

BLACK GLOSS POTTERY PRODUCTION IN A LATIN COLONY: SOME NEW DATA FROM *FREGELLAE*

Little is known about 4th and 3rd century B.C. pottery production in the hinterland of southern Lazio, including the Latin colony of *Fregellae*, founded in 325 B.C. and destroyed by the Romans in 125 B.C. This Roman city is situated at the confluence of the rivers Sacco and Liri, on the via Latina about half way between Rome and Capua. Its ceramic production initially reflected the influence of the Urbs, but later developed its own tradition that was independent of the coeval productions in both Latium and Campania. To date, the only published black gloss pottery from *Fregellae* comes from the sanctuary of Aesculapius (Comella 1986, mainly relating to the city's final phase) and from some surface surveys (Nicosia 1979 and Malandrino 1991). The studies undertaken by L. Trigona on the baths and by N. Tiburzi on the *domus* are still unpublished (there is some preliminary information for the *domus* in Diosono *et alii* in press). This text will present some results from the study of the black gloss pottery found in the suburban temple on the via Latina, north of the city. The catalogue of the pieces was made by M. Ceccaccio, E. Seccaroni and myself and cannot be presented here for reasons of space and its complexity. The complete study (including the catalogue) is due for publication in the volume on the forum temple and suburban temple, which is currently in press (Diosono – Ceccaccio – Seccaroni in press).

However, the aim of this paper is rather to illustrate the way in which the local productions, non-local productions, and their morphological repertoire came to be identified based on fabric, lettered stamps and decoration. It was not possible to identify the production centre for the imported pottery.

The study examined two lots of material: that recovered by the Superintendency in about 1975 during work to widen the modern road (which more or less follows the line of the ancient via Latina) on which the temple stands, and that found during the excavations carried out by the University of Perugia in 2002 and 2004. The latter was only able to document the almost total destruction of the stratigraphy caused by agricultural activity and excavations to recover stone blocks and architectural elements from the temple in the 1800s (Battaglini in press). The material from the road excavation is in a better state of preservation and less fragmentary. Given the

scarce reliability of the stratigraphy, the decision was taken to only work on the diagnostic materials corresponding with 542 fragments. The productions were identified based on the macroscopic characteristics visible using a digital microscope (an absolute lack of funding prevented any other types of examinations or analyses). The fragments were divided based on the clay colour, the inclusions, characteristics of the slip and, lastly, the general quality of the production attributable to the artefact. In this way, eleven productions were identified. To date no evidence has been found for pottery production in the urban area of *Fregellae* (the only kiln wasters up to now found, during a survey made by another scientific team, are unpublished: Crawford – Keppie – Vercocke 1985, 94). However, there is no doubt that such a sizeable and important city, moreover situated on a plateau rich in clay and water, had active pottery workshops within its territory. But how to identify a local production without the benefit of archeometric laboratory analyses? We compared the black gloss fabrics with those of the other ceramic classes found at *Fregellae*, particularly construction and architectural materials, which are certainly local, but also with other classes of fine and coarse wares. The results of this comparison confirmed that the predominant productions present in the temple of *Fregellae* were those that can be defined as local and by local, we mean ceramics that must have been produced within the colony's territory. An in depth examination was made of the lettered and decorative stamps and all other decorative elements (also in order to check the correct identification of the productions), of their association in the same or different productions, and also in relation to those from other published sites.

All the above described operations should be considered preliminary in each study, which also includes archeometric analysis.

The productions

P1. A production mainly attested and certainly identifiable as active at *Fregellae*. The clay is light pinkish yellow, varying between 10YR 8/3-8/6 and 7.5YR 8/3-8/6; some examples present firing defects which partially alter the colour in the section, but not enough to prevent attribution. The fabric is friable and moderately refined; the identifiable inclusions are calcite, mica, and volcanic minerals. The exterior slip is matt black, created by holding the foot of the vessel and dipping it into the suspension. The slip is badly preserved given its middling quality that is also attested by examples characterised by an external surface with reddish and brownish

patches, but never too diluted. No stacking marks are present. There are various stamps, probably due to different productions being made in the same ceramic workshop: *H*, *VH/HV*, *A*, *AH*, *AVH/HVA*, *AL/LA*.

There are also various decorative stamps: clubs or combinations of clubs, figured in a circular field, with small central rosette and four small radial palmettes, with large rosette, and the later examples with a circular motif combined with large, very complex palmettes. The analysis of the morphological repertory cross-referenced with that of the stamps and decorative stamps seems to show that the production was active for a long time, practically for the entire duration of the colony's life. It has many forms in common with P4.

P2. This production is in many ways very similar to the preceding P1, but differs in the clay colour (a pinkish light brown varying between 7.5YR 7/4-7/6-8/4), a less refined fabric with abundant inclusions of calcite, mica, and volcanic minerals and, above all, of a better quality distinguished by a shiny and better preserved slip. The attested lettered stamps are *H*, *QPU* and *A*; decorative stamps are rare and fragmentary. Only bases belonging to this production were found, thus the chronology is largely based on the stamps and decorative stamps and to a much lesser degree on the forms produced. The dual presence of stamps *A* and *H* and the similarity of the decorative stamps, in addition to some of the fabric characteristics, suggest that it is in some way linked to production P1.

P3. This is a well-attested production (the third largest in quantity) in light brown-pink clay 5YR 7/6 with mainly mica inclusions and rarer calcite and volcanic materials. The slip is always shiny. There are no stamps and even the decorative stamps are limited to the type with large central rosette. Overall, the quality is good. The reference chronology of the attested forms suggests this was a larger production active during the first phase of the colony's life, which gradually decreased during the second half of the 3rd century B.C., finally ceasing before the beginning of the 2nd century B.C.

P4. Quantatively, the second largest production found at the temple. It is easily identifiable by its darkish brown colour (7.5YR 7/3-7/6), friable and not very compact clay with constant presence of mica, calcite and volcanic mineral inclusions, and the occasional presence of *chamotte* and vacuoles. The slip is always matt black, occasionally brownish due to misfiring. This production is characterised by the total lack of lettered and decorative stamps or any other decorative element. Like P1, it

was probably a local production active throughout the colony's life. However, it is characterised by simpler methods of management and by a slightly higher overall quality, which compensates for the smaller production in terms of quantity compared to P1, with which it has many forms in common.

P5. This is a not very well-attested production with a completely different clay from the local one (pale brownish-pink 5YR 6/6, very refined with only mica inclusions), often misfired and tending towards greyish in colour, both in section and the slip, which is always matt. It only presents the stamp *AVVA* (perhaps to be associated with *AVH/HVA* in P1) and two decorative stamps, one with four small rosettes and the other with a large central rosette. This is a generally low quality production, limited in chronology by types datable to between the late 4th and the central decades of the 3rd century B.C. It is important to stress that P5, probably not made at *Fregellae*, presents similarities with the local Fregellan productions and with the non-Fregellan production P6, attesting that it affected by the vicinity and influence of both much larger productions.

P6. The fourth production in terms of quantity, probably imported. The pinkish-pale brown clay (7.5YR 7/4-8/4-8/6) is very refined, with very occasional mica; the slip is always shiny and uniform, and well-preserved. A single lettered stamp is attested, unfortunately illegible, while various types of decorative stamps are present with a single rosette or five elements with palmettes, some of which large. To be highlighted, the presence of rouletting on the floor of the bowl (which is absent in the Fregellan production). It is impossible to identify with any certainty where it came from, neither the clay or decoration type suggest it came from already known pottery workshops situated between the inner areas of southern Latium and northern Campania.

P7. This is a minor import, characterised by a bright pink clay 2.5YR 7/6-7/8, with the presence of mica and occasional volcanic inclusions. The slip is always well-preserved and shiny black. The attested forms in the repertory from the suburban temple are cups and some *gutti*, probably indicating that P7 was a production that does not seem to have any points of similarity with the local ones and is only found sporadically within the city.

P8. An imported production of which there is only one example, dark pink clay 2.5 YR 7/6, only calcite inclusions. The slip is matt and reddish in colour, tending to flake off in patches.

P9. A minor import characterised by a bright orangey pink clay 5YR 7/8 with only calcite inclusions and a matt black slip.

P10. A minor production, with technical characteristics that differ from the others identified here: pink clay 5YR 8/44, very compact and with abundant mica, calcite and volcanic inclusions; the slip is matt black.

P11. A minor import, characterised by greyish clay varying between 10YR 7/1 and 2.5Y 7/1, with occasional mica inclusions and a moderately shiny grey slip.

The stamps

Contrary to the sanctuary of Aesculapius, from which there are no examples of impressed letters or monograms (Comella 1986), a good quantity of stamped black gloss material was recovered from the suburban temple on the via Latina. It was possible, in part, to compare the material with that already published from the surveys undertaken in the urban area (Nicosia 1979; Malandrino 1991).

H

H is the commonest stamp, with 11 examples in Production 1 and one in Production 2. Of these, there is only one example with the letter inside a rectangular cartouche, while for all the others it is in relief within a circle. However, all examples are circa 1 cm in height, but each was made by a different punch. Traditionally they are defined as “bolli erculei” as, from Morel onwards (1988, pp. 57-59), they are attributed to 3rd century B.C. black gloss productions characterised by more or less explicit references to the cult of Hercules. The more elaborate forms are the *Heraklesschalen* or other *paterae*, which present the figure of Hercules in relief in the central stamp. The commoner forms are the cups with decorative stamps, which reproduce symbolic attributes of the god (in particular the club, but also the arrow and anchor), sometimes associated with single letters of uncertain solution or onomastic formulae (most of which abbreviated in various ways) and/or the letter H. The latter also appears by itself, both as a stamp or over-painted or incised (and therefore either created before or after the vessel was fired).

Recently, David Nonnis (2013, for the bibliography for the evidence cited below; see also Cifarelli – Ambrosini – Nonnis 2002-2003, pp.290-291, for other references) has proposed an overall picture of its attestations. It was present in central Italy in areas where Roman colonisation took place; as well as in Rome and its suburbs. In fact, it is found and attested principally at *Cales* and *Alba Fucens* and with a particular con-

centration in the Sacco-Liri-Garigliano valleys (*Signia, Fregellae, Aquinum, Interamna Lirenas, Minturnae*) and also at *Fondi, Teanum Sidicinum, Capua, Paestum, Ostia, Lanuvium, Lavinium, Tibur, Cosa, Carseoli, Canosa, Ariminum, Nursia*, in the territory of *Falerii* and *Capena*. There is even a known example at *Emperion*, in *Hispania Citerior* (and a base with an impressed club from *Tarraco*), which probably arrived there through trade.

The finds are mainly from cult sites dedicated to Hercules, but also from the sanctuaries of other divinities or different contexts, such as necropolises or private buildings unconnected to the cult. According to Nonnis, the cups with Herculean decorative stamps originally had some ritual value and were bought by pilgrims at a sanctuary to be dedicated there or at other cult sites, or taken away as a souvenir of the visit. Luigi Pedroni (1992 and 2001, pp. 223-225) suggests that the vessels characterised by these stamps had a votive use, but could also represent the levy on their earnings that potters dedicated to the tutelary numen of commerce and craft-working. A part of this offering would then have been sold by the temple itself, and therefore reconverted into coin.

If we look at the finds from *Fregellae*, the H stamp is the commonest found on the black gloss pottery, both from the suburban temple on the via Latina and from the surveys carried out in the urban area by Angelo Nicosia (1979, n. 22). It was also found in the forum and *domus* excavations, which remain unpublished. In the case of *Fregellae*, it was also associated with the cult of Hercules and dated to within the 3rd century B.C. (Nonnis 1998, p. 77). However, other elements need to be taken into consideration within this overall picture: to date there is no literary, epigraphic, or archaeological evidence for a cult of Hercules in the colony (although there very probably was one); the club stamps on black gloss are also attested at *Fregellae* and in the same productions in which the H stamps are also present, but they are never found together on the same vases, as at *Cales* and *Alba Fucens*; in the suburban temple the H stamps represent 50% of those attested, but this temple was certainly not dedicated to Hercules and furthermore, among the remaining nominal stamps another four begin or end with the letter H.

VH/HV

There are two examples in Production 1. Traditionally (Morel 1988, p.59), this is interpreted as a “bollo erculeo” similarly to the previous one, reading the V as the initial of an epithet for the god, such as Hercules Victor. This was proposed by

Nicosia (1979, n.25) for an analogous example from the *Fregellae* survey. Helga Di Giuseppe (2012, p.112) disagrees with this interpretation and reconstructs the published Fregellan stamp as *H. V(alerios)*. The reading of our example *H. V(---)* (if read as a retrograde inscription) as the initials of a potter or owner of a pottery workshop, rather than an expression of devotion to Hercules, is supported by other stamps from the same Production 1, which are clearly onomastic, such as the *H. Va(---)* below.

AVH/HVA

Two examples in Production 1, this is a rectangular stamp to be read in retrograde *H. Va(---)* as proposed by Nonnis (1998, p.78), and can therefore very probably be identified with the same individual of the preceding stamp. An analogous example, for the lettering and technical characteristics, is published in Malandrino's survey (1991, fig. 3 n.50).

A

The single letter A in a circle is characterised by the open bar and attested by two examples in P1 and by one in P2, each one slightly different. Nicosia (1979, nn. 23-24) has published two examples, all with the open bar in both normal and retrograde script.

An identical stamp to the Fregellan one in P2 is present on a black gloss cup found in the Tiber and identified as a non-Roman production (Bernardini 1986, p. 89, n. 295). However, its characteristics also differentiate it from the definitely local Fregellan productions examined here. Therefore, the stamp A cannot be attributed to a Fregellan production reaching Rome or to a Roman workshop that had an affiliated workshop in the Latin colony. However, there are evident similarities between the stamp found in Rome and those from *Fregellae*, but also an evident lack of other examples with which to compare them, thus its reading remains uncertain. However, it is possible to state that at *Fregellae* the A stamp is present in local productions marked with other stamps like the one described above *A.V(---)* and *Ah(---)* and *AL/LA* (see below). However, the paleography seems to date this stamp to an earlier period.

AL/LA

A single example attested in Production 1, two ligatured letters that read either AL or LA. As this type is not previously attested at *Fregellae* and no parallels have been found in the region, it is difficult to interpret.

AH

One example in Production 1. This may be the same stamp read as HV by Nicosia (1979, n. 21) and as +AH by Malandrino (1991, fig. 3, n. 51) on a misfired example (reinterpreted as AN in Di Giuseppe 2012, p.112).

Stamps with *C.AH* and *R.AH* are known at *Minturnae*, from pottery found in the river Garigliano, attributable to the gens *Cahii* and *Rahii* or, perhaps, as seems more likely, to the gens *Ahii* (Ruegg 1995, p.179 and p.182; Gregori-Nonnis 2013, pp.164-165). In the latter case, the name could recall the Oscan stamp *Ga.Ahiis* from Venafro (Di Giuseppe 2012, p.110).

QPV

Attested by one example in P2, of which an identical example was published by Nicosia (1979, n.26) and another by Malandrino (1991, fig. 3, n.49), stamped on a misfired vase. The individual *Q. Pu(---)* cannot at present be identified.

AV/VA

A single example attested in P5 and only in that production. It could be read both AV and VA in retrograde (Nonnis 1998, p.78) therefore making it comparable to the preceding stamp *Va(---)* attested in P1. A similar example, whose technique also resembles P5, is published in Malandrino (1991, fig. 3 n.52), and Di Giuseppe attributes it to a *Valerius* (2012, p.112). In the Liri-Garigliano valley both the letters AV and VA find parallels at *Minturnae*, where stamps on black gloss attest both Val dei *Valerii*, makers of Graeco-Italic wine amphorae, and a not better identified *S.AV(---)*, unfortunately read and published backwards by Agnes Kirsopp Lake (1934-1935, p.98 and n.2, pl. 21). There is epigraphic evidence from the nearby town of *Aquinum* (CIL X, 5515) and from Rome (CIL VI, 12818) for a gens *Aufidia* natives of the territory of *Fregellae*.

...H(?)

A rectangular stamp of which only the terminal part is preserved, attested on an example in Production 6.

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e-mail: francescadiosono@virgilio.it

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