

Understanding Roman Potters' technology at Fanum Martis, Northern France, using a compositional approach

*Barbara Borgers*¹, *Corina Ionescu*², *Sonja Willems*³, *Raphael Clotuche*⁴

¹ University of Salzburg, Department of Geography and Geology, Salzburg, Austria; e-mail: barbara.borgers@sbg.ac.at

² Babeş-Bolyai University, Department of Geology, Cluj-Napoca, Romania; e-mail: corina.ionescu@ubbcluj.ro

³ Inrap Hauts de France, Achicourt, UMR 7041 équipe Gama; e-mail: sonja.willems@inrap.fr

⁴ Inrap Hauts de France, Glisy, UMR 7041, équipe Gama; e-mail: raphael.clotuche@inrap.fr

The Roman town of Fanum Martis, Valenciennes, is known to have become an important centre of pottery production with 15 kilns already identified. Five kilns were found scattered in the southern part of the town during the 1970s and 1990s, whereas recent excavations yielded another 10 kilns in the south-eastern part. All the kilns were dispersed, and operated between the end of the 1st century AD and the beginning of the 4th century AD. Examination of the waster dumps of the kilns that were excavated between 1970s and 1990s revealed a wealth of information on the typo-morphology of the local ceramic products; combined with the results of the recent excavations, this research examines Roman potters' technology at the centre of Famars, and change therein through time.

Inter-and intra-kiln variability among the waster vessels has been examined in detail, using both petrographic and chemical analyses. The scientific analyses have made significant contributions to different aspects of potters' technology at the town of Famars, and permitted to reconstruct consistent traditions. Several compositional patterns have been identified among the ceramic vessels, and they appear to be correlated to different phases in the operation of the kilns, and to changes in potters' selection of raw materials and manipulation. Close correspondence between the mineralogical and chemical characterisation of the ceramic samples provides several well-defined compositional reference groups for this production centre. They permit the identification of local products from Famars at other sites in Northern France, Belgium and the Netherlands, and provide a firm basis for inferring the trade and distribution patterns in this northern region of the Roman Empire.