MINERALOGICAL AND PETROGRAPHIC ANALYSES OF TILES FROM THE LATE ROMAN NECROPOLIS OF PRIAMAR, SAVONA (LIGURIA, NW ITALY)

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The late Roman (IV-VII c. AD) necropolis on the top of the Priamar hill (Savona, the ancient *Savo*), now included in a XVI c. fortress, is composed of 87 tombs. Some African amphorae were used for children's burials, but in most cases Roman tiles (*tegulae*) were utilized ("tombe a cappuccina"). The tiles show fairly homogeneous shape and dimensions; no stamps are present.

The ceramics of the necropolis are thought to come from the abandoned *municipium* of *Vada Sabatia* (Vado Ligure), which lies a few kilometeres to the west of Savona and is still poorly investigated by archaeologist.

Optical microscopy and XRD analyses were carried out in order to obtain information about provenance and production techniques of the tiles. Local sediments and kiln wasters of various ceramic wares were used as reference materials.

Several fabrics have been recognised, randomly distributed in the necropolis and even in the tiles of the same tomb. Most fabrics can be referred to a few productions of the local area (the coastal strip between Albisola and Vado). Fe-rich alluvial clays and Pliocene fossiliferous carbonate-rich sediments were used as raw materials, sometimes (intentionally?) mixed together. Alluvial or marine sands, mostly derived by gneisses and amphibolites of the local Palaeozoic basement, were frequently added as a temper.

The abundant sandy grains, sometimes compositionally and texturally different from the temper of pastes, that can be observed on one surface of the tiles, indicate that sand were sprinkled on the bottom of the moulds in order to facilitate the separation of the raw tiles.

An interesting result is the presence of a few samples with fabrics characterised by inclusions incompatible with local rocks. In most of these cases, acid metamorphic and volcanic rock fragments are included in a fossiliferous carbonate-rich matrix. Southeastern France might be a possible

provenance area for these imports. An uncommon long-distance trade (probably by sea) of tiles is so demonstrated.