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Classical and Hellenistic Canosan Terracottas

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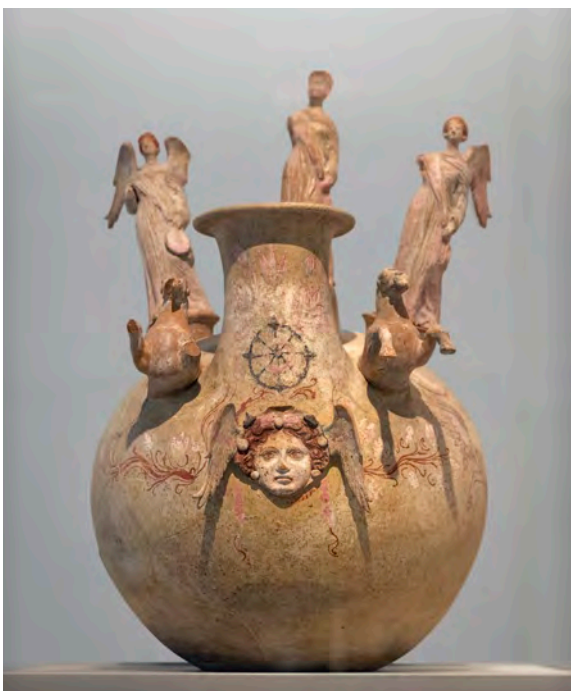
Canosan Polychrome Terracottas and Figures

Michael Svetbird

If you are a researcher and frequent visitor to archaeological and historical museums across the world – studying, among other things, works of ancient pottery, vase painting, terracotta miniatures, figurines and statuettes – you may well have encountered some selected objects of unusual form and colour range. These pieces immediately arrest the eye amid the more familiar repertoire of Attic or Etruscan amphorae, kraters, oinochoai, stamnoi, and other categories of ancient ceramics.

Traditionally, the pottery forms of the first millennium BC adhered to specific canons, driven by a range of needs (every day or symposium use and the storage of goods), ritual or ceremonial purposes (including grave goods), as well as technical production constraints and evolving aesthetic preferences. These canons, while gradually shifting over centuries, developed in a linear and deliberate manner – most visibly in the forms of pottery vessels, domains of painted decoration, colour range, and thematic content.

The more familiar types of vessels and their painted decoration naturally evolved from purely utilitarian containers, bearing simple geometric motifs, into increasingly sophisticated artefacts of ceramic art. These new iterations exhibited greater formal refinement, enhanced variation in scale, the addition of relief elements and volute appendages (as seen, for instance, in volute-kraters), and increasingly intricate ornamental and narrative compositions. Yet, the essential 'utilitarian-aesthetic' paradigm persisted: the forms, though more elaborate, largely remained within canonical bounds, and the painted decoration also progressed slowly and consistently in style, keeping pace with technical advances and the growing virtuosity of the vase-painters.



Askos with figurative appliqués and attachments, restored in the 1960s with replacement of the female figures from another Askos, colours are only partially preserved (see also page 13, right). Classical–Hellenistic periods, c. fourth–third century BC. Canosan polychrome terracotta ware. Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Canosa. https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

Geographical context of the places mentioned in the present article. Public Domain, modified by Mark Merrony.

Stylistically, the transition from the Geometric style (c. tenth–eighth centuries BC), through the Orientalising, black-figure, and red-figure traditions, to the white-ground style (c. fifth–fourth centuries BC in Attica), unfolded over a span of several centuries.

What, then, does one mean when describing certain ceramic artefacts as 'selected', 'unusual', and 'eye-catching' amid the more conventional ceramic assemblages? Let us imagine that you are examining a series of Classical-period pottery vessels. Before you are a row of black- or red-figure vases of canonical form, rendered in the familiar colour range. Suddenly, among them, an object appears which breaks the visual uniformity in both form and colour (left). This vessel, while based on an Attic canonical shape, is adorned with relief elements and attached miniature figures that issue around its surface. Its painted decoration (where preserved) bursts into a kaleidoscope of seemingly magical or celestial hues: pinks, greys, crimsons, blues, and yellows, in addition to the customary black, white, and terracotta (page 6, left).

The museum label beneath such an unusual exhibit would most likely indicate a specific place of production: Canosa di Puglia, or simply Canosa. These artefacts from Canosa, though represented in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli, the Louvre in Paris, the British Museum in London, the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam, and elsewhere, as well as in many private collections, remain distinctive.

To the best of my knowledge, no institution or private collector possesses a truly comprehensive or cohesive collection of Canosan polychrome ware and miniatures, particularly one assembled in a single location. Often, only scattered, individual pieces are on display. An important exception is the Museo Archeologico Nazionale Canosa di Puglia (hereafter, 'MAN Canosa') in Apulia, southern Italy.

I had previously visited Canosa a few years ago while exploring the archaeological museums in the region, from Gallipoli and Lecce to the regional capital, Bari. It seemed that the most representative and wide-ranging collection of regional archaeology was housed in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Taranto (MArTA). Yet it was the small and compact museum in Canosa that most captured my imagination, which showcases Canosan polychrome wares and miniatures, along with other artefacts found in the area which have attracted interest. I had always intended to return to Canosa since then to study its archaeology and history in greater detail and, in June of this year, such an opportunity presented itself.

Painted askos with an appliqué depicting a serpent or mythological sea creature on top and a possible Gorgoneion (see also page 10, above left). Classical–Hellenistic periods, c. fourth–second century BC. Canosan polychrome terracotta ware. Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Canosa. https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

Current excavations at Canosa have pinpointed Canosan workshops with an abundance of pottery remains. https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

'Hoplite Tomb', the hypogeum in Canosa, named after the carved relief of a hoplite. Classical period, second half of the fourth century BC. Carved from tufa. https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

Modern Canosa is a relatively small town, located approximately 20 kilometres inland from the Adriatic Sea with a population of about 30,000 inhabitants. Unlike its Apulian counterpart Taranto (ancient Taras), which was a prominent seaport of Magna Graecia, Canosa nonetheless holds the distinction of being one of the most significant archaeological sites in present-day Apulia. In antiquity, particularly in pre-Roman times, it flourished as a major centre of trade and craftsmanship.

Initially, it was inhabited by the Daunians, a local Italic population, and part of the broader group of Lapygians, thought to have descended from the Pelasgians, considered to have been a pre-Hellenic people

Antefix depicting Bendis, the Thracian goddess of the hunt, the counterpart of Greek Artemis and Roman Diana. From Apulia. The deity may be recognised from her headdress in the shape of a lion's head and the wings on her temples. Hellenistic period, c. third–second century BC (?). © Allard Pierson Museum, Amsterdam. https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

from Greece and elsewhere. The Daunians (Lapygians) were present in the region from at least the second millennium BC, according to archaeological evidence and historical interpretations.

From the eighth to sixth centuries BC, the region was colonised by Greek settlers from Attica (the territory of Athens) and is historically known as Magna Graecia ('Great Greece') for this reason.

Although the original Daunian settlement at Canosa predates the arrival of the Greek colonists, its name is unknown. From the period of Greek colonisation onwards, however, the settlement became known as Canusion in Greek and Canusium in Latin, functioning alongside the indigenous population and gradually developing the features of a *polis* (city-state).

The Hellenistic period in Canosa is generally dated from the Archaic period (c. 800–480 BC) through the Classical period (480–323 BC), culminating in the second-century BC of the Hellenistic period. Curiously, archaeological and written sources indicate that there were no significant tensions between the local Daunian population and the relatively recent settlers from Greece.

In the context of classical mythology, Canosa is most notably associated with Diomedes, the hero of the Trojan War and King of Argos, who is traditionally considered to have been the city's founder.

He is referenced by the Augustan poet Virgil in the *Aeneid* (9.246) and credited with the founding of several cities in southern Italy. The Roman grammarian Servius Honoratus, who flourished in the fourth century AD, in fact names Diomedes as the founder of Canosa in his commentary on the *Aeneid*.

However, archaeological evidence indicates that a settlement on the site of Canosa predated the events of the Trojan War and the supposed arrival of Diomedes in southern Italy, which have more to do with myth than verifiable history. Nevertheless, by the peak of Magna Graecia's prosperity (sixth–fourth centuries BC), Canosa had developed into a relatively well-known and substantial centre of trade and artistic production, complete with its own emporia and workshops (page 6, above right).

This productive period coincided, in broader chronological terms, with the flourishing of black- and red-figure pottery in Attica. Generally speaking, the domestic, ritual, and personal objects produced in this region, as I have noted in previous publications, were widely exported throughout the Greek world, including Magna Graecia, and also northern Italy, Etruria, and beyond.

Winged female and male figures. Produced in Canosa. Classical–Hellenistic periods, late fourth–mid-third century BC. Canosan polychrome terracotta figures. Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Canosa. https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

Two girls playing the popular game known as Ephedrismos, in which they act out the roles of the goddess of love Aphrodite and her son Eros. One is carrying the other on her back, while trying to use her hands to push over a stone. The winner may look forward to a happy marriage. Classical–Hellenistic periods, fourth–third century BC. Canosan polychrome terracotta. Allard Pierson Museum, Amsterdam, inv. APM01891. https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

These Attic products stood as advanced exemplars of both technological refinement and aesthetic achievement, serving as models for localised adaptations in regions beyond the Greece mainland. Alongside religious and ceremonial motifs, architectural elements, jewellery, fashion, and various grave goods, one of the principal forms of Greek cultural export was undoubtedly Attic pottery.

Archaeological finds of Attic-produced ceramics dating from the sixth to the third centuries BC, across Italy, demonstrate a remarkably high proportion of imports, in some areas even suggesting dominance of such. This overwhelming presence, commonly acknowledged and supported by material evidence, especially in museum collections, points to the powerful influence exerted by Attic craftsmanship on regional artisans.

This pattern applies not only to Magna Graecia in general, where cultural and technological influence was reinforced by the physical presence of Greek colonists, but particularly to Canosa, where the local Daunian elite, while preserving many of their indigenous forms and practices, as in funerary architecture, adapted Attic artistic and material elements into their own social and cultural expressions. This adaptive process is evident in the realm of ceramic and pottery production.

While the borrowing, integration or adaptation of cultural elements is not exceptional, it is important to emphasise that the Canosan phenomenon of a highly individualised local tradition, based on selectively incorporated external influences, stands out. Some Greek vases are enhanced with such figurative features,

Canosan polychrome terracotta ware in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Canosa. https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

Workshops currently under excavation at Canosa.
https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

commonly referred to as 'plastic pottery' (from the Greek '*plastikos*', meaning 'shaped', 'modelled' or 'moulded'). Moreover, detailed terracotta relief imagery is generally characteristic of both Magna Graecia in general and Apulia in particular (page 7, above left).

However, it was in Canosa that the production of this type of pottery achieved a truly grand and unique scope, in some respects arguably even surpassing its source traditions in artistic ambition.

There, it evolved into a distinctive branch, diverging from the canonical pathways of Attic pottery production. To a considerable extent, this distinction applies equally to the manufacture of clay reliefs and figurines (page 7, below; page 8, above). It is, of course, essential to acknowledge as a kind of 'primary source' the renowned tradition of plastic clay figurines produced at Tanagra in Boeotia, central Greece, the so-called 'tanagrine statuettes' (page 15). Yet the clay figurines of Canosa differ markedly from these, at least as we perceive it in the modern era, most notably in their distinctive polychromy and expressions, which I will expand upon below. Whether these Canosan artefacts may rightly be regarded as a 'hybrid' of Attic and Apulian traditions is ultimately a matter of interpretation, perception, and scholarly judgement.

The information panels at MAN Canosa describe the phenomenon as follows: 'In the middle of the fourth century BC, the workshops of Late Apulian vase painters across the Taranto area developed new assembly and decorating techniques, leading to new polychrome, sculptural forms known as Canusian [Canosan] ware. The experiments involved the addition of low and high relief decorative features, created from moulds then attached to the unfired vase with the aid of slip, a binder consisting of water mixed with clay.' This is beautifully expressed in the various displays in the MAN Canosa.

Current archaeological excavations, which I was fortunate enough to visit and examine in detail, thanks to the invaluable assistance of the Fondazione Archeologica Canosina, are ongoing in areas identified as workshops devoted to the production of pottery and figurines. What appear to be several firing chambers, with circular surfaces, are presently under excavation (page 6, above right; left and below). These excavations are being conducted under the direction of archaeologists and scholars from the University of Bari 'Aldo Moro', led by Professor Giuliano Volpe and Dr Giovanni De Venuto, and the University of Foggia, represented by Prof Maria Turchiano.

Artefacts originating from Canosa began to draw the attention of antiquarians and collectors from the late seventeenth century and through the eighteenth century, when various finds, often randomly discovered by chance, began to appear in public and private collections. Many of these were eventually procured at Taranto, Bari, and Naples, other European countries, and later North America, both in the public and private spheres. Today in Canosa there are ongoing questions regarding provenance, legal oversight, and the level of local institutional control exercised by Canosan authorities at the time.

In 1928, a major discovery was made within the city limits: the so-called 'Tomb of the Golds' (*Tomba degli Ori*), a richly furnished hypogeum burial of an aristocratic Canosan woman. The grave goods included gold, silver, and glass jewellery and ceremonial items, along

Workshops currently under excavation at Canosa.
https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

Askos depicting a mythological sea horse (hippocampus)
Classical–Hellenistic periods, fourth–second century BC.
Canosan polychrome terracotta ware.
Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Canosa.
https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

Pyxis lid with three figures in low relief, possibly a
mythological scene. Classical–Hellenistic periods,
c. fourth–third century BC. Canosan polychrome terracotta ware.
Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Canosa.
https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

with various ceramics, all dated to the second half of the fourth century through the third century BC.

In the 1930s, these finds were displayed in the newly founded Archaeological Museum at the Canosan Town Hall (Comune di Canosa), while the MAN Canosa, as such in its present form, was established in 1994 in the nineteenth-century Palazzo Sinesi and is currently relocating to a larger venue. Presently, the artefacts from the 'Tomb of the Golds' are primarily on display at the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Taranto (MArTA).

Returning to Canosan polychrome pottery and miniatures, in addition to their unusual relief forms and figurative attachments, the post-firing painted decoration is striking and outstanding, particularly the vibrant pink background. This pigment, along with other 'unconventional' hues, are essentially a hallmark of this

Female head with a female figure forming part of a handle, in imitation of a vase (prochoos). Found in a tomb near Canosa (see also page 13, left). Hellenistic period, c. 300 BC.
Canosan polychrome terracotta ware. The British Museum,
inv. 1982,1005.10. https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

Ceremonial 'head vase' with a female 'portrait'.
Hellenistic period, late fourth–early third century BC.
Canosan polychrome terracotta ware.
Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Canosa, inv. 6035.
https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

material. This distinctive colour is thought to be a pigment derived from the powdered red root of madder (*Rubia Tinctorum*), ground and diluted with water and/or clay. However, the use of madder root and the proportions in which it was added remains a matter of scholarly debate. It is not clear whether this natural, organic pigment would have been able to retain its brightness, richness and preservation over such a long period of time in its own right. It is more likely that it was combined with other elements or minerals that increased its durability.

Some examples of Canosan polychrome terracotta ware and figurines in the various museums that I have visited appear to have lost this pigment entirely, giving them a somewhat 'naked' appearance, although they preserve their elegance of form. This pigment loss may perhaps be attributed to its high organic content or the experimentation by artisans with its composition and proportions. Alternatively, it may reflect the storage conditions and the environmental conditions that the finds were exposed to before their excavation.

Museum specialists at MAN Canosa have informed me that they regard madder root powder as the principal pigment component which was applied after an artefact was fired. Hypotheses based on chemical analysis have been suggested by a research team led by Professor Giuseppe Egidio De Benedetto (Department of Chemistry, Università del Salento, Lecce, Apulia), in collaboration with the Italian Governmental Department of Cultural Heritage (Beni Culturali). In 2010 and 2011 they examined approximately fifty ceramic fragments from Canosa using Raman microspectroscopy and laser technology to identify the chemical and molecular composition of the pigments. Their conclusion was that iron oxides were identified as the basis for red hues and their derivatives, although this does not necessarily exclude an organic source. Interestingly, pigment from madder root was exploited in antiquity for dyeing textiles and clothing. If its earliest verified use is correct, this was around 1500 BC during the New Kingdom of Egypt (eighteenth dynasty), and it was widely used into the late medieval period.

In any case, the pink colouration on Canosan ware, when combined with other colours rarely found in traditional ceramic decoration, sky- or navy-blue and grey, as well as the more familiar white, terracotta, and black, result in compositions of striking visual effect. These may be grouped as full multi-coloured decorative compositions painted on vessels (page 6, left; page 10, above left and right); individual miniature painted motifs, statuettes, and figurines (page 7, below; page 10, below right; page 14, left); and painted three-dimensional appliqués that enhance or complement the narrative scenes painted on the body of the vessel (below).

Ceremonial 'head vases' with female 'portraits'. Hellenistic period, c. late fourth–third century BC. Canosan polychrome terracotta ware. Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Canosa. https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

Oinochoe (vase) with horses and figurative appliques (see also page 14, right). Hellenistic period, late fourth–early third century BC. Canosan polychrome terracotta ware. Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Canosa. https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

Ceremonial/cinerary vessels in the modified form of a loutrophoros (water vessel). Hellenistic period, late fourth–early third century BC. Canosan polychrome terracotta ware. Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Canosa. https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

Not to diminish in any way the merits of the 'conventional' black- and red-figure vase-painting traditions, nor the skill of the renowned Attic vase painters, one must nonetheless acknowledge that the Canosan tradition distinctly stands out within this broader panorama. Their 'riot of colours', inventive forms, and iconographic content mark them as truly exceptional.

It is noteworthy that the traditions of Canosan polychrome decoration are also clearly evident on vessels that seem to be more utilitarian and less overtly decorative. These may have served not only for ritual purposes but possibly a more practical function, such as the storage of goods. However, this remains a matter of scholarly debate, since most of the objects discovered appear to have fulfilled exclusively ceremonial and ritual/religious roles (page 12, left). All such vessels and statuettes were recovered from Canosan burial sites or hypogea (Greek: 'under ground').

I must here reiterate the premise from my previous article that burial sites and tombs remain among the most invaluable sources of archaeological information concerning the cultural practices, beliefs, and everyday life of ancient communities. Like the Etruscans, the Apulians developed complex funerary traditions, which often included, in addition to cremation, the construction of large tombs. These functioned as fully realised subterranean dwellings, sometimes with multiple rooms (depending on the social status and wealth of the deceased and their family), one of which was typically reserved for the deceased per se, decorated, furnished, and sealed. This environment ensured the remarkable preservation of the artefacts they contained – pottery, decorative objects, figurines, sculptures, architectural features, wall paintings, and armour.

MAN Canosa holds a rich collection of such objects, many of which were recovered from the Varrese Hypogeum, a chambered tomb complex located near Canosa. This site, originally discovered in 1912 and thoroughly excavated during renewed investigations in 1971, dates from the mid–late fourth century BC. The site yielded more than 400 objects, including a substantial corpus of Canosan polychrome ware and figurative ceramics, alongside imported goods, jewellery, armour, and luxury items. As a multi-generational burial site belonging to an elite Daunian family, the complex naturally contained exemplary specimens of high-status goods which were prized at the time. The artefacts from the Varrese Hypogeum are, in general, remarkably well preserved and offer today's viewers a vivid glimpse into their original splendour. However, only a selection of this larger collection is currently on display at MAN Canosa.

Hypogeum 'Lagrasta', one of the most important funerary complexes in Canosa. It comprises three distinct hypogea, excavated underground in the tuff rock. The largest is characterised by a wide dromos (corridor) and nine chambers and vestibules branching from it, decorated with Ionic half-columns. Hellenistic period, late fourth–first century BC. https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

As mentioned above, in the near future, the museum will relocate to a more spacious facility currently under development in a nearby palazzo. The new premises will feature expanded galleries and improved display environments that will introduce artefacts that were not on display before, combining their perception with a modern museum design. Thanks to the gracious collaboration of the Fondazione Archeologica Canosina and MAN Canosa, I have already had the privilege of viewing a number of these exhibits in the new building.

Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to visit the Varrese Hypogeum itself, but was able to explore several smaller tombs within Canosa, which are included in the present article to provide a clearer sense of the original contexts in which these extraordinary artefacts were preserved for centuries (page 6, below right; page 12, right).

Interestingly, the 'Scocchera Hypogeum B' (not illustrated in the present article) is situated directly beneath a modern residential building. It was rediscovered during the construction phase of a block of flats in the early 1970s, and some elements of the contemporary structure's concrete foundation are either supported by or directly adjoin the tuff walls and ceiling of the hypogeum. Visiting these burial sites prompts a reflection on the life cycle of the objects discovered within them.

What transformations did they undergo, from their commissioning in workshops, their subsequent sale or possible resale? Through whose hands did these objects pass before reaching us, often in an excellent, almost original condition, allowing us to behold them in much the same way as ancient viewers did some 2,500 years ago?

Above, I touched on pigment production, which characterises Canosan polychrome ware and miniatures from an aesthetic perspective. In terms of technical production processes, the following sequence merits attention. First, the basic forms of the vessels, wares, and statuettes were derived from Greek pottery traditions and were generally based on canonical shapes. Second, the vessels were fired and then painted. Third, a white coating of the clay mineral, 'kaolinite', was applied post-firing to serve as a base layer for colours. Fourth, pigments, both organic and mineral, were subsequently applied in a cold state, according to the design intentions of the vase-painter or artisan. Fifth, the creation of clay statuettes and low reliefs were presumably moulded in part, while other portions such as miniature bodies, hair, or drapery, were sculpted by hand, which was an artistic and meticulously executed process of sculptural modelling.

The iconography of Canosan pottery and the art of sculptural miniatures in the round, as previously noted, represents a distinctive hybridisation of the Greek artistic legacy and the indigenous traditions of Daunian culture. Some subjects directly intersect with the iconography, mythology, and daily life of ancient Attica (page 8, above; page 10, above right), while others, such as idealised depictions of funerary rituals capped by architectural elements, certain mythical creatures, and highly realistic, portrait-like faces, are purely localised and unique to this context (page 10, below; page 11, left; above left).

I continue to wonder: do these sculpted heads represent portraits of specific individuals, are they imaginative renderings of near-divine beings, or a combination of both? They notably belong to the specific 'head-vase' vessel category and were not intended as

utilitarian containers. Derived from Attic vases, they served a purely ceremonial, funerary function as grave goods, and were never used in daily life.

Particularly striking is the almost invariably benevolent and serene expression found on these faces, both on 'head-vases' and other ceramic and sculptural types. Even the depictions of the Gorgoneion, traditionally fearsome in Attic iconography, appear more akin to tranquil postcard-like angels, bearing gentle and contemplative expressions rather than monstrous ones (page 5, left; page 6, left; page 13, right). This visualised benevolence and positive aura, artistic aspiration towards beauty, serenity, romantism, and spiritual gentleness, can be regarded as another distinctive feature of the Canosan/Daunian artistic tradition.

There is a discernible idealisation in the representation of figures, likely rooted in an intention to convey a beautiful and harmonious realm in which the depicted characters' gestures attain a kind of colourful and timeless perpetuity (page 7, below; above). This interpretation is supported by the observation by an extract on an information panel in the MAN Canosa: '… an aspiration for a peaceful, idealised atmosphere in which the actions of the protagonists were eternal.' This tendency is apparent in depictions of animals and mythical creatures (right).

In my view, the emotive accessibility of these images, softly conveying positive energy, so to speak, through visual form and pigment, constitutes one of the most distinctive and evocative features of Canosan polychrome terracotta and miniatures. I should also stress the attention to detail in the statuettes, low reliefs, and applied decorative elements on the pottery, all conveyed in miniature. It is both natural and expected that the progress and skill of artisans, sculptors, and vase-painters during the fourth to second centuries BC (the Canosan Hellenistic period) had developed considerably, especially when compared with those of the eighth to sixth centuries BC (Archaic Greek period).

However, it is worth emphasising that the complexity of miniatures and reliefs, particularly the sculptural appliqués on pottery, and the clear intent to convey specific moods, still astonish the modern viewer with their refined, exquisite artistic execution. Moreover, these qualities distinguish the Canosan from that of the Attic tradition. It should, though, be noted that in certain cases the three-dimensional figurative appliqués and bodies of Canosan vessels are not entirely original. Some elements may have been replaced during restoration and transferred from one vessel to another.

Sphinx statuette. Hellenistic period, c. fourth–third century BC.
Canosan polychrome terracotta figure.
The office of the Fondazione Archeologica Canosina.
https://www.michaelsvetbird.com

Regarding detail and expressive gestures, one may compare, for instance, the terracotta figurines from Tanagra in Boeotia, dating to the fourth–third centuries BC, with Canosan plastic statuettes from approximately the same period (page 7, below; below) Do not the latter appear more intricate, detailed, and dynamic?

For the most part, such representations depict figures standing more or less still. At times it is difficult to determine precisely what they are doing, whom they represent, or what intentions they may convey.

Yet if one compares, in detail, the tilt and turn of the heads, the positions and gestures of the hands, the facial expressions, the treatment of the drapery, and the numerous added attributes and objects, it appears that the Tanagra figurines are more static and comparatively simplified, whereas those from Canosa exhibit greater expressive movement and complexity.

In my view, the difference in perception is dictated not solely, and nor even primarily, by the colour range, but rather by the dynamism and intricacy of the modelling, although this remains a subjective observation, and readers are of course encouraged to form their own judgements.

I am not suggesting a 'better or worse' judgement, especially given that the above comparison involves a limited number of selected examples, but merely drawing attention to some distinctive features of Canosan artistic production as illustrated by the material presently available for study and comparison. It may be presumed that some of these statuettes have, as well, fulfilled apotropaic (to ward off evil) and symbolic functions or purposes.

To summarise, I would highlight three principal characteristics that render Canosan polychrome terracottas and miniatures unique and 'eye-catching' within the artistic tradition of Magna Graecia which sets them apart from other regions (Attic, Etruscan, and elsewhere): the use of polychromy, a vibrant and varied colour palette, and experiments with pigment and application techniques; innovations in design, particularly in geometric and sculptural form; and an expressive, idealised, and benevolent visual language in both vase-paintings and sculpted figures.

To conclude this artistic and historical exploration of ancient Canosa and its distinctive cultural identity, it is worth recalling that the city likely came under Roman influence between c. 318 and 312 BC, during the period in which many Apulian centres began forging alliances with – or submitting to – Rome amidst the backdrop of the Samnite Wars. By the early third century BC, Canosa had acquired the status of a Roman *municipium*, formally integrating into the Roman administrative framework. Remarkably, the city maintained its loyalty to the Republic throughout subsequent regional upheavals, including the turbulent years of the Second Punic War (218–201 BC), when many other Apulian communities wavered in their allegiances.

Such, then, was the outcome of my recent visit to Canosa, a journey that prompted the compilation of the various observations and materials presented in this article. These were drawn not only from Canosa itself but also from other museums and institutions housing related artefacts. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the Fondazione Archeologica and the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Canosa (MAN Canosa) for their invaluable assistance in the gathering of materials and resources for this article.

Statuettes from Tanagra, Boeotia, Greece ('Tanagrines'). Painted terracotta. Late Classical–Hellenistic period, second half of the fourth–third century BC. Painted terracotta. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. https://www.michaelsvetbird.com