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# Diphilos Dissertation Prize 2022 Studies on Coroplastic Production in Greek Sicily. A PhD Dissertation on the Terracotta Dedicants from the Votive Deposit of Piazza San Francesco in Catania (fifth to fourth century B.C.E.)

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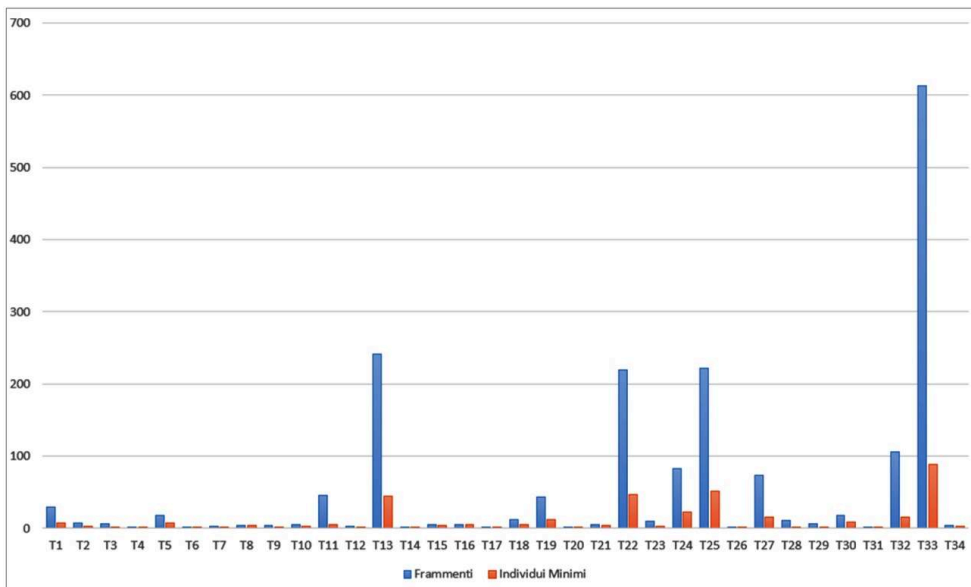
# Diphilos Dissertation Prize 2022 Studies on Coroplastic Production in Greek Sicily. A PhD Dissertation on the Terracotta Dedicants from the Votive Deposit of Piazza San Francesco in Catania (fifth to fourth century B.C.E.)

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- 1 The study conducted for this Ph.D forms an integral part of a larger project involving several researchers who are studying materials found in the votive deposit of Piazza San Francesco in Catania that was uncovered in 1959 by Professor Giovanni Rizza. My dissertation concentrates on the votive terracotta statuettes from the deposit, the most abundant class of materials, within which the most attested iconographic group is represented by female piglet carriers that date from the proto-Classical through the late-Classical periods. They are excellent vehicles for recomposing and outlining the framework of coroplastic production in Katane in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E.
- 2 In all, some 1812 fragments of these female piglet carriers have been analyzed for this project. Each fragment, as much as possible, has been attributed to a type and a generation/version/variant. This has revealed a minimum number of individuals (MNI<sup>3</sup>) that are equivalent to 377–378 specimens that can be reduced to 34 basic types.

Fig. 1. Diagram with the division of the Fragments and Individuals for each Type



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- 3 The dissertation is organized into 5 basic parts. The first is focused on the discovery and the related dynamics of the votive deposit. It also includes a review of previous studies and interpretations – pre and post discovery – concerning the location of the Demeter Sanctuary according to ancient sources, but also in relation to other archaeological documentation from Catania. The chapter is completed with a brief outline of the goals of this project.

Fig. 2. Autoptical analysis of the fabrics with the optical microscope. University of Vienna, 2018/2019



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Fig. 3. Some examples of microphotos of the fabrics related to the "Group 2"



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- 4 The second part focuses on the technical and technological characteristics of these votive statuettes. Due to the breadth and complexity of these aspects, a division into two subparts was necessary. Subpart II.A is entirely dedicated to a macroscopic study of fabrics using the optical microscope<sup>4</sup> in the laboratory of the University of Vienna, where I had the opportunity to collaborate between 2018 and 2020 on various projects related to fabric descriptions for both pottery and terracottas.

Fig. 4. Type 27: five generations attested



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Fig. 5. Specimens related to the Type 22, belonging to the same generation



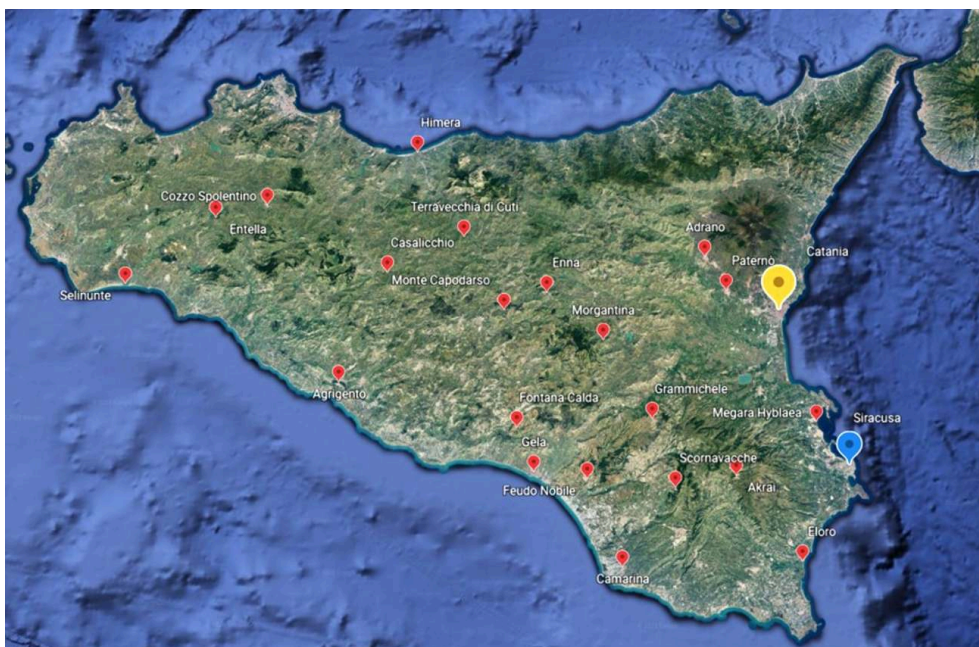
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- 5 Sub-part II.B, on the other hand, focused purely on technical aspects, i.e., on different modeling techniques and the traces of the artisan's workmanship left in the clay. This chapter also includes a more purely methodological section that describes new approaches to understanding production that are used for the study of terracottas, as well as an analysis of previous methods. Finally, the chapter closes with a sort of dictionary on the technical and iconographical terms used for this study, whose purpose is to help the reader gain a greater understanding of the technical vocabulary used in coroplastic studies.



- 6 The third part of this dissertation comprises the Catalogue that is the fulcrum of the dissertation—the chapter where the unpublished results of the project are presented. In this, all types have been assembled into three main chronological macro-groups that are organized chronologically into proto-classical,<sup>5</sup> classical, and late-classical typologies.
- 7 This material has been further divided into main iconographic types for each of which a large form has been created that contains numerical data, including identification of generations, versions, and variants, reconstructions of the schemes of filiations, and production systems. Finally, this third part also contains iconographic analyses and observations on the diffusion of these types across Sicily.

Fig. 6. Total map of distribution with all the contexts from where the specimens ‘comparisons of Catania come from. In yellow the centre of Katane, in Blue Syracuse and in red the other archaeological contexts



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- 8 The fourth and fifth parts sum up the two most important aspects of this dissertation that are the production analysis and an investigation into the iconographic, social, and cultic significance of these terracottas. The fourth part is focused primarily on all the evidence that has led to the identification of the city of Katane as a production center. This also includes an exploration into its relationship to other production centers of Sicily, especially Syracuse, from which, at least in part, its production system depended. To Syracuse, in fact, Catania seems to be linked through production, politics, and religion. The chapter also discusses the typologies from a diffusion perspective, analyzing in detail the distribution of the iconographies and their hypothetical attribution and creation to a given center. This also includes a presentation of the different contexts used comparatively for the study of these terracotta types, as well as a map indicating where the types of piglet holders known from Katane also have been found (fig. 6). Finally, the discussion of the regional distribution of the types is concluded by a brief introduction to the different modes of diffusion and by an

illustrative table containing references to each individual type, including its comparative material with references and the nature of its context.

Fig. 7. Analysis of the differences between Type 32 and Type 33



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- 9 The fifth, and last, part focuses attention on the iconographies of the votive terracottas of the Piazza San Francesco deposit, as well as on the social and ritual meanings of these offerings. The mythological and religious aspects of these iconographies that have been linked to Demeter cults in Sicily also is examined, primarily based on commentary by Diodorus Siculus.
- 10 It should be noted that, although this dissertation is primarily an analysis of production, some parts in the fifth section that pertain to iconographic and cultic investigations remain incomplete since the second year of the Covid-19 pandemic corresponded to the last year of my doctoral cycle when libraries were forced to close. This made bibliographical consultation difficult, if not impossible. One of the most important goals in the publication of the final monograph on this material will be to develop these areas more fully.<sup>6</sup>

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## NOTES

1. I would thank Prof. Uhlenbrock, the Association for Coroplastic Studies (ACoSt), and all the committee members of the Diphilos Dissertation Prize 2022 for selecting my PhD thesis for this award. I also thank Dr. Pautasso, my dissertation's co-supervisor, for having entrusted me with the study of the classical terracottas from Piazza San Francesco.
2. A brief article about the project and its methodology has been published in Ferlito 2020a. Additionally, preliminary results of the project have been presented by the author in occasion of two online lectures: the first one was organized in January 2021 by the Institute of Classical Archaeology of the University of Vienna; the second one was coordinated in May 2021 by the Institute of Classical Archaeology of the University of Augsburg.
3. Minimum Number of Individuals means the actual number of specimens calculated, first of all taking into consideration the number of the heads, or, all those diagnostics fragments from which can be deduced the presence of an individual.
4. The preliminary results of the autoptical analysis of the fabrics of the figurines have been published in Ferlito 2020b.
5. A characteristic type of the proto-Classical period has been thoroughly analyzed and published in Ferlito 2019.
6. The final monograph will not present just the results of the PhD Thesis that is limited to the types of female piglet carriers, but also will include those other classes of terracottas attested from the deposit that belong to the second phase of the sanctuary. For example, in November 2022, a small group of terracottas belonging to types known from Locri and Medma were presented in the form of a poster at the Cagliari conference What can terracottas tell us. Coroplastic polysemy in the ancient Mediterranean, and in press within the proceedings of the same conference (Ferlito in press).



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## ABSTRACTS

This contribution represents a brief description of my doctoral dissertation<sup>1</sup> entitled “Il deposito votivo di Piazza San Francesco a Catania: produzione, contesto e diffusione. Le offerenti in terracotta nella Sicilia orientale dall’età protoclassica all’età tardo-classica” <sup>2</sup>that was defended successfully on May 4, 2021, at the University of Catania.

## INDEX

**Keywords:** terracottas, votive deposit, terracotta production, dedicants, Demeter Sanctuary, Ph.D dissertation, Catania

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