the 1st c. AD to the Atlante VIII CIa of the 5th c. AD, hardly those figures can be considered a snapshot of the economy in AD 472. Furthermore, the high fragmentation of the lamps (mostly walls, bases, and shoulders) allowed the identification of the types for roughly the half of the sherds, 163 individuals.

The catalogues used as main reference for the identification and dating of the Italic lamps are Dressel (1899), Bailey (1980), and Deneauve (1969), while for the Tunisian lamps are Atlante 1 (1981), Barbera/Petriaggi (1993), and Bonifay (2004). Museum catalogues and articles from Campanian contexts have been used to further compare the items.

Italic lamps

The majority of the lamps found at our site was produced in Italian workshops mostly located in Latium and southern Italy, although often they imitated famous types originally produced elsewhere, and continued those traditional shapes for several centuries. The clearest example of this kind of activity is in the Firmalampen, which were produced originally in the Po Valley but were soon imitated throughout the Italian peninsula, often in a rougher fashion.

The most common Italic shapes from Pollena Trocchia are the pseudo-Vogelkopflampen (17), the Firmalampen (6), the Fabbricotti II b (7), the Dressel 30/Bailey R (38), the Dressel 20/Deneauve VII A (7), the Provoost type 8 (3). 14 lamps are provided with stamps.

Seven lamp discuses can be categorised under the Dressel 20/Bailey P/Deneauve VII A (**fig. 1,1–3**) type. It is commonly accepted that this type was produced in Italian workshops, probably even in Campania (Pompeii), ¹¹ and is dated from the second half of the 1st c. AD, with maximum spread under Vespasian until the 2nd c. AD. ¹² The first of those discovered

ARTHUR/VECCHIO 1985, 416–426; ARTHUR 1984, 315–320; TONIOLO ET. AL. 2014, 323–333; MARTUCCI/TONIOLO 2011, 73–85.

² Arthur 1983; id. 1994...

GARSANA 2009, 673–683.

BALDASSARRE ET AL. 2010.

DE SIMONE ET AL. 2009; MARTUCCI ET AL. 2012; ID. ET AL. 2014..

⁶ Cascella/Vecchio 2014, 93–94 fig. 150.

⁷ Mukai et al. 2010, 223–233 fig. 10.

JOHANNOWSKY/LA FORGIA 1983; JOHANNOWSKY ET AL. 1986.

⁹ De Simone/Perrotta/Scarpati 2011.

¹⁰ Martucci et al. 2012, 87–117.

DENEAUVE 1969, 165; BAILEY 1988, 314–336.

Some of the lamps found at Carthage come from Pompeian workshops, DENEAUVE 1969, 165. Bailey reckons these productions as typical for central Italy and Campania, he also hypothesises that some of these might have been produced in the territories of *Herculaneum* and Pompeii (BAILEY 1988, 314–318). For the dating problems, see also BONIFAY 2004, 314–327.

in Pollena Trocchia (**fig. 1,1**) has been restored from four fragments; its clay is light buff, typical of the Italian productions, the slip is dark orange (**fig. 3,1**). The discus is decorated with two dolphins in relief, divided by a rudder; the closest comparison is with an exemplar from Carthage.¹³ Another discus (**fig. 1,2**) has a dark-red slip and is decorated with a seated female figure (Fortuna?), a common subject among the Italic lamps dated to the end of the 1st–2nd c. AD.¹⁴ The third discus (**fig. 1,3**), with light buff clay and orange slip, although fragmentary clearly portrays a female profile in relief.

A conspicuous number of Italic lamps (17) falls into the pseudo-Vogelkopflampen/Pavolini type V.¹⁵ These lamps (**fig. 1,4**) have a horizontal handle and a shape similar to the Dressel 22–23 types,¹⁶ but the examples from Pollena Trocchia show round-shaped nozzles, like some lamps found in Neapolis. The clay is light buff/rosy and the slip is beige. The chronology is still argument of debate, probably the production began on the Italian peninsula between the middle of the 2nd c. AD and the beginning of the 3rd c. AD; the specimens from our site find close comparison with lamps from contexts in Neapolis dated to the mid-2nd c. AD.¹⁷

The Firmalampen are present with six fragments (fig. 1,5-6), unfortunately with no discus or handle, thus comparisons are very limited in this case. Probably they were produced locally: the clay is beige/rosy and the slip is red/orange, in some cases with a darker tone (red/brown). Among these, four fragments show a peculiar incised decoration with circles and other geometric patterns on the shoulder. The Firmalampen started being produced in the 1st c. AD in northern Italy, 18 had a vast diffusion, then started being imitated in central and southern Italy for a large timespan, up until the 5th c. AD, progressively losing quality, like in one instance from Carminiello ai Mannesi. 19 In Campania they are widely spread: Francolise, 20 Neapolis (Carminiello ai Mannesi, 21 Girolamini, 22 Theatre 23), and Puteoli.²⁴ The Firmalampen from Pollena Trocchia find close comparison with lamps from Carminiello ai Mannesi, from contexts dated to the 2nd-3rd c. AD.²⁵

The most common lamp type (48 fragments) from our site is decorated with warts (perline/globules). Within this group, the most common shape is the Dressel 30/Bailey type R, with 38 fragments, while the rest falls either in the variant of that type with petals and warts on the discus (three fragments) or in the Fabbricotti II b type (seven fragments). Among these, of particular importance are the three discuses

with warts on the shoulder and central rosette with thirteen petals (**fig. 1,7–8**), which are close to the Provoost type 8 and were probably produced in Puteoli.²⁶ In fact, a certain concentration was found during the digs at Via Solfatara in Pozzuoli, in contexts dated between the mid-3rd c. AD and the 5th c. AD.²⁷ Lamps of this kind were found also in Neapolis, both at Carminiello ai Mannesi²⁸ and at the Theatre,²⁹ the latter offering the closest comparison with the fragments in Pollena Trocchia and a dating at the mid-5th c. AD.

The other 38 fragments fall into the standard Dressel 30/Bailey R type,³⁰ whose production began in Latium at the end of the 3rd c. AD and subsequently started being imitated throughout the Italian peninsula by several workshops.³¹ The closest comparanda for our lamps (**fig. 1,9–11**) are from the Girolamini, from contexts dated to the end of the 4th c. AD, but others are present in other Neapolitan contexts dated between the 4th and the first half of the 5th c. AD.³²

Among the Fabbricotti II b type lamps, it is worth to mention our best-preserved specimen, restored from various fragments (**fig. 1,10**).³³ The Fabbricotti II b type (**fig. 3,2**) probably originated in southern Italy and from the 1st c. AD it is widely present in Puglia (e.g. Lucera, Ordona, Posta),³⁴ and is commonly imitated also in late antique Campania. The closest comparison with the lamps from our site can be found in the lamps from the city of *Aeclanum* and currently hosted at the Museo Irpino di Avellino,³⁵ but similar ones were found also in Neapolis and Beneventum.³⁶

African Lamps

The African lamps found in Pollena Trocchia are 21% (70 fragments) of the total. Overall, they can be dated between the second quarter of the 4th c. AD and AD 472,³⁷ in which date the volcanoclastic fill of Mt. Vesuvius buried the site for almost its entire height. Whenever possible, the dating of each fragment has been done following the most recent reference works,³⁸ while in the other cases the late antique contexts from Neapolis (mostly Carminiello ai Mannesi and the Theatre)³⁹ have been used for comparanda.

Among the 69 lamps in African Red Slip, 32 are of the Atlante VIII shape, 28 of the Atlante X, while the remaining nine sherds cannot be identified because of their small dimensions and the poor state of preservation.

¹³ Deneauve 1969, 177 n. 783 Tav. 74,783.

Considering that part of the discus is missing, the exact identification of the subject cannot be achieved, the closest comparison is with BAILEY 1980, 29–30 fig. 23.

¹⁵ PAVOLINI 1977, 64 tav. 16,2.

¹⁶ Dressel 1899.

¹⁷ Carminiello ai Mannesi, phase IV b (GARCEA 1994, 305–306 fig. 138,17).

Bailey type N: Bailey 1980, 271–291 Tav. 52–54.

¹⁹ Garcea 1999, 447–449.

²⁰ In contexts of the 2^{nd} – 3^{rd} c. AD (Cotton 1979, 72–74 fig. 14,11).

²¹ Garcea 1994, 304–306 fig. 138,15.

Five fragments of late Firmalampen of local origin, from contexts dated to the late 4th c. AD. ARTHUR/VECCHIO 1985, 421; ARTHUR 1986, 520.

BALDASSARRI ET AL. 2010.

From the funerary monuments in via Solfatara, in contexts dated to the 3rd-4th c. AD (GIALANELLA 1994).

²⁵ Garcea 1994, 304–306 fig. 138,15.

²⁶ Garcea 1999, 449–451.

²⁷ Gialanella 1993, 79–80

²⁸ Garcea 1994, 313; 315 fig. 140,89.

²⁹ Baldassarri et al. 2010, 133–135 fig 68,4–6.

³⁰ Dressel 1899; Bailey 1980, 377–381.

The lamps Dressel 30/Bailey type R are commonly dated to the 3rd—4th c. AD, although later ones have been found at Ostia, in contexts of the mid-4th—5th c. AD (ANSELMINO 1977). More recent studies tend to extend the dating to the beginning (BAILEY 1980, 377–380) or the end (MARCONI/COSENTINO/RICCIARDI 1993, 40–42) of the 5th c. AD.

³² Garcea 1999.

³³ Fabbricotti 1974, 23–26; id. 1969, 3–31;

³⁴ Lombardi 2011, 439–441 Tav 2,2.6;

³⁵ Grella 1991, 43–45 tav.10–11

³⁶ Lupia 1998, 122–126 tav.14,8.

³⁷ DE SIMONE/PERROTTA/SCARPATI 2011.

BONIFAY 2004; Atlante I, 1981.

³⁹ GARCEA 1994; ARTHUR 1994; BALDASSARRE ET. AL. 2010.

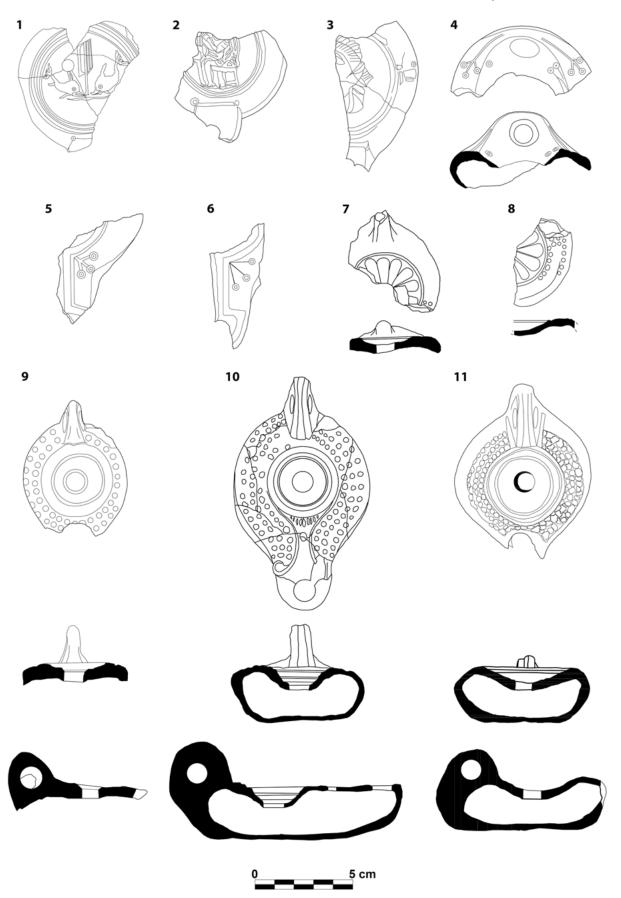


Fig. 1. Italic lamps from the Roman villa with baths in Pollena Trocchia.

For the best-preserved Atlante VIII lamps, it has been possible to assess the types. The specimen of the Atlante VIII CIa type⁴⁰ (**fig. 2,1**) is decorated with palm-leaves on the shoulder and the CHI-RHO Christian monogram on the discus. This type is commonly dated to the 4th–5th c. AD, although some studies propose a later date.⁴¹ The closest comparison is with a lamp at the Museo Archeologico Romano, dated by Barbera and Pietraggi to AD 440–460/470.⁴²

Two ARS lamps have a square discus (**fig. 2,2–3**). The first of two (**fig. 2,2**) are an Atlante VIII D6b, probably produced in northern Tunisia, ⁴³ with a few specimens at the Museo Nazionale Romano. ⁴⁴ The fragment from Pollena Trocchia comprises only the rectangular discus with semi-circular patterns around it. Through comparisons, this type can be dated to the mid-4th c.—beginning of the 5th c. AD. ⁴⁵ The other fragment (**fig. 2,3**) with square discus and palm-leaves on the shoulder might pertain to the Atlante VIII CId shape (**fig. 3,5**), ⁴⁶ which was produced in northern Tunisia and is commonly dated to the mid-5th c. AD, although the discovery of some imitations of this type in the workshops near Nimes hint to an earlier dating. ⁴⁷

Other 28 fragments pertain to the Atlante X shape; the majority of these (ten fragments) fall into the Atlante X AIa type, while both the types AIb and BIa have two individuals each. Here are presented three fragments of the Atlante X AIa (**fig. 2,4–6**). This type started being produced in Tunisia at the end of the 4th c. AD and was widely spread throughout the Mediterranean basin. First fragment (**fig. 2,4**) consists in a discus with unpierced handle, curved patterns (two opposed double-volutes, s-shaped spirals) on the shoulder and five palm-leaves on the discus (only three are preserved). Some comparanda allow a dating of this type to the mid-5th c. AD.

Another lamp (**fig. 2,5**), of which only the discus and part of the nozzle are preserved, shows a palm-tree decoration on the discus and geometric patterns on the shoulder (triangles and concentric circles). The typological comparison with a lamp from the Museo Nazionale Romano leads to a dating around the mid-5th c. AD;⁵² the closest geographic comparanda are at the Museo Irpino di Avellino.⁵³

A further lamp (**fig. 2,6**) in the Atlante X AIa shape is rather small, since it comprises only tiny portions of the nozzle and the shoulder, but is of particular interest for its decoration with a head of Silenus. Indeed, while anthropomorphic motifs are quite common on ARS lamps, they are

always placed on the discus, while here it is on the shoulder. No similar decoration is attested in the general reference collections or in the published assemblages from Campania.

Two other fragments belong to the Atlante X BIa type; this was produced in Tunisia from the end of the 4th c. AD and was traded around the Mediterranean basin.⁵⁴ The fragment presented here (**fig. 2,7**) is the largest of the two and comprises the discus and a small part of the shoulder. The discus is decorated with a fish in relief; a similar lamp was found as grave good (tomb 530) at another villa, not far from our site and in the ancient countryside of Neapolis, in the modern neighbourhood of Ponticelli, where it is dated to the mid-5th c. AD.⁵⁵

The last lamp (**fig. 2,8**) is an Atlante VIII D8/Bonifay group D8 type 50, probably produced in northern Tunisia (**fig. 3,4**) Only parts of discus, shoulder, and handle are preserved. The lamp shows radial pods on the shoulder which form a rosette with a small discus in the centre. This type is especially noteworthy since it is generally reckoned as the "evolutionary link" between the Deneauve XI B (which is not in ARS) and the Atlante VIII D5. S8

Lamps with stamps

Among all lamp fragments found in Pollena Trocchia, 14 are provided with stamps on the base (**fig. 2,9–11**).⁵⁹ In four instances the inscription can be reconstructed as CCORVRS, which refers to the manufacturer C. Cor(neli) Urs(i) (**fig. 2,9**: CCO[...]). The localisation of this workshop is still argument of debate; current studies propose either southern Italy or Tripolitania, while its period of activity seems to have been mostly between AD 130 and 200.⁶⁰ The lamps made by Cornelius Ursus were quite popular, noteworthy are those found in *Aeclanum*,⁶¹ Neapolis,⁶² but a vast sampling has been found also in Sardinia.⁶³

Another stamp – ATTINI (**fig. 2,10**) – has been found in only one instance, on a fragment of a base which is too small to identify the lamp type. The fragment has a beige clay and a brown slip, which hints to an Italian origin; nevertheless, the same stamp was found also at Carthage in association with a Deneauve VII A, thus it can be dated to the second half of the 1^{st} – 2^{nd} c. AD. 6^{4}

A further stamp shows KEA/CEI (= Celsus, **fig. 2,11**) in Greek characters on a Dressel 30 A⁶⁵/Bailey type R,⁶⁶ with wart decoration on the shoulder and heart-shaped nozzle (**fig. 3,3**). This stamp is common in southern Italy and especially in Campania, up to the point that a Campanian origin has

⁴⁰ Atlante I, 194–196.

⁴¹ Ibid. 192–198.

⁴² Barbera/Petriaggi 1993.

⁴³ Bonifay 2004, 368–370. Barbera/Petriaggi 1993, 129–130

⁴⁴ BARBERA/PETRIAGGI 1993, 130 n. 104; BONIFAY 2004, 367 fig 206,18.

BARBERA/PETRIAGGI 1993, 129–130; while Bonifay lowers it to the second quarter of the 5th c. AD (Bonifay 2004, 368–369).

⁴⁶ Atlante I, 194–198 Tav. 97,1; Bonifay 2004, 365–366 fig. 205 type 46 n. 8–9

Some imitations of the shape VIII CId produced in a workshop at Générac (Nimes) might raise the dating to the mid-4th c. AD (Bonifay 2004, 365–366 fig. 205).

⁴⁸ Atlante 1, 198–203.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 200.

BARBERA/PETRIAGGI 1993, 182–183 cat.142 discus decoration n.203.

⁵¹ Ibid. 182–183 cat.142.

⁵² Ibid. 304–305 cat. 263.

⁵³ Grella 1991, 17–18 tav.3.

⁵⁴ Atlante I, 200–203 Tav. 100,5

CASCELLA/VECCHIO 2014, 93–94.
 Atlante 1, 194–198: BONIFAY 200.

Atlante 1, 194–198; Bonifay 2004, 367–370 fig. 206 tipo 50, D8 n. 22.
 Bannera / Perpiace: 1903 230 n. 287

 ⁵⁷ BARBERA/PETRIAGGI 1993, 329 n.287.
 58 Ibid

Ibid.
 BUCHI 1975

⁵⁹ Buchi 1975.

⁶⁰ Bailey 1980, 89–90.

⁶¹ Grella 1991, 57 Tav. 15,42.

⁶² GARCEA 1994, 304; 307 fig.139,27.

⁶³ SANCIU 2002, 1285–1286; 1297 fig. 7,8.

⁶⁴ Deneauve 1969, 87; 180 n. 814.

⁶⁵ Dressel 1899.

⁶⁶ Bailey 1980, 377–381.

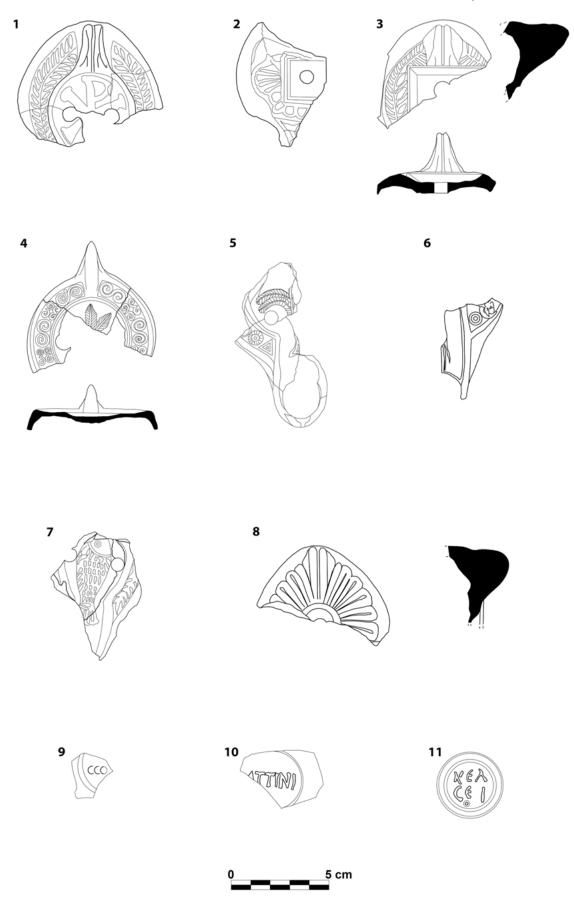


Fig. 2. African lamps and stamps from the Roman villa with baths in Pollena Trocchia.

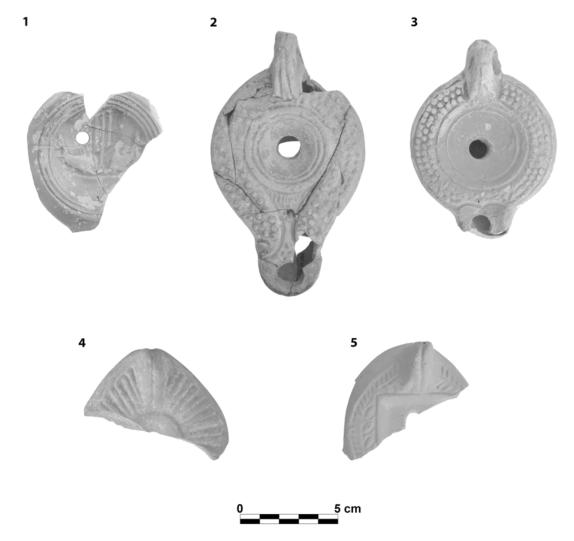


Fig. 3. Photos of the lamps from the Roman villa with bath in Pollena Trocchia.

been hypothesised for Celsus' workshops.⁶⁷ Nevertheless the presence of some of these stamps in Sabratha has been used to suggest a Tripolitanian provenance.⁶⁸ The dating is also matter of discussion, but in general it is hypothesised from the second quarter to the end of the 2nd c. AD.⁶⁹ The most significant comparisons are in Neapolis,⁷⁰ *Aeclanum*,⁷¹ Olbia (Sardinia),⁷² and Sabratha.⁷³

Discussion

The information presented on the lamps from Pollena Trocchia fosters overall considerations on this entire class of material in late antique Campania. In fact the dataset from our site is not only the largest currently available for the entire region, but also the first assemblage considered in

its entirety for the environs of Mt. Vesuvius, thus through it one can get also a snapshot of what lamp types were traded beyond the coast.

The thorough analysis of all lamps' fabrics and slips might lead to some misleading conclusions, since the ratio of 21% African and 79% Italic lamps includes all residual artefacts. By narrowing the analysis to the latest phases, i.e. to the lamps dated to the 4th and 5th c. AD, the Tunisian products reach a percentage of 62.5% (**fig. 4**). This piece of information can be compared with the only two complete datasets available for the region, namely Carminiello ai Mannesi⁷⁴ and the Theatre in Neapolis, where for the same timeframe the lamps in ARS are respectively 56.6% and 75.8% (**fig. 4**). Thus, on the one hand the situation in Pollena Trocchia seems rather consistent with what observed in the city.

On the other hand though, this piece of information is quite striking when compared to the provenance of the remaining parts of the pottery assemblages, like the tableware in ARS, which in Pollena Trocchia is only 5% of all classes,

 $^{^{67}}$ Id. 1988, 102–103; Sanciu 2002, 1288–1289 tav. 13.

⁶⁸ Joly 1974, 146 n. 617.

⁶⁹ Bailey 1988, 204–205; Joly 1974, 91.

⁷⁰ Garcea 1994, 304.

⁷¹ Grella 1991, 48 tav.13,26–27; 75 n.29.

⁷² Sanciu 2002, 1288–1289 tav. 13.

⁷³ Joly 1974, 146 n. 617.

⁷⁴ Garcea 1994, 303–327.

⁷⁵ Baldassarre et. al 2010, 50; 133–135; Arthur 1994, 52; 303–327.

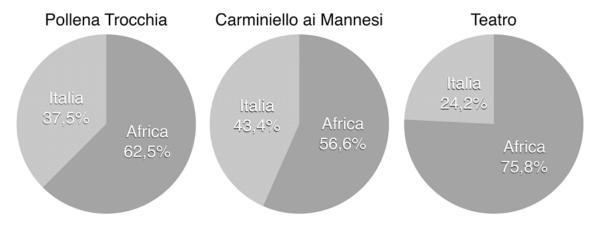


Fig. 4. Pie charts of the ratio between African and Italic lamps in Pollena Trocchia, Carminiello ai Mannesi and Theatre.

while in Neapolis' Theatre is 16% of the total. ⁷⁶ This oddity is even more remarkable when considering the general figures on the ratio between African (13%) versus regional (87%) products in the entire pottery assemblage from Pollena Trocchia. ⁷⁷ Therefore we can conclude that within a striking predominance of local products over imports, the percentage of Tunisian lamps in Pollena Trocchia follows the general trends witnessed in Neapolis.

The preference for imported rather than local lamps might have been caused by one or more factors. One of these might be related to taste and quality; in fact the lamps are not only utilitarian products, since their ubiquitous presence in the house made them part of the furnishing, thus it is legitimate to hypothesise that for these objects, more than for tableware, the quality of the decoration might have played an important role. On the other hand, in an economic perspective, one

should consider that the small size of the lamps made them a great cargo filler, thus despite the general reduction of trade from Africa in late antiquity (and the consequent rise of the regional products), the quantity of imported lamps available in the Campanian markets was still quite large, so to leave less space for competitors. Furthermore, the higher specialisation required for the creation of the lamps might have been rare among the very small workshops in the environs of Vesuvius.

Moving the discussion to the typology, the assemblage from Pollena Trocchia shows a substantial similarity with Neapolis, with an even larger variety of types when compared to the Theatre⁷⁸, thus showing that the trade of this good was wide and even or, more likely, it was centralised in the main cities.

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⁷⁶ DE SIMONE ET AL. 2014, 51–63.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Baldassarre et al. 2010, 133–135.

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