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## Fabrics of Western Sardinia

### Introductory Note

Two fabrics have been defined by the Riu Mannu and Terralba projects on the basis of systematically and intensively collected surface finds (1992–99 and 2003–04). Around 4,000 fragments from a dozen sites of Classical-Hellenistic date in West Central Sardinia have been examined macroscopically to define the fabric typology, which has been refined through microscopic analysis of a sample of around 500 fragments as well as petrographic (thin section) analysis of around 200 fragments. Only in more recent years (2007–10) finds from stratigraphically excavated contexts have become available and the ca 8,000 fragments classified macroscopically have so far confirmed the definitions of fabric A and B<sup>1</sup>.

### Fabric B

This label groups together three distinct, but related fabrics that share a similar calcareous matrix ('white fabric'). They occur throughout the Classical-Hellenistic period at all rural sites investigated in the Terralba district, where they tend to represent 15–20 % of all (surface) finds. Because that is substantially more than the evidently imported materials, which together account for about 10 % of rural (surface) assemblages, it is likely that these fabrics were produced in the wider region of West Central Sardinia. Because the Terralba district does not possess calcareous clays, they cannot be local. The suggestion that these fabrics represent a regional production is supported by the fact that it was used for a wide range of objects, ranging from fine wares to amphorae and indeed sometimes roof tiles (most if not all probably of later Roman date).

From a geological perspective, there are three possibilities where a calcareous clay may have been extracted. All three areas are made up of Eocene marine marls and their identical geological origin matches the similarities of the fabrics. Within the region of the Gulf of Oristano, these Eocene deposits surface at the two headlands that close off the gulf, Capo Frasca in the South and Capo San Marco in the North. Further inland, the Marmilla is also entirely made up of these marls. Because these marls are rich in fossils and all three fabrics contain micro fossils, albeit in varying quantities, it is quite likely that these Eocene deposits were exploited for the clay used to produce these fabrics.

Given the location of Tharros on the northern end of Capo San Marco, it seems more than plausible that some, if not all, of these white-fired productions come from there. Note however that there also exists a series of limestone hills immediately north of Tharros on the Sinis peninsula. In the absence of any information on fabrics and/or ceramic production in Tharros, this question remains unresolved for now.

(P. v. D.)

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<sup>1</sup> For fabric A see the paper „Fabrics of Western Central Sardinia“ by P. Van Dommelen & M. Trapichler in **FACEM** (version, 06.06.2011).

### Description of the observed fabrics

For Van Dommelen's fabric B we observed in general a calcareous matrix which appears in pink to pale brown color shades. Among the temper frequently occurs dark mica, occasionally distinguishable are carbonate pseudomorphoses or carbonate particles.

#### Coarse Wares

**W-SARD-C-1** (M 148/8.9) the matrix is pink and granular, it contains white and dark mica, as well as frequent to very frequent yellowish brown calcareous particles and reddish brown inclusions, white carbonates are only singularly distinguishable. W-SARD-C-1 corresponds to van Dommelen's fabric B1.

#### Transport Amphorae

**W-SARD-A-1** (M 148/7) shows a very pale brown and granular matrix which differs from the Coarse wares – fabric of van Dommelen's fabric B1, concerning its porosity, the absence of dark mica as well as by striking and characteristic brown, white cored calcareous particles among its temper. W-SARD-A-1 corresponds to van Dommelen's fabric B1.

**W-SARD-A-2** (M 148/10.11) is characterized by a very pale brown and granular matrix; the temper contains besides the regular clear and white quartz particles white and dark mica and frequently characteristic rounded yellowish brown calcareous inclusions, reddish brown (iron-oxide-concretions) particles being less frequent. W-SARD-A-2 corresponds to van Dommelen's fabric B2

**W-SARD-A-3** The pale yellow granular fabric differs from W-SARD-A-2 by the presence of brown, white cored calcareous particles within the temper. W-SARD-A-3 corresponds to van Dommelen's fabric B2.

**W-SARD-A-4** (M148/13) The pink granular matrix is riddled with small carbonate pseudomorphoses, most striking among the moderately sorted temper are – besides some quartz and dark mica particles – numerous brownish black particles of regular size. W-SARD-A-4 corresponds to van Dommelen's fabric B3.

**W-SARD-A-5** (M 148/15) differs by the appearance of clearly distinguishable foraminifera among the carbonate-pseudomorphoses from W-SARD-A-4. It corresponds to van Dommelen's fabric B3.

#### Ceramic Building Materials

**W-SARD-CBM-1** The pink fabric contains unsorted temper consisting of some very large white calcareous inclusions, prominent and partly large dark mica particles and numerous fine to large reddish and black inclusions (iron-oxide-concretions). The fabric corresponds to van Dommelen's fabric B3.

(M. T.)

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This article should be cited as: P. Van Dommelen & M. Trapichler, "Fabrics of Western Sardinia". In **FACEM** (version 06/06/2011) (<http://www.facem.at/project-papers.php>)