AGNESE FISCHETTI* – BARBARA BORGERS**

Fabrics of Coarse Ware from a Mid-Republican site at Ciampino, Rome

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Introduction

This paper focuses on the fabrics of coarse ware from the *via Romana Vecchia* site in Ciampino, Rome. The study was conducted as part of the project "Cooking Ware as Indicator for Regional Trade: A View from 4th-1st centuries BC Central Mediterranean" (2019-2024),[1] and based on materials found during excavations by Agnese Fischetti[2], and studied as part of her Doctoral research.[3]

The *via Romana Vecchia* site

The *via Romana Vecchia* site is situated between the *suburbium* of Rome and the Alban Hills. It lies at the intersection of ancient routes along the ridges of the *Vulcano Laziale*, which have been used as natural pathways over the centuries and were formalised during the Roman period with the construction of the *Via Cavona* and the so-called *Via Castrimeniense*. The site is also near the *Via Appia* and its connections with minor roads. As such, it represents a strategically significant location for a rural settlement, which developed into a *villa* in the late Republican period. Furthermore, the fertility of the land, combined with the gently sloping terrain and flat plateau, suggests that the site may have served both productive and possibly commercial functions.

During the archaeological excavation campaigns,[4] several interconnected structures have been unearthed — possibly rooms belonging to a peripheral sector of the site, although their state of preservation is unfortunately poor. The remains primarily consist of foundation walls, with no reliable stratigraphic context, as it appears to have been obliterated in antiquity and subsequently further disturbed by the planting of olive trees. Two wells were also excavated, constituting part of a hydraulic system and they were connected by a subterranean pipeline. Both wells were filled with a substantial quantity of (nearly) complete pottery vessels. Comprehensive archaeological investigation permitted to identify a votive deposit in one of the two shafts.[5] This paper focuses on the composition of the coarse ware found in this votive deposit, as observed through macroscopic observation.

Coarse Ware Shapes and Fabrics

* Università degli Studi Roma Tre, Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici, Via Ostiense 234, Roma, Italia.
** University of Vienna, Department of Classical Archaeology, Franz Klein-Gasse 1, 1190 Vienna, Austria.

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[2] Fischetti 2017.

[3] Fischetti 2022.

[4] Fischetti 2022, 153-175.

[5] Fischetti 2017.

Five different types of coarse ware pots have been identified (Figure 1),[6] each of which will be described in turn:

- Type 1 pots are defined by an indistinct rim (Figure 1, n. 81). These shapes occur in Rome between the end of the 4th and 3rd centuries BC.[7]
- Type 2 pots are characterised by an almond-shaped rim (Figure 1, n. 82, 83A, 83B, 84). This type circulated in Rome and southern Latium between the 4th and 2nd centuries BC.[8]
- Type 3 pots have a triangular rim (Figure 1, n. 85A, 85B, 85C, 85D, 86), and they occur in Rome from the 4th century BC onwards.[9]
- Type 4 pots are defined by a short horizontal rim (Figure 1, n. 87). This shape has been found in archaeological contexts in Ostia, dating between the 3rd and 1st centuries BC.[10]
- Type 5 pots display a continuous profile rim (Figure 1, n. 88). This type is also common on contexts in Ostia, dating between the 3rd and 1st centuries BC.[11]

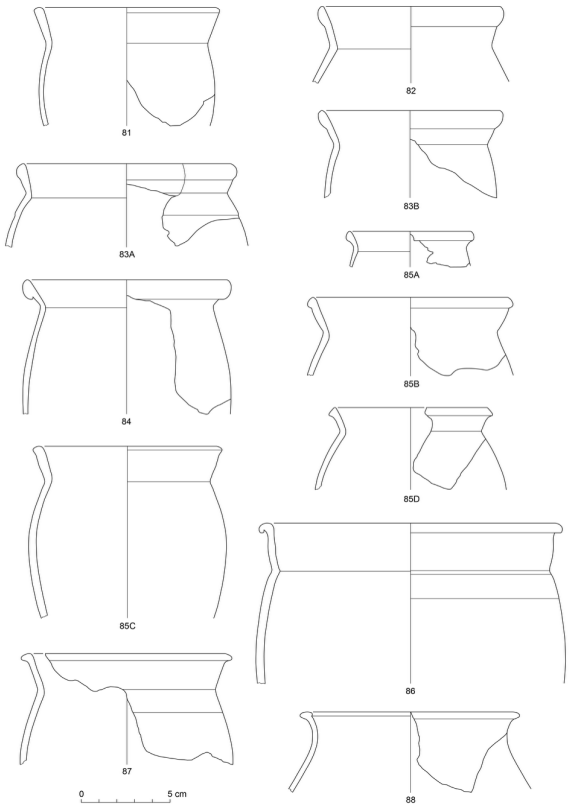

Figure 1. Five different rim types on pots, found on the *via Vecchia Romana* site, dating to the Middle Republic. Type 1 with an indistinct rim (n. 81), type 2 pots are defined by an almond-shaped rim (n. 82, 83A, 83B, 84), type 3 pots display a triangular rim (n. 85A-85D, 86), type 4 with a short horizontal rim (n. 87), and type 5 pots display a continuous profile rim (n. 88).

[6] Fischetti 2022.
[7] Olcese 2003, Type 1.
[8] Olcese 2003, Types 2, 3a, and 3; Borgers et al. 2017.
[9] Olcese 2003, Type 4b.
[10] Olcese and Coletti 2016, 398-399.
[11] Olcese and Coletti 2016, 398-399.

Of all coarse ware pots and lids recovered during the excavations, 39 fragments were chosen for detailed compositional description. They were selected to represent the range of types of coarse ware pots and lids found in the well. All pots were examined in detail, combining macroscopic observation with thin section petrography, with the aim of reconstructing their technology.[12]

This paper focuses on a selection of this assemblage and describes the macroscopic observations of seven fragments (M 273/1, 2, 10, 14, 15, 25, 29), among which three main fabrics were identified, including LAT-C-1, LAT-C-2, and LAT-C-3.

LAT-C-1
Samples: M 273/2, 25, 29
Representative sample: M 273/2

Samples in fabric LAT-C-1 are defined by a yellowish red colour (Munsell Value HUE 5 YR 5/8) or reddish brown colour (Munsell Value HUE 5 YR 4/4 or 5/4). Their texture is granular and the fragments are hard. The clayey matrix small-sized quartz, mica (e.g., biotite), and rounded reddish brown inclusions (e.g., iron pellets). The fragments display between 20 and 25% coarse inclusions, which are moderately sorted and range between 0.2 and 0.5 mm. Compositionally, they consist of dominant white or clear grains (e.g., feldspar), black angular inclusions (e.g., pyroxene), and greyish rock fragments (e.g., leucitite). Other coarse inclusions are dark-coloured (e.g., volcanic glass) and greyish (e.g., leucite). Voids are channel-shaped, they measure between 0.2 and 0.5 mm. Overall, the porosity varies between 10 and 15%.

All five pot types were produced in this composition. Leucitite rock inclusions, present in this fabric group, are common in the Alban Hills. This is taken to suggest that the coarse ware may have been produced in this region,[13]and the fabric has been identified on the ancient site of *Norba* (modern-day Norma).[14]

LAT-C-2
Samples: M 273/1, 10
Representative sample: M 273/10

In visual examination, LAT-C-2 samples are characterised by a reddish yellow colour (Munsell Value HUE 5 YR 6/8). The texture of the fragments is smooth, and they tend to be very hard. The clayey matrix contains fine quartz and mica (e.g., biotite). Coarse inclusions comprise between 10 and 15% of the fragments, and they are well-sorted. Most frequent are dark brown or opaque volcanic glass fragments, measuring around 0.5 mm. Other coarse grains consist of angular black (e.g., pyroxene) and white or clear (e.g., feldspar) colours, as well as rounded manganese and iron pellets, measuring between 0.2 and 0.5 mm, rarely > 0.5 mm (e.g., manganese). Voids occur in the shape of vughs. They measure between 0.1 and 0.2 mm and comprise between 5 and 10% of the fragments.

Types 1, 2 and 3 pots occur in this composition. Based on petrographic and supplementary geological data, this fabric may have been produced within the surroundings of the site.

[12] Borgers and Fischetti 2023.
[13] Borgers et al. 2023.
[14] Borgers and De Haas 2026 in FACEM (release 9: 03/2026).

LAT-C-3
Samples: M 273/14, 15
Representative sample: M 273/14

LAT-C-3 samples are defined by a yellowish red colour (Munsell Value HUE 5 YR 5/6 and 5/8). The fragments have a granular texture and they are hard. The matrix is characterised by small-sized quartz and mica (e.g., biotite), as well as clay pellets and numerous pumice fragments. The analysed fragments display between 20 and 30% coarse inclusions, which tend to be moderately sorted and range between 0.2 and 0.4 mm. Compositionally they mainly comprise whitish to clear-coloured inclusions (e.g., feldspar), as well as some quartz. Rare black angular inclusions (e.g., pyroxene), volcanic glass and chert are also present. Voids are vugh-shaped. They measure between 0.2 and 0.3 mm and comprise c. 10% of the fragments.

Pots in Types 2 and 3 occur in fabric LAT-C-3. They bear compositional similarities to the 'Roman and Tiber Valley' fabric,[15] which occurs on several sites both within Rome,[16] as well as in its hinterland.[17]

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[15] Olcese 2003.
[16] Thierrin-Michael 2003.
[17] Borgers et al. 2017, 2023; Borgers and De Haas 2026 in FACEM (release 9: 03/2026).