

Since becoming the capital city of Sicily after the Aghlabid conquest of 831 CE, Palermo's role changed in many aspects. It became the seat of power, the core of the administration of the Island, and it gained a central position within the broader Mediterranean networks. The city also experienced an increase in population and urban growth. Starting in at least the late 9th century, Palermo also became the leading centre for the production of amphorae and glazed wares in Sicily and played a crucial role in the diffusion of new fashions and techniques both into and out of the Island.

In the last few years, the circulation of pottery in Islamic Palermo has been the subject of a considerable number of studies, which are synthesised in the recent publication "Dalla ceramica alla storia economica. Il caso di Palermo islamica" published in the BEFAR series. Although some technological and chronological aspects are still to be clarified, we can now safely state that the local production is well known. However, the study of new archaeological contexts, as well as some fortuitous findings, have uncovered details of Palermitan production. In this paper, we present some of these novelties, focusing on morphological variants and techniques.

New morphological variants

Alfabeguer: a large basin employed for the cultivation of basil and other aromatic plants, though it cannot be excluded that these types of pots had a decorative function too. It is not the first time that examples of *alfabeguer* have been identified in Palermitan and Sicilian contexts of the Islamic period. However, the findings from Piazza della Vittoria reveal not only new variants of rims but also attest a wider use of these objects in the city than previously thought (Fig. 1).

Amphora: a Palermitan amphora (h c. 43 cm) found underwater outside Sciacca and characterised by the presence of a filter with simple holes inside the neck and two handles with a thumb-piece on top (Fig. 2). Similar rims have been found in Palermo and Monti di Trapani which are dated to the 11th century (ANFFIL.g1). The Sciacca amphora allows us to identify the entire form and to classify it within the group ANF6. ANF6 is the most diffused group among those produced in Palermo during the Islamic period, and two main variants have been documented. The *individuum* here presented adds a new variant to those already known, while perhaps providing evidence for the longevity of this shape during the second half of the 11th century.

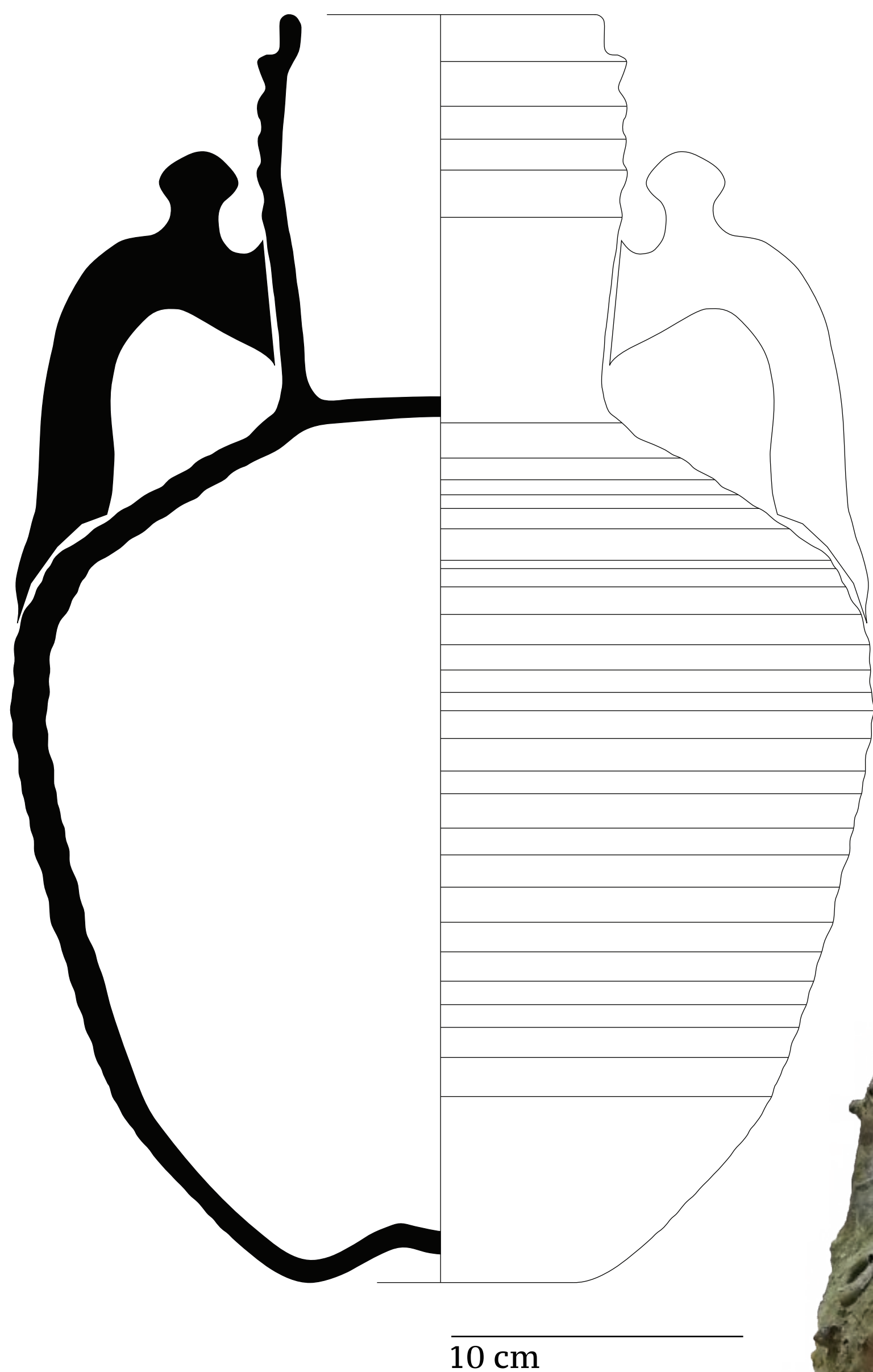


Fig. 2: Amphora. Inv. 2482, Museo Regionale della ceramica di Caltagirone – Parco Archeologico e Paesaggistico di Catania della Valle dell'Acì.



Fig. 1: *Alfabeguer* from Piazza della Vittoria (PA).

New techniques

Moulded yellow glazed ware: this type of forming method has already been documented within the local production, but never in such good preservation conditions as in the flask found in Piazza della Vittoria contexts (Fig. 3). Furthermore, this flask is the first example of its shape documented in the Palermitan production.

Palermitan cuerda seca parcial: fragments of *cuerda seca parcial* imported from al-Andalus have been identified in contexts dated to the first half of the 11th century in Palermo. A jug with a filter neck from Piazza della Vittoria (Fig. 4) documents, for the first time, a local production of this decorative technique.

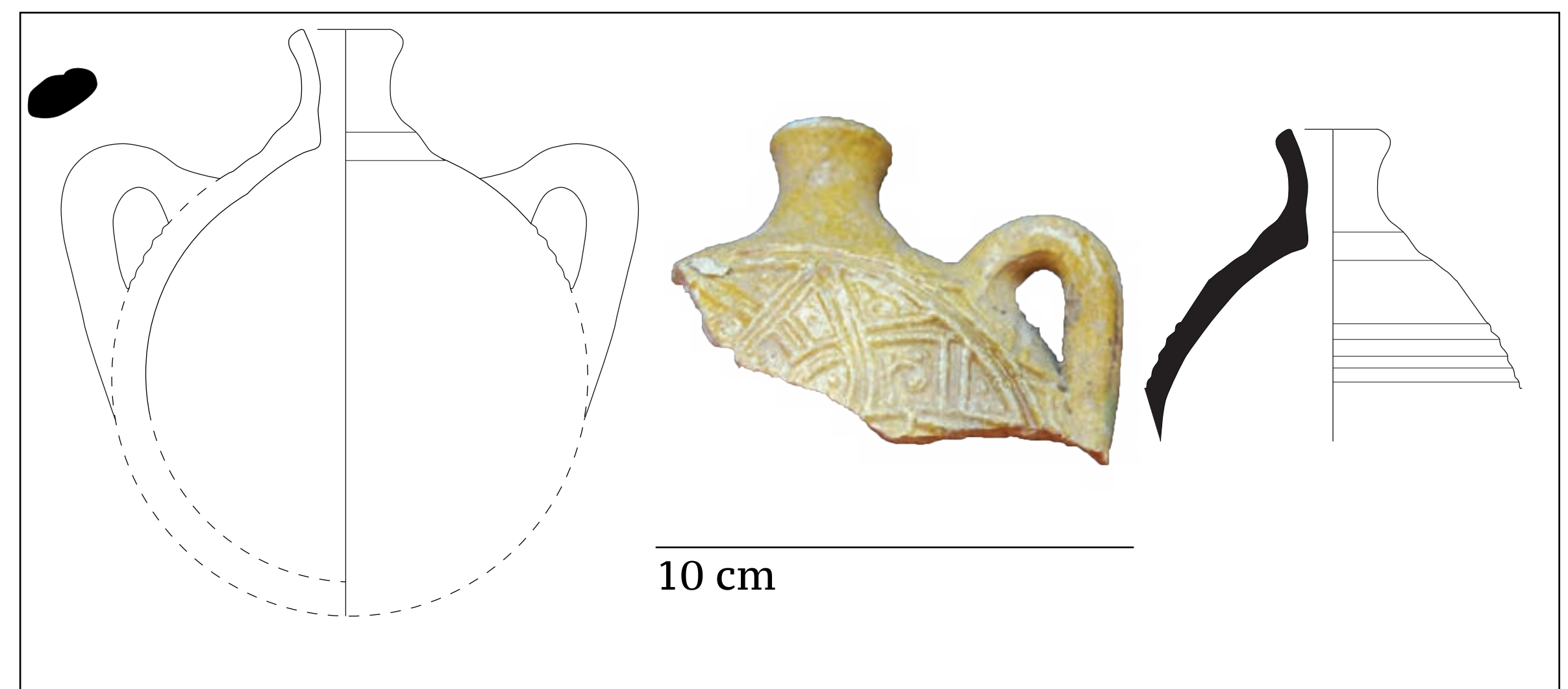


Fig. 3: Moulded yellow glazed ware from Piazza della Vittoria.



Fig. 4: Palermitan *cuerda seca parcial* from Piazza della Vittoria.

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