The early medieval and medieval glazed pottery from excavations at San Vincenzo and the Upper Volturno valley, Molise.

The monastery of San Vincenzo lies in the Upper Volturno valley, Molise. The San Vincenzo project, directed by Richard Hodges (director of the British School at Rome), is a regional study which examines the monastery of San Vincenzo al Volturno and its terra (Fig. 1). The archaeological work undertaken in the Upper Volturno valley includes large scale excavations of the monastery itself, an intensive survey of the terra of San Vincenzo and small excavations of two of the villages in the terra (Hodges and Mitchell 1985). Excavation and survey was combined with a detailed study of the documentary evidence (Wickham 1985); the monastery of San Vincenzo and its terra is well-documented by the 12th century Chronicon Vulturnense (edited by Federici 1925-38), written by John the monk in 1110-1120.

The study of the pottery both from excavation and survey (Patterson 1990, 1985; Hodges-Patterson 1986) has analysed ceramic production and distribution in this area from the 5th to the 12th centuries, concentrating in particular on the relationship between the pottery of the abbey and those of its dependent settlements. One of the most interesting aspects of the study of the pottery has been the opportunity to examine the material from a hierarchy of sites in a defined territory, that is the terra of the monastery of San Vincenzo. Petrological analysis of both the pottery fabrics and the clays of the area was a fundamental part of the study. Clay samples were taken in the area, the clay made into briquettes, fired and thin sections made, thus allowing an easy comparison of the clay samples with the pottery fabrics. Quantification of the petrological fabric groupings has been carried out.

The abbey, founded at the beginning of the 8th century, reached its greatest splendour between the late 8th and 9th century. In the second half of the 10th century the abbey reorganized its terra, probably previously occupied by very small scattered settlements, into concentrated settlements on hilltops, that is castelli, in an attempt to revive its economy. [487] Despite the intensive survey of the terra of San Vincenzo, no 8th and 9th century pottery has been identified outside the monastery and the earliest evidence for pottery in the terra comes from these hilltop settlements.

The glazed pottery discussed in this paper comes from the excavations of the abbey of San Vincenzo and of two of its dependancies, Colle Castellano and Vacchereccia (Fig. 1). The material from the abbey comes from contexts of the 9th and of the 10th to 11th centuries (and includes some residual Roman material). At Colle Castellano excavations have yielded material of the (late 9th) 10th to 12th centuries (Coccia-Hodges, forthcoming), and at Vacchereccia material of the 10th to 14th centuries (Hodges-Nowakowski 1984). The deposits from both sites are dated on the basis of parallels with the material from the abbey.

The glazed pottery or ceramica a vetrina pesante consists predominantly of a series of closed vessels with a green or brown glaze covering the whole of the exterior surface (Fig. 2). [488] Relatively few forms were found and the pottery does not form a particularly homogenous group. The closest parallels are with examples of ceramica a vetrina pesante from sites elsewhere in
southern Italy. Several of the San Vincenzo vessels, for example, have applied plait decoration (decorazione plastica a treccia), a motif which is fairly characteristic of the southern Italian ceramica a vetrina pesante. Incised, impressed and applied decoration are also represented to varying degrees on the ceramica vetrina pesante from all three sites. No examples, however, with applied petal decoration have been recovered and the vessels bear no resemblance to the Forum Ware of Rome. Given the fragmentary and varied nature of the glazed pottery assemblage, the pottery and the petrological fabric groupings are first discussed according to site.

San Vincenzo: the glazed pottery comprises 0.3% of the 9th century material, and 0.5% of that of the 10th to 11th centuries. In the original classification of the material three main petrological groups were identified, which correspond more or less to the fabric groupings assigned for the purposes of this seminar. Fabric 1/ Group 5 volcanic-sedimentary, analyses 19, 20, 21 (Fig. 2.1-9) is the most common fabric. Glazed pottery of this fabric first appear in contexts of the 9th century. It was used for the production of closed forms, probably jugs, which include two rim forms (Fig. 2.1,2) the closest parallels for which are those of the 'Byzantine' glazed chafing dishes of Corinth (Morgan 1942, Fig. 24, no. 1,2,8). Vessels of this fabric have incised and/or applied decoration, and include some examples with applied plait decoration. At San Vincenzo this decoration is usually accompanied by irregular incised lines (Fig. 2.3). Two examples with this decoration are noteworthy; one is completely unglazed and the other has one small spot of glaze (Fig. 2.4,5). A spout with an applied snake (Fig. 2.6) is of the same fabric. Fabrics 2 and 3 are poorly represented, they appear in contexts of the 10th and 11th centuries. Fabric 2 (Fig. 2.10,11) is also attributed to Group 5 (analysis 23), although this indicates a provenience similar to that of fabric 1, the forms and glazing are very different to those of fabric 1 and suggests that they are residual and of Roman date. Fabric 3 (Fig. 2.12) is attributed to Group 15b (analysis 24) and is a generic clay which could be local or subregional.

Colle Castellano: the glazed pottery comprises 0.2% of the material from phase III/IV (10th/11th century) and 0.5% of phase V. Two fabrics have been identified. The most common (fabric 1.1) occurs in contexts of the 10th/11th century. The fragments belong to closed vessels of uncertain form, and include one example with applied pellets of clay. The analysis (analysis 26) attributed this fabric to Group 5, although distinguished from the San Vincenzo examples by different firing conditions. Nonetheless I believe that it represents a variant of fabric 1, on the basis of other petrological analyses and morphological and decorative differences.

The second fabric is represented by very few fragments attributed to the late 11th to 13th century. [489]
The fabric is the same as fabric 3 of San Vincenzo and therefore of Group 15b (analysis 25), but given that this is a generic clay the results are of limited value.

Vacchereccia: the glazed pottery is very fragmentary and represents 1.6% of the material (including material of the 12th and 13th centuries). Two fabrics have been identified and the examples of these fabrics have both applied or incised decoration (see HODGES-NOWAKOWSKI 1984, Fig. 6.24-29). The most common fabric (fabric 4) is attributed to Group 8 (analysis 30), although it is similar to fabric I/Group 5 being characterized by volcanic and sedimentary inclusions. The second fabric (fabric 5) is probably of the 11th-12th century and is of Group 10d (analysis 32).
Therefore five principal fabric groups have been identified indicating at least five main production areas.

Fabric 1/Group 5 (volcanic-sedimentary). At San Vincenzo (analyses 19,20,21) this is the most common glazed ware fabric in deposits of the 9th to 11th centuries. The most common fabric of the 10th to 11th century glazed pottery at Colle Castellano is also attributed to this group (fabric 1.1, analysis 26), although a different centre of production is suggested.

Two other fragments of glazed pottery (fabric 2) from San Vincenzo are also placed in Group 5 (analysis 23), but this similarity must be treated with caution as the forms and glazing are very different to examples of fabric 1 and they are almost certainly residual and of Roman date. Other petrological analyses have in fact defined fabric 2 as a variant of fabric 1.

Provenance: sources of this clay must lie in a marginal volcanic area which borders a sedimentary area. The clay samples taken in the area of San Vincenzo revealed sedimentary clays with no trace of volcanic inclusions. The closest area with these geological characteristics lies between Campania and western Molise, about 20-35 kilometres south of San Vincenzo (see Fig. 3).

Distribution: it is interesting, although not surprising, to note that many of the examples of *ceramica a vetrina pesante* from Santa Patrizia, Naples, are attributed to the same group, suggesting the same geological area but not necessarily the same production centre.

Group 8/Fabric 4 (volcanic-sedimentary): at Vacchereccia this is the most common fabric (analysis 30) and is similar to Group 5 being characterized by volcanic and sedimentary inclusions.

Provenance: similar to Group 5.

Group 15b/Fabric 3 (generic): this fabric is represented by one fragment at San Vincenzo (analysis 24) of the 10th to 11th century, and a few fragments from Colle Castellano attributed to the late 11th to 12th century (analysis 25). Unfortunately, given that this is a generic clay which could be local or subregional, the results are of limited value.

Group 10d/Fabric 5: some fragments from Vacchereccia, probably of the 11th to 12th century, are of this group (analysis 32).

Provenance: local or subregional, but definitely from an inland area of central southern Italy. [491]

**DISCUSSION**

The *ceramica a vetrina pesante* from San Vincenzo and Colle Castellano is mainly of Group 5 (fabric 1). That of Vacchereccia, is of a different group (Group 8), but one which, like Group 5, is of volcanic and sedimentary origin. Neither of these groups are of strictly local origin suggesting that the *ceramica a vetrina pesante* was imported. It is interesting to note that other petrological analyses indicate a similar provenance for the painted pottery of the late Roman period of the villa of San Vincenzo and for a group of cooking wares present in 9th century deposits at San Vincenzo, and at Colle Castellano in the earliest phase. This suggests the existence of good clays in this area, possibly with a long tradition of ceramic production.

Although we know from the *Chronicon Vulturnense* that settlement existed in the *terra* in the 8th and 9th centuries, the lack of archaeological evidence for settlement in this period, and in particular for the consumption of pottery, indicates a very low level of material culture for these settlements. It suggests that the inhabitants were not linked very closely to the economic structure of the monastery and that the production and distribution of goods were not operating according to classic marketing mechanisms. Whatever the reason for the lack of pottery, it implies that the monastery, both socially and economically, was very distinct from its dependencies in the *terra*. Production centres, both local and outside the *terra* supplied the needs of the monastery only in this period. This picture fits with the documentary evidence of the *Chronicon* which implies that the monastery made little attempt to stimulate the economy of the *terra* in this period.

Following the Saracen attack on the monastery in the late 9th century (12th October, 881 AD) and its subsequent temporary abandonment this situation changed. Both the archaeological
and historical evidence points to a great decline in the power, status and wealth of the monastery at this time. Buildings fell into disrepair, donations had virtually ceased and there was an insecure political and economic climate. To combat this the monks, from the mid 10th century, adopted a new economic policy involving the reorganization of the territory, the existing population plus immigrants being established in concentrated settlements, the castelli. Land clearance programmes and the intensification of agriculture were very often associated with these settlements. In this context one would expect the revitalization of the economy of the terra; the castelli represented large centres of consumption which would have presumably encouraged specialist potters, probably located in the castelli themselves. The Chronicon in fact records the existence of two potters who participated in the settlement of Cerro in the late 10th century (Chronicon Vulturnense II: 310-311). [493] The intensification of agriculture is a further important element which would have presumably permitted the survival of such specialists. The ceramic evidence in fact supports this hypothesis: from the 10th century with the foundation of the castelli, the quantity of pottery recovered shows an enormous increase in the consumption of ceramic products. Furthermore virtually the same products were available at both the monastery and the villages indicating a marked change in the economic structure of the terra. The presence of a specialist product, such as ceramica a vetrina pesante, on all three sites, even in small quantities, in particular suggests a degree of social and economic proximity between the monastery of the 10th and 11th centuries and its villages that was not apparent in the 8th and 9th centuries. The fact that glazed pottery, certainly at Vacchereccia and possibly at Colle Castellano, was supplied by different production centres to those supplying the monastery suggests that the castelli were developing their own flourishing economic structure distinct from the monastery, as in fact Del Treppo suggests from the historical evidence (Del Treppo 1954, 90-93). This hypothesis is supported by other elements of the ceramic assemblage.

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Catalogue

1. (Fig. 2) Jar or jug with possible seating for a lid. On exterior, very thin uneven yellowish green glaze; on interior, thick dark olive green glaze.
   Group 5 (fabric 1), not analysed.
   Phase 5 (9th century).
   For similar shapes from Corinth, but of chafing dishes, see Morgan 1942, Fig. 24, no. 1,2,8.

2. (Fig. 2) Jar or jug, as 1, but shoulder decorated with two concentric bands of grooved wavy lines divided by two concentric grooves. On exterior, dark olive green to brown glaze; on interior, some spots of glaze.

3. (Fig. 2) Body sherd from upper half of closed vessel decorated with applied vertical plait of clay, bordered by roughly incised vertical and oblique lines. On exterior, pale olive green glaze.
   Group 5 (fabric 1) analysis 20. Phase 6b (10th to 11th century).

4. (Fig. 2) Body sherd from closed vessel, decoration is similar to no. 3; an applied vertical cordon bordered on one side by incised oblique lines. Unglazed.

5. (Fig. 2) Body sherd from closed vessel, decoration is similar to nos. 4 and 5; roughly incised vertical

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and oblique lines. On exterior, yellowish green glaze.

Group 5 (fabric 1), not analysed.

Phase 6 (10th to 11th century).

6. (Fig. 2) Spout, probably of jug, with applied decoration in form of snake, decorated with small incised circles, coiling up exterior of spout. As on nos. 3-5, incised oblique lines on exterior of body of vessel. On exterior, pale olive green glaze.

Group 5 (fabric 1), not analysed.

Phase 6 (10th to 11th century).

7. (Fig. 2) Base, slightly convex. Uneven pitted dark olive green glaze partially covers exterior and underside.

Not analysed.

Phase 5 (9th century).

8. (Fig. 2) Body sherd from upper half of closed vessel, decorated with running series of grooved upside down ‘V’ motifs, bordered by concentric grooves. On exterior and partially on interior, thin uneven yellowish green glaze.

Group 5 (fabric 1), not analysed. Phase 5c (late 9th century).

9. (Fig. 2) Body sherd from upper half of closed vessel, decorated with concentric shallow groove, bordered by concentric wavy line. On exterior, pitted dark green glaze.

Group 5 (fabric 1), not analysed. Phase 6 (10th to 11th century).

10. (Fig. 2) Footring base. On exterior, glossy brownish to olive green glaze.

Group 5 (fabric 2), not analysed.

Phase 6b (10th to 11th century). This example is very probably residual and of late Roman date.

11. (Fig. 2) Vessel with vertical sides and upright rim. On exterior, glossy, yellowish to olive green glaze.


12. (Fig. 2) Handle. Patches of thin, uneven yellowish green glaze.

Group 15b (fabric 3) analysis 24. Unstratified. [495]

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