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Prolegomenon to the Study of Apulian Red-Figure Pottery

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Abstract

There is a tendency in English-language publications to view Apulian red-figure pottery as simply a continuation of Attic red-figure, and this has often obscured important differences between the two. The unfounded assumption that Apulian red-figure vases were made by Greeks for colonial Greeks has diverted attention from the Italic people of Apulia who, in fact, provided the principal markets. Apulian vases are rarely found outside Apulia and it seems likely that many painters knew their markets well and had them specifically in mind when they devised some of the more elaborate mythological scenes. Thus the vases can provide insights into the cultures of the Italic people who obtained them. This article is an attempt to address significant misconceptions about Apulian red-figure and to provide a solid grounding for future studies of this rich and developing field.

INTRODUCTION

During the past two or three decades, both collectors and scholars have shown a new appreciation for Apulian red-figure vases and the complex imagery that often appears on them. The finest work of the mid fourth century B.C.E. is often seen as a kind of baroque extension of Attic red-figure with colonial overtones (fig. 1). In most texts, the vases are classified as Greek art on the assumption that they were produced by Greeks in Magna Graecia; the perceived parallels with Greek painting extend to the attribution of vases to painters and workshops using the method developed by Beazley for Attic vases. But little has been written in English about the important differences between Attic and Apulian vases—markets, functions, contexts, or imagery. As a result, serious misconceptions are repeated again and again in scholarly papers, books, and articles. What follows here is an attempt to address some of those misconceptions and provide a solid grounding for future studies in this rich and developing field.

Many discussions of Apulian vases start out with two basic assumptions: that they were produced in Taranto—some even call them Tarentine rather than Apulian vases—and that they were made principally for a Greek market. Some scenes are thought to be inspired by theater productions at Taranto, a city said to be addicted to theater. Discussions of funerary imagery are often based on the assumption that Orphism was a strong influence on the people, and that in one way or another, the funerary imagery reflects Orphic beliefs. In addition, it is often implied that before the Apulian workshops were established, Attic vases reached the hinterland of Apulia through Taranto, and that the non-Greeks of those regions were a primitive, servile people. In fact, none of these assumptions is based on solid textual or archaeological evidence, and each deserves to be carefully examined to make clear the current state of our knowledge about them.

TOPOGRAPHY OF APULIA IN THE FOURTH CENTURY B.C.E.: GEOGRAPHICAL AND POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Apulia, the region where the majority of Apulian vases has been found, and where, presumably, they were made, extends from the tip of the heel of Italy up the Adriatic coast to the Gargano and inland to the Bradano River (fig. 2). From at least the eighth century B.C.E., three "archaeological cultures" have been defined on the basis of pottery types and decorations as well as burial customs. The conventional names given to these areas are Messapia in the heel, Daunia to the north, and Peucetia between them.[1] People in all three areas may have spoken the same Indo-European language, Messapian.[2]

Taranto, or Taras, was the only Greek city in Apulia, and it controlled a *chora* with a radius of about 15 km; outside that *chora*, no pure Greek settlements have been found.[3] The rest of Apulia was occupied by Italic people. Various terms have been used in the past for the non-Greeks who occupied Apulia during historical

[1] None of the native people of Apulia left substantial written records, so we are dependent on Greek and Roman authors for the names given to the regions, and those authors are notably inconsistent in their use of names (e.g., Paus. 10.13.10; Plin. *HN* 3.102; Polyb. 3.88.4; Strabo 5.1.3, 6.3.1, 6.3.5–8). For a recent discussion of the literary sources, see Herring 2000, 48–55.

[2] Santoro 1981; Penney 1988, 737; Hamp 2003.

[3] Whitehouse and Wilkens 1989, 107–9. For a recent review of the evidence for the extent of the *chora*, see De Juliis 2000, 37–49.

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Fig. 1. Apulian red-figure volute krater from Ceglie del Campo, showing Helios on the neck and the Death of Thersites on the body, ca. 340 B.C.E., ht. 124.6 cm. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts (© Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Francis Bartlett Donation of 1900, 03.804).

times. "Indigenous" is inaccurate because they almost certainly displaced earlier occupants. "Native" is better, except for the word's unfortunate modern connotations. Here, I use "Italic" to refer to the non-Greek occupants of Apulia, as opposed to "Italiote" for the Greek populations.

By the early sixth century B.C.E., these Italic people had established many substantial settlements, such as those at Ruvo di Puglia, Gravina, and Rutigliano in Peucetia, where contacts with both Greece and Etruria are demonstrated by rich tomb goods found at many sites. One scholar has speculated that the high level of civilization attained by the Italic people of Apulia was one of the factors that discouraged Greeks from colonizing the Adriatic coast.[4]

Our knowledge of these people is based almost entirely on archaeological evidence, since they left little or no writing, and contemporary Greek comments about them tend to be hostile. Many of their settlements are known primarily through their rich tombs, but some habitation sites have been systematically excavated in the past and others are now parts of ongoing archaeological research projects.[5]

Relations between the Greeks of Taranto and the Italic people of Apulia were usually fraught. Herodotus tells of a battle between Tarentines and Messapians, usually dated to 473 B.C.E., that was the greatest slaughter of Greeks ever recorded,[6] and Pausanias tells of two fifth-century B.C.E. dedications by Tarentines at Delphi, one celebrating victory over Messapians and another over Peucetians.[7] The traditional view is that relations between Taranto and the Italic people improved during the last quarter of the fifth century B.C.E., and the principal evidence seems to be "the deep and irreversible wave of hellenisation" of the people of Apulia on the assumption that Taranto was its primary source.[8] The spread of Apulian red-figure pottery is often cited as an indicator of this Hellenization with the concomitant belief that the vases were produced in Taranto.[9] However, there is archaeological and textual evidence that points to strong links between Athens and the Italic people of Apulia during the last quarter of the fifth century B.C.E., which raises questions about the source of Hellenization and the degree to which relations with Taranto improved.[10] By the middle of the fourth century, Tarentines found it necessary to bring in mercenaries to combat threats from the Italic people.[11] In short, the sources of Greek influence on the Italics of Apulia need to be reconsidered.

PRODUCTION OF APULIAN RED-FIGURE VASES

There is general agreement among scholars that the earliest Apulian red-figure vases were produced

[4] De Juliis 1996, 550.

[5] Annual reports on excavations in Apulia appear in *Taras*, published since 1981, and *Attività archeologica in Puglia*, published annually in *Atti del Convegno di studi sulla Magna Grecia, Taranto*. For Monte Sannace, see Ciancio 1989 (with bibliography of earlier work). For Gravina, see Small 1992; Ciancio 1997. For Bitonto, see Riccardi 2003. For Rutigliano (*contrada* Bigetti), see Damato 2001. See De Juliis (2006) for the first publication of the rich necropolis at Rutigliano, where some 400 tombs dating from the seventh to fourth centuries B.C.E. were excavated between 1976 and 1980.

[6] Hdt. 7.170.

[7] Paus. 10.10.6, 10.13.10. Both are usually dated to the first half of the fifth century B.C.E., the first before 473 and the second after (see Nenci 1976).

[8] E.g., De Juliis 2000, 25.

[9] De Juliis 1988, 98–116.

[10] For late fifth-century Attic vases at Ruvo and elsewhere, see infra n. 16; see also Thuc. 6.44, 7.33.

[11] For a summary of the fourth-century condottieri employed by Taras, see Strabo 6.3.4.

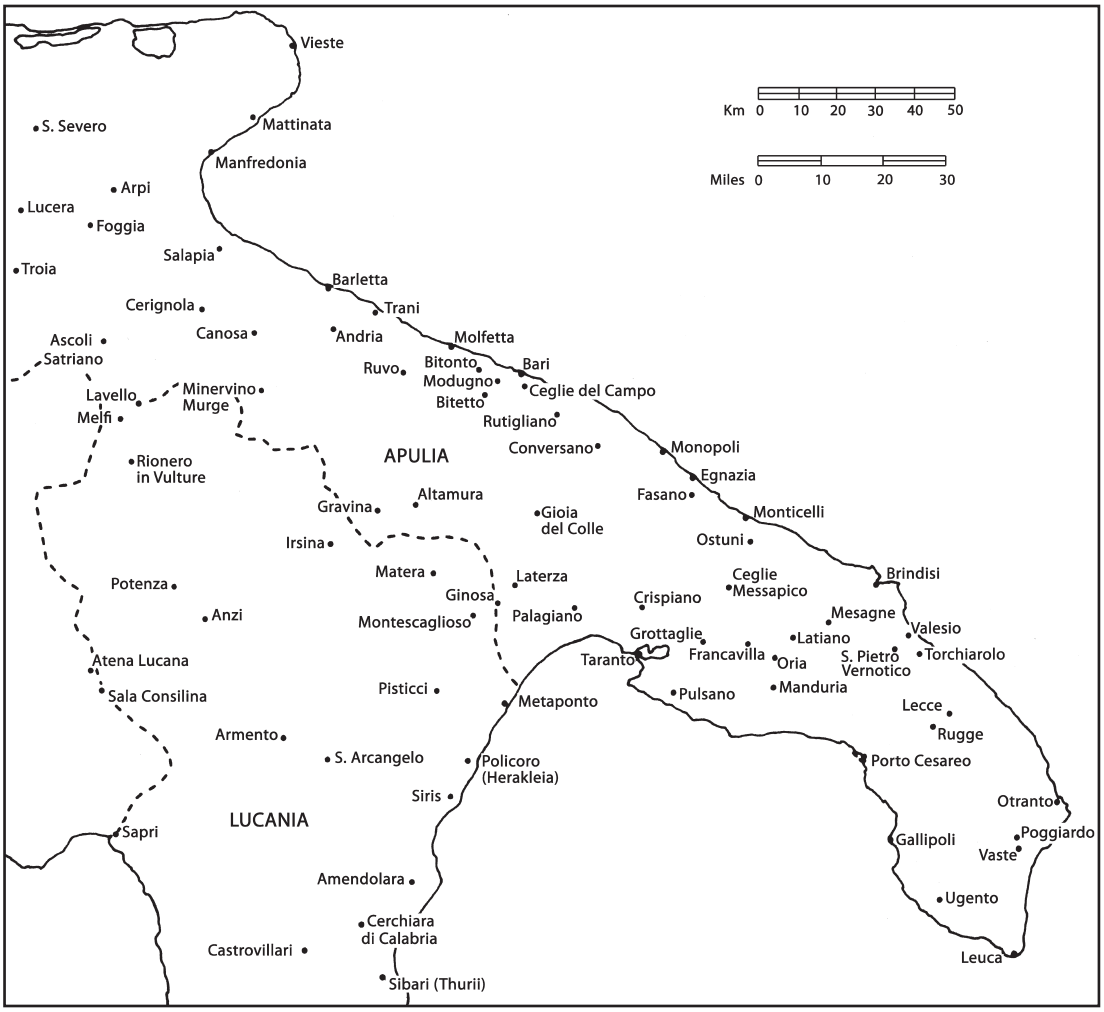

Fig. 2. Map of Apulia and Lucania (Trendall and Cambitoglou 1978–1982, 1:fig. 1; © Oxford University Press).

during the third quarter of the fifth century B.C.E., and—given the close parallels in shape, patternwork, and figure drawing between the early vases and Attic vases from Polygnotos and his group[12]—most agree that the first painters must have trained in Attic workshops.[13] There is also general agreement that from the start, Early South Italian can be divided stylistically into two schools of vase painting. The earliest is called Lucanian and is followed a bit later by a second school called Apulian. Early on, "the painters of both seem to have worked in close cooperation and either style reflects the influence of the other."[14] Within a couple of decades, the differences between the two schools in style, subject, and shape became clear. Traditionally, the Early Lucanian workshops were said to have been in Metaponto, while those of the Early Apulian painters were in Taranto.

In 1973, part of the Ceramicus of Metaponto was excavated, revealing several kilns and pits in which fragments of pots and wasters were found, including works by four Early Lucanian painters (the Amykos Painter and three of his successors: the Dolon, Creusa, and Anabates Painters).[15] By conventional dating, these workshops functioned from the late fifth century

[12] *ARV*², 1027–64; *RVAp*, 4.

[13] Macdonald (1981) argues that Attic painters emigrated to South Italy. Denoyelle (1997) suggests that South Italians could have gone to Greece and apprenticed in Attic workshops—perhaps with the Niobid Painter.

[14] Trendall 1989, 18.

[15] Trendall 1967a, 29–50, 83–104; D'Andria 1975, 356–77.

B.C.E. down to ca. 370 B.C.E. Thus, there can be little doubt that Metaponto was a center for the production of some Early Lucanian red-figure vases, though no works by the earliest Lucanian painter, the Pisticci Painter, have been found there.

For more than half a century, most scholars have assumed that Apulian vases were produced in Taranto; however, there is still no solid archaeological evidence supporting this assumption. Early in the last century, some scholars suggested Ruvo di Puglia[16] and Ceglie del Campo, near Bari,[17] as likely locations for the Apulian workshops, based on the large number of vases found at those and nearby sites. Relatively few Apulian vases have been found at Taranto.

In his first published article in 1934, Trendall argued that style rather than provenance should be the criterion by which the location of a workshop should be established, and that it was "much more likely that the main stream of South Italian pottery would, in its initial stages flow from one of the larger and more important towns."[18] He argued there for Taranto and continued to hold that position throughout his life; however, he did come to believe that after 330 B.C.E., Apulian workshops may also have been established in the region near Canosa.[19] Recently, other scholars have restated Trendall's position, insisting that Apulian vases before 330 B.C.E. were made in Taranto.[20] The argument that Apulian vases were produced in Taranto continues to be based on the assumption that only a rich, cultured city could have fostered the "beginnings of a great industry."[21] As Moon wrote in 1929, "the claim of Taranto lies principally in the fact of her importance and prosperity during the early part of the life of the industry."[22]

Trendall repeatedly explained the relative paucity of Apulian vases found at Taranto as a result of the fact that "the necropolis is deeply buried beneath the modern city and barely capable of scientific excavation."[23] Recent studies, however, have shown that some 12,000 tomb contexts are known from emergency excavations over the past century.[24] Of those, 1,296 tombs contained Apulian red-figure vases.[25] However, the characteristics of those vases are quite different from those found outside Taranto. They are generally small vases, and they lack almost completely representations of *naiskoi*,[26] mythological scenes, warriors, and symposia, which are common scenes on vases found in Italic tombs (fig. 3).[27] Kraters are rarely found in Tarentine tombs. However, fragments of many large vases, particularly calyx kraters, have been found in cemetery contexts outside tombs, and the suggestion has been made that in Taranto, large vases were used as tomb markers (*semata*) rather than as tomb goods.[28]

At present, there is still no hard archaeological evidence supporting the argument that Taranto was the principal site of red-figure workshops, early or late.[29] However, fragments of pots found in production contexts at Metaponto, including pieces excavated from the kilns themselves, demonstrate conclusively that some Late Apulian painters associated with the workshop of the Darius Painter operated there.[30] Thus, the answer to questions about the location of Apulian red-figure workshops during the history of the fabric may be much more complex than has been suggested in the past.[31] A broad program of clay analysis may help sort through some of the complexities.[32]

MARKETS: THE NATURE OF THE EVIDENCE

Attic Vases in Apulia

Attic red-figure vases dated to the fifth century B.C.E. have been found at 40 Italic sites in Apulia as well as at Taranto.[33] Particularly rich concentrations of them have been found in Peucetia at Ruvo di Puglia, Ceglie del Campo, and Rutigliano. The traditional view, though never directly stated, seems to have been that Attic vases reached native sites through Taranto. So Trendall could write of the influence on Early Apulian painters of Attic artists such as the Kadmos, Pronomos, and Talos Painters, noting that "vases by all three have been found at Ruvo and should therefore have been

[16] Macchioro 1912, 168–71.
[17] Wuilleumier 1929.
[18] Trendall 1934, 179.
[19] *RVAp*, 450.
[20] E.g., Robinson 2004, 197. However, Robinson (1990) does accept some isolated earlier exceptions.
[21] Tillyard 1923, 11.
[22] Moon 1929, 48.
[23] *RVAp*, xlvii.
[24] Graepler 2002.
[25] Hoffmann 2005, 19.
[26] Of 150 Apulian vases with known findspots that include a representation of a figure or figures in a *naiskos*, none comes from a Greek site (see Lohmann 1979).
[27] Lohmann 1979, 20; see also Hoffmann (2002) for an analysis of the ceramic contents of 549 tombs.
[28] For a list of published fragments, see Hoffmann 2002, 284–87.
[29] Fontannaz 2002, 420–21; 2005, 133–36; Schmidt 2002, 351–64.
[30] D'Andria 1975, 356, no. 4; 358, no. 14; 364, no. 33 (from Furnace B); 422–26, nos. 290, 292; 435–37.
[31] Schmidt 2002, 264; Cracolici 2003, 87. Though Trendall (*RVAp*, xlvii) found the idea of itinerant potters and painters "improbable," it remains an idea worth pursuing.
[32] For a preliminary analysis of the clay of South Italian pottery, see Grave et al. 1996–1997.
[33] Mannino 1997, 391.

accessible to the local painters."[34] Since Trendall was convinced that Early Apulian vases were painted in Taranto, and since Ruvo was an Italic settlement nearly 100 km from Taranto, unlikely to have been visited by Tarentine vase painters, the implication is that the vases passed through Taranto (where the artists would have seen them) on their way to Ruvo. To confuse matters, Trendall's use of the term "Apulians" can be rather loose, often referring to Greek colonists (Italiotes) rather than to Italics.[35]

Given Athenians' well-documented trade in vases with Spina, at the head of the Adriatic, the idea that traders in Attic vases could also have stopped at native centers on the Adriatic coast of Apulia makes obvious sense. Recent studies point to interactions between Athenians and Peucetians resulting in the production of native shapes made in Attic workshops, some painted by identifiable Attic painters.[36] Many of these vases have been found at Ruvo, and Mannino has recently posited a privileged relationship between that center and traders of Athenian products.[37] Other scholars have explored contacts between Apulia and Greece that date to as early as the ninth century B.C.E.[38] and have suggested the possible locations of ports.[39]

In short, there is no reason to view Taranto as a middleman for Attic vases in Peucetia. Indeed, a growing body of evidence points to direct contacts between Peucetian centers and Athens.[40] Robinson has even argued that residents of Ruvo visiting Athens during the second half of the fifth century B.C.E. "is so highly probable as to be regarded as certain."[41]

Provenances of Apulian Vases

Most of the more than 10,000 Apulian red-figure vases listed in Trendall and Cambitoglou's catalogues (*RVAp* and two supplements) were found in Apulia.[42] Trendall estimated that "the total number of Apulian vases found outside the province and its immediate confines would amount to only about one percent of the extant production."[43] In short, the market for the vases was local, but attempts to define the precise nature of the local markets are problematic because so few vases have a recorded provenance at a specific site in Apulia.

Fig. 3. Apulian red-figure volute krater from Ceglie del Campo. On the neck, Eros. On the body, a funerary scene showing the statue of a youth with his horse in a *naiskos*, ca. 340 B.C.E., ht. 124.6 cm. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts (© Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Francis Bartlett Donation of 1900, 03.804).

It is worth noting here that Trendall was much more interested in the style of the painting on a vase than he was in its provenance; thus, the inclusion of provenance for vases in *RVAp* can be quite haphazard. From museum catalogues and fascicles of the *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum*, a recorded provenance can, in fact, be found for many of the vases listed in his catalogues without one.[44]

A large percentage of the vases listed in *RVAp* (as opposed to the supplements) are in museums and were

[34] Trendall 1990, 218.

[35] Trendall 1991, 152.

[36] Jentoft-Nilsen 1990; Todisco and Sisto 1998; Colivicchi 2006. For a white-ground nestoris from Rutigliano attributed to the Christie Painter, see Fedele 1984, 32 (unnumbered color plate), 58, no. 65, pls. 65, 66. For the attribution, see Trendall 1990, 223 n. 28.

[37] Mannino 2004, 347.

[38] Ciancio 1998.

[39] Dunbabin 1948, 148; Lo Porto 1981, 14.

[40] For another example of Greek influence without colonization, see Domínguez 2002.

[41] Robinson 2004, 197.

[42] Trendall and Cambitoglou 1978–1982, 1983, 1991–1992.

[43] *RVAp*, xlviii.

[44] E.g., Heydemann 1872; Walters 1896; see also Sena Chiesa and Paribeni (1971–1972), where the entire collection comes from Ruvo. For a more comprehensive list of vases from Ruvo, see Montanaro 2006, 2007.

added to the collections in the late 18th and 19th centuries, when they were often excavated by locals who sold them to collectors. One observer wrote in 1836 that Ruvo di Puglia, an Italic site, had become a new center for the discovery of vases comparable to what Vulci (in Etruria) had been for Attic vases.[45] Some of these vases have a provenance listed, but most do not, since collectors often bought them from dealers in Naples.

Only about 20% of the vases listed in *RVAp* and its supplements have specific provenances listed. This figure, however, is slightly misleading because most of the additional vases in the supplements appeared during the 1970s and 1980s in antiquities markets, often having been obtained from *tombaroli* conducting illegal excavations.[46] The market for Apulian vases reached new heights in the 1980s; so, for example, in the decade between 1984 and 1994, more than 1,400 Apulian vases were on the market, as opposed to 546 the previous decade and 201 the decade before that, and few of those came from established collections.[47] In other words, they had recently come out of the ground through illegal excavations.

In spite of the relatively small number of Apulian vases with a specific provenance, some important observations can be made about the ancient market.[48] A small fraction of those vases with a provenance come from Taranto, the one Greek city in Apulia.[49] The others come from Italic contexts, with a preponderance from Peucetia. It is also likely, given the techniques of the *tombaroli*, that the majority of the vases without a known provenance—particularly those that appeared on the market during the past few decades—did not come from urban Taranto but rather from more rural Italic sites.

Almost all the recorded vases come from tombs rather than habitation sites, and it should be noted that Italic tombs, particularly in Peucetia, can be unambiguously identified by the contracted (*rannicchiato*) position of the skeleton, as opposed to the supine position used by the Greeks.

The nature of the market can be refined a bit more by looking at shapes. Certain shapes were principally obtained by Italic people.[50] For example, the volute krater, the most characteristic of Apulian shapes, is found almost exclusively in Italic tombs and only very rarely in Greek contexts. The popularity of this shape started with Attic imports such as the famous Pronomos vase, which depicts the cast of a satyr play and was found in a tomb at Ruvo di Puglia.[51] Early Apulian painters produced them for the Italic market, and by the mid fourth century B.C.E., the shape had sometimes grown to gigantic proportions (as tall as 142 cm), which provided a vast canvas for the painter to decorate.

The Apulian column krater is never found in a Greek context. Rather, it is found in Italic tombs, predominantly in Peucetia (fig. 4). Before the middle of the fourth century B.C.E., it is the only shape on which warriors in nonmyth scenes appear, and the only shape on which figures in Italic dress are depicted.[52] By way of contrast, the calyx krater rarely appears in Italic contexts but seems to have been favored by Tarentines, at least during the first half of the fourth century B.C.E. As mentioned earlier, however, most of the Apulian vases found in Tarentine tombs are relatively small: oinochoai, lekythoi, skyphoi, lekanides, and pelikai—vases that seldom have complex mythological scenes on them.[53]

The most important conclusions that come from a study of markets for vases in Apulia are that (1) the Italic people were in direct contact with mainland Greeks and did not depend on colonists as intermediaries; (2) Italic people provided the principal markets for Apulian vases, particularly the larger vessels with complex imagery on them; and (3) some shapes, such as column kraters and volute kraters, were produced primarily for Italic people. These points are of particular importance for a discussion of imagery and help give new perceptions of a people otherwise lost to us.

IMAGERY

Images Associated with Theater

Images associated to one degree or another with Attic tragedy appear on many Apulian vases, particularly during the second and third quarters of the fourth century B.C.E. The nature of that association has been

[45] Braun 1836, 162.

[46] See Graepler and Mazzei 1996; Mazzei 2002.

[47] Elia 2001; Nørskov 2002, 352–53.

[48] For a recent attempt to quantify the distribution of Early Apulian vases with known provenances, see Carpenter 2003, 6–11.

[49] Though only a few of the 500 Apulian vases listed by Trendall that are in the National Archaeological Museum in Naples or the 450 in the National Archaeological Museum at Bari are given a specific provenance, it is safe to assume that none of them came from Taranto and therefore must have come from Italic sites. The same can be said for the hundreds of vases in local museums such as those in Barletta, Canosa, Gravina, and Bitonto.

[50] Carpenter 2003, 8–10. Barr Sharrar (2008, 7) notes the special significance the shape had in Italic regions and suggests that Attic producers supplied examples in both metal and clay.

[51] Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. no. 3240 (81673) (*ARV*^{2}, 1336, no. 1).

[52] Frielinghaus 1995; Carpenter 2003, 10–16.

[53] Hoffmann 2005.

hotly debated for more than three decades, since Trendall and Webster published *Illustrations of Greek Tragedy* in 1971.[54] At one extreme are those who see scenes directly derived from theater productions, and at the other are those who see no necessary connection at all.[55] A moderate view between the two poles has recently been stated by Taplin, who views the images as being "informed by the plays."[56] At the very least, one can point to depictions of myths on Apulian vases that reflect versions unique to a particular tragedian.[57]

Among those who see a connection between the images and productions of tragedies, the point is usually made that Tarentines "were addicted to theatre," and thus these vases are an expression of this obsession.[58] The traditional view, as stated by Green, is that theater productions in Apulia were limited to Taranto and did not occur in Italic settlements.[59] In turn, the implication is that Tarentine fascination with the theater lends support to the connection between the images and the productions, a point reinforced by calling the vases Tarentine rather than Apulian, as some scholars do. The argument quickly becomes circular. While this is not the place to enter the discussion about the connection between images and theater, two points should be made about the Tarentine connection that render the issue less Hellenocentric.

First, there is insufficient evidence to conclude how active Taranto was as a center for the production of Greek tragedies in the fourth century B.C.E. The earliest source that refers to the theater is from the second century B.C.E., and all of the others are much later.[60] The site of the actual theater at Taranto has not yet been convincingly identified. Images on vases provide the only hard evidence for theater productions at Taranto, but, as discussed above, the manufacture of these vases may not be conclusively tied to Taranto.

Fig. 4. Apulian red-figure column krater from Ruvo di Puglia, showing Dionysos with a satyr and maenad, ca. 360 B.C.E., ht. 50.6 cm. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts (© Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Gift of Thomas Gold Appleton 76.65).

A second, more important point is that very few of the Apulian vases with images said to reflect Greek tragedies have been found at Taranto, while most of those where the provenance is known come from Italic tombs.[61] In fact, the majority of those with known provenance comes from the rich Italic site at Ruvo di Puglia, 100 km from Taranto.[62] Furthermore, a third of the complex scenes said to refer to tragedy appear

[54] Trendall and Webster 1971.

[55] In Trendall and Webster (1971, 11) and elsewhere, Trendall made an analogy between a vase painting and "a poster, which shows one or two highlights of the play." Later, Trendall (1990, 227) wrote: "on the whole . . . South Italian vases illustrate tragedies rather than represent them"; see also Trendall 1988, 137–38. For a recent review of a close connection between image and drama, see Green 2007. The other extreme is represented by Moret (1975, 6), where the images depend entirely upon "l'utilisation de modèles purement figuratifs."

[56] Taplin 2007, 25.

[57] E.g., representations of Euripides' *Iphigeneia at Tauris*, particularly inv. no. 3223 in the Naples National Archaeological Museum (*RVAp*, 8, no. 3). There, Iphigenia, holding a temple key, approaches Orestes, who sits on an altar, as Pylades looks on. All three figures are named. Above is a temple beside which Artemis sits. This recalls the recognition scene from that play.

[58] Green 1994, 56.

[59] Green 1986, 186 n. 18; 1991, 56.

[60] Polyb. 8.30. For other sources, see Wuilleumier 1939, 248 n. 6.

[61] Taplin (2007) lists 109 vases that may reflect Greek tragedies. Of those, 75 are Apulian, and of the Apulian vases, 21 can reasonably be assigned a findspot. Only one is said to come from Taranto. Of those 75 vases, 36 of them have come to light since 1970.

[62] In discussions of the distribution of Apulian vases, Ruvo is often described as "heavily Hellenized." In fact, almost everything that is known about Ruvo comes from the contents of tombs, since the actual site of the settlement has not been discovered. The use of "Hellenized" in this context is based almost entirely on the appearance of Attic, Apulian, and Lucanian figure-decorated pottery in the tombs, but the situation is more complex. Montanaro (2006) has shown that by the seventh century B.C.E., there were intense commercial relationships between Ruvo and the Etruscans of both Campania and Etruria.

on volute kraters, a shape that seems to have been of special significance to people of Peucetia and is very rarely found in Greek contexts. In short, on the basis of evidence currently available, it seems that Italic people, not Greeks, provided the principal market for vases with scenes that refer to Greek tragedies.

Comic actors first appear on Apulian vases at the end of the fifth century B.C.E. and continue to appear on them into the fourth century. In 1967, Trendall listed 78 vases and fragments of vases that depicted comic actors.[63] Most of the more elaborate scenes appear on kraters, which make up about half of the total. Only 36 of these vases (including 19 kraters) have a recorded provenance. Five of the kraters are from Taranto, while eight are from Italic sites in Apulia (four from Ruvo).[64]

These vases are traditionally but inaccurately called "phlyax vases" in the belief that they show "phlyakes," a local Tarentine form of comedy mentioned by Athenaeus (14.621f). Recent studies, however, have shown that at least some of the scenes on these vases refer to Attic rather than local comedies.[65] On the kraters, comic actors are often shown performing on a stage, which is sometimes depicted in great detail (fig. 5). The stage appears on six of the eight kraters found at Italic sites.

The traditional view, recently restated by Green, has been that theater productions, including comedies, were produced only in the Greek colonies of Magna Graecia and never at the Italic sites.[66] Scenes with figures acting on a stage must, however, depict productions, and the presence of these scenes at Ruvo and other Italic sites implies that the people who obtained them understood both the stage and the play. To argue that the locals bought them because they were pretty pictures that they did not understand or because they liked the shape is to revert to an outdated language for colonials.

If comedies were performed at Ruvo and Bari and Bitonto, tragedies, too, may have been produced there—a possibility that needs to be seriously considered. Dearden has speculated that "a troupe sailing to Magna Graecia at the end of the fifth century might be expected to consist of three actors (either comic or tragic) and probably an aulos player at a minimum."[67]

Fig. 5. Apulian red-figure calyx krater from Ruvo di Puglia, showing comic actors, ca. 390 B.C.E., ht. 30.6 cm. New York, the Metropolitan Museum of Art (© The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Fletcher Fund 1924, 24.97.104).

His assumption is that they would have played to Greek audiences, but there is no reason to exclude the possibility that they played to an Italic audience at Ruvo, perhaps having crossed the Adriatic to Bari as their first stop.

Presence, Context, and Meaning of "Orphic"

The term "Orphic" frequently appears in discussions of Apulian imagery. Images associated with Dionysos or the underworld are often related to "the Dionysiac-Orphic Mysteries" or "Dionysiac-Orphic doctrines"[68] or to either "Orphic belief"[69] or "Orphic myth."[70] Brauer summed up a common preconception when he wrote: "Like other South Italiot Greeks, the Tarentines were drawn to the Orphic mysteries."[71]

It is unclear what the word "Orphic" means in any of these cases. Technically it refers to content derived from poems attributed to the legendary poet, Orpheus, most of which date to the Hellenistic period or later, though as Graf has noted, "the testimonies

[63] Trendall 1967b. Trendall (1995, 128) adds "just over 30." This is still the most comprehensive list of such vases.

[64] Also from Taranto are nine oinochoai, two gutti, and some fragments.

[65] Csapo 1986; Taplin 1993, esp. 41–7.

[66] Green 1991, 56.

[67] Dearden 1999, 232. For the possibility that a locally rehearsed chorus sang "interlude songs" rather than the "dramatist's original (sometimes difficult?) lyrics," see Taplin 1999, 38.

[68] E.g., Leventi 2007, 132–35.

[69] E.g., Carter 2006, 172.

[70] E.g., Bell 1995, 9–10.

[71] Brauer 1986, 91.

of several authors before Plato . . . present a rather coherent picture of what Orpheus can stand for in the fifth and very early fourth century: poems of eschatological content which must have played a role in the mystery rites of the ecstatic Dionysos and whose doctrinal content was so close to Pythagoreanism that some authors assumed that Pythagoras or some early Pythagoreans were the real authors."[72] As Burkert has shown, however, there is no evidence for a monolithic Orphic cult or religion before the Hellenistic period; rather, there were itinerant Orphic practitioners who performed sacrifices and initiations.[73]

Orphic poems establish a new theogony in which Dionysos, the son of Zeus and Persephone, is destined to be the new king of the gods. But while still a child, he is destroyed and eaten by the Titans. Athena saves his heart and brings it to Zeus, who is able to recreate him through intercourse with Semele. Zeus destroys the Titans with thunderbolts and later creates man from the residual soot.[74] The earliest allusions to central elements of this story, however, date only to the third century B.C.E., and the most developed forms of it date to the first centuries of the Christian era.[75]

Here the question is, what reason is there for thinking that Orphic initiations were of particular importance in Apulia? The evidence usually presented is of two principal types: inscribed gold tablets and images of Orpheus on Apulian red-figure vases.

The gold tablets, all found in funerary contexts, some in South Italy, are paper-thin leaves with verses inscribed on them that tell the soul where to go, what to do, and what to say in the underworld. Graf has suggested that the texts are Orphic in the sense that they are probably based on Orphic poems.[76] The texts on two inscribed gold tablets from a tomb at Pelinna in Thessaly (first published in 1987),[77] which relate to 15 previously known tablets from various parts of the Greek world, for the first time give to Dionysos an explicit role in the deliverance of the soul of an initiate, where the deceased is instructed to "[t]ell Persephone that the Bacchic One himself released you."[78] Gold tablets have been found in Greek graves at Thurii and Hipponium, on the instep and toe of South Italy. Others have been found in Thessaly, Crete, and Sicily. But no gold tablets have been found in Apulia or in an Italic context.[79]

Orpheus commonly appears in underworld scenes on Apulian vases. Typically he stands to the left of the building in which Hades and Persephone are housed. Dressed in flowing robes and a Phrygian cap, he plays his kithara.[80] Orpheus is notable for being one of the few mortals who visited the underworld. His mission there was to retrieve his wife, Eurydice, and in one of the underworld scenes, she is shown with him.[81] Since these scenes show him taking part in a well-known myth, there is no reason to associate these scenes with Orphic mysteries.

As Schmidt pointed out, one of the few representations of Orpheus that could conceivably be linked to the mysteries is on an Apulian amphora in Basel,[82] where Orpheus with his kithara stands in a *naiskos* next to a seated man who holds a scroll. One could imagine the scroll to be an Orphic text. In addition, an Apulian volute krater in Toledo, Ohio (fig. 6),[83] has been linked to the gold tablets discussed above and said to come "very close to what the new [Pelinna] texts presuppose, Dionysos interceding with the powers beyond on behalf of his initiate."[84] Orpheus, however, does not appear on this vase. That Dionysos on Apulian vases is associated with the journey to the underworld seems very likely, but there is nothing in the imagery on the Toledo vase that allows or requires the term "Orphic" for its meaning. In particular, there is no evidence to support a conclusion that the Dionysos who appears so often on Apulian vases reflects the Orphic myth of his birth from Persephone and destruction by the Titans. The word "Orphic" should be avoided in discussions of Apulian imagery and religion.

CONCLUSION

Apulian red-figure vase painting has traditionally been seen as an extension of Attic red-figure, and as such it is included in most surveys of Greek art. Both the technique and style of the painting and many of the shapes of the pots are those perfected in Athens, and it is more than likely that the earliest painters were

[72] Graf 2000, 63.
[73] Burkert 1982, 1–12; Graf and Johnston 2007, 163–64.
[74] West 1983, 140.
[75] Edmonds 1999, 38–49; cf. Graf and Johnston 2007, 66–93.
[76] Graf 1993, 250–55.
[77] Tsantsanoglou and Parássoglou 1987.
[78] Graf and Johnston 2007, 36–7.
[79] For a list, see Graf and Johnston 2007, 4–49.
[80] For a list of 40 known underworld scenes on Apulian vases, see Moret 1993, 349–51; see also 313, fig. 5 (a typical representation of Orpheus).
[81] Naples, National Archaeological Museum, inv. no. SA 709 (*RVAp*, 18, no. 284).
[82] Basel, Antikenmuseum, inv. no. S40 (*RVAp*, 25, no. 15; Schmidt 1975, 112).
[83] Toledo, Toledo Museum of Art, inv. no. 1994.19 (*RVAp*, 18, no. 41a1).
[84] Graf 1993, 256.

Fig. 6. Apulian red-figure volute krater, showing Dionysos with Hades and Persephone in the underworld, ca. 350 B.C.E., ht. 92.2 cm. Toledo, Toledo Museum of Art (courtesy Toledo Museum of Art; gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, Florence Scott Libbey, and the Egypt Exploration Society, by exchange, 1994.19).

themselves Athenians. These connections, however, have often led students to ignore important differences between Attic and Apulian vases.

Unlike Attic vases that were often widely exported, Apulian vases were made for a local market, seldom traveling more than 100 km from the place of manufacture (wherever it was). They rarely travel outside Apulia. It seems likely that the painters knew their markets well and had them specifically in mind when they depicted complex mythological scenes on their vases. If so, the images on Apulian vases should provide some insight into the culture of the people who obtained them. So, for example, the regular occurrence at Italic sites of imagery that is related to theater productions may shed new light on the spread of Greek theater during the fourth century B.C.E. The remarkable quantity of vases with Dionysiac imagery in Italic tombs that is quite different from that found on Attic vases may help define a new perspective on that god and his mysteries and may also provide a context for the eventual Roman prohibition of the Bacchanalia in 186 B.C.E.

The old models that argued that Greeks produced the vases for colonial Greeks, or that locals obtained them primarily because they were Greek, must be discarded. Evidence discussed above points to the conclusion that the Italic people of Apulia provided the principal market for large vases with complex imagery, at least to judge from tomb contexts. So we need to look at the imagery with the assumption that it was made with their interests and values in mind. To use the term "Hellenized" for these people, who had been trading with the Greeks for several hundred years, is meaningless unless the specific meaning is that they were Hellenized in the same sense that mainland Greeks were orientalized in the seventh century. In other words, the Italic inhabitants of Apulia took only what they wanted from Greek culture and transformed it into something new that was uniquely their own. Ultimately, the message is that we should approach Apulian red-figure vases on their own terms.

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