

Some observations on the economy of Bruttium under the later Roman empire

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Amphora production in Calabria

In 1971 David Peacock suggested that one of the fabrics defined in his classification of Dressel 1 type amphorae could possibly have come from the area of present-day Calabria, in southern Italy. Of particular note was the abundance of mica visible in the hand-specimen, and the fact that it was characterized by inclusions of granitic origin. This led him to recall the wine-producing districts around Thurii and Cosentia lying on the edge of a granite massif. Since his seminal paper, much new evidence has come to light that indicates, with little doubt, that Calabria was indeed involved in the production of amphorae and, furthermore, that such production began in Greek times and may have continued into late Roman and Byzantine times.

The earliest vessels so far recognized appear to have been wine containers produced, during the 4th or 3rd c. B.C., at the Greek colony of Locri on the Ionian Sea (Manzo 1983). Graeco-Italic amphorae were also presumably produced, at the same time, at Medma, where kiln wasters have been discovered, and at Hipponion, which bears an image of the amphora form on coin types alluding, perhaps, to the strength of local wine production (Van der Mersch 1986, 573). Peacock's petrological work alongside Dressel's (1879; *CIL* 15.2, 4590) proposition of reading Reg(hinum) (modern Reggio Calabria) painted on a vessel of form Dressel 1 from the Castro Pretorio, Rome, support the hypothesis of production for exportation during the late republic.

Local amphora manufacture under the early empire is almost certainly attested through numerous vessels of form Dressel 2-4 discovered during various excavations in Calabria. Though kiln sites and wasters have not yet been recognized, the fabrics of these vessels seem repeatedly to be identical macroscopically to the fabrics employed for the production of local coarse wares. Excavations at Pompeii have yielded the shoulder of an amphora, possibly of form Dressel 2-4, bearing the stamp PIX.BRVT (V + T are ligatured). De Caro (1985) interprets the stamp as reading *pix brut(tia)* or pitch from Bruttium, which is eminently possible given the importance of the region for the supply of both timber and pine resin. Two other amphora stamps may be tentatively assigned to Calabria. A Dressel 2-4 rim and neck from Vibo Valentia, in suspiciously local-looking, micaceous, cream-coloured fabric, bears the stamp ?ROM. on the neck (information B. Sangineto). Furthermore, on distributional grounds the stamp EPIDI/CALAMVS or CALAM on Dressel 2-4 handle sherds (A + M ligatured in the second example) could be local. One example is known from Montedoro, near Taranto (Callender 1965, 88, no. 228), whilst two come from Sibari (*NotSc Supp.* 3, 1970, 530). Wine exportation is professed by the *tituli* remembering Rhegium on amphorae from the Castro Pretorio deposit in Rome, published by Dressel (*CIL* 15. 4357).

The evidence leads to the conclusion that amphorae were produced in Calabria from Greek through hellenistic/republican times down to the early empire. This in itself is not surprising, though the recognition of the various vessel types, respective production areas, time-spans, contents and distributions should eventually help to clarify the importance of Calabria within the ancient economy.

The late Roman economy in Calabria

Over the last 20 years or so, a number of scholars have demonstrated that the progressive disappearance of Italian amphorae from the archaeological record over the 1st and 2nd c. A.D. is closely linked to the decline of the slave mode of production and the decline of the Italian economy in relation to the provinces. The recent study by A. Tchernia argues forcefully that wooden barrels largely replaced amphorae for transporting wine in the later Roman empire. Only fairly recently, however, has it been demonstrated that amphora production in Italy did, indeed, continue after the 2nd c. and that in at least