

P. V. DOMMELEN – MARIA TRAPICHLER

Fabrics of Western Central 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 Western 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 B¹. Of these, fabric A has been identified as the local one.

Fabric A

Fabric A is by far the dominant fabric in the *Terralbese* rural district, immediately north of the Punic-Roman town of *Neapolis*. It consistently makes up 70–75% of all finds from rural sites. It occurs throughout the period in a coarse and a very coarse variant (the latter with inclusions of well over 1 mm and large voids). This particular fabric was produced at least from the late 5th century B.C.E. until well into the Roman imperial period, although the coarser version tends to become more dominant under the Empire.

The fabric was used for practically all coarse-ware products, ranging from cooking-pots and open bowls to amphorae and cooking-stands (*tabuna*), while roof tiles became much more frequent in the Imperial period.

No production sites have been recorded but the source must be a common alluvial clay. The presence of manganese indicates moreover that the clay was waterlogged, which supports the suggestion that it was extracted in the Terralbese area. Because the Mannu river moreover separates poorly sorted colluvial deposits with basalt and granite inclusions on its southern shores (where *Neapolis* is situated) from the alluvial-lagoonal deposits of the Terralba district, there can be little doubt that the clay extraction sites were at one or more probably several places in this area, *i.e.* north of the river Mannu.

Thin sections of Neolithic pottery and natural clay deposits from the Bau Angius area, a short distance NE from *Neapolis*, not only show that the same clay was used since early prehistoric (but obviously prepared into a different fabric) but also support the suggestion that fabric A was produced in the rural district N of the Riu Mannu, and thus explicitly not in the town of *Neapolis* itself. The same clay also began to be used to produce so-called *ceramica comune* in a medium to fine fabric from the end of the Roman Republic (classified as fabric Q by the Riu Mannu/Terralba project).

(P. v. D.)

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

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Description of the observed fabrics

In general the observed samples of van Dommelen's Fabric A are characterized by a non-calcareous matrix, the reddish yellow color of which may turn into brown and gray due to different firing conditions. The temper consists to the greater part of rounded clear or white quartz particles, only once yellowish red.

Coarse Wares

W-CENT-SARD-C-1 (M 148/1) shows a reddish yellow, granular matrix, white mica occurs frequently, the temper consists of rounded clear and white quartz particles.

W-CENT-SARD-C-2 (M 148/6) differs in color of the matrix, the inclusions being basically the same as observed in W-CENT-SARD-C-1.

Transport Amphorae (M 148/2-5)

W-CENT-SARD-A-1 (M 148/2) shows a reddish yellow, granular matrix, white mica occurs frequently, the temper consists of rounded clear and white quartz particles (cf. W-CENT-SARD-C-1).

W-CENT-SARD-A-2 (M 148/5) differs by prominent large rounded dark gray particles (rounded iron oxide concretions) within the temper.

W-CENT-SARD-A-3 (M148/3.4) the matrix shows a brown color (probably due to firing conditions), among the temper predominate rounded quartz – particles, occasionally with a characteristic orange color shade.

(M. T.)