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ROMAN CERAMICS FROM *FABRATERIA NOVA*

New perspectives on the relationships between the city and its hinterland through the analysis of ceramic assemblages

Introduction

Ceramic finds presented hereby were recovered during excavations at the “Civita” plateau of San Giovanni Incarico (Lazio, Italy). The plateau corresponds to the site of the ancient *Fabrateria Nova*, an urban centre established on a broad terrace enclosed by the River Liri in 124 BC¹, i.e. one year after the destruction of the nearby and better known city of *Fregellae*.

Fabrateria Nova was identified only recently and then excavated occasionally during the 80s and 90s. Since 2007, a partnership of Italian and foreign institutions, including the University of Cassino, the German Archaeological Institute, the University of Salento, and the Superintendence for the Archaeology of Latium and South Etruria, has carried out extensive investigations of the site, in the framework of a multidisciplinary research project.

The goal of this project was to reconstruct the ancient topography of the town – already sketched in a monograph from the late 70s² – and to carry out a detailed stratigraphic investigation of parts of the urban area. Over the years, the project has seen the participation of surveyors, archaeologists, architects, students, and volunteers.

Research has now come to its final stage and a comprehensive publication is in preparation. Preliminary results have already been presented in conferences, summary documents³ and thematic papers⁴. Although ceramic finds have been classified and studied since the beginning of this project, they remain mostly unpublished⁵. The analysis of materials excavated during the 2014 campaign is still incomplete; nonetheless, the amount of data collected so far gives the opportunity to draw a telling urban scale synthesis of pottery types, forms and chronologies, which is unlikely to be altered significantly by data currently being processed.

The topographical framework: a short overview

Research provides information for a detailed topography of a large part of the ancient town. Investigations brought to light structures that were already slightly emerging from ground level, and detected new ones with different functions and phases (**fig. 1a**).

The urban system is that of a typical town of the late Republican times. The city walls – whose general plan is well identifiable – have been partially excavated in their Western sector. The urban plan is based on a series of parallel East/West roads (like the paved road excavated on the Southern side of the amphitheatre and the one close to the thermal building, **fig. 1b**), which regularly cross North/South perpendicular axes.

Public buildings are well known thanks to past and recent investigations. The amphitheatre, excavated during the 1980s⁶, is situated at the very centre of the plateau; baths (**fig. 1c**), dated to the 1st century AD, and perfectly aligned with the orthogonal road system, were brought to light in the 2007/2008 campaigns; *tabernae* and *horrea* were found both close to the via Latina (in 2009) and close to the amphitheatre, where in the 1990s archaeologists discovered a whole district, probably with a residential function.

Sacred buildings emerged in several parts of the ancient town. In the Western sector, a few meters away from the urban walls, we can interpret the remains of a monumental complex as part of a colonnaded public building, datable between the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD. An inscription found not far from this area, bearing a dedication to Concordia⁷, has suggested a relationship between the goddess and the monumental structure.

At the centre of the plateau, excavations brought to light a square surrounded by a portico, with a temple on its Southern side (**fig. 1d**); whilst structures date back to the Augustan age, stratigraphic data suggest that the block was occupied by a square already during the Republican phase.

The last three excavation campaigns investigated a huge late-Republican sanctuary in the South-Western quadrant of the ancient town (**fig. 1e**). The area occupied by the sanctuary is enclosed by a portico on its four sides, the Eastern one consisting of a *cryptoporticus* (**fig. 1f**). Three temples have

¹ VELL. PAT. 1,15,4.

² NICOSIA 1977.

³ BESTE ET AL. 2010.

⁴ BETORI/VALCHERA 2009; BETORI ET AL. 2013; FERRARI 2011.

⁵ With the exception of a conference presentation of selected materials from the 2007/2009 excavation campaigns (I. MANZINI/G. MURRO/M. RINALDI/C. P. VENDITTI, *Fabrateria Nova: primi risultati dallo studio dei materiali ceramici delle campagne di scavo 2007–2009*, German Archaeological Institute in Rome, June 6th, 2011).

⁶ CRESCENZI 1985; CONSIGLI forthcoming.

⁷ CIL X, 5574.

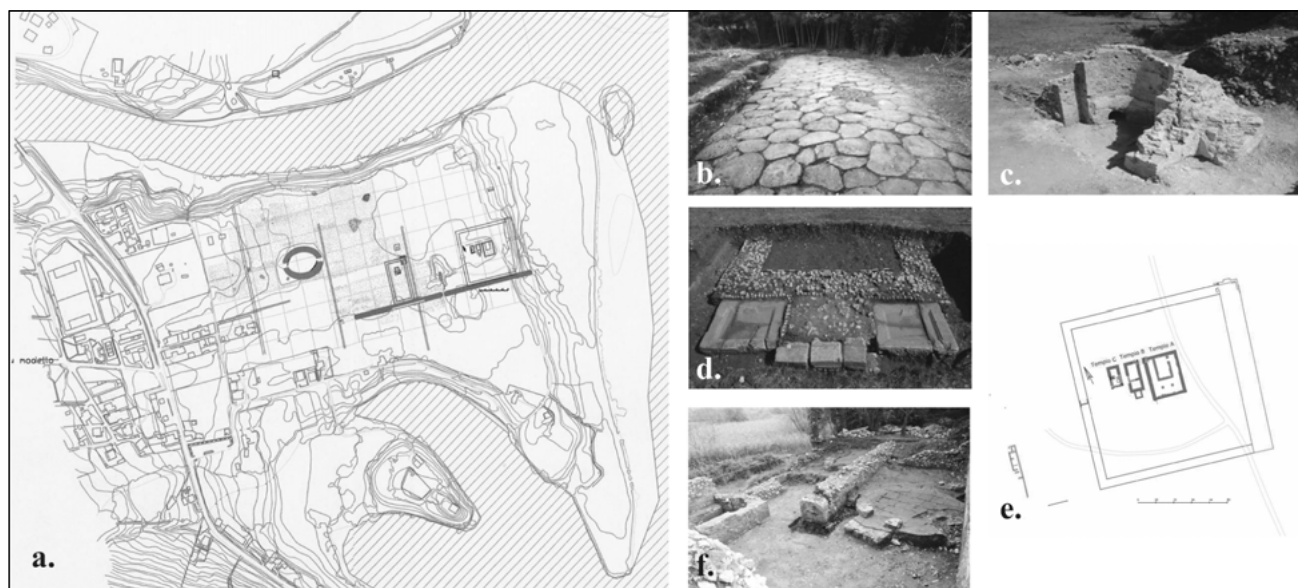


Fig. 1. **a** *Fabrateria Nova*, topography of the site and investigated remains (elab. DAI Rome); **b** paved road on the Southern side of the baths (“via Latina”); **c** thermal building; **d** Augustan square and temple; **e** late-Republican sanctuary, general plan; **f** *cryptoporticus* (elab. DAI-Rome).

been identified, a major (A) and two smaller ones (B and C), oriented towards South and perpendicular to main roadways. The 2014 excavation campaign also identified an access to the square from its Southern side, in perfect correspondence to the major temple.

With the exception of few structures emerging from ground level (in particular, the *cryptoporticus* and the baths), the identified remains lied less than 50 cm under the ground and were preserved at the level of their foundations only. Moreover, ancient structures were harmed by spoliations and farming activities. Such post-depositional events, together with the difficulties related to dating based on building techniques, make the analysis of pottery finds fundamental to identify the chronology of the intercepted stratigraphies.

The pottery finds

The life phases of the town, spanning from the 2nd century BC to the Late Antiquity, are now better known thanks to data acquired from pottery finds. A multi-national *équipe* of researchers is carrying out a comprehensive study, within the wider *Fabrateria Nova* Project, funded by the German Archaeological Institute. The examined ceramics provide an extraordinary insight into the life of the colony throughout the centuries and, thanks to their quantity and variety, they help reconstructing a complex and multi-layered image of the town.

We compiled data from the study of archaeological finds into a relational database, developed by the German Archaeological Institute of Rome using Filemaker Pro. The database includes information related both to the stratigraphic analysis and to the catalogue of archaeological finds. In this way, we could reconstruct the *facies* and chronology of life phases of the town, and frame information to investigate dynamics of site creation, development and abandonment on an urban scale.

Ceramics from the six major excavated contexts, corresponding to public buildings (i.e. *cryptoporticus*, temples A-B-C, Augustan small temple, baths, *horrealtabernae* and paved road) give a rather coherent picture. We have examined over 5,000 fragments of pottery and amphorae so far, spanning for a long period from the 2nd century BC to modern times. Forms and types show a repetitive trend in relation to class and chronology. Preliminary analyses of findings from the last excavation campaign in the area of the Republican temples, as well as of materials from contexts close to the city amphitheatre⁸ investigated in the 1990s, reveal a similar set of classes and types.

This study, while giving relevant information for an intra-site analysis, has also raised new questions on the integration of *Fabrateria Nova*’s ceramics into the broader regional context. More specifically, the key issues are the relationship between local and imported wares; the commercial circulation of pottery; and phenomena of local imitation.

Black-glazed pottery

Black-glazed pottery is the key indicator for the Republican phases of *Fabrateria Nova*. It is mainly attested in three contexts: i) the square surrounded by the portico (first phase, previous to the Augustan one); ii) the *cryptoporticus*; and iii) the *tabernae* on the Northern side of the so-called *via Latina*. In these contexts, black-glazed pottery was recovered in primary deposition and in rather abundant quantities. Morphological analysis shows a prevalence of open forms (bowls and plates), whilst drinking vessels and closed forms are extremely rare (fig. 2a). The chronology of the attested types is rather diversified. Relatively few materials are dated from

⁸ This work is being completed thanks to a grant funded by Thyssenkrupp SG.

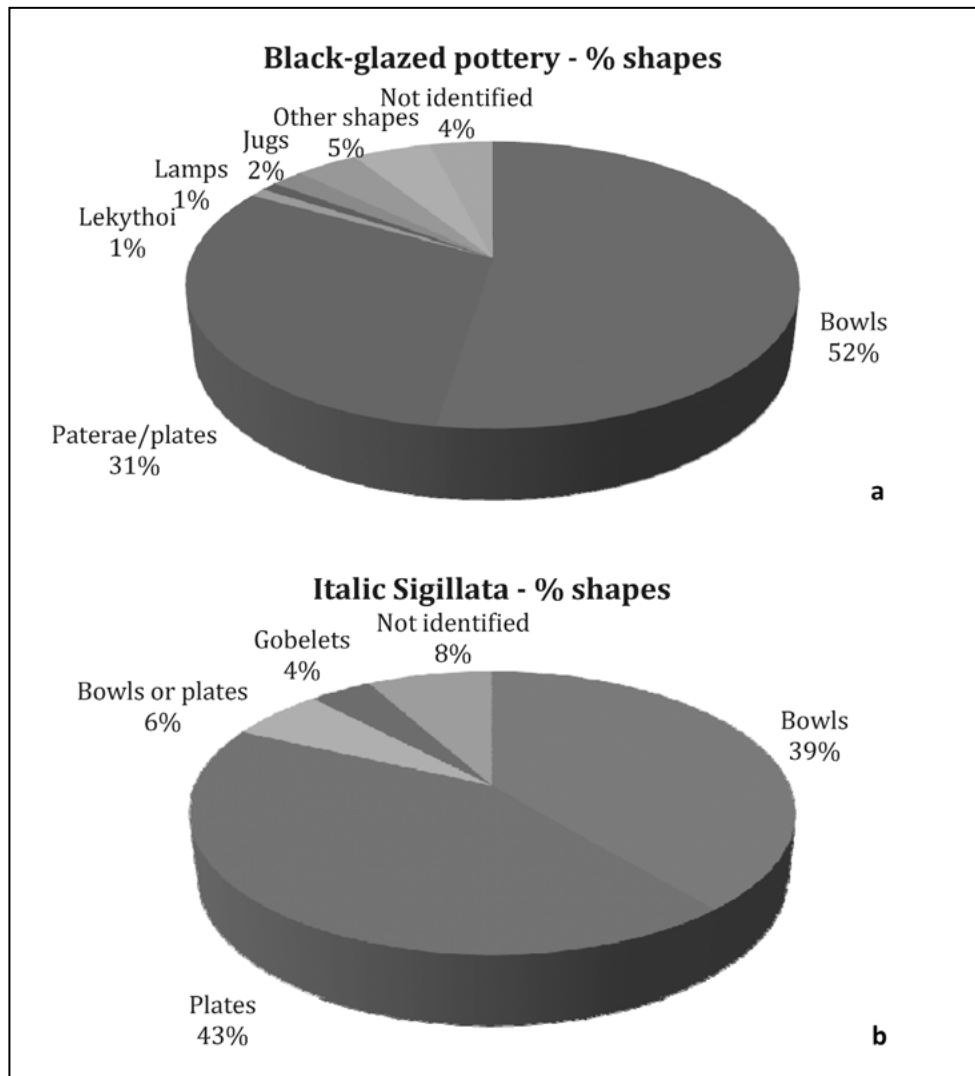


Fig. 2. *Fabrateria Nova*, attested shapes and their percentages: **a** black-glazed pottery; **b** Italic Sigillata.

the late 4th to the first half of the 2nd century⁹, while the phase dating from the end of the 2nd century BC – corresponding to the establishment of the *Fabrateria Nova* colony – is better represented. It is interesting to note the presence of forms and types belonging to the so-called “B-oides” wares, comparable to those from “mid” and “late” periods of the production of *Cales*¹⁰. It is not easy to determine whether at *Fabrateria* saw

a local imitation of morphological and decorative repertoires typical of the Calenan pottery is attested, or a small scale import of fine wares from Northern Campania instead.

With the exception of “B-oides” vases, black-glazed pottery from *Fabrateria Nova* was probably produced locally, as hinted by the low quality of fabrics and by relatively small number of forms and types attested.

Italic Sigillata

Italic Sigillata has been recovered, almost exclusively, from the great portico and particularly from its Augustan levels¹¹. Apart from few fragments generically dated to the second half of the 1st century BC¹², over 40% of the Italic Sigillata is of Augustan chronology. For the first Augustan age, almost

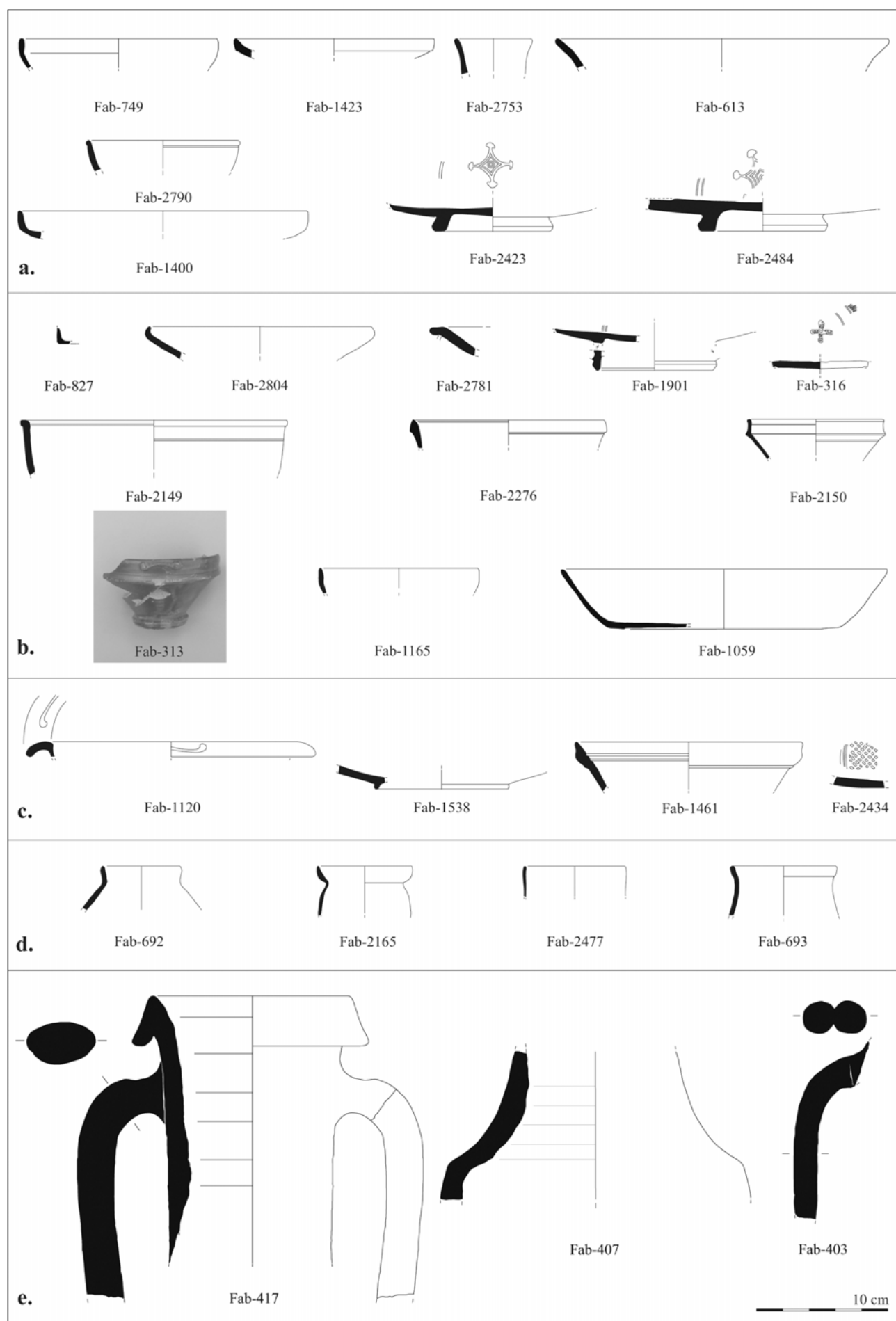
⁹ For the phase end of the 4th/half of the 3rd centuries BC, specimens relate to very widespread productions of Central Italy: bowls with incurved rim, Morel 2760/2780, hemispheric bowls with vertical rim, Morel 2980 and similar (fig. 3a, Fab-749), and concave-convex wall bowls; as well as bowls with almond rim, Morel 2538-2539 (fig. 3a, Fab-1423). The same chronology have two *skyphoi* relating to specimens found in *Cales* (PEDRONI 2001 pl. 36,279.281; fig. 3a, Fab-2753) and some feet of the series Morel 321. For the phase spanning from half 3rd to 2nd centuries BC, materials are relatively abundant, but due to their extreme fragmentation it is difficult to further refine their chronology. Hemispheric bowls, concave-convex wall bowls (fig. 3a, Fab-613, Morel 2648a), and plates with thickened and pendant rim are attested.

¹⁰ Forms found in *Fabrateria Nova* and also produced in *Cales* are the bowls Morel 2323 (fig. 3a, Fab-2790), but particularly distinctive are the plates with vertical or slightly incurved rim (fig. 3a, Fab-1400, Morel 2255b1), attested with almost all types in Morel’s classification. Two of these plates (fig. 3a, Fab-2423 and Fab-2484, Morel 2270-2280) show on the inside bottom the lozenge stamps typical the “late” production of *Cales* – possibly imitated elsewhere. Despite still debated problems

of chronology, this production can be dated between the end of the 2nd and the half of the 1st century BC; its presence marks the latest phase of black-glazed pottery found in *Fabrateria Nova*.

¹¹ For the shapes attested and their percentages, see fig. 2b.

¹² Plates with flaring wall and indistinct lip (fig. 3b, Fab-827, similar to Conspectus 1) and plates with convex wall and incurved rim (fig. 3b, Fab-2804, Conspectus 4.2.1).



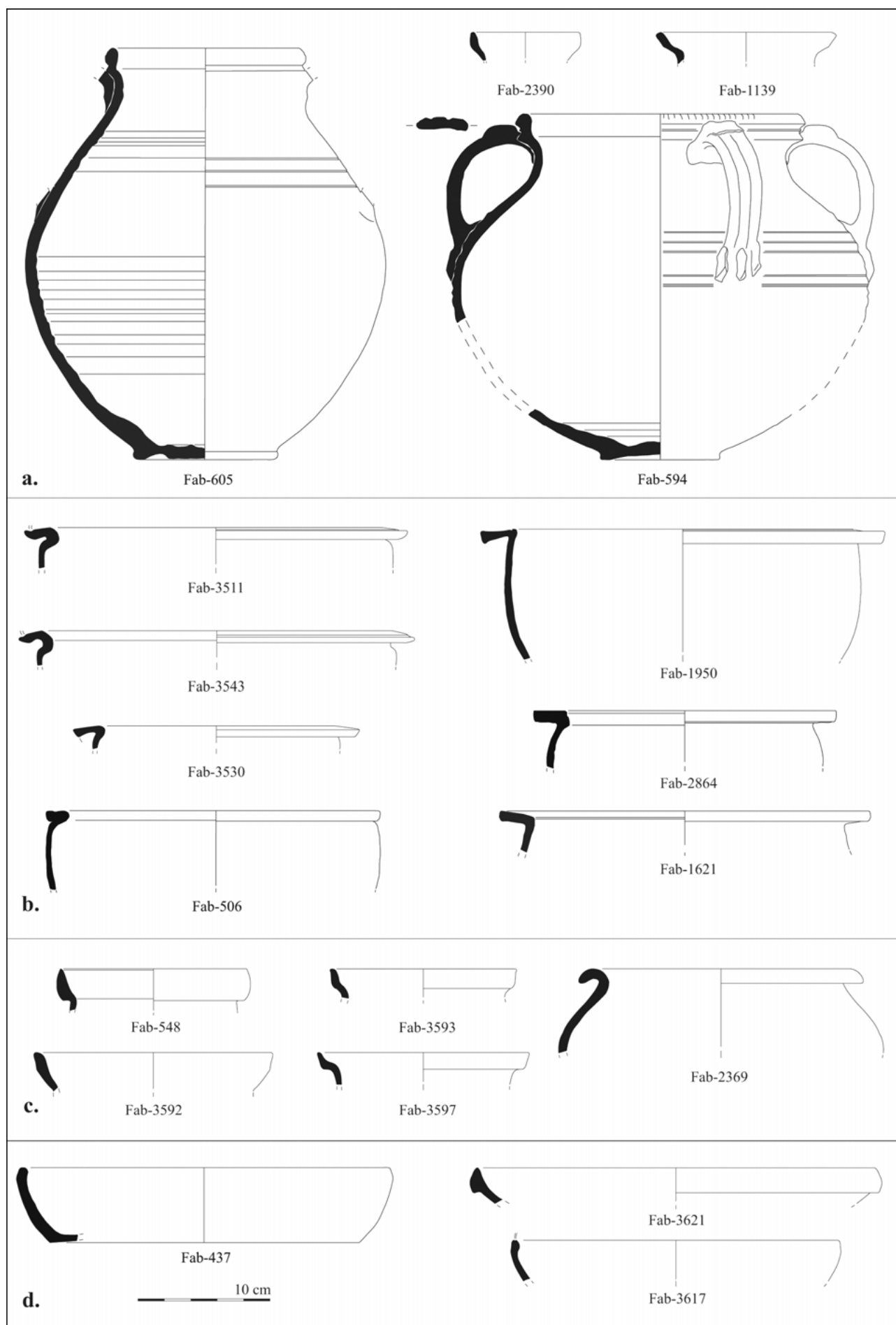


Fig. 4. *Fabrateria Nova*, coarse wares: **a** household ware; **b** kitchen ware, pots; **c** kitchen ware, jars; **d** kitchen ware, pans. – Scale 1:4.

all of the fragments correspond to plates¹³; the only stamped foot recovered so far dates to the end of the century¹⁴. The panorama of the mid- to late-Augustan age is rather typical, with bowls Conspectus 9¹⁵, 14¹⁶, 22¹⁷ and 26¹⁸, and plates Conspectus 12¹⁹ and 20. Bowls Conspectus 23²⁰ and 36²¹, and an almost complete plate of a peculiar shape²², can be attributed to the Tiberian and Claudian ages. The latest fragment belonging to this class (second half of the 1st century AD) is a plate Conspectus 3, with a high flared wall and indistinct rim.

African red slip ware

African red slip ware is attested in scattered fragments. Neither its stratigraphic provenance nor its chronology allow any significant concentration analysis. Identifiable forms include at least two plates Lamboglia 4/36 A = Hayes 3 B²³, a form produced in African Sigillata A¹, A^{1/2} e A²; a bowl Lamboglia I b = Hayes 8 A²⁴; and a base fragment bearing a stamp type Hayes 71²⁵, normally associated to plates of D and D¹ productions, datable down to the end of 4th/early 5th centuries AD: as such, this fragment represents the latest African Sigillata found at *Fabrateria Nova*.

Thin walled pottery

Thin walled pottery from *Fabrateria* is found in significant quantities and covers a wide chronological span, from approximately 150 BC to the end of the 2nd century AD; the majority of fragments date to the Tiberian and Claudian age. Common and recurring shapes (i.e. goblets, jugs, and bowls) are articulated into a great variety of types, exemplifying different productions over time. Products typical of the late 2nd century BC²⁶ are followed by products of Central Italy

dating from the end of the Republic to the early Imperial times²⁷. The vast majority of fragments has been excavated from the Tiberian levels of the *cryptoporticus* and from the South-Eastern corner of the portico, the latter dating mainly to the Tiberian and Claudian ages.

Amphorae

The distribution of amphorae in the excavated contexts shows significant similarities with the chronologies of the buildings. Notably, late-Republican amphorae, mainly of Campanian provenance, are particularly well attested in the *cryptoporticus*²⁸ and in the area of the republican temples A-B-C, and even in general terms they represent the vast majority of the recovered amphorae. Less frequent are amphorae from Gallia, *Baetica*, and North Africa; Lusitanian and Aegean products are from rare to sporadic. The vast majority of the recovered fragments are dated before 50 AD, with the significant exception of a single exemplar of Late Roman 1, datable down to the 7th century AD.

Common wares

Whilst the fine pottery and amphorae return, as expected, diversified productions and geographic origins, something different emerges from the analysis of common wares, a class that is predominant over the others.

We examined a significant number of common wares' fragments (more than 1300 the diagnostic fragments only). Because of the very characteristics of the excavations described above, these finds represent a remarkable sample of household and kitchen wares used in the city over a large span of time – from the late Republican era to the Middle Ages – particularly during the first two centuries of the Empire.

Without considering fine tableware ceramics (which for their small number and variability of shapes are not particularly fit for this type of analysis), some interesting data come from coarse (household and kitchen) wares.

A relevant percentage of coarse wares can be classified as household ceramics, used for the preservation of food and liquids, as suggested by the shape (mainly jars and amphorae) and by the features of the fabric. Various types of jars are attested, with a globular or ovoid body, usually two-handled, whose rim (more or less flared and swollen) shows an internal step or groove for the lid²⁹. Two examples, characterized by a thickened rim molded on its outer face³⁰, are particularly notable, both for their substantial size and their degree of completeness; the second one has three vertical handles, instead of the more usual two, decorated with applied elements in relief so as to reproduce a feline paw.

As far as kitchen wares are concerned, the selection of functional forms highlights the greater importance of pots,

¹³ This phase is characterized by greater typological diversification, which corresponds to an increase in the number of fragments: among the best preserved specimens, a plate Conspectus 5.4.1 (**fig. 3b**, Fab-2781); several ring feet Conspectus B 1, belonging to large-size plates; and ring feet of the form Conspectus B 2.4 (**fig. 3b**, Fab-1901), possibly associated to older forms, but also to productions which make their appearance around 20 BC.

¹⁴ It is a fragmentary bottom with a central cruciform stamp patterned in circles, surrounded by a double concentric groove and a band of wheel decoration (**fig. 3b**, Fab-316); cfr. OCK 2554.2.

¹⁵ E.g. the cup **fig. 3b**, Fab-2149, with a groove both in the inner and outer walls.

¹⁶ The most attested form (e.g. **fig. 3b**, Fab-2276).

¹⁷ Dating from the second decade of the 1st century AD (**fig. 3b**, Fab-2150).

¹⁸ With a double spiral decoration applied under the rim.

¹⁹ Specimens show the variants Conspectus 12.1.2 and Conspectus 12.3.1, whose production is normally considered parallel to that of form 22.

²⁰ **Fig. 3b**, Fab-313 (Conspectus 23.2), with a double spiral applied on the outer rim.

²¹ **Fig. 3b**, Fab-1165, Conspectus 36.4.4.

²² One of the very few vessels with fully preserved profile (**fig. 3b**, Fab-1059), it shows a generic resemblance to the shape of Pucci 1985 form XIII, but it differs from the latter for the rim, which is not distinct from the wall.

²³ Our two specimens are an everted curved rim with an applied water leaves decoration (**fig. 3c**, Fab-1120), and a ring-foot with part of the base of a plate (**fig. 3c**, Fab-1538).

²⁴ This (**fig. 3c**, Fab-1461) is at the present the only fragment of this form and is characterized by a strong orange-coloured surface. The chronology according to Hayes does not exceed the second half of the 2nd century AD.

²⁵ **Fig. 3c**, Fab-2434.

²⁶ Types Ricci 1985, 1/9 (**fig. 3d**, Fab-692) and Ricci 1985, similar to

1/14-15 (**fig. 3d**, Fab-2165).

²⁷ Types Ricci 1985, 1/156 (**fig. 3d**, Fab-2477) and Ricci 1985, 1/50 (**fig. 3d**, Fab-693).

²⁸ Main types are Late Graeco-Italic (**fig. 3e**, Fab-417), Dressel 1 (**fig. 3e**, Fab-407), and Dressel 2-4 amphorae (**fig. 3e**, Fab-403).

²⁹ OLCESE 2003 pl. 23.3.2; DYSON 1976, PD 46 and 68, and similar types (**fig. 4a**, Fab-2390 and Fab-1139).

³⁰ **Fig. 4a**, Fab-605 and Fab-594.

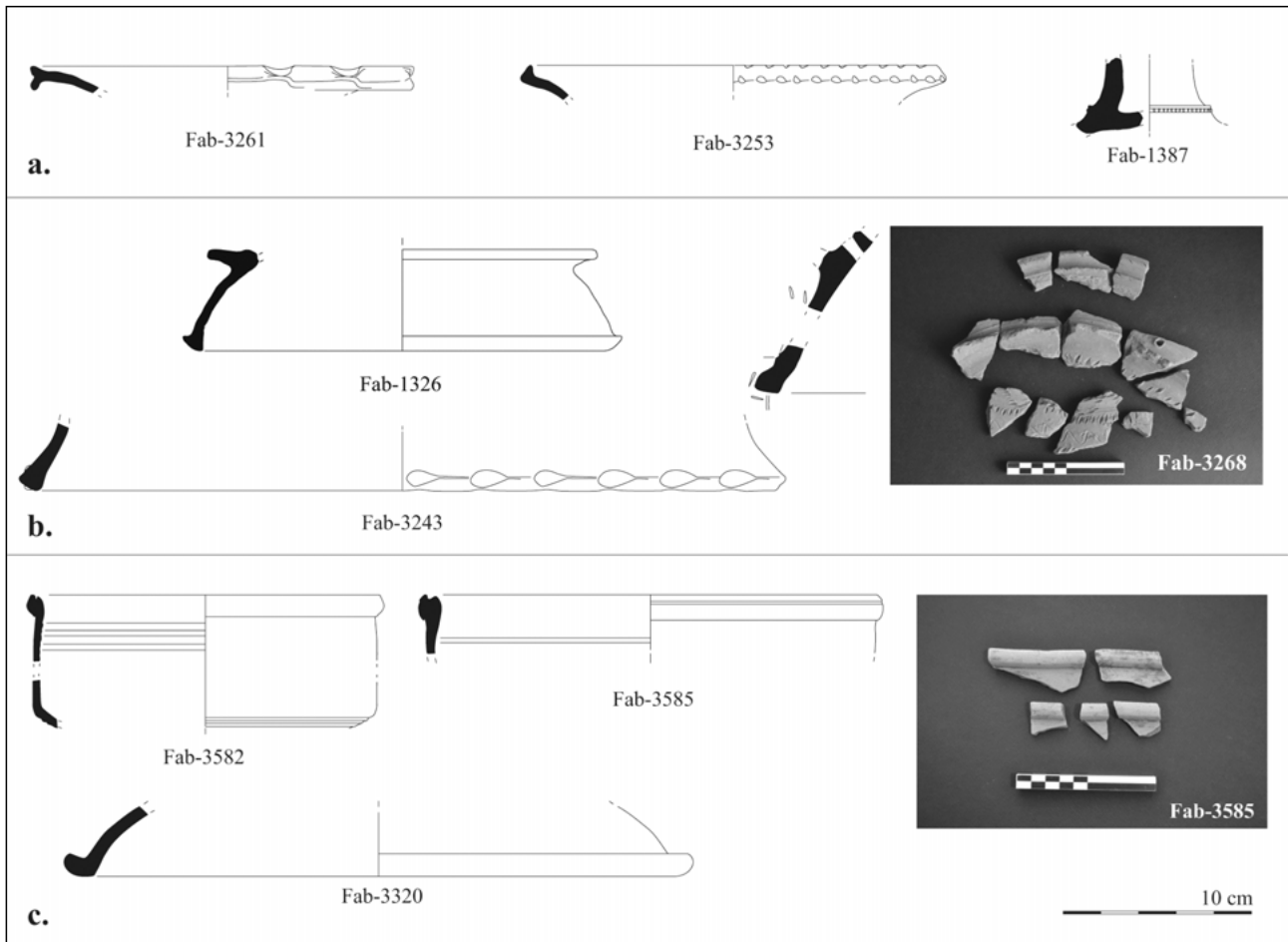


Fig. 5. *Fabrateria Nova*, kitchen ware: **a** censers; **b** *clibani*; **c** African cooking ware and imitations. – Scale 1:4.

jars and lids, compared to a significantly lower number of censers, *clibani*, pans and saucepans.

Brim-lid pots, in particular, are one of the main forms between the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. A large variety of types is documented. They can differ for the shape of the body (convex or vertical), the kind of attachment between the wall and rim, the inclination and shape of the brim, and for the presence or absence of grooves on its upper face³¹.

As for the jars, among the major types are late-Republican types with an almond-shaped rim³² and the many variants of the type with internally hollow rim³³, dating around the 1st century AD and beyond, which are often distinguishable from household ware jars solely because of the presence of traces of their use on fire. More isolated, although significant, are other types³⁴, which still contribute to the reconstruction of the panorama of forms of this period.

Typical of the period under consideration are pans with vertical or incurved edge³⁵ and with almond rim³⁶; both are also attested in internal red-slip ware. Rarer are examples with vertical lip grooved on its upper face for the accommodation of the lid³⁷.

Leaving aside, because of their extreme fragmentation, the still numerous lids, at least two further forms (censers and *clibani*) are relevant, although attested in a small number of fragments. Censers, typical of the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, have a fairly significant variability both in terms of articulation of edges and of wave or notches decorations³⁸. In addition to the usual types³⁹, also some rather peculiar fragments have been assigned to *clibani*. They are characterized by big dimensions and by a certain refinement, with notches and fingerprints decorations on the edges and on the brim⁴⁰. The presence, in at least one example⁴¹, of a suspension hole on the cap seems to confirm such morphological attribution.

³¹ HAYES/MARTINI 1994, 153 fig. 65,15–16 (fig. 4b, Fab-3511 and Fab-3543); OLCESE 2003 pl. 5,5a,2 (fig. 4b, Fab-3530); CARTA/POHL/ZEVİ 1978, str. VIIa, n. 1622 (fig. 4b, Fab-506); OLCESE 2003 pl. 3,3a,3 (fig. 4b, Fab-1950); ibid. pl. 2,2,5 (fig. 4b, Fab-2864); DI GIOVANNI 1996, 2213 b–c (fig. 4b, Fab-1621).

³² Fig. 4c, Fab-548 (similar to OLCESE 2003 pl. 8,3b,6).

³³ Fig. 4c, Fab-3592 (OLCESE 2003 pl. 10,7,4), Fab-3593 (DYSON 1976, 22II 58) and Fab-3597 (OLCESE 2003 pl. 12,9,4).

³⁴ As the jars with curved rim, similar to DUNCAN 1965 form 37, A 81 (fig. 4c, Fab-2369).

³⁵ DI GIOVANNI 1996, 2121 a (fig. 4d, Fab-437).

³⁶ GOUDINEAU 1970 pl. 1,3 (fig. 4d, Fab-3621).

³⁷ OLCESE 2003 pl. 15,3,1 = DI GIOVANNI 1996, 2131 (fig. 4d, Fab-3617).

³⁸ Fig. 5a, Fab-3261 (OLCESE 2003 pl. 21,1,2; see Ostia II, 473 for the rim decoration), Fab-3253 (similar to Ostia II, 475 a–b) and Fab-1387.

³⁹ Fig. 5b, Fab-1326 (OLCESE 2003 pl. 18,3, for the general shape; DYSON 1976, PD 8 for the rim).

⁴⁰ Fig. 5b, Fab-3243.

⁴¹ Fig. 5b, Fab-3268.

African cooking ware

Although in minor quantities, African cooking ware is attested at *Fabrateria Nova*, especially in the later levels of the *cryptoporticus* and of the Republican temples.

The most relevant form is by far the casserole type Hayes 197⁴², dating between the first half of the 2nd and the beginning of the 5th century AD. Also attested are the lids Hayes 195⁴³, of similar chronology. Remarkably, some fragments closely recalling the form Hayes 197⁴⁴ are characterised by a fabric which is undoubtedly not “African”. Imitations of this form are already known in Northern Campania⁴⁵ and it is very likely that the fragments of *Fabrateria Nova* belong to a local/regional production.

Final remarks

In general, cooking and household ceramics of the late Republican and early Imperial times from *Fabrateria Nova* fit within the framework of Italic coarse wares of this period. However, some further considerations can be made, building on the examination of fabrics and the comparisons with ceramic assemblages of other sites in the same geographical area.

The examination of fabrics showed indeed a remarkable uniformity, which is consistent with the repetition of forms and types (albeit with a myriad of variants) we stressed above. Most of the coarse ware ceramics are characterised by a clay of a more or less intense orange (Munsell 7.5YR 7/8 to 8/6), with an abundant presence of medium to large inclusions, both limestone and volcanic.

The prevalence of this fabric over others justifies the hypothesis of a unified production, either local or imported.

The comparison with the attested ceramics in sites of the same area during the same period shed further light on this subject, supporting – together with other elements – the hypothesis of a local/regional production of coarse wares attested at *Fabrateria Nova*.

A useful dataset is provided by several sites in the Lower Liri Valley, dating to the Republican and early Imperial times, surveyed in the 1990s⁴⁶. Some of these contexts (*Interamna*⁴⁷, the Ara Murata villa⁴⁸, and especially the Roman kiln site 21⁴⁹) have in fact provided the closest comparisons to some peculiar types from *Fabrateria*. Moreover, the association between types gives an overall impression of a remarkable similarity.

Taking into account all of these elements, it is possible to suggest that at *Fabrateria Nova* a local production of coarse tableware and kitchenware ceramic is attested, whose integration within the broader regional panorama still remains to be explored through accurate comparisons.

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⁴² Fig. 5c, Fab-3582.

⁴³ Fig. 5c, Fab-3320.

⁴⁴ Fig. 5c, Fab-3585.

⁴⁵ SORICELLI 2009, 389–391.

⁴⁶ HAYES/MARTINI 1994.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 142 fig. 59; for recent investigations see also BELLINI ET AL. 2014, 202–203, with relevant bibliography.

⁴⁸ HAYES/MARTINI 1994, 146 fig. 61.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 152 fig. 65.

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