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ARCHAEOLOGY OF MOBILITY: CIRCULATION OF GOODS AND PEOPLE IN LATE ANTIQUITY AND THE MIDDLE AGES

ARQUEOLOGIA DE LA MOBILITAT: CIRCULACIÓ DE BÉNS
I PERSONES EN ÈPOCA TARDOANTIGA I MEDIEVAL

MARC BOUZAS, LLUÍS PALAHÍ (EDS.)

**ARCHAEOLOGY OF MOBILITY: CIRCULATION OF GOODS
AND PEOPLE IN LATE ANTIQUITY AND THE MIDDLE AGES.
MATERIAL, TECHNICAL AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES
FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A SOCIETY**

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INTERCANVIS MATERIALS, TÈCNICS I CULTURALS
PER CONSTRUIR UNA SOCIETAT

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VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE TRACES OF TRADE: AN ANALYSIS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC DYNAMICS IN THE LATE MIDDLE AGES AT CENCELLE (TARQUINIA, VT)

Flora Miele ^{1, 2, 3, 4}

INTRODUCTION

The movement and circulation of goods do not merely generate individual knowledge or memories; they leave traces that, sometimes visible and evident, other times more subtle and invisible, are imprinted on the landscapes traversed and the societies involved (Simbula, 2009). Mobility, both material and immaterial, thus constitutes a central element for understanding the medieval world, as the movement of people, goods, and knowledge reshapes spaces, social practices, and forms of interaction between communities. The circulation of people, objects, and knowledge represents a key field of historical and archaeological research, offering crucial insights into the relationships between production, consumption, and trade in the late Middle Ages. Mobility emerges not merely as an economic phenomenon but as an interpretative framework for understanding social relations, hierarchies, and community strategies (Molinari, 2010). This period is marked by a profound transformation in material culture, with a growing visibility of objects in documentary sources and an increased complexity of manufacturing, particularly in ceramic production. The progressive diffusion of glazed wares from the twelfth century onward reflects broader changes in exchange systems, including wider regional and international circulation (Molinari & Orecchioni, 2017; Orecchioni, 2025; Rao & Zoni, 2025, pp. 13-15). Recent scholarship has questioned the interpretation of glazed ceramics as luxury or status markers, emphasizing instead their role as commodities within interconnected exchange networks (Molinari, 2003). This perspective underscores

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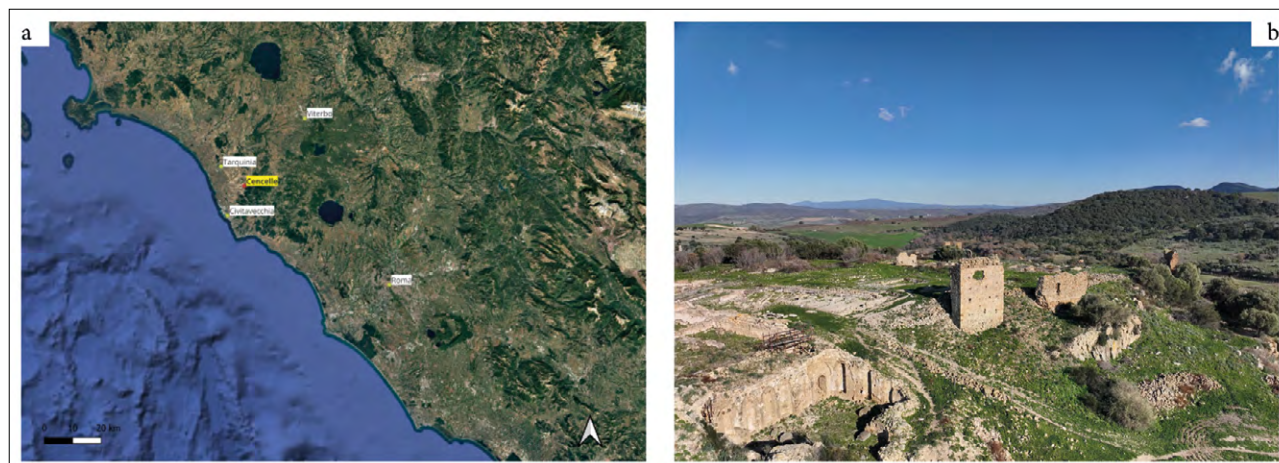


Fig. 1: The medieval town of Cencelle (Tarquinia, VT). a: location; b: the archaeological area seen from the south (drone photograph and processing by F. Moschetto).

the need to integrate material and written sources to investigate late medieval commercial systems beyond rigid distinctions between local and long-distance trade (Giannichedda, 2006; Fara, 2022; Basso & Gelichi, 2025; Rao & Zoni, 2025). Territorial and political transformations between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, characterized by multiple boundaries, urban centers, and interconnected commercial circuits, facilitated the circulation of goods of diverse origins and the construction of complex trade networks, within which even medium—small centers could play a significant role (Mainoni & Barile, 2018). It is within this complex framework that the present case study is situated. The analysis of ceramic materials recovered at Cencelle (Tarquinia, VT) (Fig. 1), datable between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries, reveals the coexistence of local productions and imported artifacts, raising questions about market dynamics and trade relations both within and beyond the city (Ermini Pani, Somma, & Stasolla, 2014; Stasolla, 2012). This study builds on previous research on the site and surrounding territory (Stasolla, 2009; Barone, 2014), aiming to update and reconsider, in light of new data and an integrated reading of material and historical sources, Cencelle's position within a network of exchanges connecting the inland of northern Lazio to the Tyrrhenian coast, an area characterized by intense commercial flows in the late Middle Ages. The study focuses on imported ceramics within their wider material, historical, and geopolitical context, interpreting their presence as evidence of access to supply networks rather than social prestige, and contributing to broader reflections on consumption patterns between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries (Molinari, 2003). Cencelle, a papal foundation established by Leo IV in 854 CE and inhabited at least until the eighteenth century, provides the opportunity to observe these dynamics between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries through the study of material culture, with a particular focus on imported ceramics. The presence of a ceramic production facility active from the first half of the thirteenth century to the mid-fifteenth century (Antonelli, 2014), alongside the circulation of non-local wares, allows for a reflection on the economic strategies of the local community and on Cencelle's role in regional and Mediterranean exchange networks. This makes it possible to evaluate the spatial and temporal distribution of local (Brancazi, 2021; Previti, 2026) and imported artifacts within the complex urban structure (Miele, 2025a). The aim is to identify and discuss the visible and invisible features of trade, assessing the site's role within regional and interregional networks, and contributing to the debate on transformations in medieval economic systems in central Italy. In this perspective, the study considers, on the one hand, immediately

recognizable material evidence such as ceramic artifacts, and, on the other, less tangible, difficult-to-measure factors, showing that medieval trade transported not only objects but also influenced mentalities, behaviors, and social structures.

CONTEXT

Cencelle is located on a naturally defensible hill near the Mignone River and the Melledra stream, a site favored by Pope Leo IV to ensure immediate access to essential resources such as water and construction materials (Ermini Pani, 2014, p. 3). The settlement was connected to a complex infrastructure system, with two main axes, the Via Aurelia along the coast and the Via Cornelia inland (Corsi, 2025), complemented by secondary routes linking smaller settlements and the port of *Centumcellae* (Civitavecchia) (Vallelonga, 2012; Citter, Nardi Combescure & Stasolla, 2018; Vacatello, 2023). In the Middle Ages, maritime routes along the Ligurian, Tyrrhenian, and insular coasts, including small natural landing sites, expanded trade networks connecting Liguria, Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica. Within this system, the coast of present-day Lazio held a central position throughout the late Middle Ages, both geographically and, above all, economically (Palermo, 2009). Proceeding from south to north, the Lazio coastal strip (Fig. 2) featured several landing points, including Astura with its castle and the ports of Anzio, Nettuno, and Terracina, often affected by silting and therefore mainly used as shelters for small vessels. The core of the regional port system, however, was represented by the Tiber River, navigable from the mouth at Ostia to Rome and beyond, at least as far as Orte, and by the landings of Ostia, Porto, and Fiumicino, which ensured the initial storage of goods (Palermo, 1979). Further north were the ports of Corneto (modern Tarquinia), Montalto, Bagni di Sant'Agostino, and other minor landings, often at the mouths of the Arrone, Fiora, Marta, and Mignone rivers (Nardi Combescure, 2002; Citter & Annoscia, 2021; Vacatello & Contu, 2021).



Fig. 2: View of the Lazio coastal strip captured from Google Earth, showing the main ports and landing sites active in the medieval period (processed by F. Moschetto)

Civitavecchia played a particularly significant role, as its harbour characteristics attracted major investments, establishing it as the principal commercial and military Tyrrhenian port of the Papal State. Along the *Patrimonium Sancti Petri* coast, numerous secondary landing points were also present, such as Santa Marinella, Santa Severa, Cere, and Palo, protected by castles and primarily used for the shipment of grain from the inland (Nardi Combescure, 2020). A detailed description of this coastal strip is provided by medieval and early modern portolan charts and nautical maps, which constitute primary sources for reconstructing coastal shipping routes and geographic references for navigation (Nardi Combescure, 2018). Although archaeological evidence for the medieval ports of this coastal stretch is limited, integrating documentary, cartographic, and archaeological data allows a more precise reconstruction of the port system in northern Lazio and the geo-economic context relevant to Cencelle. Within this framework, the port of Corneto emerges as a particularly important hub already by the late thirteenth century, integrated into north-south maritime routes and characterised by a welcoming policy that included fiscal incentives, especially for Genoese and Ligurian merchants. The absence of a major urban centre such as Rome fostered lively commercial activity here, supported by multiple sea access points. Corneto thus became part of a trade system covering the entire Ligurian-Tyrrhenian basin, fuelled by extensive supply and redistribution markets and the strong interconnection between regional economies. Within this network circulated not only local products but also goods from other Mediterranean basins, redistributed through major ports such as Genoa, Pisa, Naples, and Palermo (Palermo, 2009, p. 100; Palermo, 2019). Documentary sources indicate that one of the main attractions for merchants from northern Italy was grain, produced in abundance in the inland territories of Lazio (Palermo, 1990; Abulafia, 2009). In this context, Cencelle, surrounded by fertile agricultural land and extensive pastures, represented a key economic resource and a functional node for the operations of the Corneto port (Jamme, 2005, p. 355). Thirteenth- and fourteenth-century documents attest to the economic importance of these resources, frequently bought, sold, or leased, as well as the existence of maritime and coastal rights linked to the city, which contributed to making its territory highly contested among Viterbo, Corneto, and Rome (Jamme, 2005, pp. 356, 373). Between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, during a phase of intense economic dynamism, Cencelle was involved in complex political and territorial events, marked by repeated attempts at control by civic and feudal powers, including the Di Vico family, engaged in expansionist policies aimed at dominating sea access points and agricultural resources (Jamme, 2005, p. 395; Nardi Combescure, 2020, pp. 71-72). The centrality of cereal production is further confirmed by the documented presence of millers in the city assembly and by archaeological evidence of milling structures and hydraulic works, attested between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries both inside and outside the city walls (Vallelonga, 2006, p. 182; Annoscia, 2017). Cencelle thus emerges as an integral part of a dynamic scenario characterised by the circulation of goods and people between the coast and the inland. Its connection to the port of Corneto remained central until the mid-fifteenth century, when the decline of the latter and the progressive strengthening of other ports, such as Ancona and especially Civitavecchia, prompted a redefinition of regional trade routes (Palermo, 2009, p. 125). This was further influenced by the discovery of the Tolfa alum mines (Dallai, Bianchi & Stasolla, 2020) and the reorientation of the Roman grain market towards the Marche region, which shifted the main economic and distribution flows. In this new arrangement, the circulation of goods, including

ceramic products, became increasingly linked to the production and exchange networks of inland Lazio, within which Cencelle continued to play a significant, though diminished, role compared to previous centuries (Barone, 2015).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to investigate the role of Cencelle within the exchange networks active between the Late Middle Ages and the early modern period, and to evaluate the mechanisms of access to supply circuits, this study adopted an integrated methodological approach. This combined qualitative and quantitative analyses of ceramic materials, with a specific focus on imported wares, the contextualization of archaeological data through systematic review of published literature, and the use of archaeometric analyses, complemented by experimental archaeology and traceological analysis. This suite of tools allowed the interpretation of ceramics not only as material products but also as indicators of economic dynamics and circulation processes. The ceramic materials analysed originate from all sectors of the site where excavation activities have either been completed or are still ongoing, encompassing all finds recovered up to the 2022 excavation campaign. The investigated areas provide a detailed picture of the main urban functions, including residential, residential-craft, public, religious, and funerary contexts, enabling a comprehensive reading of production, circulation, and consumption dynamics within the city (Fig. 3). Within this methodological framework, the results of analyses conducted in previous studies on ceramic materials recovered from the production complex at Cencelle, including those from the municipal kiln, provide a crucial reference for the interpretation of local artifacts. These studies subjected the artifacts to archaeometric analyses, attributing them to pastes based on a clay matrix identifiable as locally sourced (Antonelli, 2007; Antonelli, Agostini & Pallotta, 2025). Attribution, grounded on both find context and the technological characteristics of the artifacts, was further corroborated by more recent mineralogical-petrographic analyses, which revealed a close correspondence between the compositional features of the clays classified as local and those observed in samples taken from kiln structures and potential clay procurement areas surrounding Cencelle (Cirelli, 2002; Testolini, Thompson & Lemorini, 2023). The precise definition of local productions, as outlined in the literature and supported by available archaeometric data, constituted an essential preliminary step for the identification of artifacts not attributable to production traditions of the Lazio area, defined according

Fig. 3: Excavation areas at Cencelle investigated up to the 2022 field season (processed by F. Vacatello)



to current administrative boundaries. The integration of archaeometric data with morpho-typological observations and stylistic analyses enabled a more accurate distinction of ceramics attributable to external production contexts, confirming their specific technological and compositional traits. This distinction allowed the isolation of the materials investigated in the present study and laid the foundation for the subsequent analysis of circulation dynamics and exchange networks involving the site during the period under consideration.

IMPORTED CERAMICS AND COMMERCIAL NETWORKS AT CENCELLE

The imported ceramics recovered within the *Civitas* present a complex and diversified picture, largely spanning the 13th to 15th centuries, although there are also attestations from the second half of the 12th century and later examples dating to the 16th-17th centuries, albeit in limited quantities. The investigated sectors provide a representative overview of the city's functional areas, including residential, residential-craft, public-religious, and funerary contexts. Imported ceramic materials account for approximately 2% of the city's overall ceramic assemblage. Based on mineralogical-petrographic analyses, these artifacts have been grouped into several compositional clusters, defined with reference to contemporary regional geological maps (Fig. 4). These paste groups are associated with production areas in northern Campania and southern Lazio, the Siena-Arezzo region, Spain, Orvieto, and Liguria. These production areas mainly produced table wares, including coated, slip-covered, glazed, or tin-glazed ceramics; however, less common finds include unglazed transport vessels, represented by a few amphorae (Marchetti & Stasolla, 1996; Cirelli, 2017, p. 109, nn. 3-5), and red-painted ceramics. Within the city walls, there is a clear predominance of Tuscan and Campanian products, followed by Ligurian, Iberian, and Orvietan wares (Fig. 5a). Stratigraphically, the earliest imported ceramics derive from Areas I, II, III, IV, X, XI, and XII, corresponding to residential and residential-craft contexts, with a chronological range from the late 12th century to the mid-13th century and into the first quarter of the 15th century (Stasolla, 2012; Moschetto, 2020; Melega et al., 2025). Ceramics from Areas VI and VII, associated with religious-funerary contexts, and Area XIII, interpreted as a stable complex (Brancazi, Cymerman Abad & Miele, 2025), show a slightly later chronology, primarily dating to the late 13th century through the first half of the 15th century, as evidenced by the abundant presence of the so-called *Green Family* (Brancazi, 2021, p. 53) and the occasional but consistent appearance of cobalt-decorated wares. Materials from Area IX, interpreted as a set of residential and partially funerary spaces, date to a more restricted period between the late 13th and mid-14th century. This internal

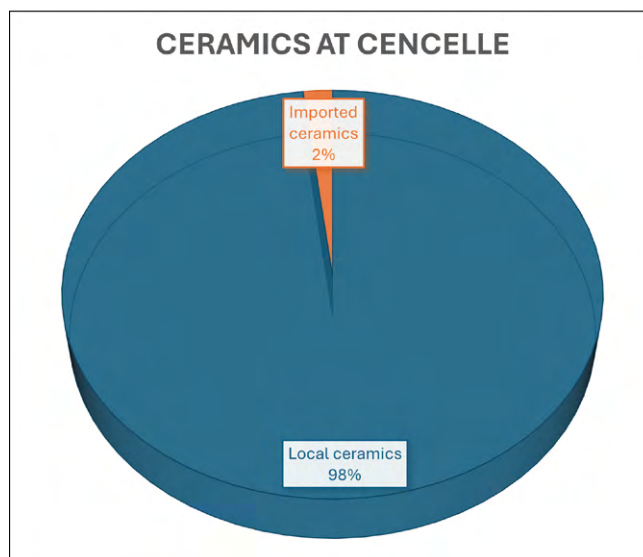


Fig. 4: Percentages of locally produced and imported ceramics found at Cencelle

heterogeneity appears linked to the differing functional nature of the sectors and the various durations of urban occupation (Stasolla, 2018) (Fig. 5b). Significantly, in residential and residential-craft districts, at least one ceramic specimen from each of the main production areas identified, Liguria, Campania-Lazio, Tuscany, Spain, and Orvieto, is present. The assemblage is predominantly composed of table wares, while transport containers, mostly unglazed or red-painted, are less represented. These artifacts attest to both direct and mediated connections with multiple production centers across the Italian peninsula and the broader Mediterranean. The predominance of open forms over closed ones may relate to the use of containers made from other materials or the widespread presence of locally produced closed forms, as highlighted by previous studies (Brancazi, 2021). During the communal phase (12th-13th centuries), a period of particular structural and material significance, there is a notable spread of bowls, plates, and mugs, which may indicate increased individual use of tableware by diners (Antonelli, 2014). The earliest examples of

ceramics diverging from local traditions date to the second half of the 12th century and the early 13th century. The repertoire includes monochrome green and clear-glazed wares, spiral ware, and glazed ceramics painted in brown, red, and green copper oxide (RMR), attributable to Campania-Lazio production areas and, on the basis of morpho-typological analysis, comparable to Neapolitan production with evident influences from northern Apulia, particularly the Foggia area (Fig. 6). During the 13th century, the ceramic repertoire further expanded with the appearance of slip-covered wares, archaic graffito from Savona, protomaiolica, monochrome green tin-glazed wares from Campania-Lazio, as well as archaic Tuscan and Orvietan maiolica, reflecting the gradual integration of Cencelle into supra-regional production and circulation networks (Miele, 2023; Miele, 2024) (Fig. 7). Alongside these, unglazed Tuscan containers and red-painted ceramics from the Campania-Lazio area are attested (Fig. 8). Between the second half of the 14th century and the mid-15th century, there is an increased presence of Iberian wares, particularly blue-decorated and lustre-painted ceramics closely resembling contemporary Valencian productions (Miele & Russo, 2023) (Fig. 9). From the 15th century until the city's final abandonment in the 17th century, ceramics circulating in Cencelle were mainly sourced from Rome and northern Lazio centers, embedded in a well-established production network including Acquapendente, Farnese, Castro, Orte, Viterbo, and Civita Castellana. These were occasionally accompanied by late sgraffito slipware and white monochrome Tuscan wares (Miele, 2025b) (Fig. 10). Beyond ceramic evidence, numismatic finds and documentary sources provide insights into the broader context of mobility and

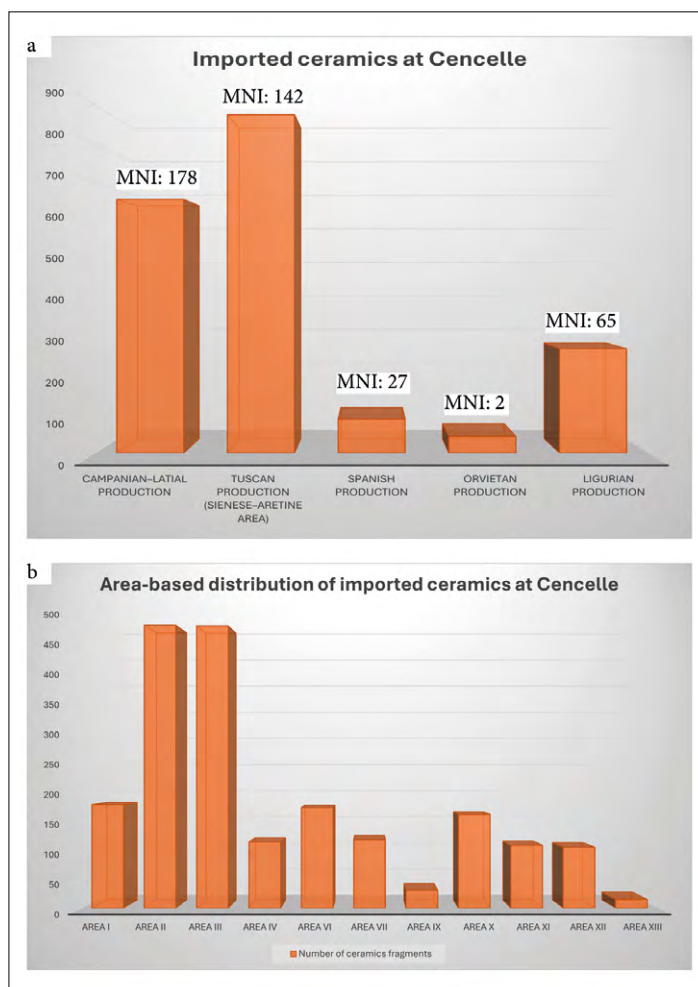


Fig. 5: Imported ceramics at Cencelle. a: Imported ceramics and their provenience groups, with the indicated MNI (minimum number of individuals); b: Distribution of imported ceramics across the areas of Cencelle.

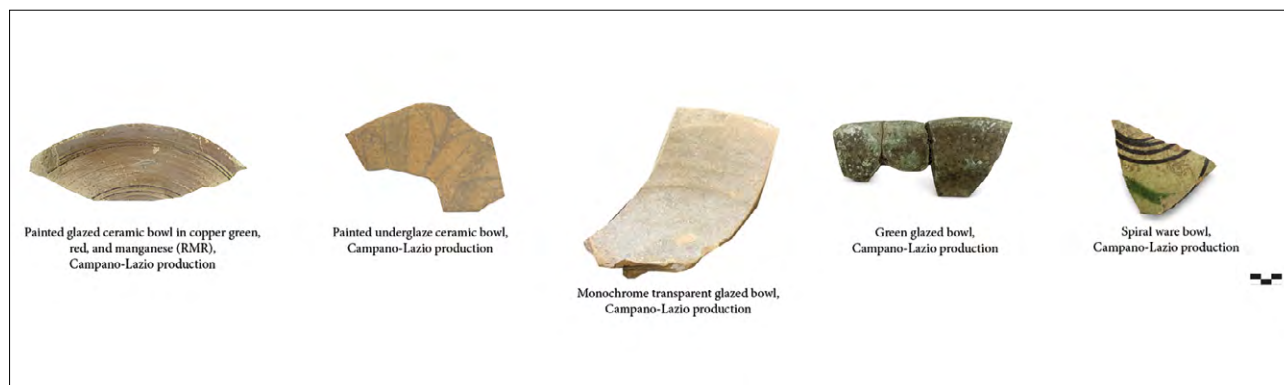


Fig. 6: Selected imported ceramics from Cencelle, datable to the late 12th – first half of the 13th century (photo and processing by F. Miele)



Fig. 7: Selected imported ceramics from Cencelle, datable to the 13th and 14th centuries (photos by F. Miele and the Cencelle Project archive; processing by F. Miele)

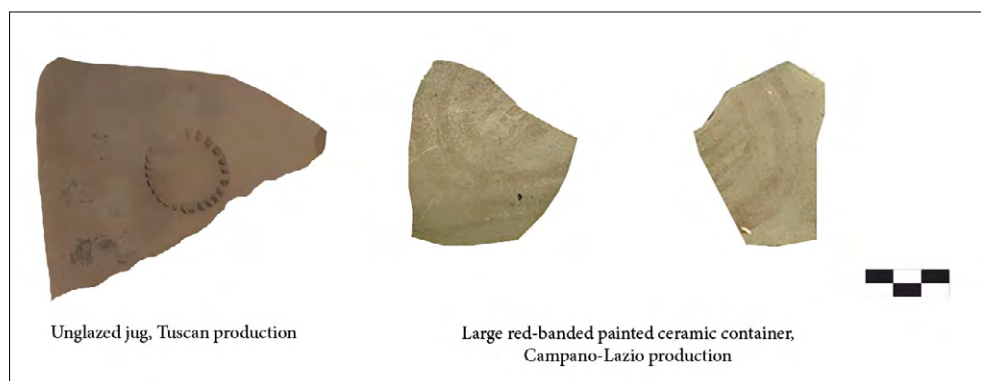


Fig. 8: Selected imported ceramics from Cencelle, datable to the 13th century (photo and processing by F. Miele)



Fig. 9: Selected imported ceramics from Cencelle, datable to the 14th and 15th centuries (photos by F. Miele and the Cencelle Project archive; processing by F. Miele)

exchange within the Ligurian-Tyrrhenian basin in which Cencelle was situated. Monetary evidence shows that, particularly during the 13th-14th centuries, Tuscan and southern coins circulated in the city, reflecting strong connections to Campania and, above all, to central Italian and northern Lazio centers such as Viterbo (Vanni, 2012). Documentary sources attest to a long-term presence of Tuscan individuals in Corneto and surrounding territories. The nearby port of Corneto functioned as a strategic stopover for southbound vessels, while the urban center hosted non-local residents. For example, a document dated 25 November 1191 records that a certain *Bonacursus de Corneto Pisanus* received a sum of money from *Martino di Rapallo* and promised to repay 64 Genoese lire to his partners within three days of arriving in Corneto. The designation “Pisan of Corneto,” as noted by David Abulafia, suggests the existence of a Pisan colony in the city, whose main function was to secure the purchase of surplus grain (Abulafia, 2009, p. 77). Other individuals, such as *Petrus Spatao de Corneto* and *Bruno*, brother of *Hugolinus*, described in 1205 as “Florentines of Corneto,” indicate the presence of mobile merchants whose networks extended beyond Corneto toward Pisa, Genoa, Gaeta, and other regional exchange hubs. Cencelle itself, albeit indirectly, participated in these dynamics, as exemplified by *Iacobus Pisani* of Viterbo, an apostolic notary mentioned in the act of submission of the city to Pope Nicholas IV in 1291, highlighting the integration of Tuscan individuals into the high society of Lazio (Fabre, 1905, n. 365, pp. 597-598). Additional documentary evidence suggests that, at least in 1220, the city’s social composition included non-local individuals, as indicated by the anthroponymic analysis in documents recording the acquisition of the city by Viterbo (Calisse, 1898, p. 146; Jamme, 2005, p. 356). As is well known, the primary attraction for merchants from northern and central Italy in the Corneto area was *frumentum* or wheat. Although inland production centers are rarely

Fig. 10: Selected imported ceramics from Cencelle, datable to the 15th and 16th centuries (photos by F. Miele and the Cencelle Project archive; processing by F. Miele)

mentioned explicitly in the sources, it is plausible that merchants traveled from the ports to major grain-producing hubs, among which Cencelle was included, benefiting from fertile lands and proximity to the active port of Corneto (Abulafia, 2003). The city's economic importance is further evidenced by its possession of the *omnia iura et actiones directas et utiles, quae et quas habemus in mari et in litore*, which the community was willing to transfer to Viterbo to cover debts owed to Corneto. The same document mentions individuals such as *Berardus Defuligni* and *Sebastianus Fuligni*, community representatives whose names suggest Umbrian origins, alongside persons such as *Petrus Genuensis* and *Petrus Tropee Genuensis*, indicating connections with Genoese networks. Between the mid-13th and mid-14th centuries, the alignment between the Papal States and the Angevin crown had repercussions in Cencelle. The list of 196 castellans active between 1304 and 1370 includes individuals of French origin, such as *Bertrand Donec* (1312-1321) and *Guillaume de Focayrolis* from the diocese of Cahors (1318) (Jamme, 2005, pp. 402-406). These data fit within the broader context of Angevin rule over Rome and Lazio (1263-1335), marked by centralized administration and the appointment of officials from Provence, with an increased presence of foreign personnel, podestàs, judges, and notaries, also documented in Corneto (from 1265) and Civitavecchia (from 1268) (Caciorgna, 1995, pp. 198-199; Annoscia, 2012, pp. 287-288). Within this Ligurian-Tyrrhenian basin, Spain also played a significant role in commercial networks from at least the 13th century. Documentary sources record tax privileges for Corneto sailors granted by Peter II of Aragon in the early years of the century and by James II of Aragon in 1298 (Supino, 1969, pp. 238-239, doc. 317; pp. 240-241, doc. 318). These relationships strengthened in the following century, particularly after the Aragonese conquest of Sardinia in 1324, integrating the island's economy into Catalan trade strategies. This development enhanced Catalan commercial influence without interrupting ties with established partners, especially Pisan and Genoese merchants (Tognetti, 2018).

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

It is evident that the city of Cencelle was actively involved in the circulation of goods and people between the Tyrrhenian coast and the inland areas, benefiting from its proximity to the port of Corneto (modern Tarquinia), a city that at times maintained close ties with Cencelle. This positioned the site within a network of interregional and international trade relations along the Tyrrhenian-Ligurian corridors and in northern Lazio. The city was well integrated into Mediterranean commerce during a period of strong economic and commercial expansion, which affected numerous centers, particularly between the 13th and 14th centuries, characterized by processes that indicate the penetration of trade not only into urban areas but also into markets in towns and surrounding countryside (Rao & Zoni, 2025, p. 12). The artifacts recorded at Cencelle follow patterns similar to those observable in other contemporary urban settlements along the Tyrrhenian coast (Cirelli, 2017, p. 90). Imported ceramics mainly come from regions with established maritime connections, such as Campania, Tuscany, Liguria, and Spain, while some Umbrian wares, likely transported overland, are also documented. Imports from the Maghreb, Egypt, Sicily, and Apulia are absent, as these were more common

in the Greco-Levantine basin and probably transported by Venetian vessels. The quantity and provenance of imported artifacts varied over time, suggesting the influence of multiple factors, including local political relations, preferred mercantile channels, and established presences of foreign merchants in the area (Patitucci Uggeri, 2002, pp. 37-38). Most products originated from Tuscany, followed by the Campania-Lazio area, Liguria, Spain, and Orvieto, confirming the existence of preferential routes likely linked to the influence of merchants already present locally and to specific political conditions. The predominance of Campania-Lazio products in Cencelle appears to have been favored by Angevin influence in the region and by the active role of merchants from Gaeta, who operated along the central Tyrrhenian and northern Lazio, facilitating the circulation of Campanian wares to centers such as Cencelle and Santa Severa (Cocciantelli, 2019; Enei & Russo, 2023). This framework explains the concentration of Campanian ceramics in the city and along the Tyrrhenian coast, consistent with the regional commercial dynamics of the period. Archaeological investigations, for example at the Esedra of the Crypta Balbi (Molinari, 1990, p. 470), show that in the first half of the 13th century approximately 30% of tableware originated from Campania, while in the northern Lazio territory, Campanian ceramics were scarce or absent (Bartoloni & Ricci, 1995). Areas where Campanian ceramics are scarcer seem to coincide with contexts characterized by stronger control from local authorities and emerging aristocracies, as well as greater adherence to local ceramic production traditions; conversely, areas where these wares are more frequent appear more strongly influenced by Angevin presence. The significant presence of Tuscan ceramics in Cencelle can be explained by the long-term, stable presence of Tuscan merchants in Corneto and the surrounding areas, who were active and well integrated into the urban fabric. The scarcity of Orvietan ceramics may reflect an autarkic and strategically competitive choice by the *Civitas*, which, despite having access to locally or regionally produced Archaic Maiolica, opted to source objects from outside the Umbro-Lazio market to obtain similar but distinctive and specialized wares, such as Tuscan Archaic Maiolica (Miele, 2023). In this way, the city could meet the demand for specialized goods without directly competing with Orvieto producers and without compromising the availability of local wares for the domestic market. A similar strategy can be observed in other contexts, such as southern Tuscany, where already in the 12th century the expansionist policies of the Aldobrandeschi counts redirected material culture from a Lazian influence toward Pisan traditions (Citter & Valdambrini, 2015). Likewise, in Bolsena between the 14th and 15th centuries, the Ghibelline Monaldeschi della Cervara family, originally from Orvieto, maintained preferential channels with their home city for ceramic procurement, establishing a commercial strategy that favored external supplies over the local market without undermining domestic production (Frazzoni, 2007). The notable presence of Savonese graffito ceramics in Cencelle may reflect the activity of Genoese merchants along the Ligurian-Tyrrhenian corridor, especially during the late medieval centuries. Away from the Tyrrhenian coast, from the 15th century onward, Umbro-Lazio graffito wares begin to prevail in an increasing number of productions, especially in northern Lazio centers, signaling a gradual reorientation of regional influences on ceramic production (Casocavallo & Catini, 2005). Between the second half of the 14th and the mid-15th century, Cencelle and other northern Lazio sites show a greater concentration of ceramics from Spain, probably reflecting strengthened ties with the Crown of Aragon, particularly after the arrival of the Aragonese in Sardinia in the 14th century. This consolidated

the integration of the island economy into Catalan mercantile strategies without severing connections with previous commercial partners, such as Pisans and Genoese. In this context, Corneto may have played a key role in the redistribution of *loza dorada* in northern Lazio, as suggested by documented exchanges between Cornetan and Spanish merchants (Camardo & Casocavallo, 2005, p. 313). To better understand the artisanal systems associated with ceramic production and assess their significance within a community such as Cencelle, experimental archaeology and traceological analyses were employed (Forte, 2020). While a detailed discussion of these approaches is beyond the scope of this study, their use as investigative tools is highlighted. A pilot study on Campania-Lazio protomaiolica (13th-14th century) from Cencelle allowed the creation of a dataset of recurring traces deriving from specific techniques and gestures, such as wheel finishing. The analysis revealed that some production phases, particularly surface treatment on the wheel, were carried out by apprentices, suggesting an organized division of labor within specialized workshops. These results demonstrate that ceramic objects, before becoming commodities, were complex and highly structured products whose value also depended on technological choices and artisanal expertise. The experimental approach opens new perspectives for studying the skills involved in medieval production and for extending the analysis to other ceramic classes, offering further insight into circulation patterns and the economic value of artifacts (Previti & Lemorini, 2024; Miele, 2025c). In summary, the analysis of imported ceramics at Cencelle highlights how ceramic circulation resulted from a complex interplay of political, economic, and mercantile factors: from local strategies of selection and procurement to external influences linked to merchants and contacts with Italian and Mediterranean production centers. At the same time, studying production processes through experimental and traceological approaches underscores that the value of artifacts depended not only on their commercial function, but also on the artisanal skills and technological choices underlying their manufacture. In this sense, Cencelle emerges as a significant node in medieval trade networks, where goods reflected broader social, economic, and cultural dynamics, providing a clear example of how commerce and production intersected between the 13th and 15th centuries.

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