

The Earliest Roman Amphorae:
Elizabeth Lyding Will
University of Massachusetts at Amherst

Recent research on Graeco-Italic amphorae allows us to focus more closely on the beginnings of Roman international trade in the 3rd and 2nd cs. B.C. Contexts at the Athenian Agora and information from other sources now permit the establishment of a chronology for Graeco-Italics, a complicated category of amphorae comprising both Hellenistic, Greek and the earliest Roman trading containers. Jars of Graeco-Italic forms d (first half of the 2nd c. B.C.) carried Italian wine to the East and to the West. The trade to the East, according to the evidence we now have, originated in Campania. The western trade seems to have come from Etruria, much of it from the area of Cosa, where Graeco-Italics of Form d are found in large numbers. Two graffiti on Form d pieces at Cosa can now be associated with the Sestius factory, which is known to have been the largest manufacturer of Roman amphorae in the first half of the 1st c. B.C. Evidence that the Sestius factory may in fact go back to the latter 3rd c. is provided by a possible Sestius stamp on a Graeco-Italic amphora of Form b. Amphorae of Forms b and d, all of typically "Sestius" clay, are found at scattered sites from Majorca to Carthage; they enhance the evidence for the probable importance of the Sestius organization as an early maker of amphorae sent to the West. But we have reason to think that Italian trade to the East in Form d amphorae surpassed the western trade until Delos was made a free port in 166 B.C. Sabellian potters from the area of Pompeii may have led in the manufacture of amphorae sent to the East, and it may have been from them that the Sestii learned the techniques of mass production.

*This is an abstract from a paper presented by E.L. Will at the 83rd AIA annual conference. It is made available on the E.L. Will memorial website with the permission of the American Journal of Archaeology. This abstract is published in the American Journal of Archaeology, full citation below.

Will, E.L. 1982. Abstract: "The Earliest Roman Amphoras." *American Journal of Archaeology* 86:290-291.