

COARSE CERAMICS WITH CALCITE INCLUSIONS: A TECHNOLOGY FOR ALL AGES

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The use of carbonate inclusions, more precisely suitably ground spathic calcite, in the production of coarse ceramics is documented since prehistory. It is one of the few technologies which did not feel the effects of the passage from the prehistoric native culture to the diffusion of the Roman culture. On the contrary, this last had an enormous influence on other processing techniques, both in ceramic and non ceramic sectors.

The continuity of the will of introducing small calcite fragments in ceramic bodies is here demonstrated for prehistoric ceramics coming from Italian Neolithic settlements, as well as for the contemporary production of ceramic baking-pans, being the latter today produced in small quantity for cooking the well known Italian 'piadina'. Various raw materials (siliceous sand, grog, pumice-stone, volcanic sand, etc.) have been used in the past for the production of coarse ceramics, but their use seems to be often connected with specific chronological periods and with the local availability of these materials.

The introduction of ground calcite represents a correction of the clay body in order to favour the formation of a microstructure less sensible to the thermal dilatation, so improving the thermal shock resistance of the ceramic material. In fact, since the prehistory artefacts made of coarse ceramics are usually utilized for cooking foodstuffs.

In this paper the results of archaeometric investigations are presented, which have been carried out on several samples of 'calcitic' coarse ceramics coming from archaeological contexts of different ages in Italy. In particular, the characterization of the samples has been carried out mainly through observations at the optical microscope in thin section, x-ray diffraction and thermal analyses. In addition, the significance of our experiences is strengthened by taking into account several published studies concerning "calcitic ware" coming from both Italian and not Italian archaeological sites.