

## THE "PRESEPE." BY SIDNEY J. A. CHURCHILL, M.V.O.

**T**HE representation of the Nativity in churches, as well as in private houses, at Christmas-time is a very ancient institution in Italy. Luigi Correra, in an article on the "Pastori ed il Presepe Napoletano," contributed to the "Emporium" of Bergamo (Vol. XI. p. 68, with six illustrations), states that the Presepe, or representation of the birth of Christ, is mentioned in early notarial records of the XVth century in Naples. An article contributed to "Roma: Rassegna illustrata dell'Esposizione del 1911" (Rome, December 25, 1910) carries the custom of exhibiting the Nativity in convents and private houses much further back, and mentions the fact that the Basilica Liberiana of Santa Maria Maggiore, in Rome, from the VIIth century was called "Santa Maria ad Praesepe." The representation of the Nativity took place regularly at Christmas in one of its chapels, and from this Gregory IV (A.D. 827-843) took the model for a Nativity which he caused to be erected in S. Maria in Trastevere. The writer in the "Roma," from whom this is quoted, is of opinion that the Presepe originated with the "Mystery" plays. During the Middle Ages the churches in Northern Europe appear to have frequently been the scenes of religious representations by living actors. S. Francis of Assisi himself, in the year 1223, prepared a representation of the Nativity, during which he preached to his followers. Such "Mystery" plays are common to this day amongst the Persian followers of Muhammed, and preaching is an important part of the ceremonial.

The Presepe is a translation in dialect of the biblical narrative of the birth of Christ. In Sicily and the kingdom of Naples much skill was devoted to the preparation of the Presepe. When Carlo III of Naples prepared a Presepe with his own hands, and his queen cut up her own sumptuous garments to dress the dolls used in the King's "Nativity," all the best talent of the day was employed in the construction of the figures. The shepherds were modelled on actual figures of well-to-do peasants of the day, or of the preceding century. Some of these dolls, whether of wood and rag or terra-cotta, are extraordinary examples of plastic art. At the present day, although there are still some fine collections in private hands, in museums, and in churches—and it takes years of search and intelligent collecting to form a complete Presepe—the art of making the dolls is dying out, and there is only one person left in Naples who can produce the old dolls and repair them. Most of his examples are old ones which he has collected in a long life of devotion to his

## THE "PRESEPE"

dying art ; his work has been mostly limited to the grouping of them together and to repairing such as required treatment.

The dolls were made of wood as regards faces, limbs, and hands ; the bodies of rag, so as to be more pliable. Later the heads were made of terra-cotta ; the modern Presepe figure is of *papier-mâché*. The Presepe usually represented three phases—the Annunciation ; the Nativity in the Grotto at Bethlehem with the Visitation ; and the *Taverna*. At the Annunciation the shepherds are seen sleeping by their farms with their flocks around them ; the Nativity shows the birth of Christ and the Eastern kings in homage ; and the *Taverna* a wayside resthouse, such as might be met with in Southern Italy during the XVIIIth century. The fruit of the soil and cattle of all kinds are shown in quantity.

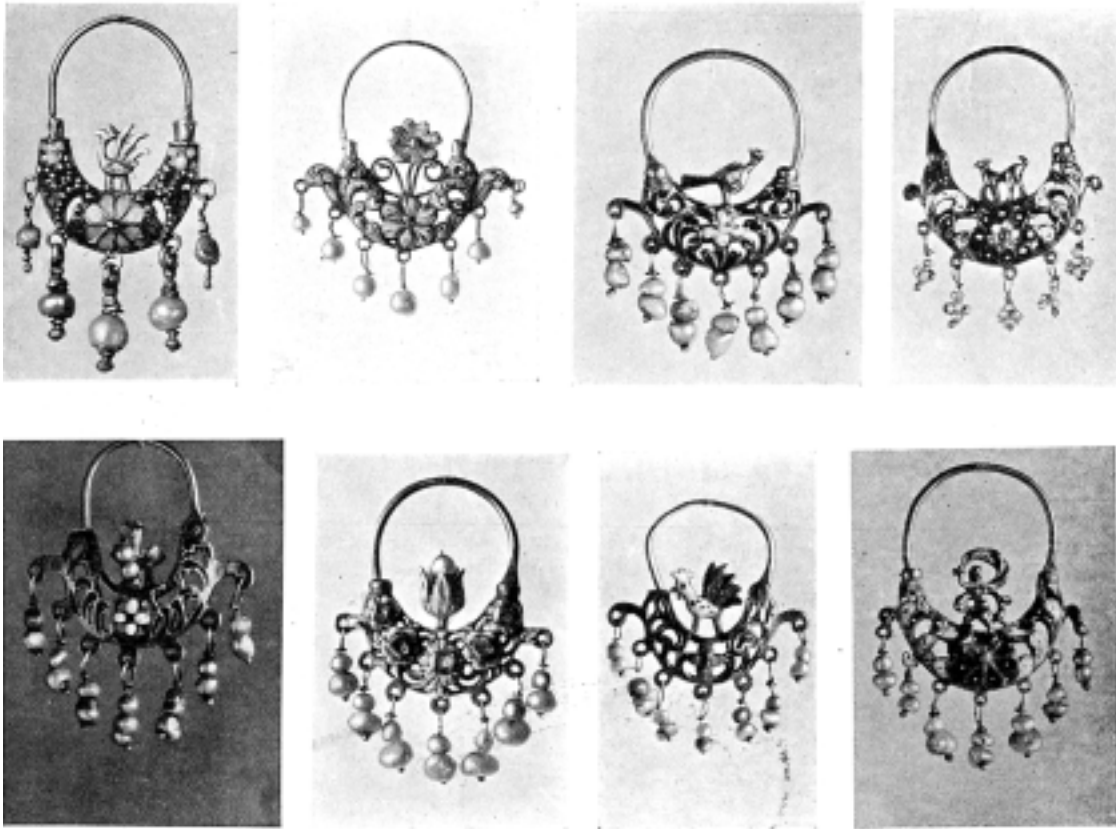
One of the greatest and most famous modellers of *Pastori* was Giuseppe Sammartino, who was born in 1720 and died in 1793. A well-known follower of his was Giuseppe Gori. His speciality was the making of nobles and Oriental figures. Francesco di Nardo was famous for his animals, but even more skilful than he were the brothers Saverio and Nicola Vassallo. Francesco Gallo, who was also a modeller at the Capodimonte Porcelain Works, modelled animals for the Presepe. The finer examples of the *Pastori* are faithful representations, down to the most insignificant details of contemporary peasant costumes, which are now fast disappearing under the penetrating and progressive influence of up-to-date means of communication and emigration.

JEWELLERY



229<sup>A</sup> GOLD, ENAMEL AND PEARL EARRINGS AND  
PENDANT FROM SICILY. PEARL PENDANT  
CROSS FROM MILAN, LOMBARDY

JEWELLERY



230 TO 237 GOLD, ENAMEL AND PEARL EARRINGS FROM SICILY



238 GOLD FILIGREE JEWELLERY FROM SARDINIA  
*(The property of Contessa Sanginet de Teulade)*

JEWELLERY



239 ENAMEL AND PEARL EARRING  
FROM GENOA LIGURIA



240 ENAMEL AND PEARL  
EARRINGS FROM SICILY



241 ENAMEL AND PEARL PENDANT  
FROM SICILY



242 ENAMEL AND PEARL  
EARRING FROM SICILY



243 ENAMEL AND PEARL PENDANT  
FROM GENOA, LIGURIA



244 ENAMEL AND PEARL  
EARRING FROM SICILY

JEWELLERY



244<sup>a</sup> GOLD, ENAMEL AND PEARL EARRINGS FROM SICILY

JEWELLERY



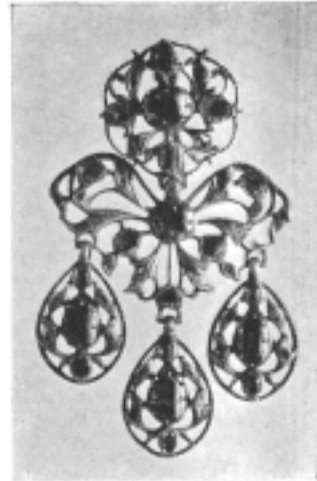
245 ENAMEL AND PEARL  
EARRING FROM SICILY



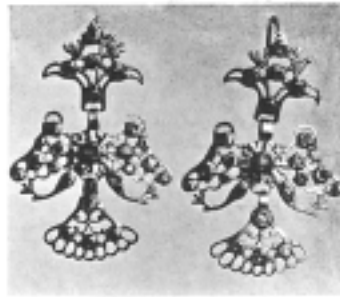
246 EARRING FROM  
NORTH ITALY



247 GOLD, ENAMEL AND  
PEARL PENDANT  
FROM SICILY



248 EARRING FROM CALABRIA



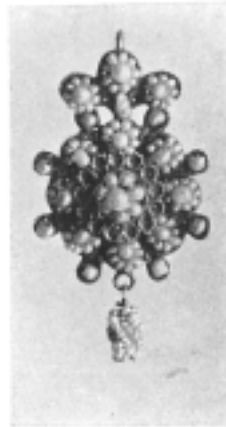
249 EARRINGS FROM ALCAMO, SICILY



250 EARRING FROM  
SOUTH ITALY



251 GOLD, ENAMEL AND  
PEARL EARRING FROM  
NORTH ITALY

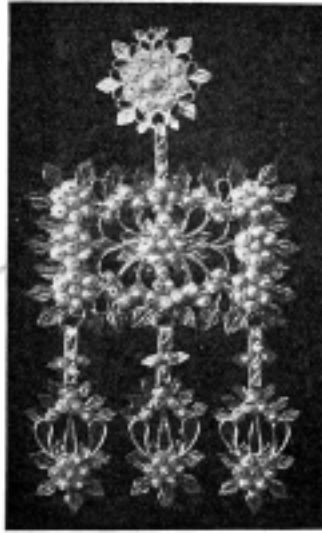


252 EARRING FROM  
VENETIA

JEWELLERY



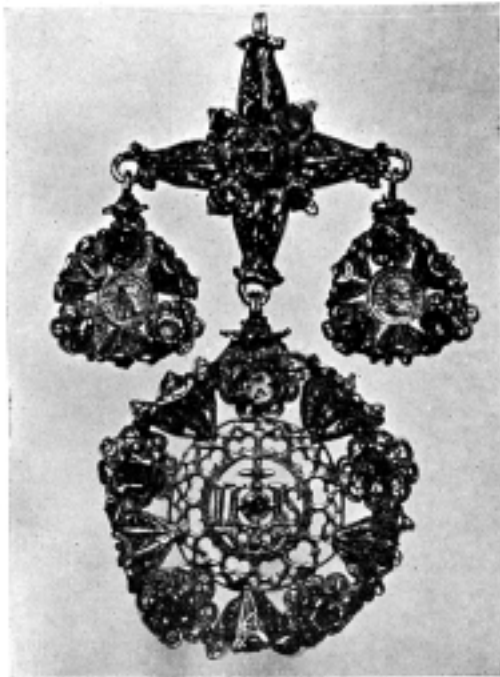
253 SILVER-GILT PENDANT  
CRUCIFIX FROM SICILY  
*(The property of Mrs. Malcolm  
Holme)*



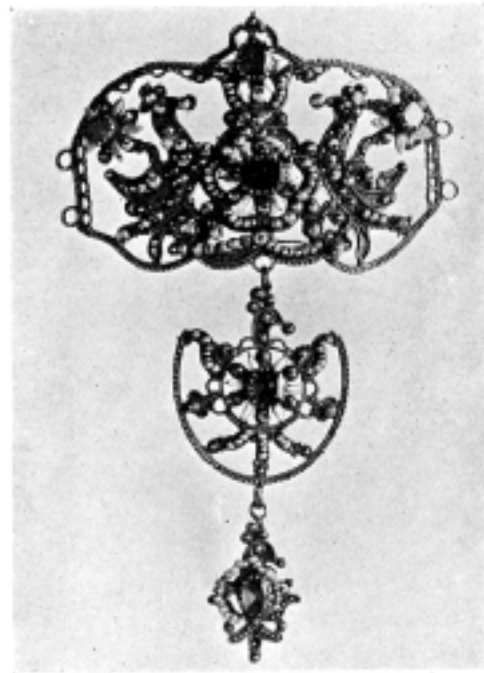
254 GOLD AND PEARL EARRING  
FROM SARDINIA



255 PENDANT CRUCIFIX FROM  
NAPLES, CAMPANIA



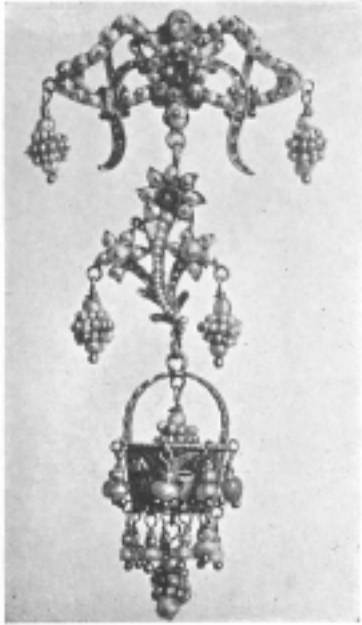
256 FILIGREE PENDANT OF ROSARY FROM SARDINIA



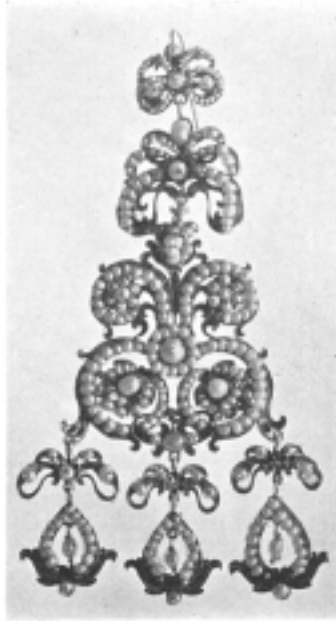
257 PENDANT FROM CALTAGIRONE, SICILY



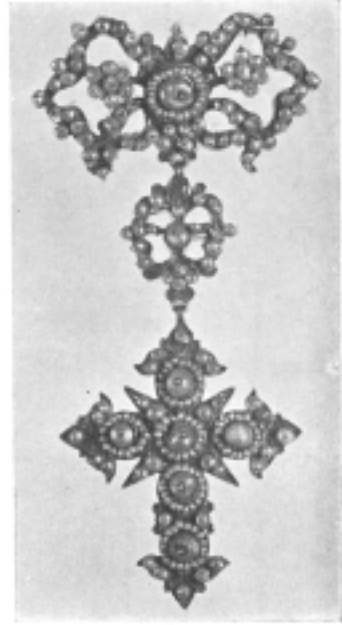
JEWELLERY



258 PEARL PENDANT FROM SICILY



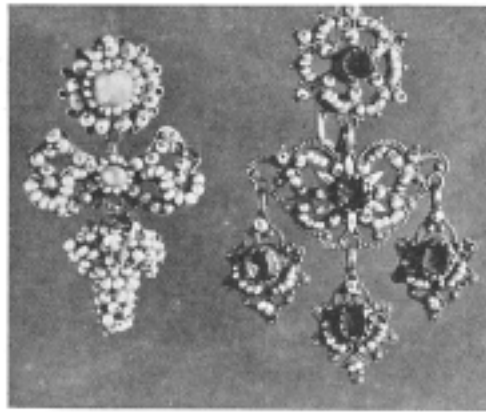
259 PEARL EARRING FROM SOUTH ITALY



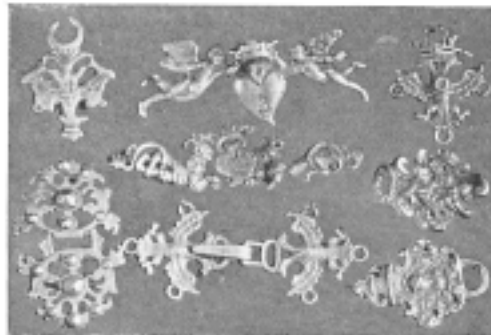
260 PENDANT CRUCIFIX FROM CENTRAL ITALY



261 PEARL EARRING FROM SICILY



262 PEARL EARRINGS FROM NAPLES AND CALTAGIRONE



263 SILVER MANTLE-CLASPS



264 PEARL EARRING FROM GAETA, CAMPANIA

JEWELLERY



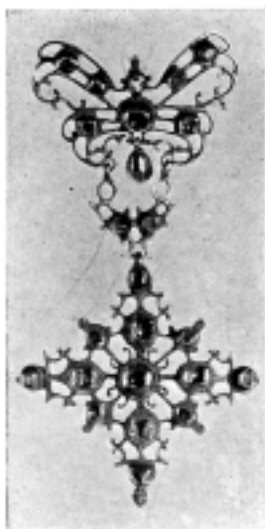
265 FILIGREE PENDANT FROM  
SIRACUSA, SICILY



266 PEARL EARRING FROM  
NAPLES, CAMPANIA



267 PENDANT FROM TUSCANY



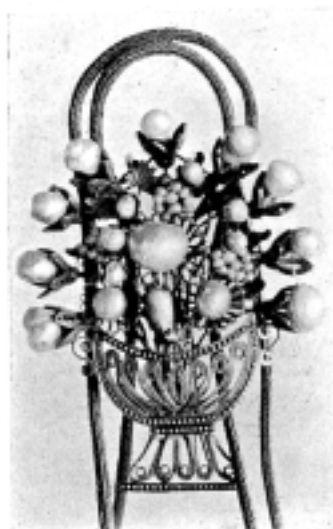
268 PENDANT FROM CALABRIA



269 SILVER-GILT AMULET FROM  
SOUTH ITALY

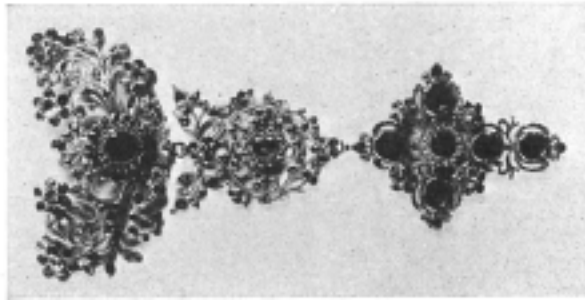


270 EARRING FROM VENICE

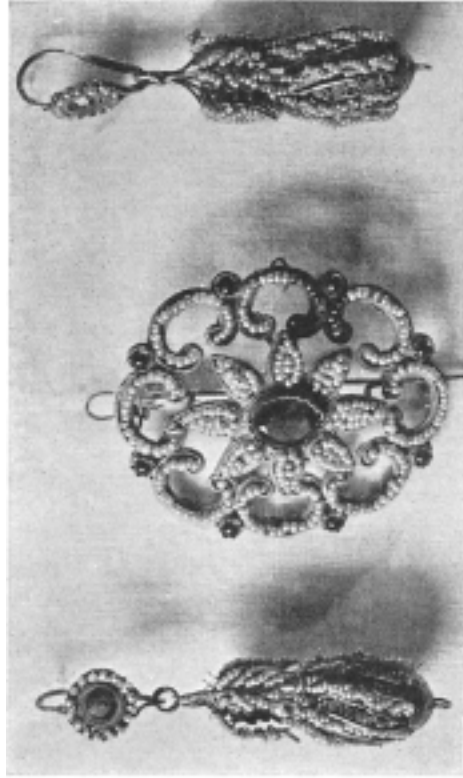


271 PENDANT FROM SOUTH ITALY  
*(The property of Signor Bulgari)*

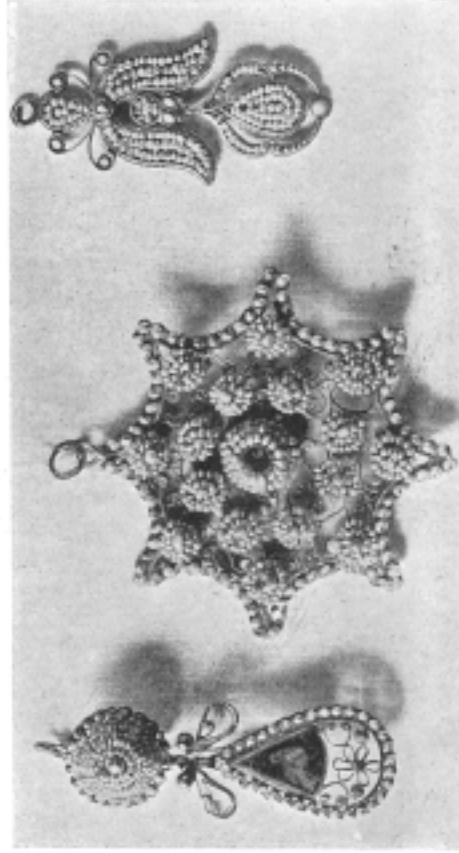
JEWELLERY



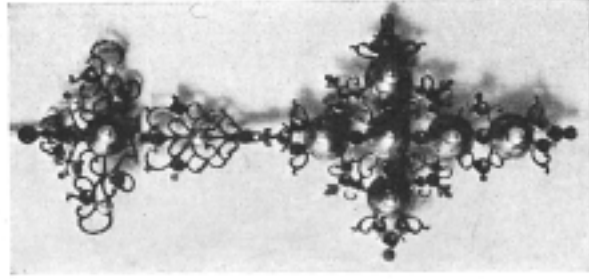
272 PENDANT FROM SOUTH ITALY



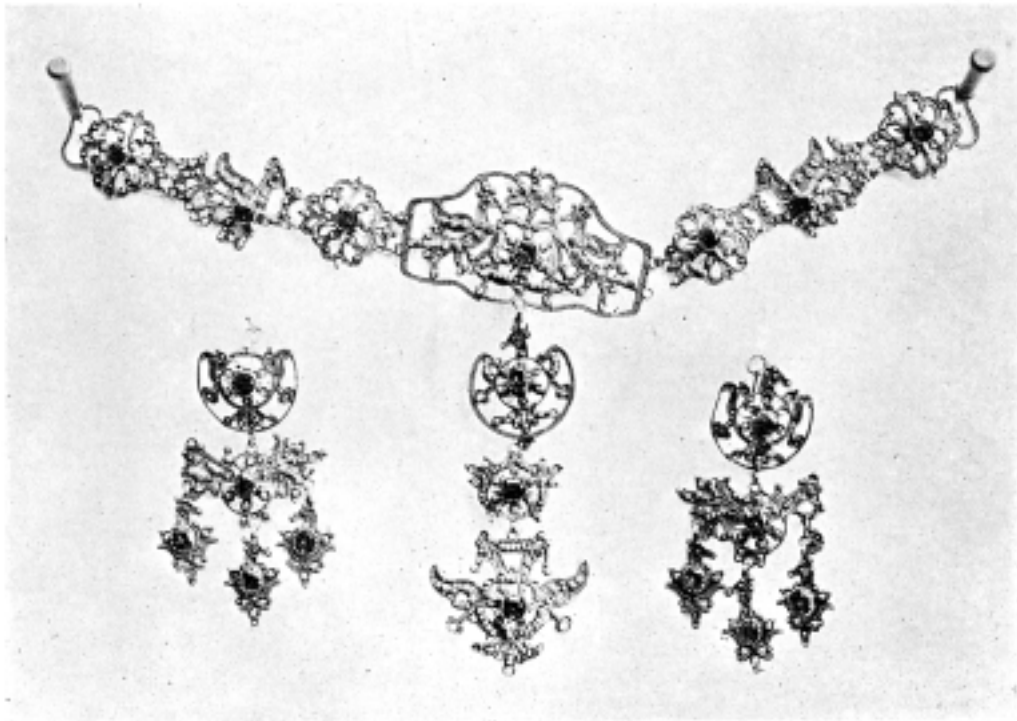
273 GOLD AND PEARL JEWELLERY FROM SOUTH ITALY



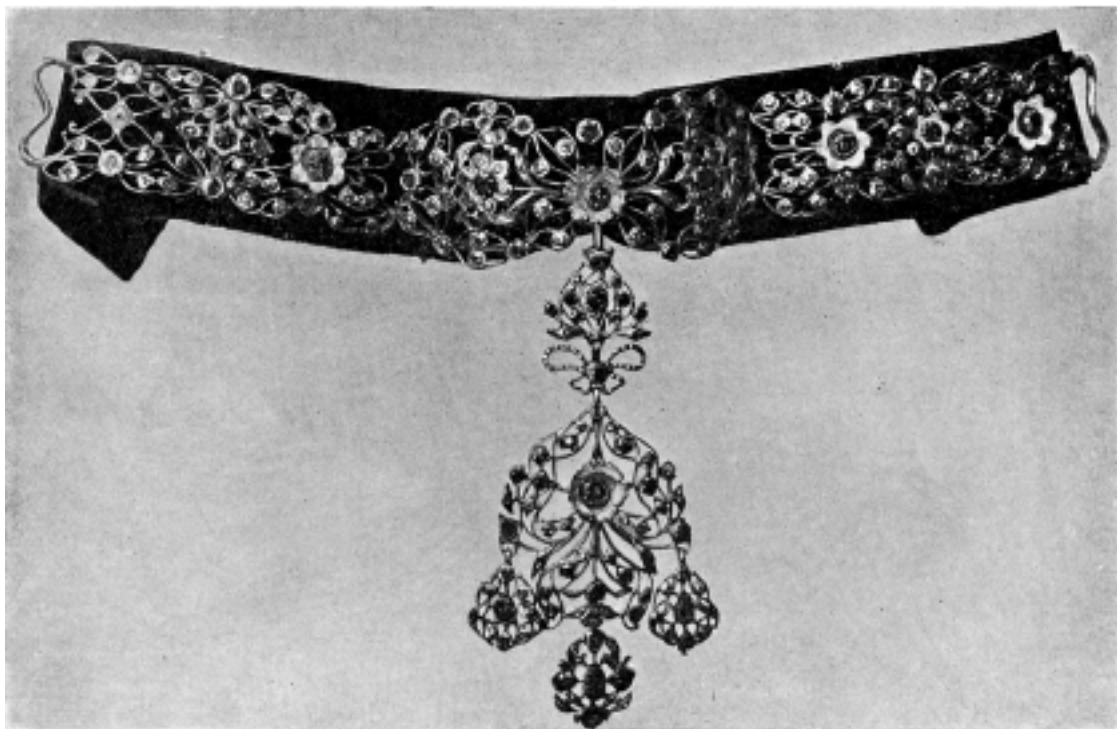
274 GOLD, PEARL AND ENAMEL JEWELLERY FROM MARCHES



275 PENDANT FROM TUSCANY

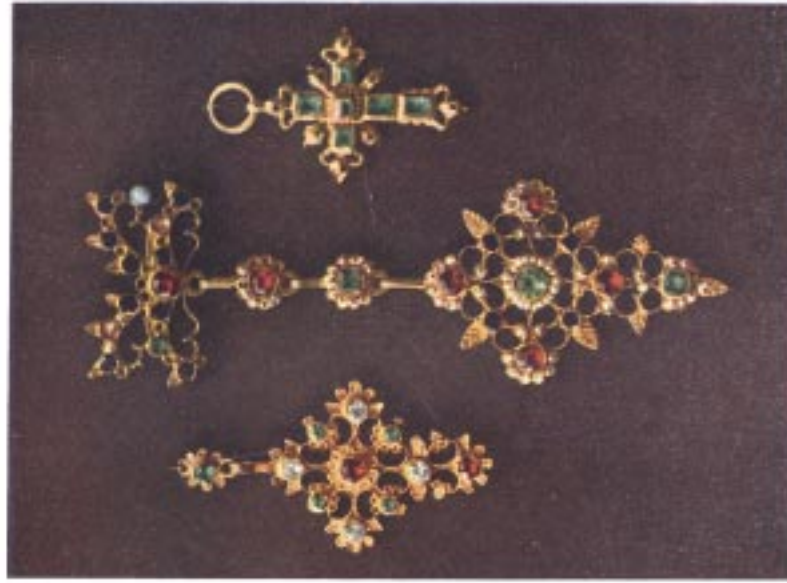


276 SILVER-GILT PARURE FROM CALTAGIRONE, SICILY  
*(The property of Princess Trabia)*



277 FILIGREE NECKLACE AND PENDANT FROM CALTAGIRONE, SICILY

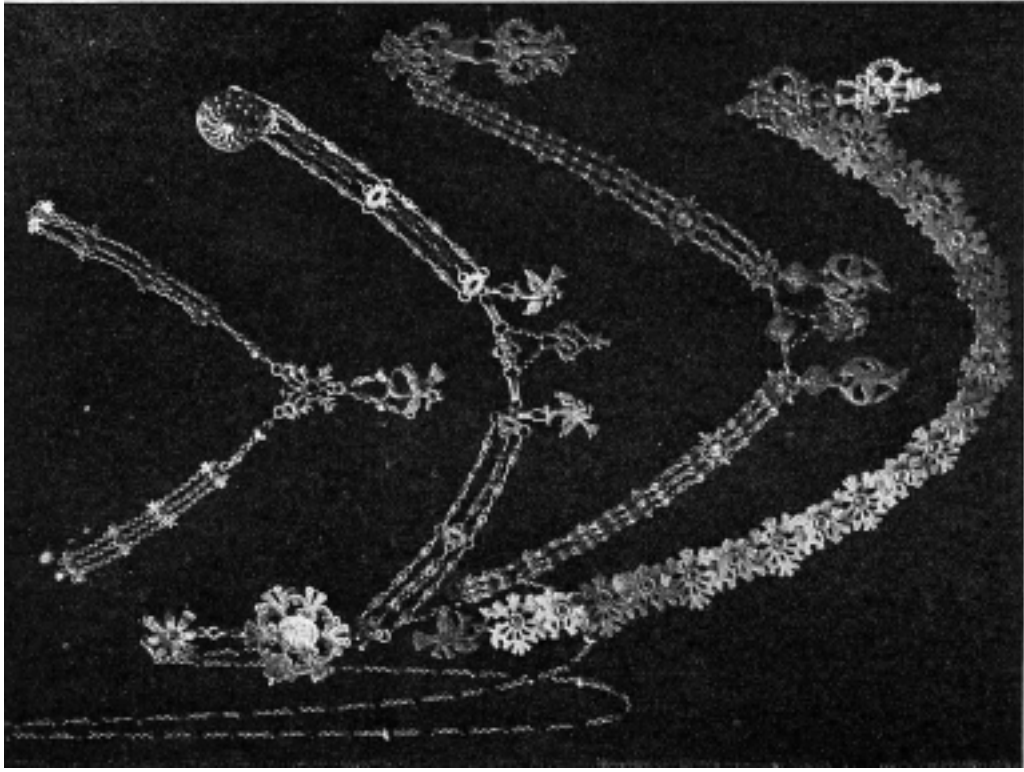
JEWELLERY



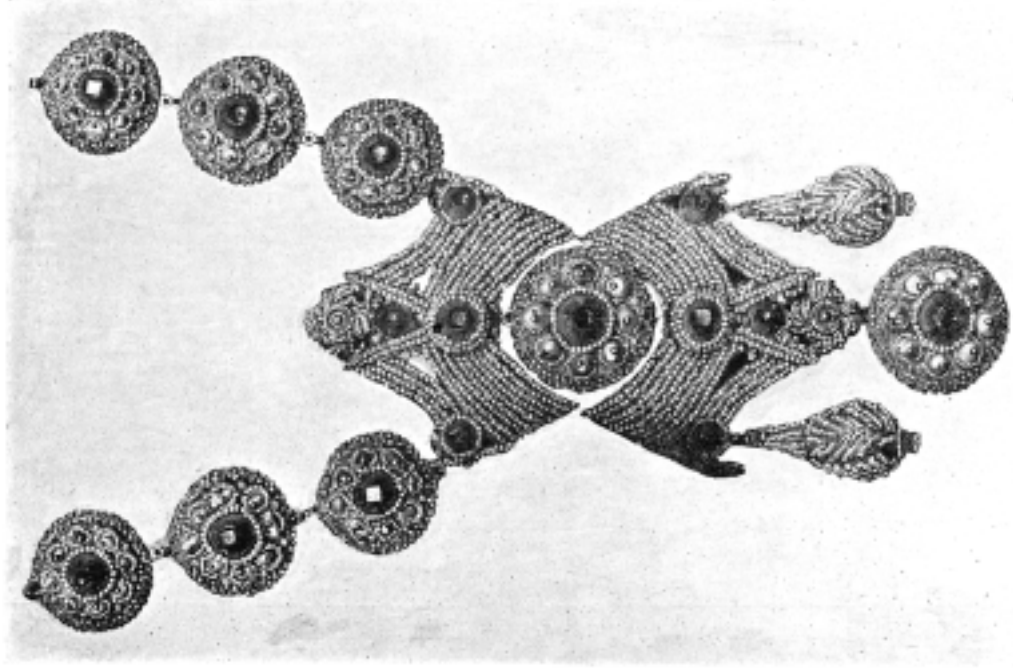
*Photos Ing. Bronzini*

277<sup>A</sup> TO 277<sup>C</sup> JEWELLERY FROM SARDINIA  
*(From the Collection of Signora Pia Lorisato.)*

JEWELLERY



278 JEWELLERY FROM SARDINIA  
(The property of *Contessa Sanginet de Tenladi*)



279 GOLD AND PEARL PENDANT FROM GAETA, CAMPANIA

JEWELLERY



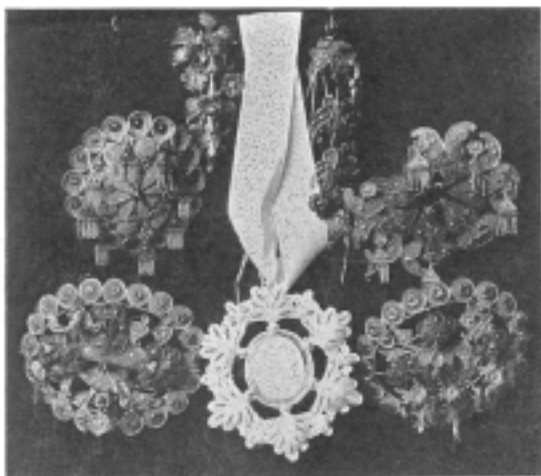
280 SILVER TOOTH-PICKS FROM SARDINIA



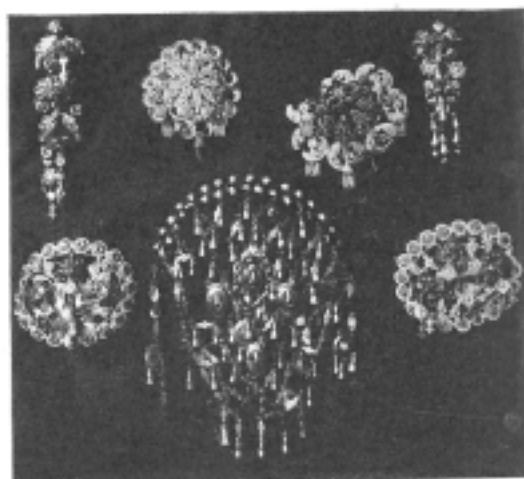
281 SILVER TOOTH-PICK, HAIR ORNAMENT AND MANTLE-CLASP FROM SARDINIA



282 SILVER TOOTH-PICKS FROM SARDINIA



283 SILVER HEAD-ORNAMENTS FROM VERCELLI  
*(Photo Roccavilla)*



284 SILVER HEAD-ORNAMENTS FROM BIELLA  
*(Photo Roccavilla)*

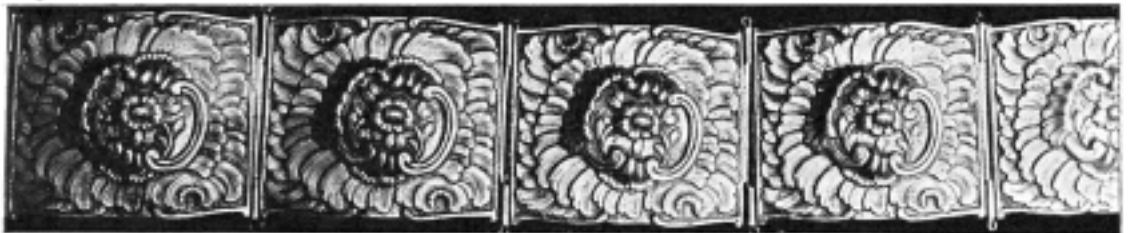


285 SILVER BUTTONS FROM SARDINIA]

JEWELLERY



286 AND 287 SILVER GIRDLE AND CLASP FROM PIANO DEI GRECI, SICILY



288 AND 289 SILVER GIRDLE AND CLASP FROM SICILY  
(The property of Senatore Chiaramonte Bordonaro)



JEWELLERY



290 SILVER AND CORAL ORNAMENT USED AT CHRISTENINGS  
FROM PIANO DEI GRECI, SICILY



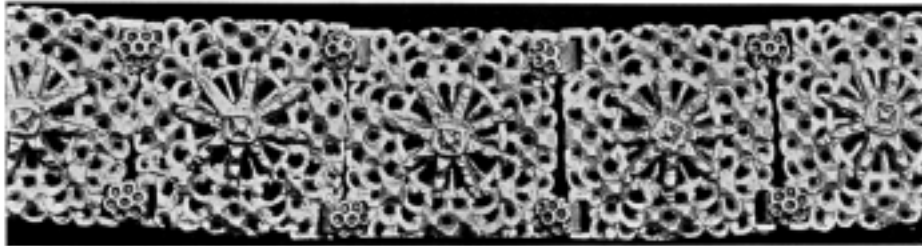
291 AND 292 SILVER-GILT GIRDLE AND CLASP FROM PIANO DEI GRECI, SICILY

JEWELLERY



*Photo Churchill*

293 AND 294 SILVER GIRDLE AND CLASP FROM PALERMO, SICILY (1703)  
(The property of Senatore Andrea Gueneri)



295 AND 296 SILVER GIRDLE AND CLASP FROM PIANO DEI GRECI, SICILY (1680)

JEWELLERY



297 SILVER-GILT GIRDLE-CLASP



298 GIRDLE-CLASP FROM PIANC  
DEI GRECI, SICILY

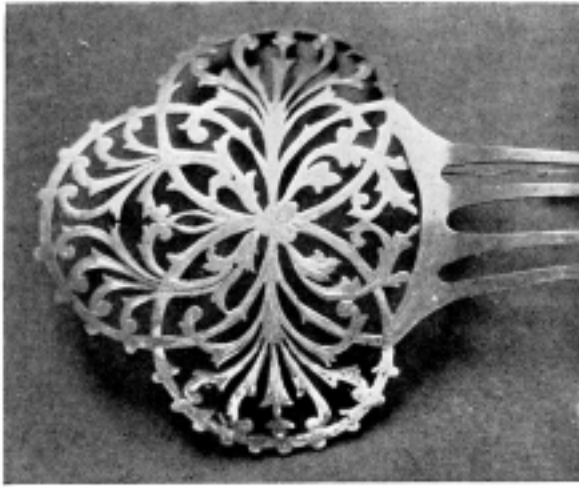


299 SILVER-GILT GIRDLE-CLASP  
FROM PALERMO, SICILY

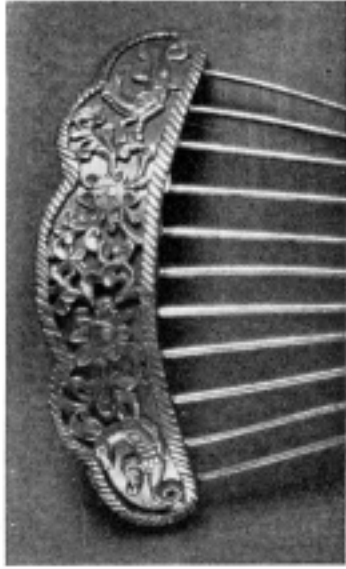


300 SILVER GIRDLE FROM PALERMO, SICILY (1710)  
*(The property of Mrs. Euphrosyne Whitaker)*

JEWELLERY



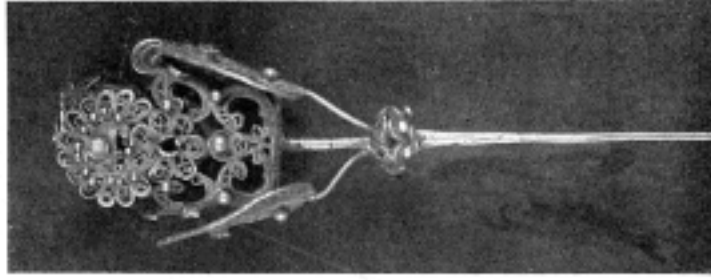
301 SILVER HAIR-COMB FROM SOUTH ITALY



302 SILVER HAIR-COMB FROM CATANIA, SICILY

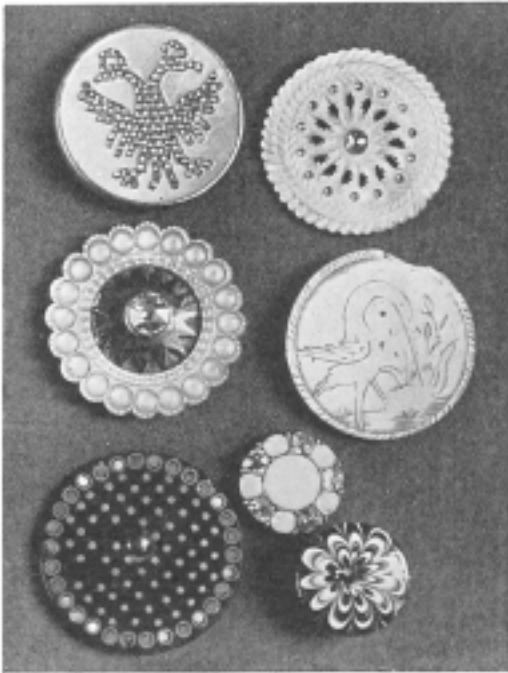


303 SILVER HAIR-COMBS FROM NAPLES, CAMPANIA



304 SILVER HAIR-ORNAMENT FROM SARDINIA

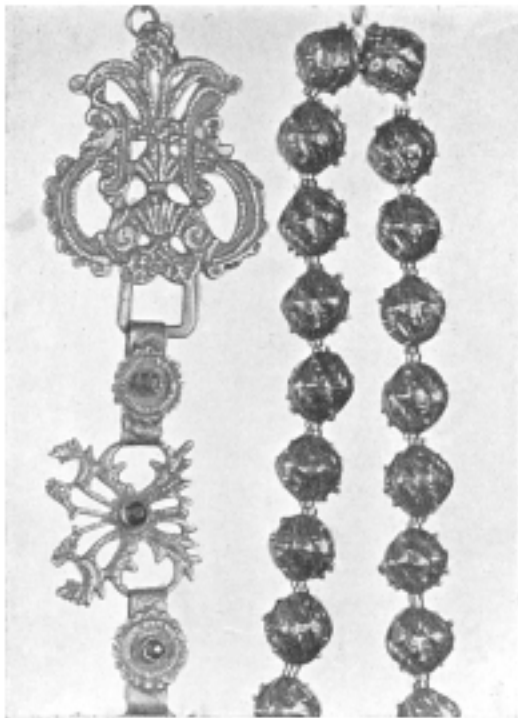
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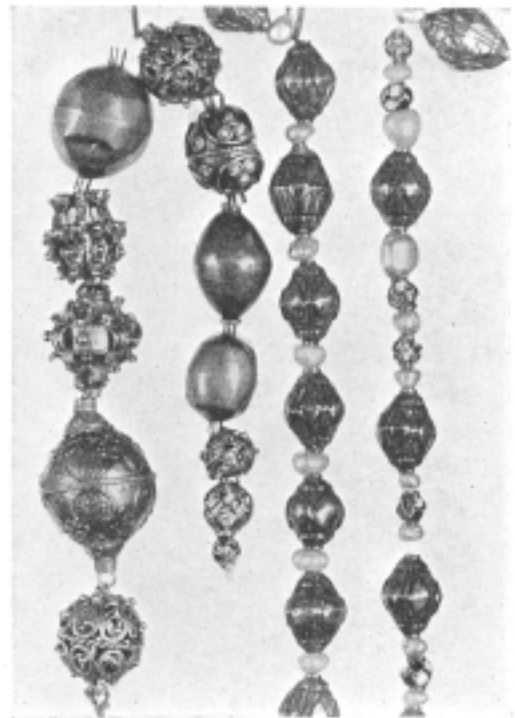
305 BUTTONS FROM VENICE AND SOUTH ITALY



306 SILVER AND JEWELLED BUTTONS FROM SARDINIA

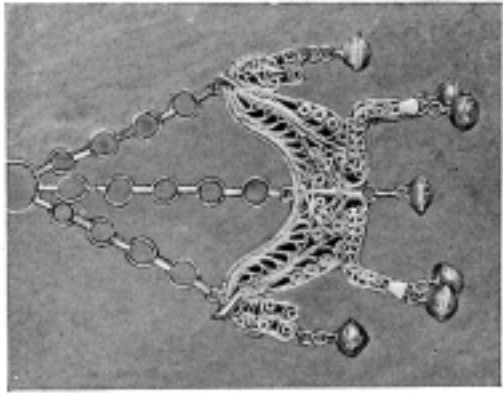
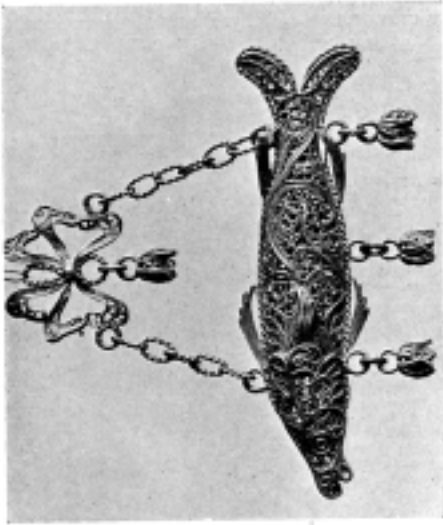


307 SILVER CHAIN FROM SARDINIA, AND NECKLACE FROM ABRUZZO

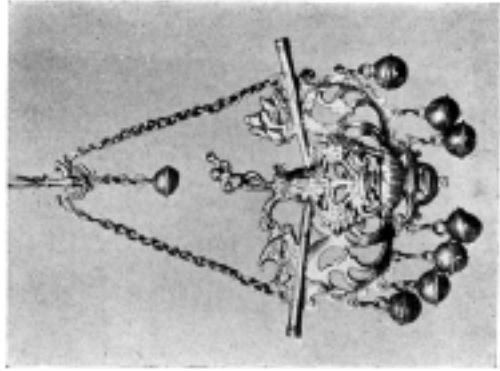
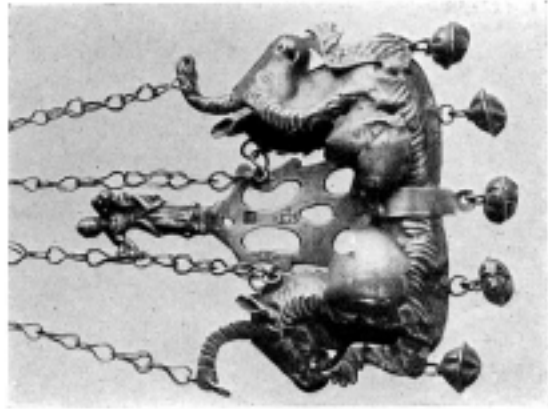
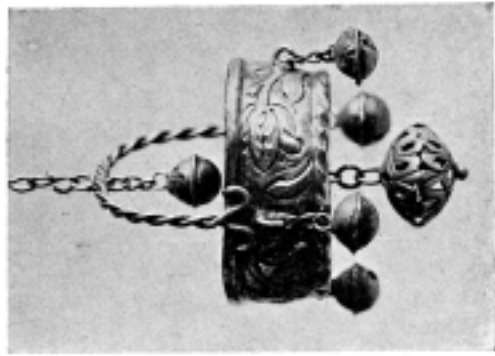


308 GOLD BEADS FROM SOUTH ITALY

AMULETS



*(The property of Mrs. Malcolm Hoime)*



*(The property of Mrs. Malcolm Hoime)*

AMULETS



315 IVORY AMULET FROM  
SOUTH ITALY  
(The property of Dr. T. Ashby)



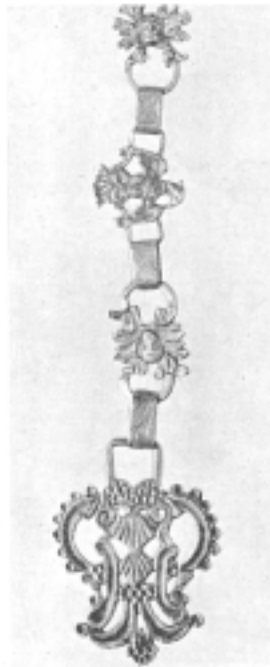
316 SILVER CHARM AGAINST THE  
"EVIL EYE," WORN BY CHILDREN  
(The property of Mrs. Malcolm Holme)



317 PENDANT CRUCIFIX FROM  
NAPLES, CAMPANIA



318 SILVER BELL WORN  
318 SILVER BELL WORN  
BY CHILDREN AS A CHARM  
AGAINST THUNDER, FROM  
NAPLES (XVIII CENTURY)



319 SILVER CHAIN  
FROM SARDINIA



320 SILVER BELL  
WORN BY CHILDREN  
AS A CHARM AGAINST  
THUNDER, FROM NAPLES

SILVER-WORK



321 TO 323 SILVER HEADS OF KNITTING-NEEDLES, FROM NAPLES, CAMPANIA



324 SILVER HEAD OF KNITTING-NEEDLE, FROM NAPLES, CAMPANIA



325 SILVER PENDANT USED TO HOLD THE THREAD WHILST KNITTING, FROM ABRUZZO (XVIII<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY)



326 SILVER HEAD OF KNITTING-NEEDLE, FROM NAPLES, CAMPANIA





327 NECESSAIRE OF  
ENGRAVED AND GILDED  
BONE, FROM SICILY

"PRESEPE" DOLLS



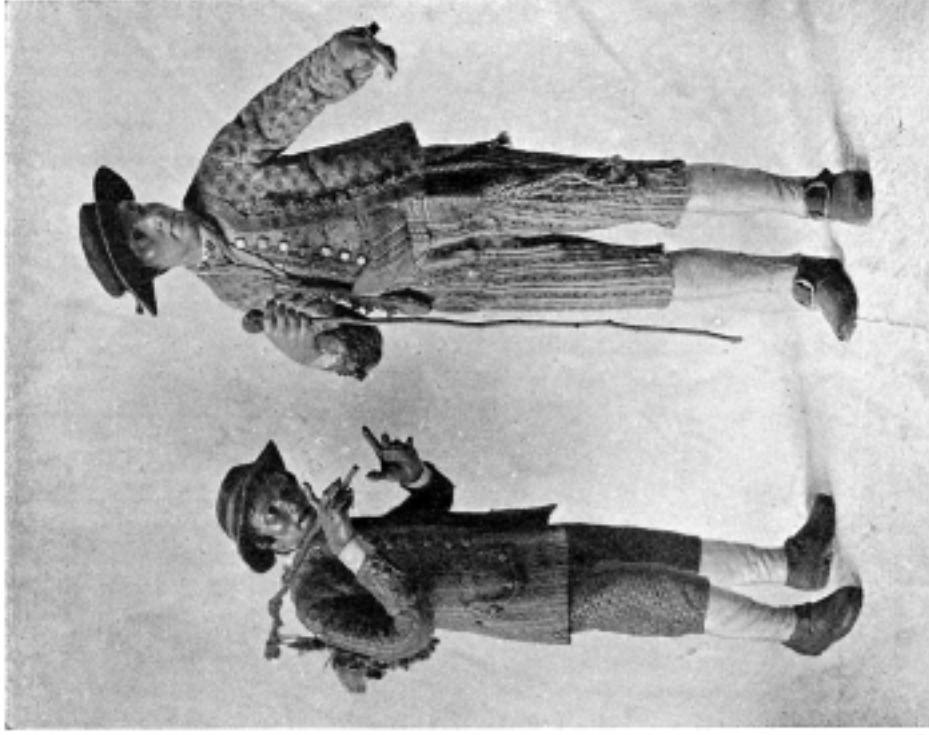
328 AND 329 PRESEPE " DOLLS FROM NAPLES, CAMPANIA (XVIIIH CENTURY)  
(From the Collection of Signor Enrico Caruso, M.V.O.)

"PRESEPE" DOLLS



330 TO 332 "PRESEPE" DOLLS FROM NAPLES, CAMPANIA (XVIII<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY)  
*(From the Collection of Signor Enrico Caruso, M.V.O.)*

“PRESEPE” DOLLS



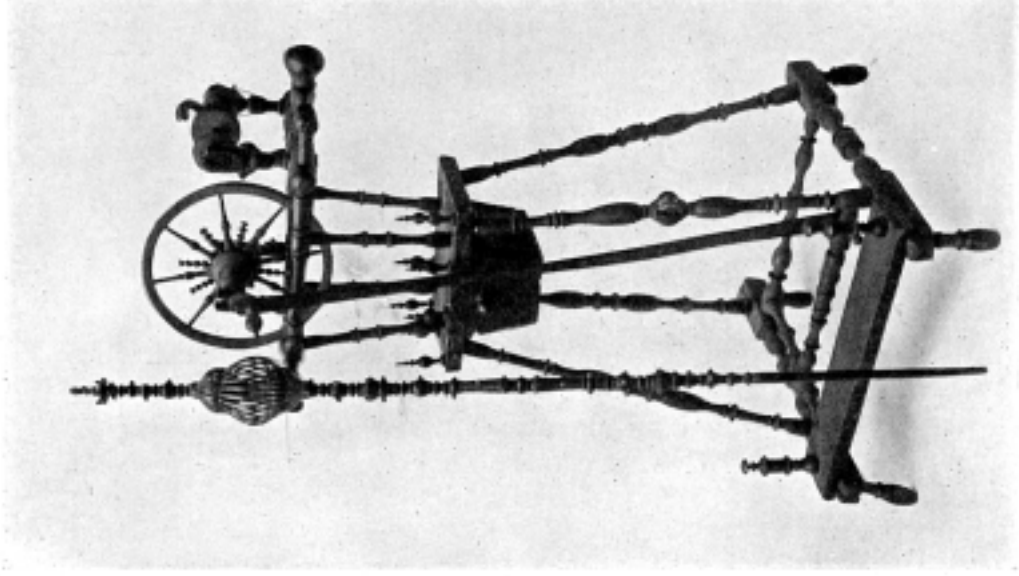
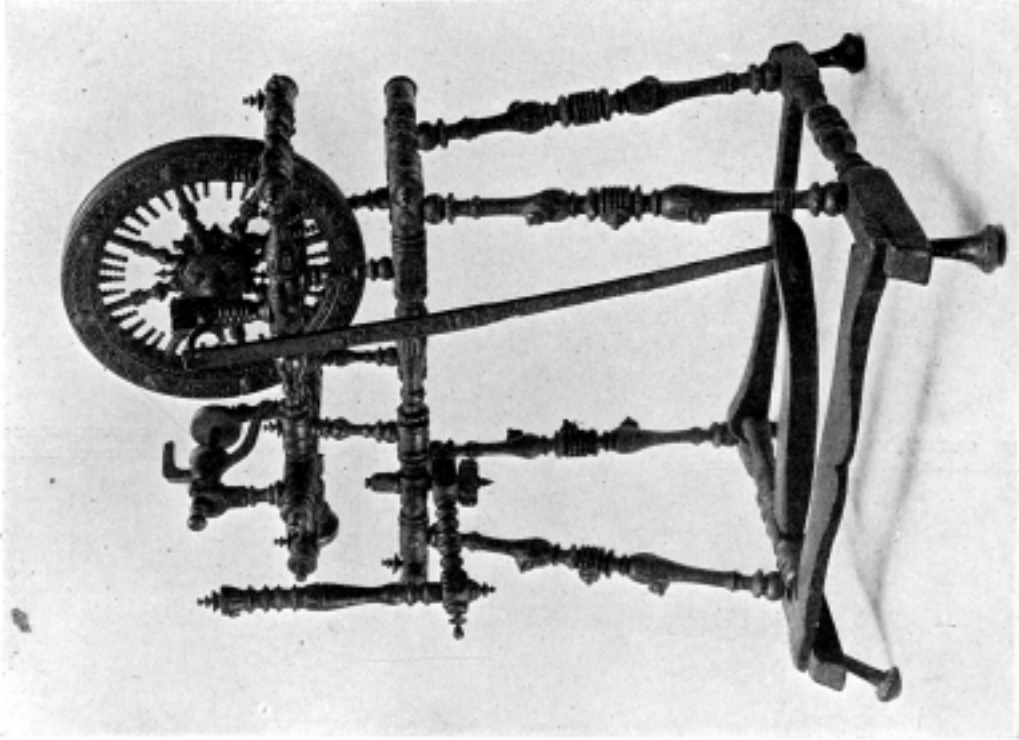
333 AND 334 'PRESEPE' DOLLS FROM NAPLES, CAMPANIA (XVIII<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY)  
(From the Collection of Signor Enrico Carruso, M.V.O.)

"PRESEPE" DOLLS



335 TO 338 "PRESEPE" DOLLS FROM NAPLES, CAMPANIA (XVIII<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY)  
*(From the Collection of Signor Enrico Caruso, M.V.O.)*

WOOD-CARVING



339 AND 340 CARVED SPINNING-WHEELS FROM LOMBARDY  
*From the Bagatti Valsecchi Collection, Milan*

WOOD-CARVING



341 CARVED MILKING-STOOLS FROM CREMONA, LOMBARDY



342 CARVED SEAT OF MILKING-STOOL FROM CREMONA, LOMBARDY

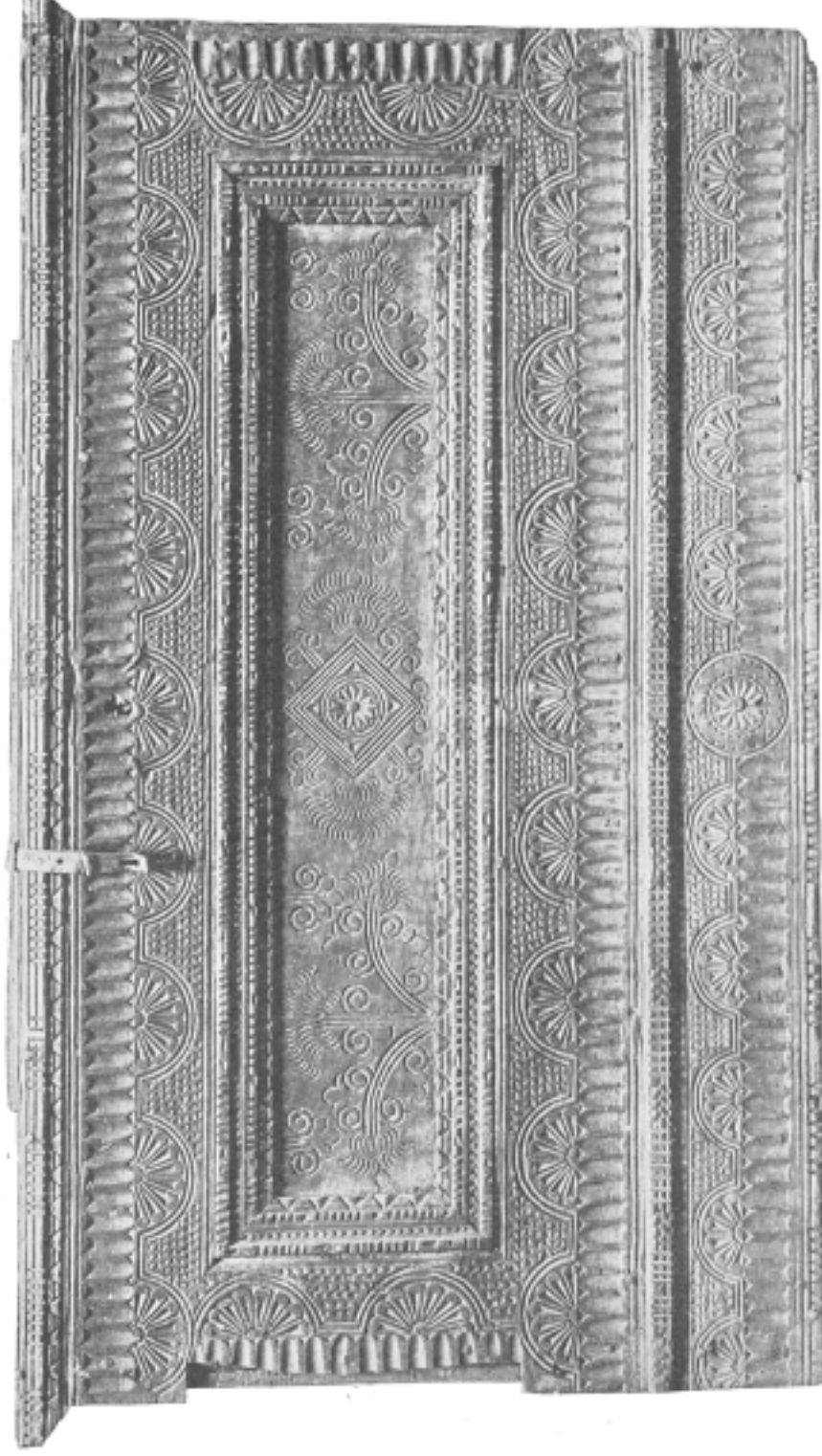


344 CARVED CHAIR FROM LOMBARDY  
*(From the Bagatti Valsecchi Collection, Milan)*



343 CARVED SEAT OF MILKING-STOOL FROM CREMONA, LOMBARDY

WOOD-CARVING



*Photo Ist. Ital. Arti Grafiche, Bergamo*



WOOD-CARVING



350 CARVED BUTTER-MOULD FROM PIEDMONT



351 AND 352 CARVED BUTTER-MOULDS FROM PIEDMONT



346 TO 349 CARVED BOXES FROM ABRUZZO  
*Photos Ist. Ital. Arti Grafiche, Bergamo*



353 CARVED BOX FROM ABRUZZO



354 AND 355 CARVED PLANE AND INK-STAND FROM LOMBARDY



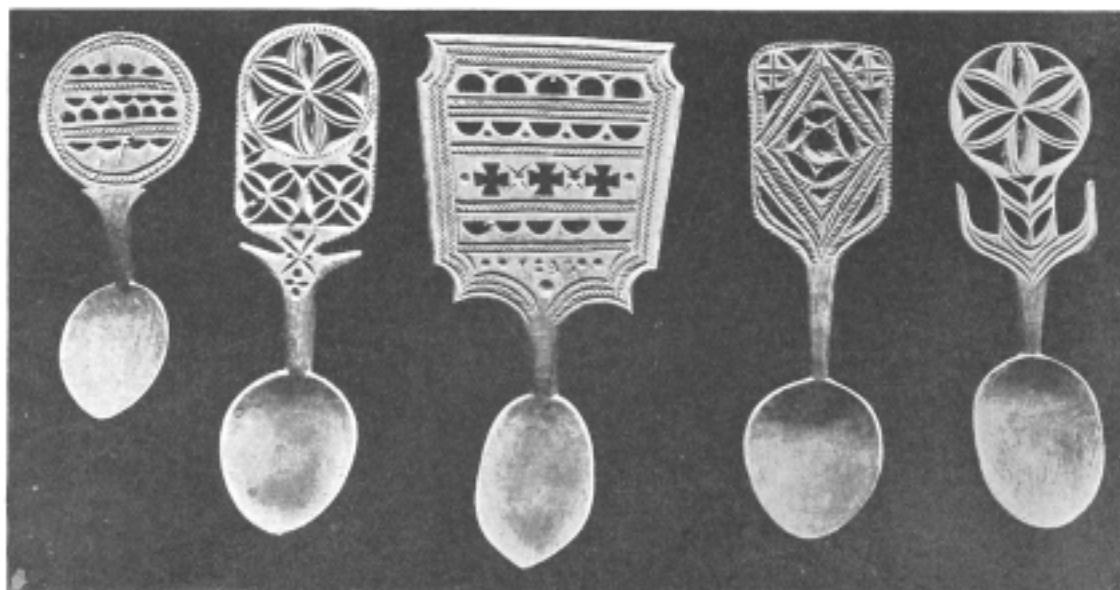
356 CARVED PEN FOR A CHILD, FROM LOMBARDY

*(From the Bagatti Valsecchi Collection, Milan)*

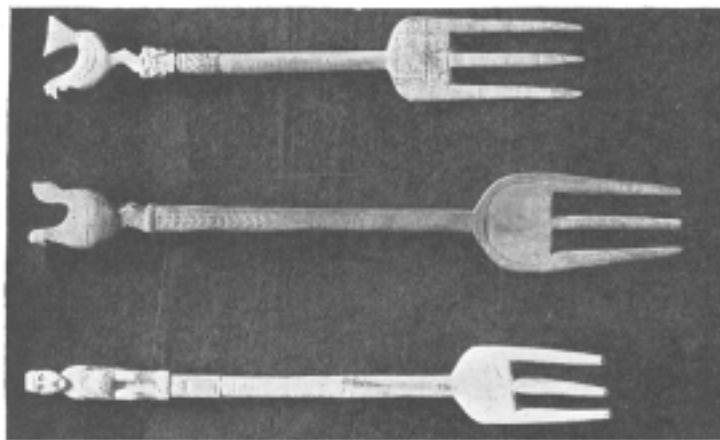
WOOD-CARVING



357 CARVED WOODEN SPOONS FROM SICILY

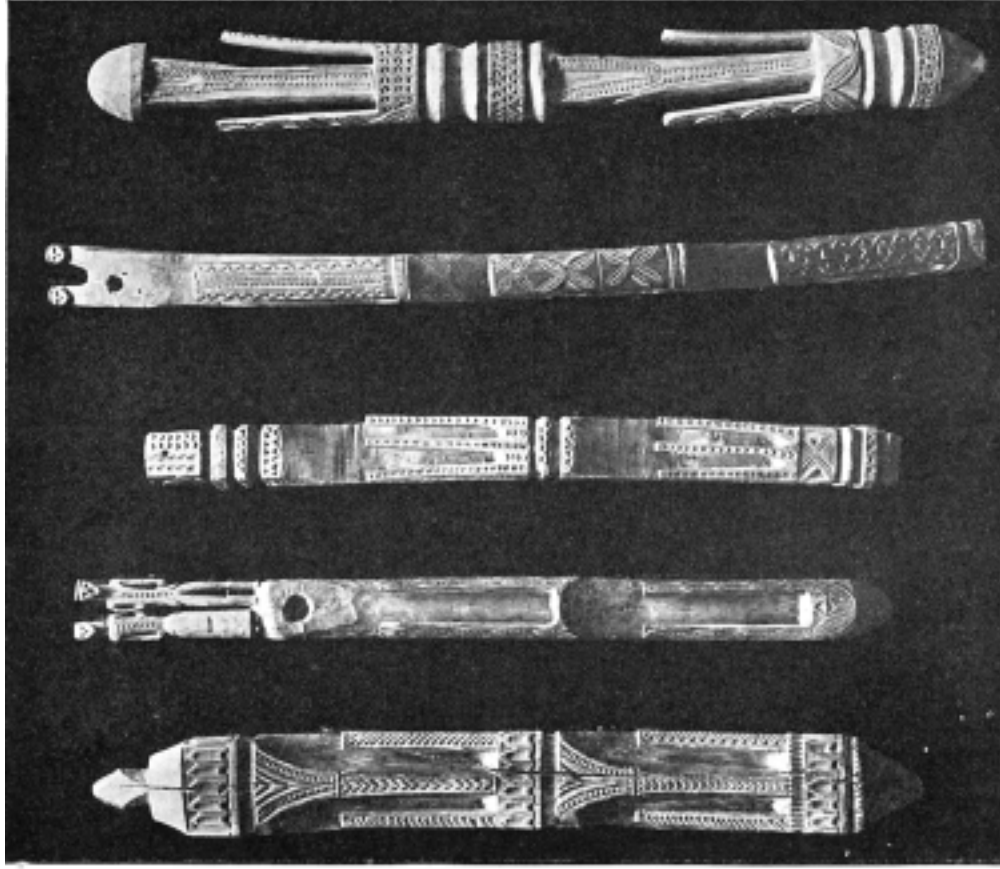


358 CARVED WOODEN SPOONS FROM PIEDMONT



359 CARVED WOODEN FORKS FROM BASILICATA  
*Photos Ist. Ital. Arti Grafiche, Bergamo*

WOOD-CARVING

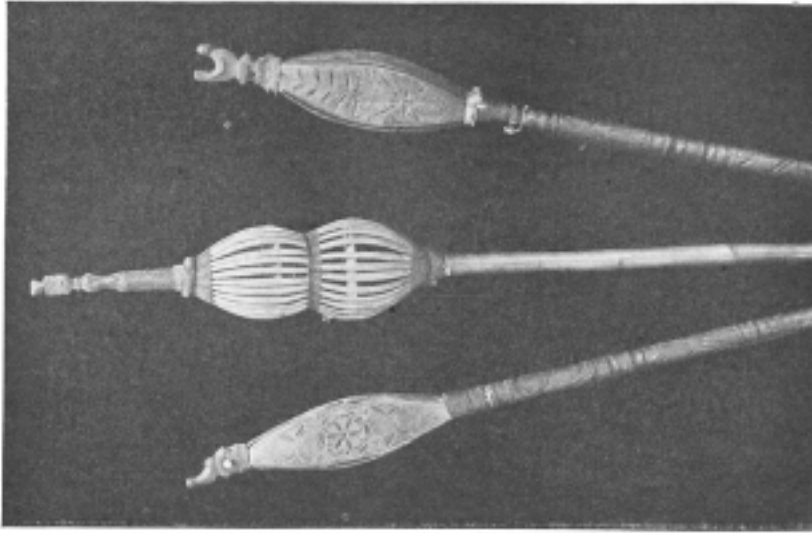


360 CARVED SUPPORTS FOR TABLE-GLASS, FROM SIRACUSA, SICILY.  
*Photos Ist. Itul. Arti Grafiche, Bergamo*

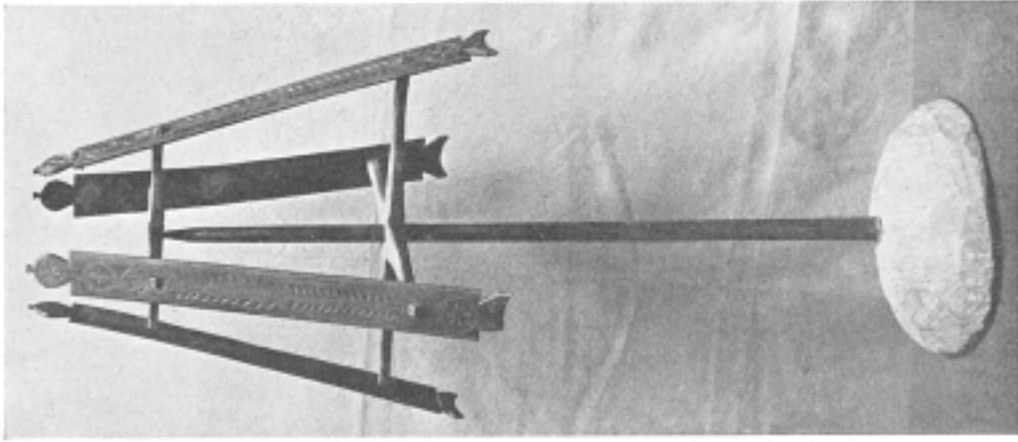


361 SHEPHERDS' CARVED STAVES FROM SOUTH ITALY

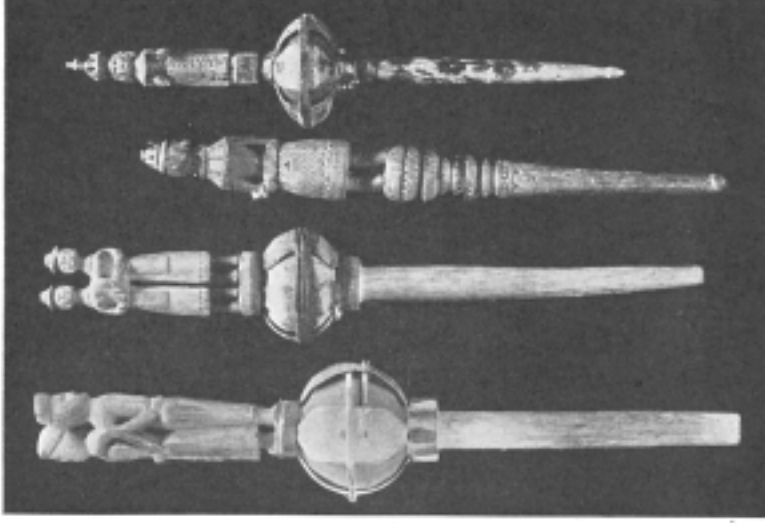
WOOD-CARVING



362 CARVED DISTAFFS FROM ABRUZZO  
*Photo Ist. Ital. Arti Grafiche, Bergamo*



364 CARVED WOOL-WINDER FROM SICILY  
*Photo Ist. Ital. Arti Grafiche, Bergamo*



363 CARVED DISTAFFS FROM CALABRIA  
*Photo Ist. Ital. Arti Grafiche, Bergamo*

WOOD-CARVING



365 CARVED YOKE  
FROM SICILY



366 TO 368 CARVED GOAT-YOKES FROM PIEDMONT  
*Photos Ist. Ital. Arti Grafiche, Bergamo*



369 CARVED COW-YOKE FROM  
SICILY  
*(From the Pitrè Collection, Palermo)*

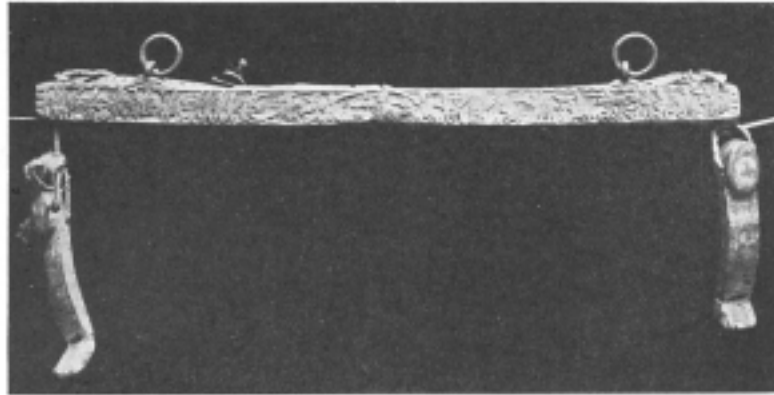


370 WOODEN COW-YOKE, WITH  
POKER-WORK AND BRASS MOUNTS,  
FROM PARMA  
*(From the Leader Williams Collection, Palermo)*

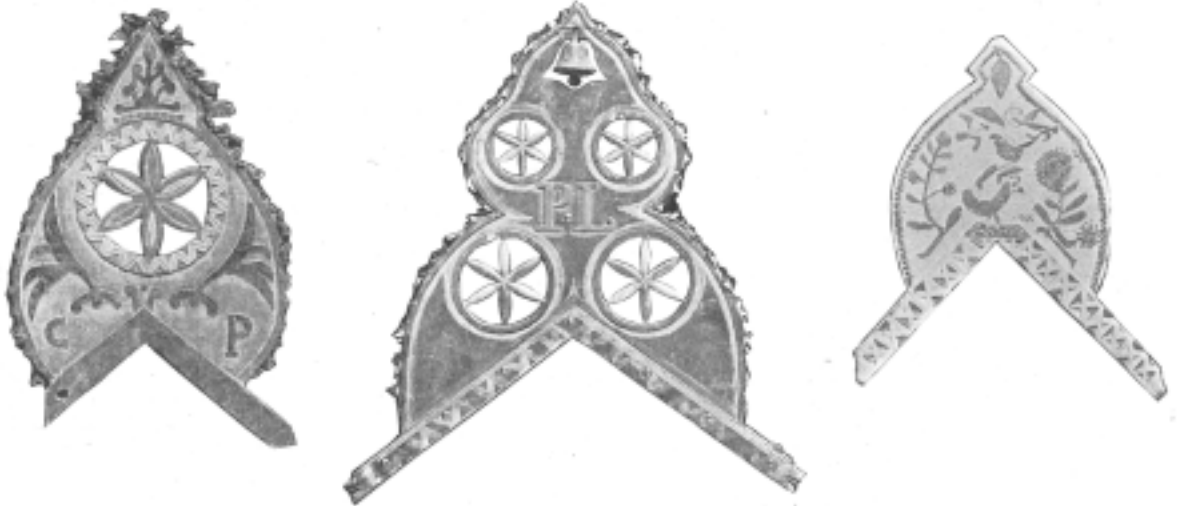


371 CARVED COW-YOKE  
FROM SICILY  
*(From the Pitrè Collection, Palermo)*

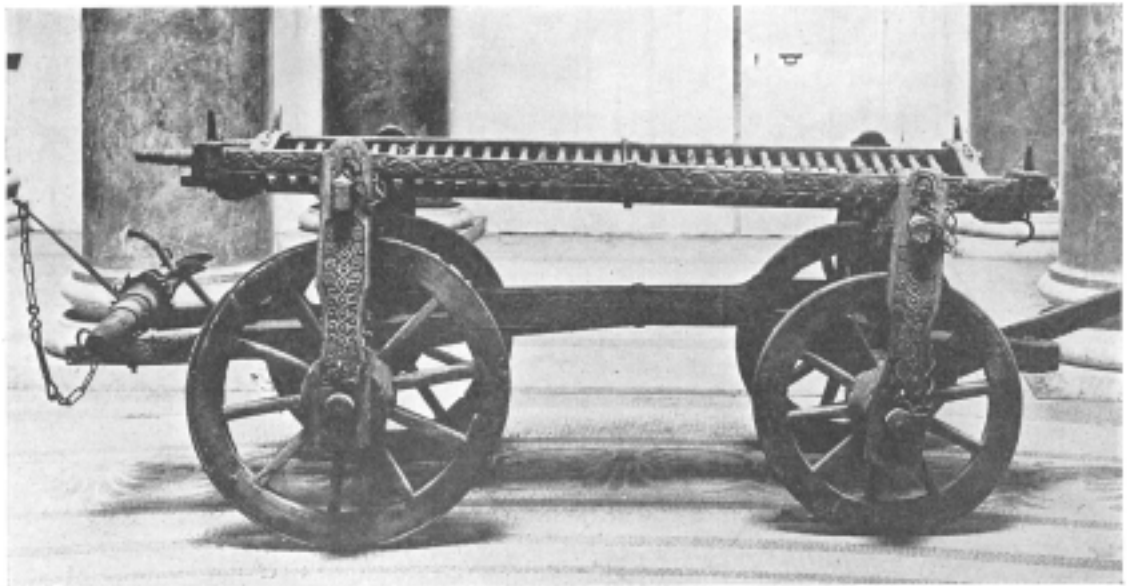
WOOD-CARVING



372 CARVED YOKE FROM ROMAGNA

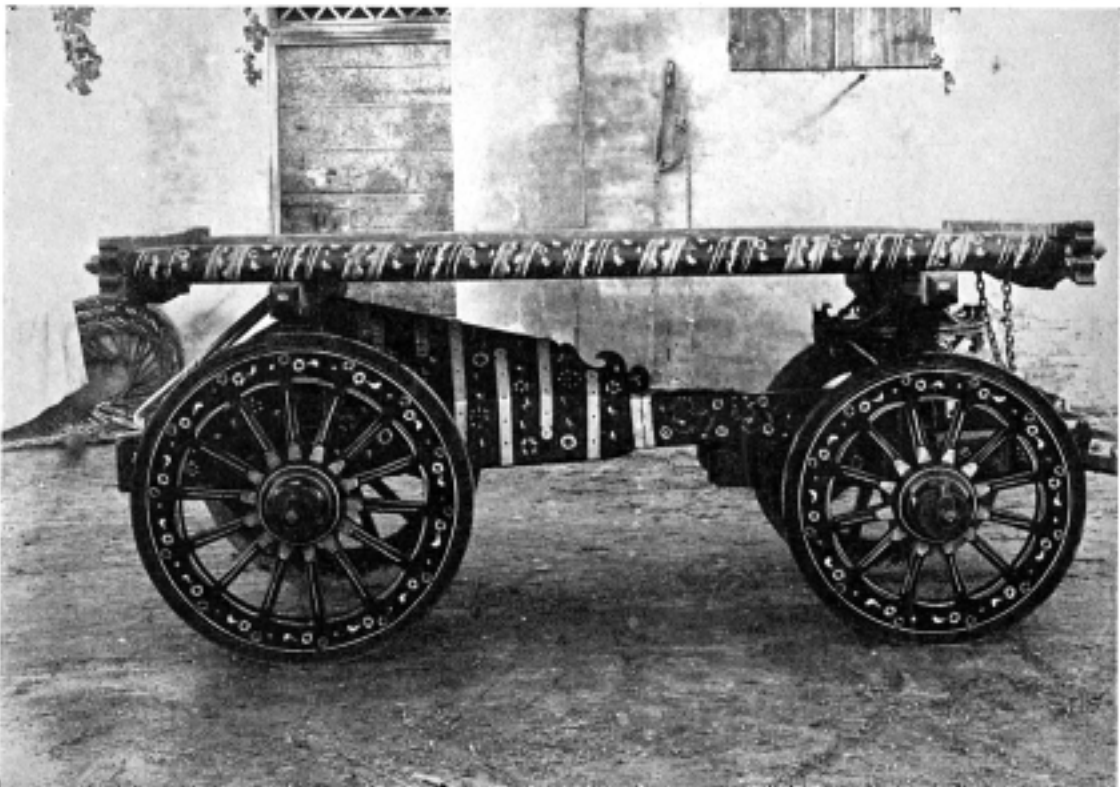
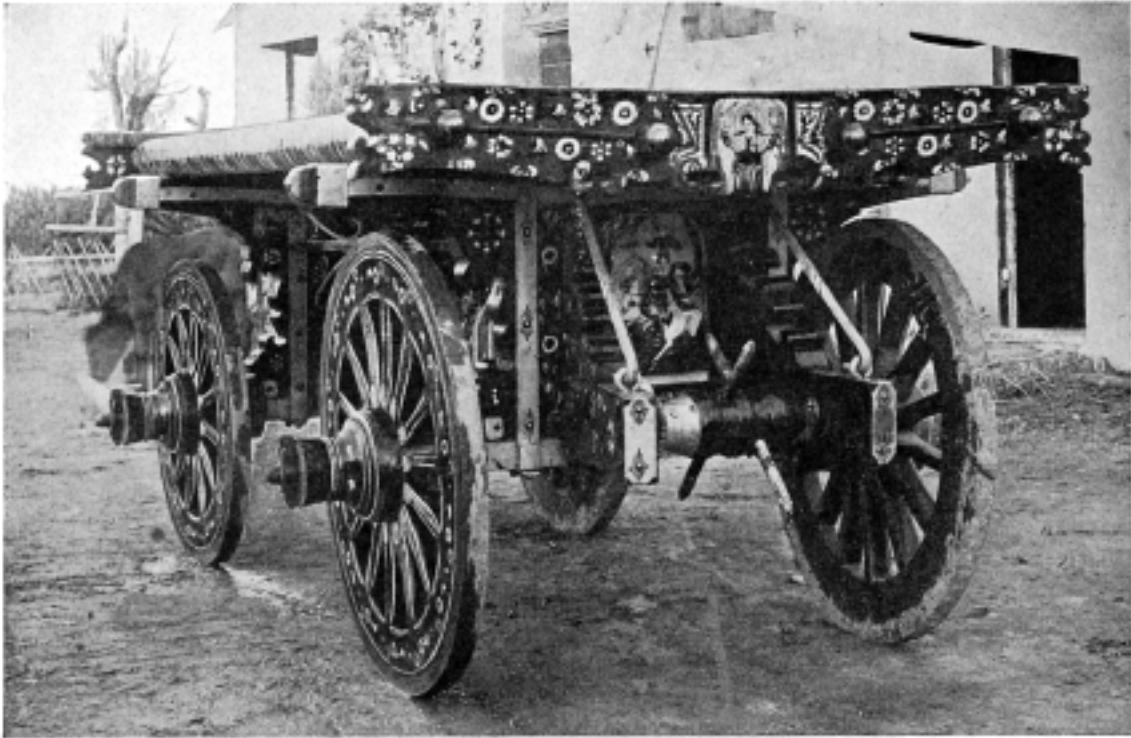


373 TO 375 CARVED BULLOCK-YOKES FROM VERONA, VENETIA



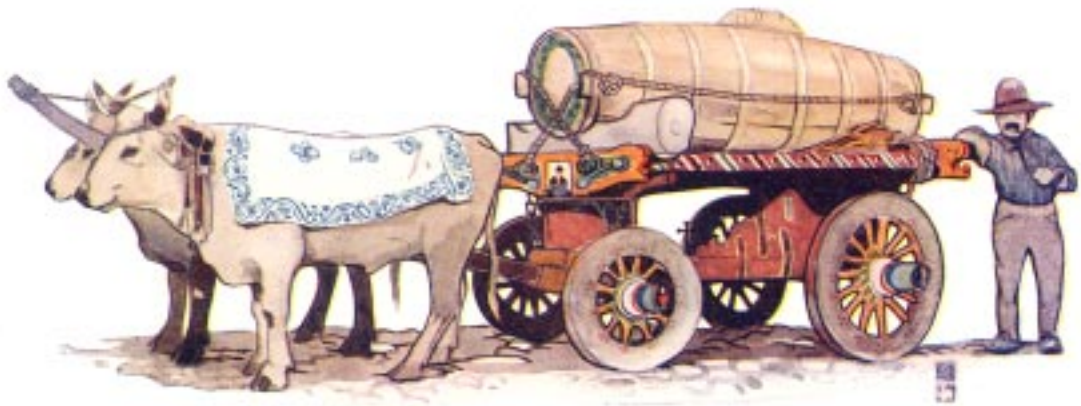
376 CARVED WOODEN CART, USED FOR RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES, FROM PIEDMONT  
*Photos Ist. Ital. Arti Grafiche, Bergamo*

PAINTED CARTS



*Photo Ballardini*

PAINTED CARTS

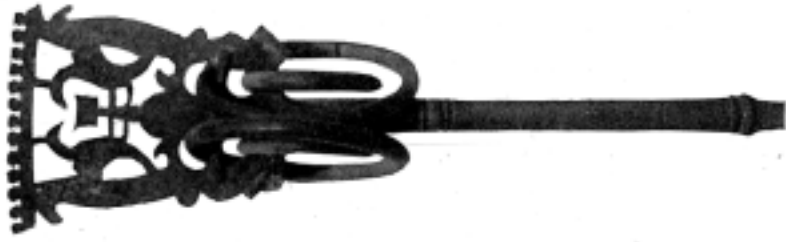


378<sup>A</sup> PAINTED HORSE-CART FROM SICILY

378<sup>B</sup> PAINTED BULLOCK-CART FROM ROMAGNA



METAL-WORK



379 IRON JINGLE OF  
BULLOCK-YOKE, FROM  
ROMAGNA

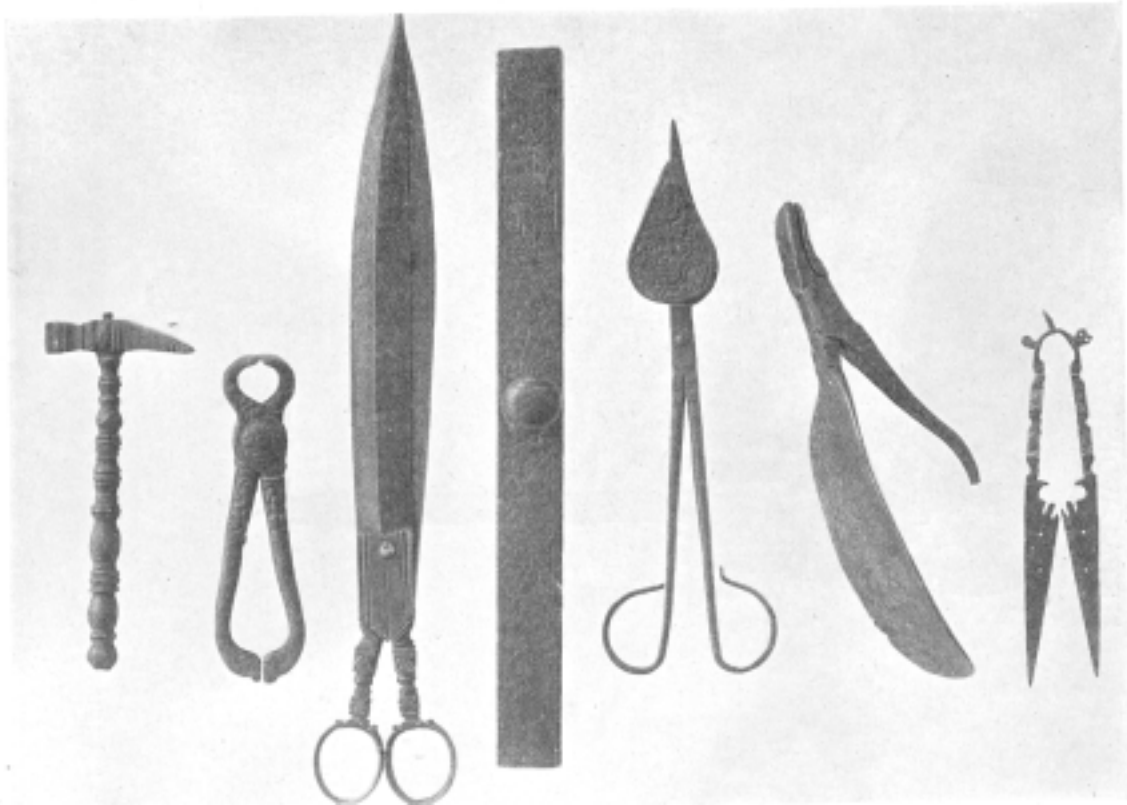
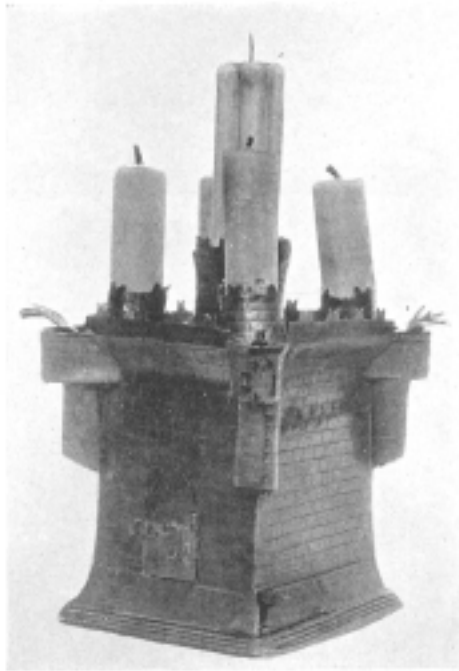
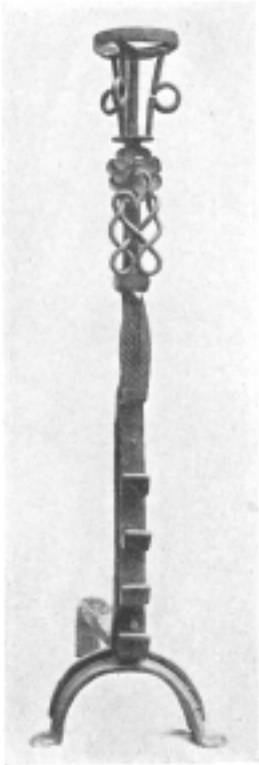


380 IRON JINGLE OF  
BULLOCK-YOKE, FROM  
ROMAGNA



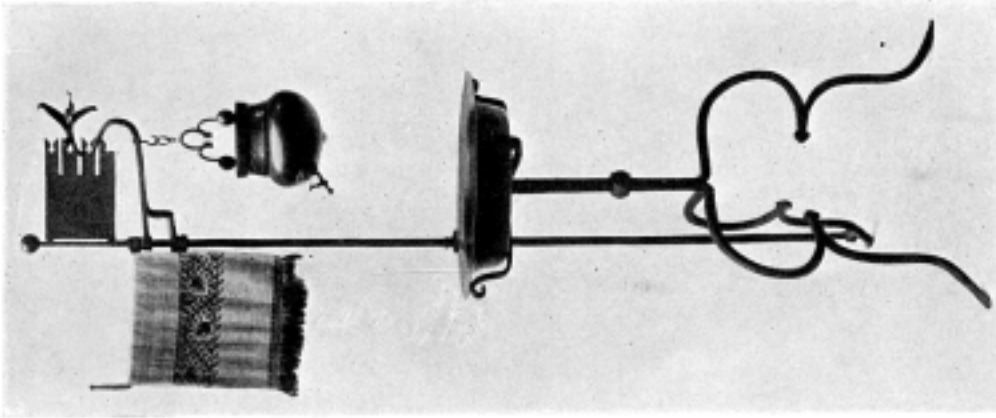
381 AND 382 IRON ORNAMENTS OF BULLOCK-CARTS, FROM ROMAGNA

METAL-WORK

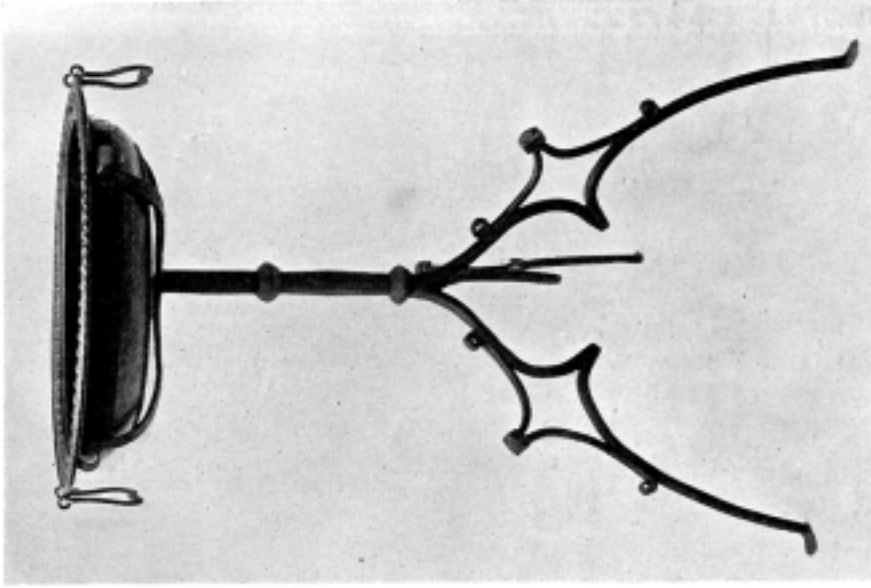


383 TO 386 WROUGHT-IRON CANDLESTICK, FIRE-DOGS AND TOOLS FROM LOMBARDY  
*(From the Bagatti Valsecchi Collection, Milan)*

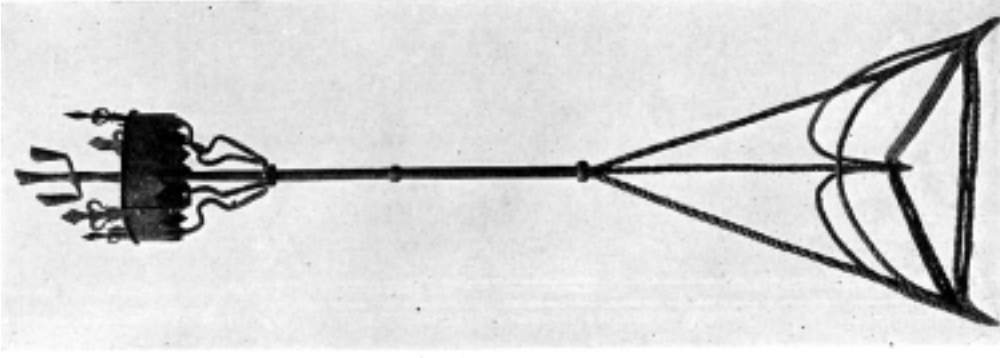
METAL-WORK



387 WROUGHT-IRON HAND-BASIN  
FROM LOMBARDY



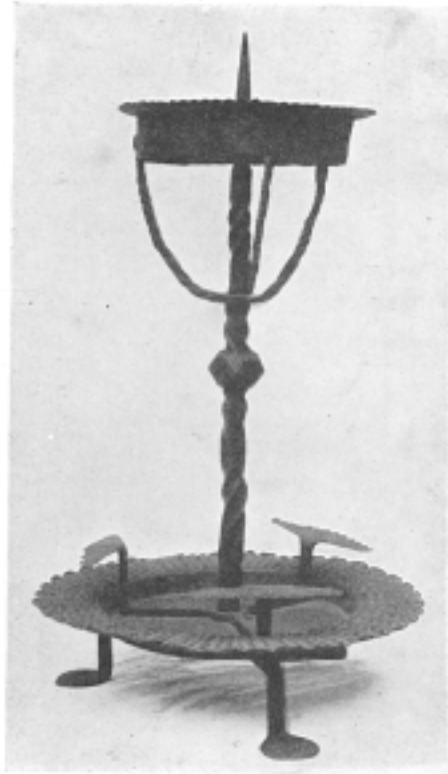
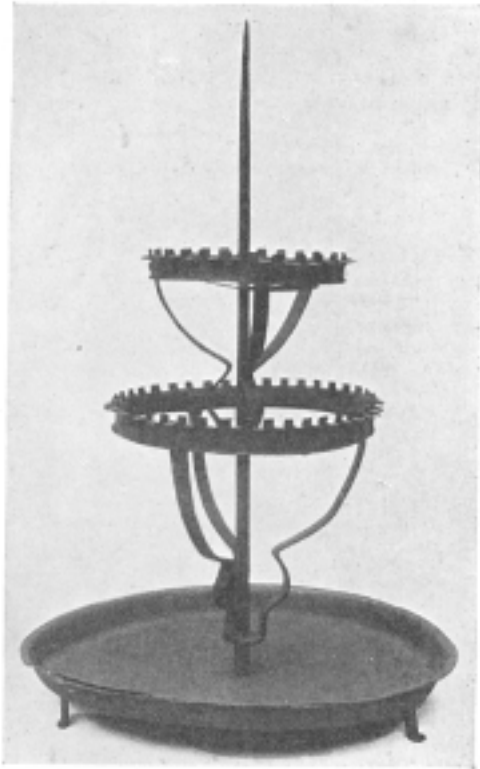
388 COPPER BRASIER ON WROUGHT-IRON STAND  
FROM LOMBARDY



389 WROUGHT-IRON CANDLESTICK  
FROM LOMBARDY

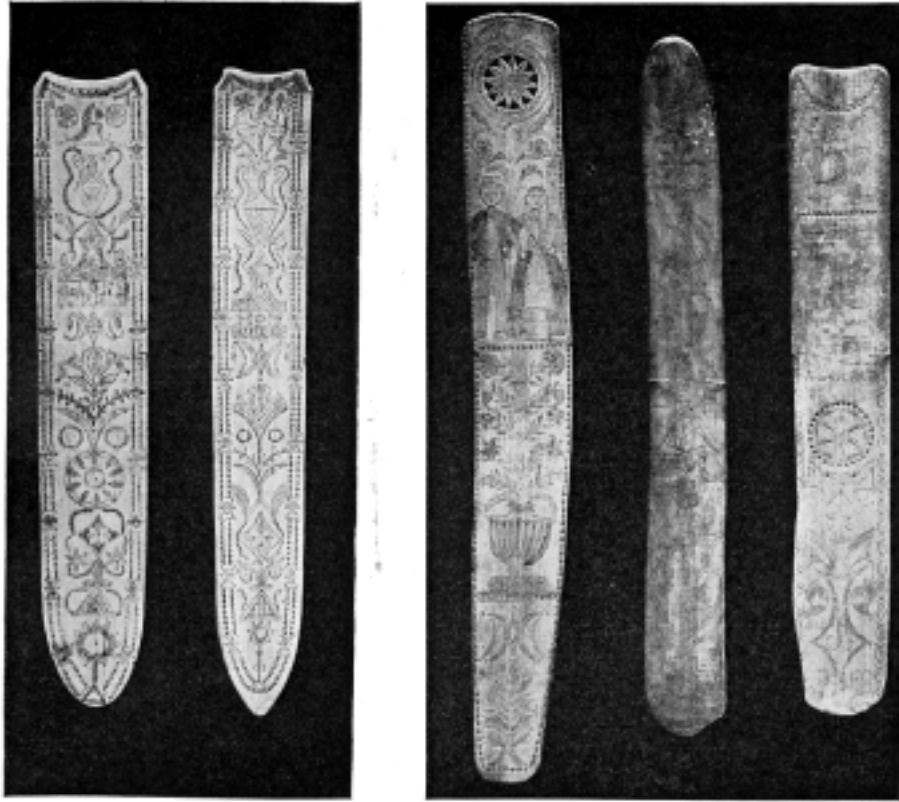
*From the Bagatti Valsecchi Collection, Milan*

METAL-WORK



390 TO 392 WROUGHT-IRON AND WOODEN CANDLESTICKS FROM LOMBARDY  
*(From the Bagatti Valsecchi Collection)*

MISCELLANEOUS CARVING



393 AND 394 CARVED SUPPORTS FOR CORSETS, FROM CALABRIA  
*Photo Ist. Ital. Arti. Grafiche, Bergamo*



395 TO 397 CARVED HORN GOBLET AND DRINKING-FLASK, FROM SARDINIA  
*Photo Ist. Ital. Arti. Grafiche, Bergamo*

POTTERY



398 TO 401 PAINTED POTTERY FROM MONTE VERGINE, NAPLES

POTTERY



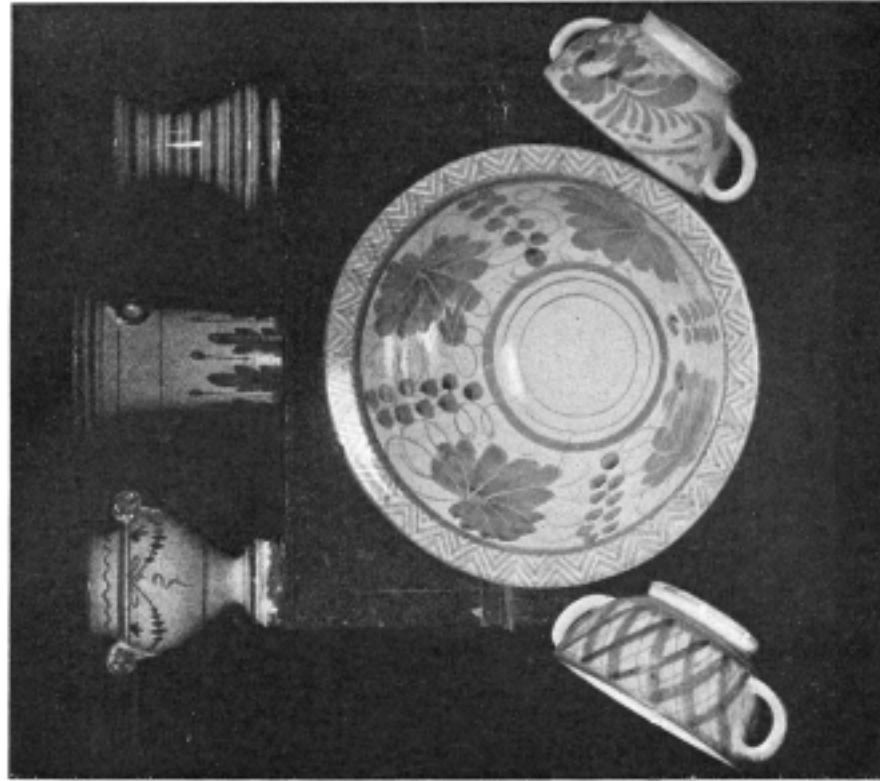
POTTERY



407. TO 415 PAINTED POTTERY



POTTERY



*Photos Ballardini*

416 AND 417 PAINTED POTTERY FROM FAENZA, EMILIA

POTTERY



FROM ROMAGNA



FROM ROMAGNA



FROM MARCHES



FROM MONTELUPO, TUSCANY



FROM MONTELUPO, TUSCANY



FROM MONTELUPO, TUSCANY



FROM ROMAGNA



FROM ROMAGNA

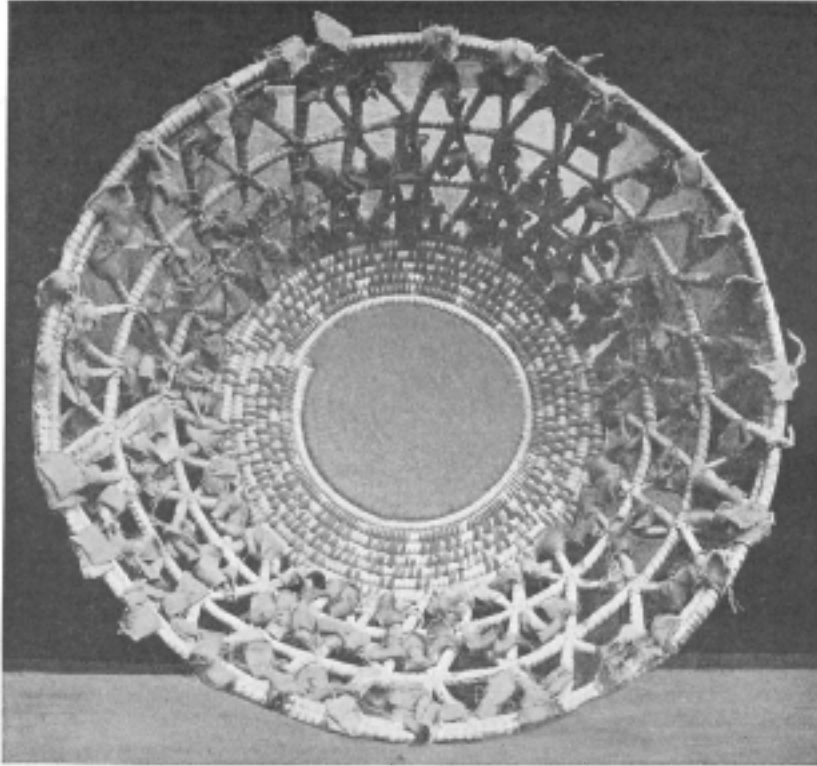
POTTERY



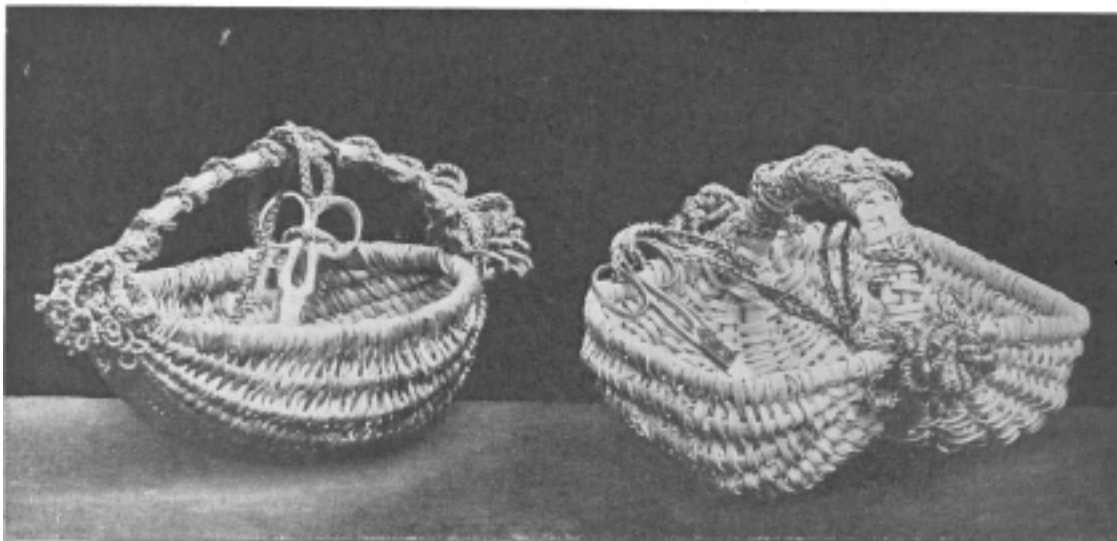
*(The property of Herr  
Daneu, Palermo)*

427 TERRA-COTTA FIGURES FROM  
CALTAGIRONE, SICILY

BASKET-WORK

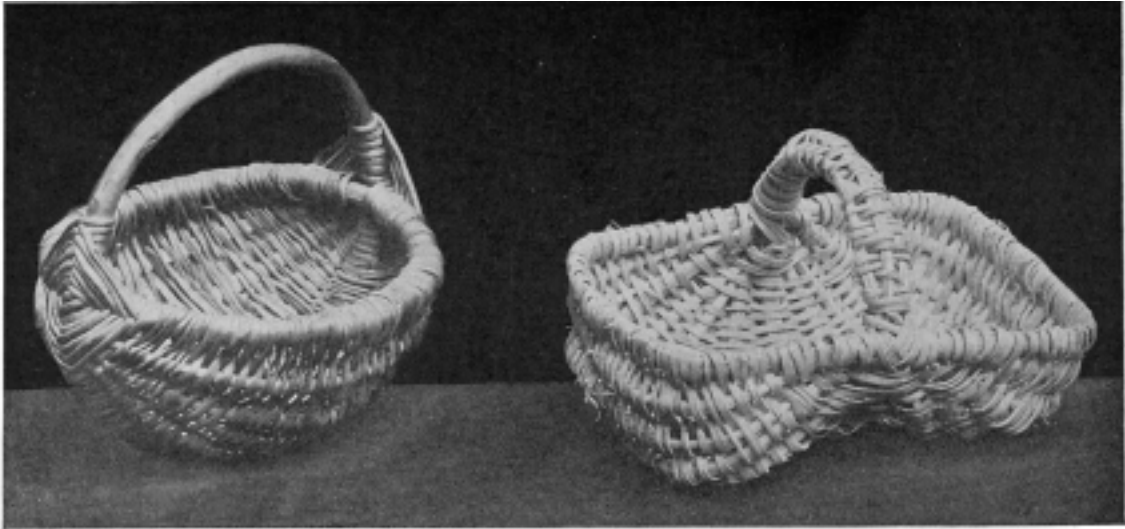


428 BASKET MADE OF PALM LEAVES, FROM CASTELSARDO, SARDINIA  
*(From the Industrie Femminile Collection)*



429 BASKETS MADE OF CHESTNUT BRANCHES, FROM BERGAMO, LOMBARDY  
*(From the Industrie Femminile Collection)*

BASKET-WORK



430 AND 431 BASKETS MADE OF CHESTNUT BRANCHES, FROM BERGAMO, LOMBARDY  
*(From the Industrie Femminile Collection)*

BASKET-WORK



432 TO 435 BASKETS MADE OF PALM LEAVES, FROM CASTELTURDO, SARDINIA  
*(From the Industrie Femminile Collection)*

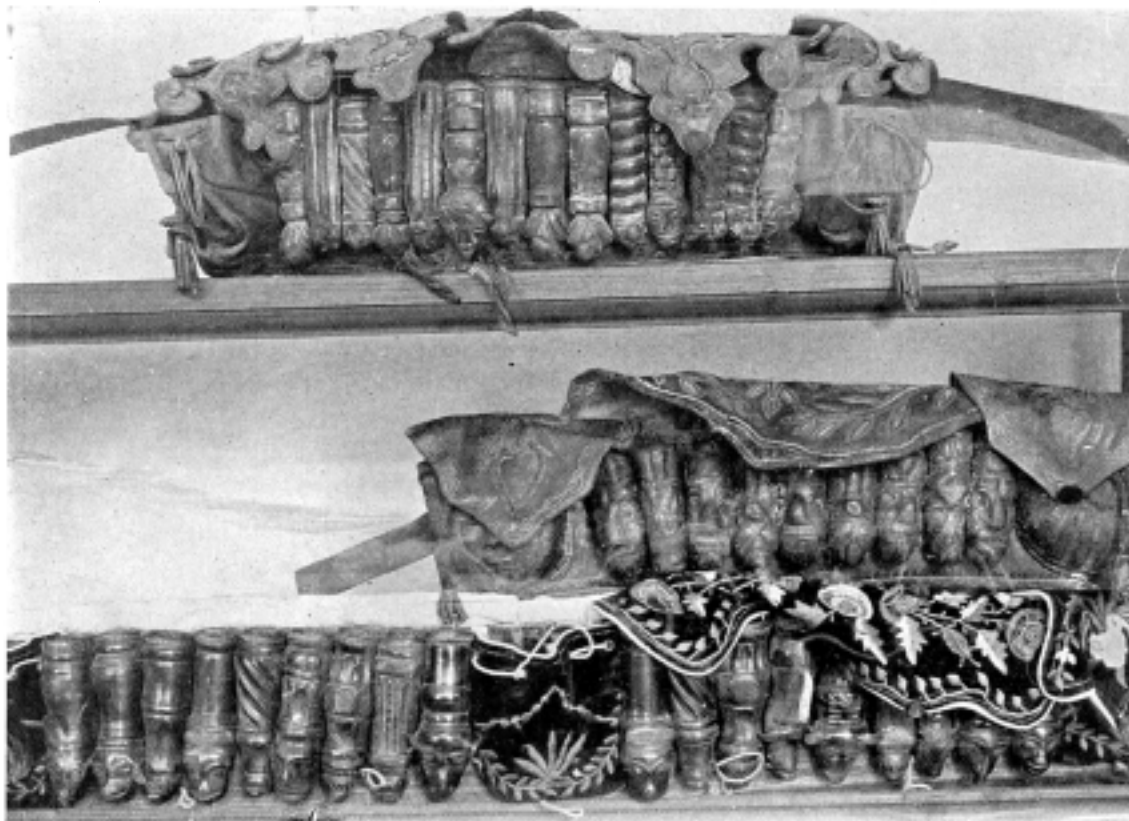


436 BASKETS MADE OF BULRUSHES, FROM PUGLIA  
*(From the Industrie Femminile Collection)*

PIPES AND BANDOLIERS



437 WOODEN PIPES, FROM ROME  
*(The property of Sgr. Pascarella)*



438 BANDOLIERS FROM SICILY  
*From the Petrè Collection, Palermo)*

CUT PAPER DESIGNS



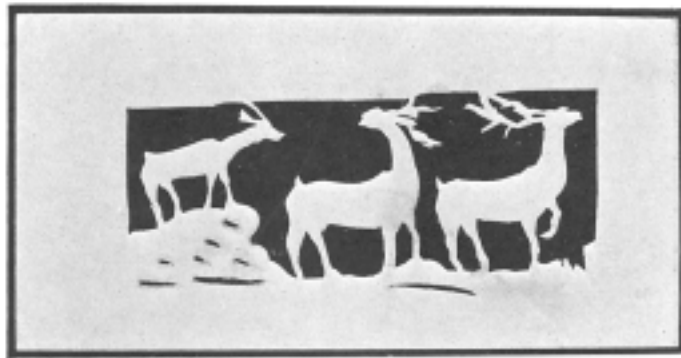
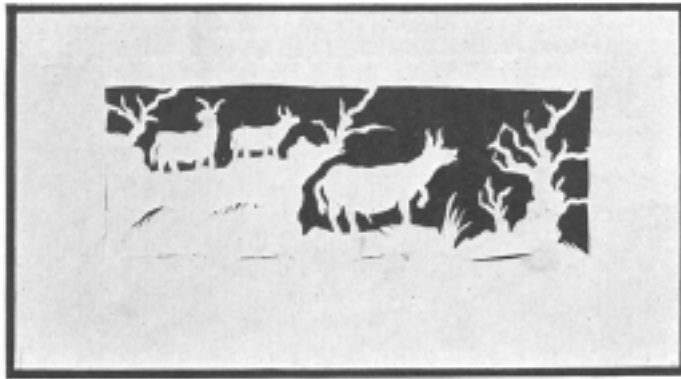


CUT PAPER DESIGNS



(The property of S. J. A. Churchill, Esq., M.V.O.)

443 CUT VELLUM DESIGN (XVIII<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY)



444 TO 449 CUT PAPER DESIGNS FOR LACE AND EMBROIDERY (XVIII<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY)