

FRANCESCA DIOSONO* – ASIA MALATESTA** – BARBARA BORGERS*** – ANA BREDY****

The Sanctuary of Diana at Nemi, Lazio (Italy): Typology and Fabrics of Roman Coarse Ware

To cite this article: Diosono, Malatesta, Borgers and Bredy 2026. "The Sanctuary of Diana at Nemi, Lazio (Italy): Typology and Fabrics of Roman Coarse Ware". In FACEM (release 9: 03/2026) (<https://doi.org/10.25365/phaidra.777>)

Introduction

The shrine of Diana Nemorensis at Nemi lies on the shores of its namesake lake, in a volcanic crater within the Alban Hills, located about 30 km southwest of Rome in the territory of the ancient Latin city of *Aricia*. Excavations conducted by the Università di Perugia and Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München between 2009 and 2019, in collaboration with the Soprintendenza, have significantly increased our understanding of this sacred complex.

The sanctuary was in use from the 6th century BC - initially as a federal Latin sanctuary, and later it came under Roman control after the defeat of the Latin League in 334 BC. As a prominent Roman sacred site, it underwent significant architectural changes through time.¹

This contribution presents the typo-morphology and fabrics of Roman coarse ware from the sanctuary of Diana.² Seven cooking pots (known as *ollae*) with almond-shaped rim are examined, with the aim of tracing their typological and compositional development.³ The results show a typological evolution in this almond-shaped *olla*, consistently produced in one fabric,⁴ testifying to the continuous manufacture and use of this shape over time.

Coarse Ware Shapes and Fabrics

The seven selected specimens can be assigned to the five different types (Figure 1)⁵:

- Type 1A has an enlarged, flattened rim, ovoid body, and flat base (Figure 1, 1A). This type occurs in Rome⁶ and Ostia⁷ between the 6th and 3rd centuries BC.

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

**Sapienza Università di Roma, Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Antichità, Via dei Volsci 122, Roma, Italia.

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

****Università Alma Mater Bologna, Dipartimento di Storia Culture Civiltà, Piazza S. Giovanni in Monte 2, 40124 Bologna, Italia.

¹ Diosono 2020, 2024.

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 Diosono et al. in press.

⁴ The same clay fabric is related to other materials from the Sanctuary, see Diosono et al. 2024.

⁵ Diosono et al. in press.

⁶ Quercia 2008, 223, fig. 2; D'Allessio, Di Guiseppe 2005, 12, fig. 10.7; Meylan Krause 2002, table 5:87.

⁷ Olcese and Coletti 2016, 395, fig. 3:10.

- Type 1B corresponds to an enlarged almond-shaped rim with external edge, ovoid body, and flat base (Figure 1, 1B). The type has punctual matches at Bolsena,⁸ Pyrgi,⁹ Ostia,¹⁰ Gabii,¹¹ and Artena,¹² dated between the 4th and 3rd century BC, with some attestations continuing until the second half of the 2nd century BC.¹³

Both types 1A and 1B are attributable to the ovoid *ollae* type 2 with flared and enlarged rim,¹⁴ attested in southern Etruria and Rome between the 6th and 3rd centuries BC. In *Latium Vetus* and the Pontine region, however, their incorporation into the coarse ware repertoire occurs predominantly between the 4th and 3rd centuries BC.¹⁵

- Type 1C is characterised by an almond-shaped rim tapering upward, with an internal concavity for a lid, tapered neck, and rounded basin (Figure 1, 1C). This type, attested at the *Nymphaeum* of the sanctuary¹⁶, has a chronological span between the 2nd and 1st centuries BC.
- Type 1D has an almond-shaped rim with semicircular cross-section, and an external groove (Figure 1, 1D). This shape¹⁷ is similar to Olcese type 3a,¹⁸ and occurs between the 2nd century BC and the beginning of the 1st century AD.
- Type 1E pertains to an *olla* with enlarged and everted almond-shaped rim, a globular body, and flat base (Figure 1, 1E). It is attested in Rome,¹⁹ and can be dated between the 2nd and 1st centuries BC.

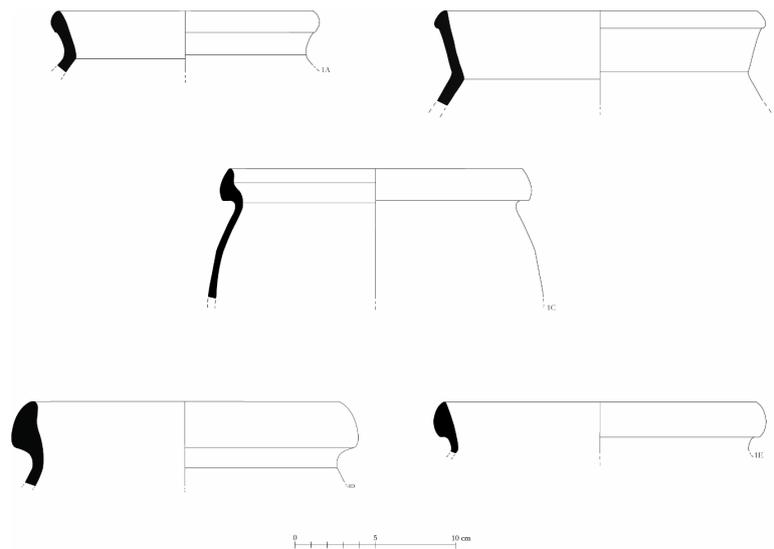


Figure 1. Five different rim types (1A-1E) under the overarching *olla* form with almond-shaped rim, from the sanctuary of Diana, Nemi.

⁸ Santrot and Santrot 1995, 58, n. 480.

⁹ AA.VV. 1970, 512, fig. 386 n. 21.

¹⁰ Olcese and Coletti 2016, 395, fig. 4:16.

¹¹ Zuchtriegel 2012, table XV, n. 266; from the impasto repertoire.

¹² AA.VV. 1989, 70, n. 2.

¹³ Dupré and Ribaldi 2000, fig.26, n. 13.

¹⁴ Olcese 2003, 78-80.

¹⁵ Olcese 2003, 78; Borgers et al. 2017, 315.

¹⁶ Cerquaglia and Privitera 2014, olla type 17.

¹⁷ Santrot and Santrot 1995, 226, n. 505; the type has a contemporary find in Bolsena, where it dates from the mid-3rd to mid-2nd century BC.

¹⁸ Olcese 2003.

¹⁹ Bertoldi 2011, 95, fig. 87, olla type 5.

All seven samples belong to the same fabric (LAT-C-6), three of which (M 295/1-3) will be described in more detail.

LAT-C-6

Samples: M 295/1-3

Representative sample: M 295/2

LAT-C-6 samples are defined by a yellowish red colour (Munsell value HUE 5 YR 5/8 or 4/6). Some fragments display a dark grey colour (Munsell value HUE 5 YR 4/1) on the internal surface, resulting from use practices in ritual events. The texture of the fragments is granular, and, overall, the fragments are hard to very hard. Coarse inclusions comprise between 20 and 25%. Their size varies from 0.2 to 0.7 mm, and they are moderately sorted. These large grains are predominantly angular and black (e.g., pyroxene), and angular white to clear (e.g., feldspar).

Voids occur in the shape of vughs, their size varies between 0.1 and 0.3 mm. The overall porosity is between 10 and 15%.

Fabric LAT-C-6 is unique to the site of Nemi; to the authors' knowledge, the fabric has not been identified on other sites examined in southern Lazio.²⁰ This might suggest that this composition may have been a local production, or at least nearby the sanctuary of Diana. To support this hypothesis, further research and a geological prospection are planned for the near future.

Conclusion

The Roman coarse ware from the sanctuary of Diana at Nemi reveals the development of several types within the overarching *olla* shape with almond rim, which were consistently produced in a single fabric or composition. This points to continuous local production and use at the site. Importantly, the evidence underscores the sanctuary's role as a stable context for the continuity of ceramic technological traditions within the broader context of Roman rule.

References

- D'Alessio M.T., and H. Di Giuseppe 2005. "La villa dell'Auditorium a Roma tra sacro e profano". In *Roman Villas around the Urbs. Interaction with Landscape and Environment*. Proceedings of a Conference at the Swedish Institute in Rome, September 17–18, 2004, 177–196. Rome: Arbor Sapientiae.
- AA.VV., C. 1989. "La Civita di Artena. Scavi belgi 1979–1989 (1989)". Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider.
- AA.VV., C. 1970. "Santa Severa (Roma). Scavi e ricerche nel sito dell'antica Pyrgi (1959–1967)". *Notizie degli Scavi di Antichità*, Suppl. II, volume XXIV.
- Bertoldi, T. 2011. *Ceramiche Comuni dal Suburbio di Roma*. Roma: Aracne.
- Borgers, B., and T. De Haas 2026. "Fabrics of Coarse Ware from a Mid- and Late Republican site at *Norba* (modern Norma), Lazio (Italy)." In FACEM (release 9: 03/2026) (<http://www.facem.at/project-papers.php>).
- 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.
- Cerquaglia, C., and T. Privitera 2014. "Ceramica da cucina e incensieri nel santuario di Diana Nemorense: i tipi presenti e il loro utilizzo nell'ambito del sacrificio". In *Il santuario di Diana a Nemi. Le terrazze e il ninfeo. Scavi 1989–2009*, edited by F. Coarelli, G. Ghini, F. Diosono, and P. Braconi, 441–447. Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider.

²⁰ *Norba*: Borgers and De Haas 2026 in FACEM (release 9: 03/2026); Rome: Fischetti and Borgers 2026 in FACEM (release 9: 03/2026); *Fregellae*: Diosono and Borgers 2026 in FACEM (release 9: 03/2026).

- Diosono, F. 2024. "Il santuario di Diana. Un paesaggio sacro di alberi, acqua e architettura monumentale a terrazze". In *Le navi di Nemi. Luoghi e memorie al futuro*, edited by M. Centanni, D. De Angelis, and E. Pallottino, 30-39. Ricerche di Storia dell'Arte 142/2024.
- Diosono, F. 2020. "Inside the Volcano and into the Trees. The sacred Grove of *Diana Nemorensis* in archaic Latium between the literary and archaeological sources". In *Sacred Landscapes in Antiquity: Creation, Manipulation, Transformation*, edited by R. Haussler, and G.F. Chiaï, 17-28. Oxford – Philadelphia: Oxbow Books.
- Diosono, F., and B. Borgers 2026. "Fabrics of Mid- and Late Republican Coarse Ware from *Fregellae*, Lazio (Italy)". In FACEM (release 9: 03/2026) (<http://www.facem.at/project-papers.php>).
- Diosono, F., A. Bredy, C. G. Ferrari, A. Malatesta A, and B. Borgers in press. "Mid-Republican cooking ware in the sanctuary of Diana in Nemi: a diachronic analysis of shapes and technology". In *New Theories and Methods for Old Pottery: Innovating Perspectives on Hellenistic Ceramics*. Proceedings of the 6th IARPotHP Conference, Catania 9-12 October 2023, edited by D. Malfitana, J. Poblome, J. Lund, and A. Mazzaglia. Phoibos Verlag.
- Diosono, F., I. Giannino, C.G. Ferrari, and B. Borgers 2024. "La classe e lo stile: i votivi a impasto rosso-bruno dal Santuario di Diana a Nemi". In *What can terracottas tell us, Coroplastic polysemy in the ancient Mediterranean*, edited by R. Carboni, C. Cenci, and N. Chiarenza, 1-41, OTIVM 16.
- Dupré, X., and R. Ribaldi 2000. *Scavi archeologici di Tusculum: rapporti preliminari delle campagne 1994–1999*. Roma: XI Comunità Montana del Lazio "Castelli Romani e Prenestini" and Escuela Española de Historia y Arqueología en Roma (CSIC).
- Fischetti, A.L., and B. Borgers 2026. "Fabrics of Coarse Ware from a Mid-Republican site at Ciampino, Rome (Italy)". In FACEM (release 9: 03/2026) (<http://www.facem.at/project-papers.php>).
- Meylan Krause, M.-F. 2002. "Domus Tiberiana: Analyses stratigraphiques et céramologiques". *British Archaeological Reports International Series* 1058. Oxford: British Archaeological Reports Oxford Ltd.
- 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.
- Olcese, G., and C. Coletti 2016. *Ceramiche da contesti repubblicani del territorio di Ostia*. Immensa Aequora 4. Roma: Quasar.
- Quercia, A. 2008. "Le ceramiche comuni di età romana". In *Horti et sordes: uno scavo alle falde del Gianicolo*, edited by F. Filippi, 197–246. Rome: Quasar.
- Sanrot, M.-H., and J. Sanrot 1995. *Bolsena VII. Fouilles de l'École Française de Rome à Bolsena (Poggio Moscini). La citerne 5 et son mobilier: Production, importations et consommation. IIIe siècle/début Ier siècle av. J.-C. et deuxième tiers du Ier siècle ap. J.-C.* Rome: École Française de Rome.
- Zuchtriegel, G. 2012. *Gabii I: Das Santuario Orientale im Zeitalter der Urbanisierung. Eisenzeitliche und archaische Funde der Ausgrabungen 1976/77*. Venosa: Osanna Edizioni.