**SAMPLE OF TRANSLATION WORK FROM A SERIES OF ABSTRACTS TRANSLATED FOR BREPOLS:**

**ORIGINAL:**

I quarant’anni di Archeologia Medievale e l’archeologia in Italia negli ultimi quarant’anni

Autore: Sauro Gelichi:

Il primo numero del NAM esce nel settembre del 1971; referente Tiziano Mannoni; promosso dal Centro Ligure per la Storia della ceramica; natura informale; compaiono quasi subito contributi sull’attività del Centro Ligure di Ricerca sulle Sedi Abbandonate; contribuiscono poi geografi, urbanisti, archeologi, studiosi di ceramica etc.; cominciano a comparire anche qualche relazione preliminare o segnalazione di scavo; sempre nel 1 numero, p. 8, si dà notizia dell’esistenza del Notiziario del G.R.A.M. (Gruppo Ricerche Archeologia Medievale) di Palermo, ciclostilato di 16cc.; nel numero del 31 maggio 1972, p. 11, si dà notizia di una ‘Riunione Informativa per lo Studio della Storia dell’Insediamento’ Scarperia, 1-2 luglio 1972; nello stesso numero H. Blake, pp. 11-12 segnala la ‘Scuola di Specializzazione per archeologi preistorici, classici e medievalisti annessa alla facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell’Università di Pisa’ con un riferimento specifico ai docenti dell’indirizzo medievale, tra cui spiccano Cagiano de Azevedo, Santi Luigi Agnello (Università Catania), Ottone D’Assia (qualificato solo come Principe), Giulio Schmiedt (Università di Pisa), G.A. Mansuelli; E. Tongiorgi; G. Maetzke; G. De Angelis D’Ossat; A. De Vita (inoltre una serie di docenti di storia medievale; escono anche call per gli scavi; nel numero del 31 settembre 1972, pp. 6ss. M. Quaini fa il resoconto dell’incontro di Scarperia; tra i risultati conseguiti e i programmi, potenziamento del NAM, costruzione di un numero monografico di Quaderni Storici, rendere periodiche le riunioni. Bresc in quell’occasione presenta i risultati del G.R.A.M. di Palermo. Nel numero del 31 gennaio 1973 compaiono anche riferimenti alle tematiche legata all’archeologia post-medievale, con riferimenti alle pipe in argilla, ad esempio, o a documenti sulla ceramica post-medievale. Compare poi un articolo su Torcello, varie notizie dall’Emilia (numero 30 settembre 1973). Il primo numero in formato diverso e non più a ciclostile compare nel 1974.

**SARAH BERCUSSON TRANSLATION**:

Title: **Forty years in medieval archaeology, and the last forty years of archaeology in Italy**

Author: Sauro Gelichi

The first issue of NAM came out in September 1971 with Tiziano Mannoni at the helm and with the support of the Centre for the History of Ceramics in Liguria. Informal in nature, the first contributions were submitted by the Ligurian Centre for Research on Abandoned Sites, but soon geographers, urban historians, archaeologists, historians of ceramics and others started to appear in the journal, followed by a few preliminary reports on or alerts of excavations that were taking place. The first issue, on p.8, announced the inclusion of the Newsletter of the G.R.A.M. (the Medieval Archaeology Research Group) of Palermo, available in 16 mimeographed pages. The issue that came out on the 31st of May 1972 included, on p.11, a notice informing its readers that an ‘informative meeting on the Study of the History of Settlements’ would be taking place in Scarperia from the 1st to the 2nd of July 1972. In the same issue, H. Blake (on pp. 11-12) reported on the ‘School for archaeologists specialising in pre-history, classics and the middle ages, attached to the faculty of arts and philosophy of the University of Pisa’. He placed a particular emphasis on those faculty members specialising in medieval studies, amongst whom stand out Cagliano de Azevedo, Santi Luigi Agnello (from the University of Catania), Ottone d’Assia (only qualified?? as Prince), Giulio Schmiedt (from the University of Pisa), G.A. Mansuelli; E. Tongiorgi; G. Maetzke; G. De Angelis D’Ossat; A. De Vita. Alongside a series of professors of medieval history, the journal also publicised a series of excavation appeals. Providing a follow-up to the May issue, in the September 31st issue, on pp.6 and following, M. Quaini provided an account of the Scarperia conference; amongst the reported outcomes and future plans were the further development of the NAM, the creation of a monograph for the Quaderni Storici series, and the decision to hold regular meetings. On that occasion, Bresc also presented the results of the G.R.A.M. of Palermo. The issue dating to the 31st of January 1973, saw the appearance of themes linked to post-medieval archaeology, with references, for example, to clay pipes and to documents concerning post-medieval ceramics. An article on Torcello also appeared, alongside news from Emilia, in the issue dated to 30 September 1973. Finally, the first issue in a different format and no longer in mimeograph form came out in 1974.

**EXAMPLE OF COLLABORATIVE TRANSLATION WORK:**

**This article was translated in collaboration with Dr Marta Caroscio. Dr Caroscio was responsible for the preliminary translation from the Italian. I then corrected and edited her work.**

**Extract from article by Alessandra Molinari: *La Sicilia tra V e X secolo: ville, villaggi, città e post-città. Stabilità, sviluppo o recessione?* (*Sicily Between the 5th and the 10th Century: Villae, Villages, Towns and Beyond. Stability, Expansion or Recession?)*.**

Further evidence can be added to the scant data presented so far. Seals proving that Byzantine officials were present on the island are known up to the 9th century. Seals dating from about 700 AD onwards demonstrate that the province of Sicily had been transformed into a *thema* (Byzantine province). Sicilian currency (gold and bronze coins) was the most important provincial coinage in the Empire. It has been ascertained that the mint operating in Syracuse was closed for good only in 878 AD. Inflation was kept down throughout the 8th century with a crash occurring only with the last coinage emissions of the 9th century. Outside the Island only a small number of Sicilian coins circulated in the eastern Mediterranean, however there was a far more substantialdistribution of these coins in the Tyrrhenian area and Sicilian golden coins (*aurei*) have been found as far north as Norway[[1]](#footnote-2). Concerning currency circulation on the Island, it has already been suggested above that coins may have circulated to a certain extent even in some rural settlements[[2]](#footnote-3), however we still only have access to preliminary evidence on this point.

Written evidence can provide further key details[[3]](#footnote-4): Muslim raids increased during the first half of the 8th century and by about 740 AD they looked like making a serious attempt at conquering the island. However, internal problems in Northern Africa benefitted the island and ensured that Sicily could enjoy a long-lasting period of truce. Written sources agree that Byzantine naval control around the Island was then strongly reinforced and fortresses were built. In general, it is clear that the Byzantine Emperors were anxious to ensure that the system of tax collection was operating as efficiently and comprehensively as possible. Another key aspect of the history of this area of the Mediterranean is the conflictbetween the Emperors of the Isauric dynasty and the Papacy. Without going into too much detail, it should be stated that the most recent work on this subject[[4]](#footnote-5) dates the effective loss of the Church’s Sicilian estates to the mid 8th century. This event had a profound impact on the Roman economy, ranging from the sudden unavailability of precious metals to the pressing need to find supplies for Rome from the nearby territories in Lazio (an event that has left clear archaeological traces in Lazio). Finally, I would like to mention the recent essay by McCormick[[5]](#footnote-7), who includes in his analysis sources ranging from the Lives of the Saints to the spread of pestilence. This author states that Sicily occupied a key position during the 8th century along the principal east-west trade route in the Mediterranean (“the Ancient trunk road”). In particular, the great plague epidemic of the mid 8th century may have reached Constantinople through Sicily.

If we consider the questions raised so far, although it is not yet possible to provide a conclusive and all-encompassing explanation, some possible answers can be put forward. The first issue is the need to understand the nature of the trading activities proven by, for example, the circulation of globular amphorae and coins. Firstly, the extent to which Byzantium could influence Mediterranean trade during the 8th century still needs to be ascertained. Events such as the decrease in Constantinople’s population, the shift towards a territorial army, the kinds of tax collection that took place (the incidence of taxes paid in money rather than in goods, and the circulation of coins) could all have played decisive roles in the decrease in trade, which was also influenced by the needs of the state[[6]](#footnote-9). During the same period, Rome faced a decrease in population that led to a re-organization of Lazio’s farmland. This does not mean that exchanges of goods, foodstuffs included, stopped or that important trade routes fell out of use, however it does mean that the nature and the intensity of inter-regional exchanges did alter and thus their economic significance also changed. The production and circulation of globular amphorae have a significant role in this respect. It must be made clear that this valuable material evidence (especially that provided by the later examples) has not yet been properly dated. Furthermore, further research is needed in order to identify production centres and reconstruct the circulation of these objects. Some scholars have interpreted the relative standardization of both the capacity and the form of amphorae (25-30 litres, equal to the average monthly wine allowance for soldiers), and their derivation from eastern Mediterranean models, as a sign that trade was still controlled by the Byzantine state and encouraged by tax collection[[7]](#footnote-10). However, not all contexts and chronologies support this interpretation. For example, different scholars working independently from one another have provided remarkably similar interpretations for the very high number of archaeological finds recovered in Malta[[8]](#footnote-11) and in Comacchio[[9]](#footnote-12), a port on the Adriatic coast. They have suggested that these two sites may have been *emporia*, similar to those found in northern Europe. Of equal interest are recent observations on the globular amphorae made in Otranto (in the kilns excavated in Contrada Mitello): it seems likely that these circulated mainly on a regional basis[[10]](#footnote-13). Furthermore, the relationship between the circulation of coinage and trade in amphorae (for example along the northern Adriatic coast) has also recently been subject to examination. The use of coins in different exchange contexts during this period was minimal throughout the Italian Peninsula[[11]](#footnote-15); this leaves us with many questions on the ways in which trade, attested to by the presence of ceramics finds, actually took place.

Finally, turning back to our analysis of Sicily, it should be pointed out that the archaeological evidence does not provide unambiguous data; rather it reveals clear differences between districts within the same regional area. Globular amphorae were always imported and were related to a partially-monetarized economy, but they are not present in every type of site, as African and eastern Mediterranean amphorae were during the 7th century. Lead seals, together with other evidence, prove the continued existence of a consistent and complex state system and of a ruling élite. The rare examples of early Medieval glazed pottery recovered may indeed have been commissioned by the aristocratic groups who still lived on the Island. However, a key problem remains the decrease in the number of visible sites. Since we can definitely exclude an overall transformation of the habitat (with concentrations of population on the hilltops), we must accept the idea of a considerable decrease in the population, aggravated by the plague of the mid 8th century. Furthermore, it may be that we are not yet fully able to identify the material evidence relating to this century. Finally, it is also possible that in some areas (for example in the estates formerly belonging to the Roman Church) circumstances allowed for the establishment of relatively independent peasant communities. Thus, for example research in early Medieval archaeology in Tuscany has shown how difficult it can be to record the material evidence of peasant-based societies. This kind of research requires specific interests, long-term excavation planning, C14 dating and so on[[12]](#footnote-16). At the moment in Sicily, taking into account how society developed in the following century, we can only argue that the idea of the presence of peasant communities in Sicily should not be dismissed out of hand. Finally, concerning rural settlements it is very difficult to ascertain the effects of the shift towards a territorial army that followed the transformation of provinces into *themata* (Byzantine provinces). However, this change did not cause a “generalized process of **castle-building**” as stated by some scholars[[13]](#footnote-17). This does not mean that it is not possible to identify *kastra* founded during this period, but they possess features that are predominantly military and they did not have a significant impact on the overall habitat.

In summary, even though the major social and political structures survived, during the 8th century Sicily was still affected by clear changes in the scale of the Mediterranean economy and the widespread weakening of its aristocracy[[14]](#footnote-18).

Islamic Sicily

When the Muslim conquest took place from 827 AD onwards, remnants of the former Byzantine state system continued to operate on the island, alongside cohesive peasant communities that remained relatively autonomous. The conquest of Sicily took place at a late stage with respect to the rest of the great Muslim expansion and was not completed for a long time. Archaeological evidence for the 9th century is poor, but far more does survive for the following century.

I will first address ceramics assemblages. The period between the 9th and the first half of the 10th century has only recently begun to be studied and any attempt at sketching a general picture would be premature. Differences between districts became more evident during this crucial period of Sicilian history and especially between the eastern and the western side of the Island but are also quite marked between urban (for example Taormina and Catania) and rural contexts. Hand-made saucepans have been identified in several sites in south-eastern Sicily, especially in rural contexts. They show incised decoration in “mat style” **a stuoia** and were fired in reduced atmosphere, but I personally believe that their form can be linked with local production of similar saucepans from the 8th century[[15]](#footnote-19). Their dissemination can therefore be linked to a change in production methods rather than to the arrival of **foreign** groups. Fine unglazed ceramics have also been recovered in rural sites. These items are evenly wheeled and locally made (jars with a **solcata** handle) but production centres have not yet been identified. Some urban sites show a wider range of objects; in particular in Taormina these saucepans are associated with pottery painted with red stripes (possibly locally produced), chafing dishes,early Medieval glazed ware ***forum ware*** (of uncertain provenance but very similar to the sherds recovered in the Crypta Balbi in Rome) and amphorae with a pear-shaped body (made in the eastern Mediterranean or in southern Italy). The evidence recovered in this town may be related to the fact that Byzantine political influence lasted longer in Taormina and thus cultural and material interchanges could continue.

The assemblages dating to the first half of the 10th century and mainly recovered in Palermo also show features of the “late Antique Mediterranean tradition”[[16]](#footnote-20). In contrast to Taormina they possess completely independent features. Within the field of form and function, the only relevant innovations are vaulted lamps known as “Vandals lamps” and vessels for *noria* (machines for drawing water). These last are very well-known in the Muslim world, as they were used for drawing water from wells.

Major changes took place in local repertoires and the technical devices used in making pottery between the second half of the 10th and the early 11th century[[17]](#footnote-21). Polychrome underglaze painted pottery started to circulate widely, showing a high standard of technical ability right from its earliest production.The lack of evidence of local experimentation during the previous century and the introduction of new pottery-making techniques, as well as new forms and decorative patterns suggest that potters moved to Sicily from different areas of the Islamic world (most likely from *Ifriqiya*). These high-quality products were made both in town centres (for example in Palermo, Mazara del Vallo and Agrigento) and in workshops located in rural settlements (for example in the environs of Villa del Casale at Piazza Armerina[[18]](#footnote-22)). It is interesting to note that the ceramics sets used in town centres are no different from those used in rural settlements[[19]](#footnote-23) (see below) and date to the same period. The assemblages recovered in both contexts, in fact, show similar features in terms of both quality and numbers of objects. Furthermore, even though minor differences can be noticed, ceramics assemblages show similar features throughout the Island in terms of technique, form and decorative pattern, despite clear variations in the impact of the Islamic language and culture, as some areas such as the district known as Valdemone kept their original languages while others were far more profoundly affected by Arab influences[[20]](#footnote-25). Finally, it is important to underline the low percentage of imported pottery, even in town centres, while some types of Sicilian pottery circulated outside the Island.

1. Cf. Morrisson 1998 and more generally on the situation in Italy during this period see Rovelli in press. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Cf. bibliography quoted in note 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. In general, on the topics listed below see Prigent 2004, id. 2008, and related bibliography. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Cf. Prigent 2004. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Cf. McCormick 2001 and 1998 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
6. On these topics see for example Haldon 2000, Prigent 2008 and Wickham 2009, pp. 348-371. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
7. Cf. Prigent 2006a, pp. 296-297. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
8. Cf. Bruno 2004, see also Cutajar in press; on this topic Prigent 2008, p. 00 provides a different opinion. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
9. Cf. Gelichi *et al.* 2006, on amphorae especially pp. 38-40 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
10. Cf. Imperiale in press [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
11. Cf. Rovelli in press [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
12. Cf. for example Valenti 2004; see also the proceedings of the conference edited by Brogiolo *et al.* 2005 and especially the conclusions by R. Francovich and C. Wickham. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
13. Cf. Cracco Ruggini 1980, p. 39; Maurici 1992. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
14. On these topics see the comprehensive and thoughtful analysis by C.Wickham (2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
15. On pottery dating to this period cf. especially Arcifa 2004a-b, and 2010. In the latter work the scholar take into account the possible influence of models from the Adriatic area. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
16. Cf. Arcifa, Lesnes 1997; Pezzini 2004. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
17. About these topics cf. Molinari 1992; and 1994b; 1995; 1997a; 2007, for a different viewpoint see also Ardizzone 2004b. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
18. On former and recent excavations undertaken on this site cf. Pensabene, Sfanemi 2006 and Pensabene, Bonanno 2008 [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
19. About this topic in particular cf. Molinari 2007. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
20. On this topic cf. the recent work by Molinari in press a, and related bibliography [↑](#footnote-ref-25)