Wine and Amphorae in Campania in the Hellenistic Age: The Case of Ischia

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1 Introduction

This chapter presents research on Graeco-Italic amphorae from Ischia, Lacco Ameno (ancient Pithecusae) (Fig. 11.1) and other areas in south-central Italy that were part of the *Immensa Aequora* Project, which consists of a series of interconnected sub-projects. Their purpose is to study the production and distribution of ceramics made in south-central Tyrrhenian Italy, using archaeological and archaeometric techniques, with a focus on the period between the 4th century BC and the 1st century AD. This period encompasses the initial stages of Roman commerce in the course of Rome’s rise to the stature of a Mediterranean power, which is still little understood. Beginning in the 4th century BC, the conquests of the Roman Republic had created conditions for enrichment as well as a new powerful class that could benefit from the opportunities offered by expansion. The project’s final goal is to study and reconstruct aspects of the ancient economy, starting with ceramics, whilst maintaining an overall historical perspective on the archaeological and archaeometric data.

Archaeology has produced little real information so far on Campanian wine between the 4th and 3rd centuries BC, particularly regarding the identities of the producers and sellers, and the role played by Rome. Ancient Graeco-Italic

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1 The results of studies of the pottery produced in this area are still awaiting publication in a number of archaeological and archaeometric fora (i.e. Olcese (2010); Olcese et al. (2013); Olcese (2015)). For the necropoleis of Pithecusae, see the fundamental works of Buchner and Ridgway (1993) and Ridgway (1984). For the *Immensa Aequora* Project, see www.immensaaequora.org.


3 This project arose from discussions with Maurice Picon. A number of archaeometrists, including I. Iliopoulos, G. Montana, G. Thierrin Michael and V. Thirion Merle, participated in this project, collaborating over various time periods and working from different perspectives.

4 Of this opinion are Van der Mersch (2001), Morel (1986) and Tchernia (1986), who emphasized that certain aspects of the production of wine in 3rd century BC Campania are not clear; in particular, the identity of the producers, that of the sellers, and the role played by Rome.
amphorae are important indicators of the economic and commercial conditions of this period, in which Rome turned its attention south and extended its influence to Neapolis and the Gulf of Naples, acting as a stabilizing force in the Tyrrhenian Sea. During this period Neapolis, taking advantage of its alliance with Rome following the *Foedus Aequum* of 326 BC, saw its foreign trade relations notably expand, a fact evidenced also by coinage and by an increase in activity at the Neapolitan mint.\(^5\)

Studies of the Graeco-Italic amphorae produced at Ischia, specifically archaeometric analyses, and comparisons with amphorae from Neapolis have generated data on the production and trade of wine in the Gulf of Naples as well as on the initial phase of Roman economic expansion in the western Mediterranean. In the following pages, results of the Ischia studies will be discussed in the form of preliminary observations on the production site of Santa Restituta, the amphorae produced there, their stamps, and the implications these finds

\(^5\) On the social and economic history of Neapolis, see Lepore (1952). On the coinage of Neapolis, see Cantilena et al. (1986).