

# **Roman cooking vessels as indicator for regional trade in the Pontine region, Central Italy**

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## **Background**

The Pontine region is situated on the Tyrrhenian Sea ca. 60 km southwest of Rome, and is bounded by the Alban Hills and Lepine Mountains. The Pontine Region Project (PRP) is dedicated to the archaeological study of this region, uses landscape approaches, such as field walking. Over the last 30 years, the PRP project has studied 35km<sup>2</sup> of the region with changing geographical, thematic or chronological focus. Most recently, the PRP project focuses on the Roman economic history of the region, uses pottery data as a proxy. This work uses two main approaches:

- A bottom-up approach: to identify evidence for pottery production and map distribution patterns of local products from Forum Appii and Ad Medias, using typological and petrographic studies.<sup>1</sup>
- A top-down approach: to develop an overarching database that incorporates all data and finds on sites identified in the project, with the aim of mapping the movement of imported wares, including amphorae and various fine wares.<sup>2</sup>

In this contribution, the distribution patterns of local and imported coarse ware from Forum Appii and Ad Medias on the Via Appia will be compared to those of imported amphorae and black gloss ware, with the aim of identifying similarities and differences in the movement of these ware groups within the region between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> century BC.

## **Pottery Production sites studied within the PRP**

During the mid-Republican period, evidence for black gloss ware production has been identified in the hinterland of the Roman colonies at Norba and Antium, but has not yet been the subject of further compositional study.<sup>3</sup>

During the late Republican period, evidence for amphora production has been identified at the sites of Astura<sup>4</sup>, Forum Appii and Ad Medias, and has been studied in thin section petrographic analysis.<sup>5</sup>

## **Movement of local and imported coarse ware in the Pontine region<sup>6</sup>**

No kilns for coarse ware have been identified in the study region. Nevertheless, the combination of typological study with thin section petrography suggests that:

During the mid-Republican period, two fabrics of high collared jars with convex-shaped rim<sup>7</sup> circulated in the region: one was produced near Satricum, whereas the other was imported from the Rome and Tiber Valley region.

During the late Republican period, two additional fabrics of high collared jars with almond-shaped rim<sup>8</sup> circulated: one was produced at Ad Medias, whereas the other was imported from the Rome and Tiber Valley Region or from Campania.

### **Movement of imported amphorae and black gloss ware in the Pontine region<sup>9</sup>**

During the mid-Republican period, very few (Greco-Italic) amphorae from Campania were imported, whereas large quantities of black gloss ware in the 'Gruppo dei Piccoli Stampigli' tradition, produced in various centres around Rome, circulated in the region, and particularly around Ad Medias.

During the late Republican period, amphorae occur in relatively large quantities at Forum Appii and Ad Medias, many of which were imported from Northern Africa (Van der Werff types 1–3), Campania and Tyrrhenian central Italy (Dressel 1A). In addition, at Forum Appii a large number of amphorae of regional production have been identified. By contrast, there is a decline in the presence of imported black gloss ware.

### **Preliminary Conclusions and Further Work**

During the mid-Republican period, the movement of imported ware groups in the Pontine region shows similar trends to Rome's *Suburbium*. The absence of amphorae suggests that wine was distributed in other containers, such as barrels or bags.<sup>10</sup> The stamps on the black gloss ware, which was produced in the Pontine region, are in the 'Gruppo dei Piccoli Stampigli' tradition.<sup>11</sup> Imported coarse ware follows similar trade routes as black gloss ware, and comes from the Rome and Tiber Valley region. Also, Forum Appii and Ad Medias seem to have been integrated in similar trade networks. This can be explained by their proximity, as well as by their location on the Via Appia.

During the late Republican period, the Pontine region seems to be characterised by increasing levels of connectivity. This is suggested by the increased number of local production sites, as well as by the variety in fabrics of imported amphorae and coarse ware. This can be explained in two ways: 1) demographic growth, and, certainly, craftsmen were attracted by new markets; 2) increasing integration in various economic networks, for instance, the harbour at Terracina may have served as a hub for the distribution of overseas (amphorae) or Italian (black gloss ware) products.

At this time, Forum Appii developed into a regional hub from where amphorae were redistributed, while Ad Medias remained largely rural and ceased to exist in the early Imperial period.

Further research, comprising a more robust quantitative dataset from the entire region as well as integration of the regional pottery data in the database, is needed to confirm these observations and to relate them to broader demographic and economic developments.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Borgers et al. 2018; Tol – Borgers 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Tol 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Tol – De Haas 2013.

<sup>4</sup> De Haas et al. 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Borgers et al. 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Borgers et al. 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Olcese 2003, olla type 2.

<sup>8</sup> Olcese 2003, olla type 3a.

<sup>9</sup> Tol 2017.

<sup>10</sup> Tol 2017.

<sup>11</sup> Tol – De Haas 2013.

### References

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