

FRANCESCA DIOSONO* – BARBARA BORGERS**

Fabrics of Mid- and Late Republican Coarse Ware from *Fregellae*, Lazio (Italy)

To cite this article: Diosono and Borgers 2026. "Fabrics of Mid- and Late Republican Coarse Ware from *Fregellae*, Lazio (Italy)". In FACEM (release 9: 03/2026) (<https://doi.org/10.25365/phaidra.776>)

Introduction

Fregellae was founded as a Latin colony in 328 BC, in southern Lazio. The town fulfilled its obligations to Rome during the Second Punic War, but it was besieged and destroyed in 125 BC by the Romans because of their claim to extend the rights for Roman citizenship. Uncontaminated by later settlement, *Fregellae* is considered a closed context dating between the Middle and Late Republic.

Located in a fertile and well-connected territory, *Fregellae* was a large and flourishing city (Figure 1); trade occurred both by land and by water along the *via Latina* connecting Rome to Capua and from the Sacco and Liri river valleys to the port at *Minturnae* on the Tyrrhenian coast. Imported goods arrived from neighbouring areas, as well as from Sicily, the Punic area, and the Aegean Sea.¹

This paper presents the compositional characteristics of coarse ware found in several private houses, as seen in macroscopic observations.² Detailed compositional analysis of these artefacts, combining thin section petrography with wavelength dispersive X-ray fluorescence, X-ray powder diffraction, and scanning electron microscopy analyses, have been published elsewhere.³

Background

The *Università di Perugia* has carried out excavations at *Fregellae* since 1978.⁴ Several public buildings have been found, including three temples, the *Forum*, the *Comitium*, the *Curia* and the public baths. In addition, two areas with domestic properties were excavated in the town;⁵ in one of these areas, known as Opi 2 (Figure 1), located east of the *Forum* along the *Decumanus I*, a total of 18 houses have been excavated, highlighting two different construction phases, as well as the context of destruction, dated to 125 BC. The coarse ware from these houses forms the core of this paper.

*Università Telematica San Raffaele, Dipartimento di Scienze Umane e Promozione della Qualità della Vita, Via di Val Cannuta 247, 00166 Roma, Italia.

**University of Vienna, Department of Classical Archaeology, Franz Klein-Gasse 1, 1190 Vienna, Austria.

¹ Diosono 2008; Diosono et al. 2019.

² The research was funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) in the framework of the Hertha Firnberg Programme (FWF project number T-1085 G) and carried out by Barbara Borgers (PI) and Verena Gassner (co-applicant). See also Borgers 2026 in FACEM (release 9: 03/2026).

³ Borgers and Diosono 2024; Borgers et al. 2026.

⁴ Diosono 2023.

⁵ Battaglini and Braconi 2019; Battaglini and Diosono 2010.

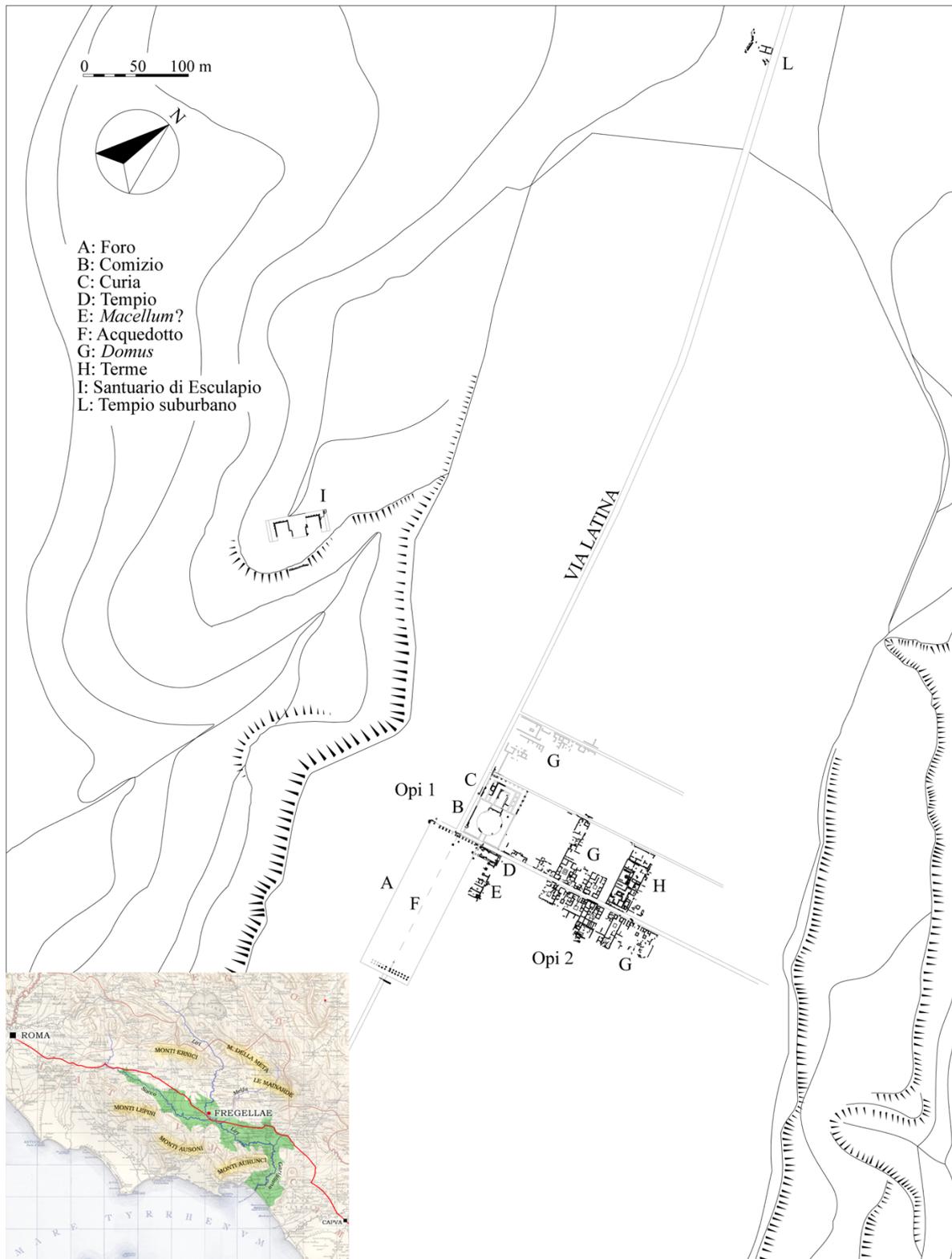


Figure 1. Location of *Fregellae* near the *via Appia* (highlighted in red) and near the confluence of the Sacco and Liri rivers in southern Lazio, Italy (bottom left corner); The town of *Fregellae* along the *via Latina*, with the house districts Opi 1 and Opi 2 (top right).

Coarse Ware Shapes and Fabrics

Differences exist in the typo-morphology of the coarse ware analysed (Diosono forthcoming). More specifically, some shapes find their origin in the Roman-Latin world (e.g., *ollae*, *testi*, *patinae*, *mortariae*), while others are typical for culinary practices in *Magna Graecia* (e.g., *chytrai*, *lopades*) (Figure 2).

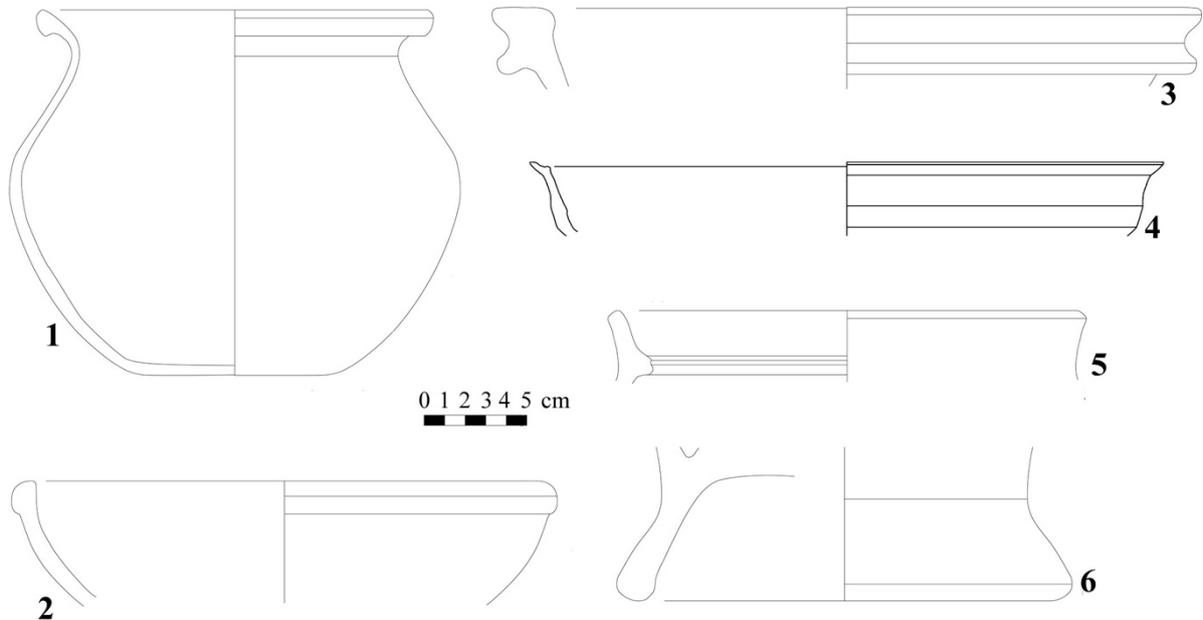


Figure 2. Drawings of forms found in the houses of the second district in *Fregellae*, used in Roman-Latin (RL) culinary traditions and *Magna Graecia* (MG): (1) *Olla* (RL); (2) *Patina* (RL); (3) *Mortarium* (RL); (4) *Lopas* (MG); (5) *Chytra* (MG); (6) *Testum* (MG)

Macroscopic observations of the sherds were used to identify broad groups based on inclusion size, variability, sorting, and abundance.⁶ This was combined with the recording of the surface and core colour of the samples,⁷ to gain basic information on redox conditions.⁸

Based on the type, sorting, and abundance of coarse inclusions of four sherds (M 299/15, 18, 34; M 306/1) analysed, one main fabric group (LAT-C-7) and one Loner (LAT-C-8) were identified.

⁶ Orton et al. 1993, 133–135.

⁷ Munsell 1994.

⁸ Rathossi and Pontikes 2010; Gliozzo 2020, 26.

LAT-C-7

Representative sample: M 299/18

Samples: M 299/18, 34; M 306/1

The samples in LAT-C-7 are defined by yellowish red colour (Munsell value HUE 5 YR 5/8), both on the surface and in the core, resulting from controlled firing conditions. Some samples, however, display a grey core (Munsell value HUE 5 YR 5/1), also known in the literature as “sandwich structure”⁹ – i.e., a reddish surface colour and grey core, indicating, among other variables, a firing process that did not last long enough to allow equal redox conditions. In hand specimen, the fragments are hard, and their texture is granular. There is a wide range of coarse inclusions (< 0.5 mm), including sub-angular to sub-rounded white grains (e.g., limestone, quartz), angular black grains (e.g., pyroxene), grey angular to subangular inclusions (e.g., feldspar), and reddish inclusions (e.g., iron concretions?). They are moderately to poorly sorted and comprise between 20 and 30% of the ceramic body; their abundance is high (c. 25–30% of the clay body) in some samples, and comparatively low in others (c. 20–25% of the matrix). Voids comprise between 10 and 15% of the ceramic groundmass, they tend to be vugh-shaped and measure between 0.1 and 0.3 mm.

These observations have been combined with thin section petrography, wavelength dispersive X-ray fluorescence, X-ray powder diffraction, and scanning electron microscopy analyses, as well as with a comparative study of the geology surrounding *Fregellae*, and it has been proposed that LAT-C-7 was produced locally.¹⁰

LAT-C-8

Sample: M 299/15

Representative sample: M 299/15

This sample displays a homogeneous reddish brown colour (Munsell value HUE 5 YR 5/4), indicating that the vessel was fired in a well-controlled oxidising environment. The fragment is hard and the texture granular. The surface of the sample displays traces of accretion.

In comparison with the samples in fabric LAT-C-6, this fragment has fewer coarse inclusions. Their abundance ranges between 10 and 15%, their size varies between 0.3 and 0.5 mm and they are moderately to well sorted. Coarse inclusions comprise a mixture of rounded white grains (e.g., quartz), angular black inclusions (e.g., pyroxene) and angular to subangular greyish/ white/colourless grains (e.g., feldspar). Voids occur in the shape of vughs, and they measure between 0.1 and 0.3 mm. The overall porosity is between 15 and 20%.

The origin of this sample differs from the main fabric in this assemblage. It bears compositional similarities to the ‘Rome and Tiber Valley’ Fabric¹¹, which is common in southern Lazio.¹² However, its shape (i.e., a *lopas*) is not common in this repertoire. *Lopades* are more commonly found on sites in the Sele river plain in Campania, including Paestum and Salerno.¹³ In this region, however, *lopadés* are defined by coarse carbonate inclusions, which are absent from fragment M 299/15. Therefore, the provenance of this sample remains to be determined.

⁹ Gliozzo 2020 and references therein.

¹⁰ Borgers et al. 2026.

¹¹ Olcese 2003.

¹² Borgers et al. 2017, 2023.

¹³ De Bonis 2018, Trapichler 2018a, 2018b.

References

- Battaglini, G., and P. Braconi 2019. "Dalla tegola al mattone. Laterizi sperimentali a Fregellae". In *le origini del laterizio romano. Nascita e diffusione del mattone cotto nel Mediterraneo tra IV e I secolo a.C.* Atti del Convegno internazionale di studio (Padova, 26-28 aprile 2016), edited by J. Bonetto, E. Bukowiecki, and R. Volpe, 495–506. Rome: Quasar.
- Battaglini, G., and F. Diosono 2010. "Le domus di Fregellae: case aristocratiche di ambito coloniale". In *Etruskisch-italische und römisch-republikanische Häuser*, Kolloquium Bonn 23.-25. Januar 2009, edited by M. Bentz and Ch. Reusser, 217-231. Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag.
- Borgers, B., F. Diosono, C. Ionescu, Á. Gál, and L. Barbu-Tudoran 2026. "Different Pots, Same Recipes? Cross-cultural Encounters in Roman Republican Fregellae, southern Lazio (Italy)". *Archaeological and Anthropological Sciences*. DOI 10.1007/s12520-025-02395-0.
- Borgers, B., and F. Diosono 2024. "A true Melting Pot: The Production of Cooking Ware at Fregellae, southern Lazio (Italy), between the 4th and 2nd Centuries BC". In *Technology, Crafting and Artisanal Networks in the Greek and Roman World. Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Study of Ceramics*, edited by E. Diego, E. Hasaki, and M. Serino, 213-219. De Gruyter, Classical Studies.
- Borgers, B., C. Ionescu, A. Gál, T. De Haas, and L. Barbu-Tudoran 2023. "Republican coarse ware from Norba, southern Lazio (Italy): a multi-analytical study of production technology and trade". *Archaeological and Anthropological Sciences* 15: 180. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12520-023-01883-5>.
- Borgers, B., G.W. Tol, and T. De Haas 2017. "Roman cooking vessels (ollae): a preliminary study of the material from the Pontine region, Central Italy". *STAR Science and Technology of Archaeological Research* 3(2): 314-325.
- De Bonis, A. 2018. "Ceramic Production in the Plain of the Sele River. The Preliminary Results of the Archaeometric Analysis". In FACEM (release 7: 06-12-2018) (<http://www.facem.at/project-papers.php>)
- Diosono, F. forthcoming. "Ceramica da cucina". In *Fregellae. Le Domus del quartiere ad Est del Foro*, edited by F. Diosono, G. Battaglini, P. Braconi, F. Coarelli, and M. Moreno-Alcaide.
- Diosono, F. 2023. "The archaeology of Fregellae: an update". In *Roman Urbanism in Italy: recent discoveries and new directions*, edited by A. Launaro, 81-95. Oxford: Oxbow books.
- Diosono, F. 2008. "Materiali e modelli orientali nella colonia latina di Fregellae (Ceprano/Arce, FR)". *Rei Cretariae Romanae Fautorom* 40: 393–396.
- Diosono, F., A. Caselli, S. Consigli, M. de Minicis, V. Forcatura, D. Lanzi, S. Sepiacchi, S. Staiano, and N. Tiburzi 2019. "Living in Fregellae: Pottery from the domus". In *Daily Life in a Cosmopolitan World. Pottery and Culture during the Hellenistic Period*. Proceedings of the 2nd Conference of IARPotHP (Lyon, November 2015, 5th–8th), (IARPotHP 2), edited by A. Peignard-Giros, 551–562. Wien: Phoibos Verlag.
- Gliozzo, E. 2020. "Ceramic technology. How to reconstruct the firing process". *Archaeological and Anthropological Sciences* 12:260. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12520-020-01133-y>
- Munsell, A. 1994. *Munsell Soil Colour Charts. Munsell Colour*. New York: New Windsor.
- Olcese, G. 2003. *Ceramiche Comuni a Roma e in area romana: produzione, circolazione e tecnologia (tarda età repubblicana – prima età imperiale)*. Mantova: Documenti di Archeologia 28.
- Orton, C., P. Tyers, and A. Vince 1993. *Pottery in Archaeology*. London: Cambridge Manuals in Archaeology.
- Rathossi, C., and Y. Pontikes 2010. "Effect of firing temperature and atmosphere on ceramics made of NW Peloponnese clay sediments. Part I: reaction paths, crystalline phases, microstructure and colour". *Journal of European Ceramic Society* 30(9): 1841–1851. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeurceramsoc.2010.02.002>
- Trapichler, M. 2018a. "Pottery Production in the Southern Sector of the Bay of Salerno: the Fabrics of Paestum" In FACEM (release 7: version 06/12/2018) (<http://www.facem.at/project/papers.php>).
- Trapichler, M. 2018b. "Pottery Production in the Northern Sector of the Bay of Salerno: the Fabrics of Pontecagnano and Fratte." In FACEM (release 7: version 06/12/2018) (<http://www.facem.at/project/papers.php>).