



Hellenistic Ash Containers from Phoinike (Albania)

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Abstract

The paper focuses on the Hellenistic ash containers from the cemetery of Phoinike, investigated by the University of Bologna and the Albanian Institute of Archaeology from 2001 to 2009. This study was conducted by analyzing the containers from two different points of view: the study of their shapes and their chronological evolution on the one hand, and on the other their contribution to the investigation of funerary ideology at Phoinike. For this inquiry the analogies between grave goods and connections between sex, grave goods and ash containers were studied.

The cemetery of Phoinike has been investigated by the Italian Archaeological Mission of the University of Bologna in collaboration with the Albanian Institute of Archaeology from 2001 to 2009. Due to its extension, the cemetery, located at the foot of the southern slope of the hill of the city, was excavated in different sectors, gradually connected until the last excavation season in 2009¹. Most graves are dated to the Hellenistic period, but the same area continued to be used until the Roman period, sometimes using also the same family graves. Cremation is the predominant practice (about 80% of burials) both in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, but always associated with inhumation too, even within the same tomb.

A first study of all ash containers attributed to the Hellenistic and Roman phases (late 4th century BCE – 2nd century CE) was published in 2014², yet the continuation of research and in particular the development of the study on Hellenistic pottery from Phoinike permit an update of the Hellenistic finds. This is mainly based on newly available data coming from a specific study of black-glazed pottery from Phoinike, subject of a forthcoming monograph³, in which the dating of most of the graves and of the related ash containers was revised and

¹ The main investigated sectors are S5, S16 and S18. For the reports about the excavations in the cemetery of Phoinike see LEPORE – GAMBERINI 2003; CARRA ET AL. 2005; CURCI ET AL. 2007; LEPORE 2004; LEPORE 2006; LEPORE 2010; DE MARIA ET AL. 2011. I would like to thank all members of the Italian Archaeological Mission in Phoinike for the opportunity of this study, and in particular the directors Prof. S. De Maria and Prof. Sh. Gjongecaj, the field supervisors in the cemetery, Prof. G. Lepore and Dott. B. Muka, as well as Dott. A. Gamberini for the useful suggestions for this paper. I also thank Ilir Zaloshnja, the draftsman of the mission, who drew almost all the ash containers here presented (except the pelike of grave 3.S5, the stamnos of grave 20.S5 and the amphora of grave 49.S5, drawn by Dott. A. Gamberini). All the photos are made by the Italian Archaeological Mission in Phoinike.

² ALEOTTI 2014.

³ GAMBERINI IN PRESS.

better defined. Considering that the suggested dating is mainly based on internal association of materials and cross references within burials, and that in most cases the dating of the ash containers is based on the black-glazed pottery they are associated with, the importance of such a specific study for the revision of all dating suggested earlier is beyond doubt. Moreover, new drawings of reconstructed ash containers in addition to those available until 2014 allow a better comprehension of and comparisons for some now restored containers not included in the earlier publication because of their very fragmentary state of preservation.

Both the continuation of the in-depth study of Hellenistic pottery and of the newly restored vessels necessitated the review of the previous assessment of the assemblage. This is particularly true in the case of the best attested vessels (*pelikai*, *stamnoi* and *chytrai*), whose shape evolutions were divided, in the first step of the research, into types and sub-types with similar features and then organized in a typology based on the dating of the burials. The continuation of the research revealed the inadequacy of this first organization. Even if new dating does not revise the evolution of the shapes already noted in the typology, it has been difficult to integrate restored ash containers into the typology: on the one hand similar general features recur in similar and contemporaneous vessels and on the other they are always different from each other. Instead of identifying and defining precise types or subtypes, we can only follow a general evolution trend, with some features recurring in earlier or more recent variants, but their organization in a strict typology seems now inadequate.

The last preliminary remark concerns the extended use of most of the burials which strongly influenced the study of pottery for two main reasons. First, the earliest burials were physically moved every time the grave was opened for a new burial. Most remains, ash containers and grave goods, have thus been found mixed and were sometimes considerably damaged by post-depositional processes, making it complicated to associate grave goods with a single burial and at times even preventing the restoration of the entire vessel. Second, while single graves have been used as closed contexts for the better defined dating of associated material, family graves and related pottery produce always a less precise dating, resulting from the already mentioned difficulty in associating other material and then in giving precise dating to each burial and the related grave goods.

Hellenistic ash containers: the shapes

The Hellenistic ash containers from Phoinike comprise six vessels: *pelike*, *stamnos*, *chytra*, *amphora*, *krater*, and *jug*. Among them, the best attested are *pelikai*, *stamnoi* and *chytrai*, while *amphoras* were used three times and *krater* and *jug* only once. Apart from *amphoras*, classified according to the known typology and production centers and thus well dated, all the other ash containers were dated mainly by associated grave goods, due to the difficulty to compare these materials to those of nearly similar contexts, and especially because most of them (in particular *chytrai* and *stamnoi*) are first of all local domestic vases with their own local features⁴.

At Phoinike the *pelike* is the oldest vessel used as ash container, where it is attested in four single graves (**fig. 1**), all dated from the late 4th to the 3rd century BCE. The best preserved *pelike* comes from grave 43.S5. It has an outturned and molded ›bifid‹ rim, a long neck, vertical strip handles, an ovoid body and a high molded ring foot. Fragmented *pelikai* from graves 3.S5 and 33.S5 have similar rims and feet, while the foot from grave 44.S5 shows a different high ring foot with a pronounced edge. With regard to decoration, the wall of the entirely preserved *pelike* is decorated with vertical shallow grooves between the shoulder and the foot, taking a ›V‹ shape below the attachment of the handles on the shoulder. It also has few traces of a

⁴ In a number of articles Hellenistic pottery from the cemeteries in the territory of Elea (RIGINOS 1997; RIGINOS 1999) and Amantia (BERETI 1997) is published. Some Hellenistic burials from Tesprotia are presented in the catalogue of the Archaeological Museum of Igoumenitsa (KANTA-KITSOU ET AL. 2008, 113–135). However, they represent only part of the pottery found, and parallels for all the pottery classes from the cemetery of Phoinike have not been found.

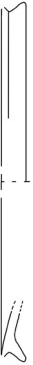
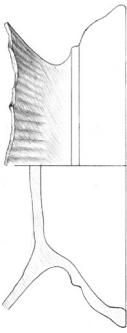

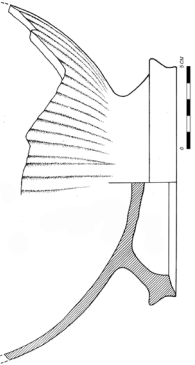

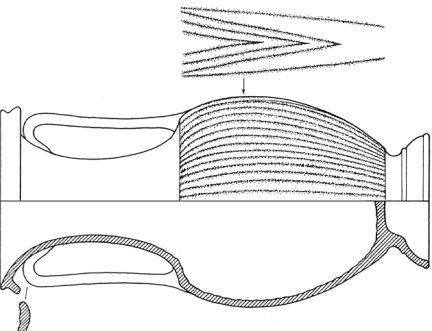
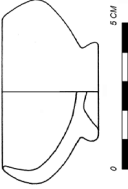
Grave	3.S5	33.S5	44.S5	43.S5
Ash Container	 		 	 
Lid				
Grave Goods	Lamp Silver coin (late 4th-middle 3rd century BCE) Bronze mirror Lead crowns with gilded pendants Two iron fibulae			Saltcellar Bronze coin (229-48 BCE) Bronze mirror Fragment of a skyphos?
Dat.	Late 4th-early 3rd cent. BCE	Late 4th-early 3rd cent. BCE	Late 4th-early 3rd cent. BCE	3rd cent. BCE
Sex	F	/	/	/

Fig.1: *Pelikai* – ash containers, late 4th–3rd century BCE.

white slip on the body, red on the neck and light blue on the foot. The pelike from grave 33-S5 has both vertical shallow grooves (on wall fragments only) and traces of a white and light blue slip, while pelikai from graves 3.S5 and 44.S5 preserve only vertical shallow grooves.

Pelikai used with the same function come from Ambracia and Preveza and dated respectively to the generic Hellenistic period and to the beginning of the 3rd century BCE⁵, are very similar to those from Phoinike. In the 4th–early 3rd century BCE pelikai were utilized as ash containers in southern Italy as well, at Taranto and Heraclea, but the shape here is very different from all variants attested at sites on the opposite coast of the Ionian Sea⁶. Moreover, a black-glazed pelike with different dimension, decoration, rim and foot from all those used as ash containers originates from Phoinike as part of grave goods (grave 23.S5), and other black-glazed pelikai come from the cemeteries of Durres and Apollonia in northern Albania, as well as from the Ionian Islands (Corfu and Leucas). These finds document the diffusion of a shared model, ultimately re-interpreted by different local productions⁷. Despite the great variability attested among shapes and decorations, all these pelikai, and in particular those from the eastern Ionian coast, are dated to the early Hellenistic period (late 4th–early 3rd century BCE). The same dating can be suggested for the pelikai/ash containers from Phoinike as well, as confirmed by material they are in association with. The saltcellar from grave 43.S5 and the one-handler bowl from grave 44.S5, both used as lids of the ash containers, belong to the early stage of the black-glazed local production of the late 4th–first half of the 3rd century BCE⁸. Furthermore, pelikai are associated in grave 3-S5 with a late 4th–mid-3rd century BCE coin from Corinth and a 4th–mid-3rd century BCE lamp⁹, in graves 3-S5 with a lead crown with gilded pendants, and in graves 3.S5 and 43.S5 with bronze mirrors, no longer attested in the following Hellenistic graves (see **figs. 2–8**)¹⁰.

Passing to the entire Hellenistic period (3rd–1st century BCE), to the date of the majority of the graves, the stamnos is the best attested vessel used as ash container¹¹. Before being utilized in a funerary context, Hellenistic stamnoi were primarily domestic vases, used in

⁵ VOKOTOPOULOU 1972, 443–44 e fig. 375, γ for Ambracia; ANDREOU 1979, 246–247 e fig. 93, γ for Preveza.

⁶ D'AMICIS 1994, 154 and LIPPOLIS 1994, 263 pl. 197 for Taranto; PIANU 1990, 227–228 and 262 for Heraclea.

⁷ For this interpretation, for the black-glazed pelike from Phoinike and pelikai from other cited sites, see GAMBERINI 2005, 135–136 and GAMBERINI – VECCHIETTI 2010, 515; GAMBERINI 2014, 113 and in particular GAMBERINI *IN PRESS* for the most updated results.

⁸ In the first study of the local black-glazed pottery, now under revision, this saltcellar and the one-handler bowl were respectively referred to the local types 4 and 1 (GAMBERINI 2007, pl. 23, 184 and pl. 22, 179). Notice of both appear in the third preliminary report of excavations in Phoinike, see GAMBERINI 2005, 135–137. Despite the bad state of conservation of grave 44.S5 with very few and fragmented material, the one-handler bowl has been identified as lid, because of the similarity with grave 43.S5, where the small bowl-lid was found in the neck of the pelike, entirely preserved.

⁹ For the coin, see GJONGEJAJ 2007, 169 fig. 10.3, no.13. The lamp, even if very fragmented, can be referred to the type Agora 25 B Prime (HOWLAND 1958, pl. 38, no. 232).

¹⁰ The most recent grave in which a pelike is used as ash container is grave 43.S5, where a bronze coin from Kerkyra suggests the late 3rd century BCE as terminus post quem for this grave (the coin published in GJONGEJAJ 2005, 172 no. 283, dated 229–48 BCE). However, this dating seems much too recent for the set of all the pottery from the grave, and in particular for the pelike used as ash container, suggesting that it could have been chosen as heirloom (GAMBERINI *IN PRESS*; for the same interpretation of a late 4th century BCE pelike in a 3rd century BCE grave in Taranto see also D'AMICIS 1994, 156; another parallel from Heraclea, where the dating of the grave – late 4th century BCE with an earlier pelike – is however suggested as problematic, PIANU 1990, 32).

¹¹ Among 47 Hellenistic cremations, the stamnos is used as ash container in 29 instances. Those here presented are the best preserved or restored. They all have dusty fine clay, varying from light pink (5 YR 8/4) to reddish yellow (from 7.5 YR 7/6 to 7.5 YR 7/8); the glaze, when attested, is always strong red (from 2.5 YR 5/6 to 2.5 YR 5/8).

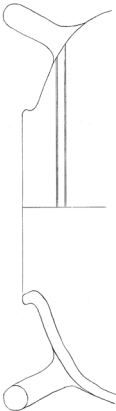
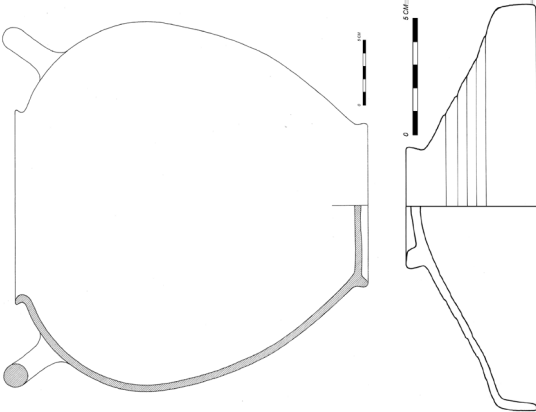
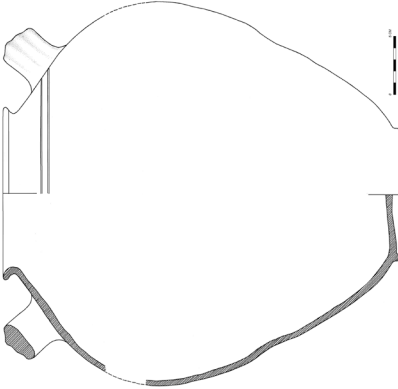
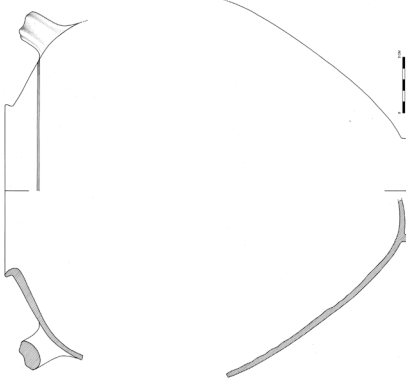
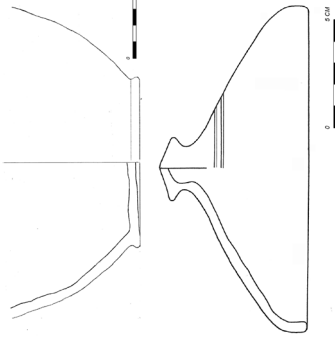
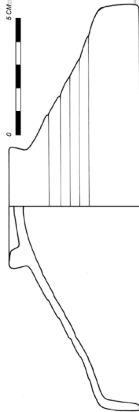
Grave	20.S5	14.S16 (fam.)	21.S18	70.S5
Ash Container				
Lid				
Grave Goods	<p><u>Inside:</u> Iron strigil</p> <p>Cyma kantharos jug</p>	<p>Coin (under study), 2 iron strigils, kantharos, 4 little black-gl. amphoras, bowl, pyxis, 9 unguentaria, amphoriskos, hydria, Macedonian amphora, bone weight</p>	<p><u>Inner:</u> Bronze coin (232–168 BCE)</p>	<p><u>Inside:</u> Gray unguentarium, bone pin</p> <p>Gold leaves of a funerary crown, kantharos, little black-gl. amphora, moldmade bowl, hemispherical bowl, 2 pyxides, lagynos, iron dagger, 2 lamps, iron ring, Fr. of 2 unidentified iron objects, Fr. of pink pigment 3 shells</p>
Dat.	275–200 BCE	3rd–mid 2nd cent. BCE	Late 3rd–2nd cent. BCE	200–100 BCE
Sex	/	/	/	F

Fig. 2: *Stannoi* – ash containers, 3rd–2nd century BCE.

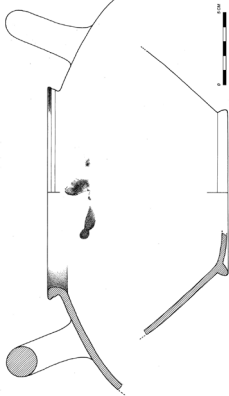
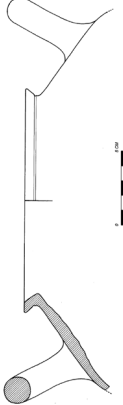
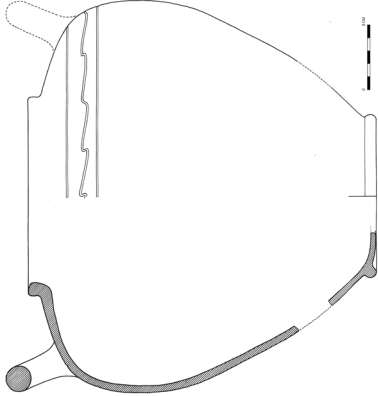
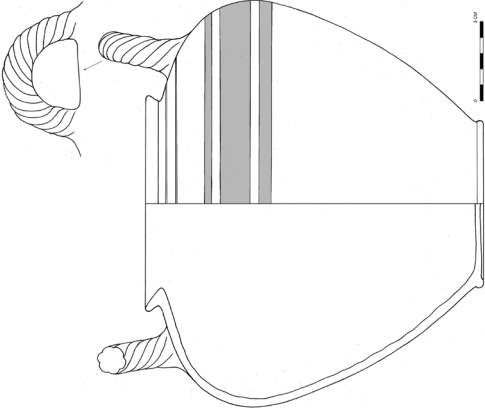
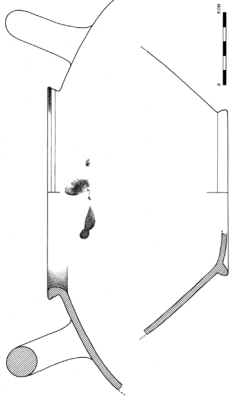
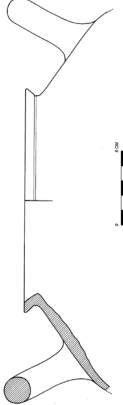
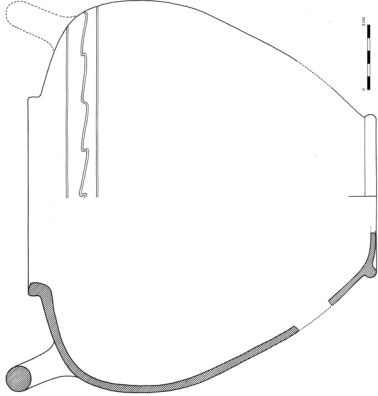
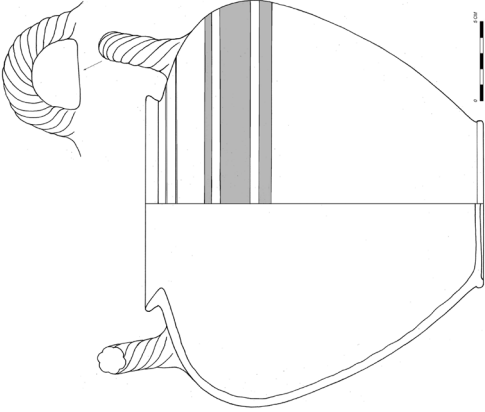
Grave	69.S5	26.S5 (fam.)	46.S5 (fam.)	11.S5 (fam.)
Ash Container				
Lid				
Grave Goods	Rhodian amphora, lamp, iron strigil	<u>Inside:</u> Fusiform unguentarium Macedonian amphora	Lekane	3 plain jugs, 2 Rhodian amphoras, Macedonian amphora. bowl-lid?, black-glazed lamp
Dat.	150 BCE	150–100 BCE	Late 2nd cent. BCE	2nd cent. BCE, 2nd half?
Sex	F	/	/	/

Fig. 3: *Stannoi* – ash containers, second half of the 2nd century BCE.



Fig. 4:
Stamnos from grave 11.S5 (Photo:
Italian Archaeological Mission in
Phoinike).

everyday life as storage vessels¹². The same morphological features that made stamnoi suitable for their primary function as food containers, and in particular their globular capacious body, made them equally suitable as ash containers. From the Classical to the Roman periods they recur in different variants with this function in almost the entire Hellenized Mediterranean world, from Greece, for example in Athens, Corinth, Sardis, Samothrace, but also in Tesprotia and Leukas, in a context similar to Phoinike, and in Taranto on the opposite Ionian coast, to southern France¹³. This widespread distribution is related to different local productions, with different own features and variants, thus preventing to find precise parallels among them. Likewise in Phoinike, the vessels display a great variability, both of shapes and decorations, with similar general features among stamnoi from graves of the same period, but showing at the same time different concurrent variants (figs. 2–5).

The oldest stamnos comes from a single grave well dated to the 3rd century BCE (275–200 BCE, grave 20.S5; see fig. 2). It has a short outturned rim, a ring foot and diagonal round

¹² I decided to use this conventional name for the shape presented here (close shape, with globular body, ring foot and horizontal/diagonal handles), because it is the most conventional and widespread identification of this vessel. However, this term could create confusion with regard to the function of the vessel it identifies, especially in the Classical period when the stamnos could have been related to a particular Dionysian ritual as wine container/pouring vessel (ISLER-KERÉNYI 2009). To avoid this confusion, in the publication of Hellenistic pottery from Athens, the same shape is called storage bin, to emphasize the different uses it could have had as domestic vessel, not related only to wine (ROTROFF 2006, 93 and fig. 27 for the best Athenian parallels for stamnoi from Phoinike, »storage bin, Form 2«). I agree with this interpretation, though at Phoinike I cannot find evident clues for a particular rite related to this shape (see *infra*). Nevertheless, I adopted the term stamnos because it immediately identifies the shape and because it has already been used in the first publication of this material (ALEOTTI 2014).

¹³ BATS 2000 for Gaul; SPARKES – TALCOTT 1970, 195 and ROTROFF 2006, 97 for Athens; EDWARDS 1975, 105 note 4 for Corinth; ROTROFF – OLIVER 2003, 67–68 for Sardis; DUSENBERY 1998, 811–814 for Samothrace; RIGINOS 1999, 171–180 for Tesprotia; ANDREOU 1981, 277–278, pl. 173, γ for Leukas; D’AMICIS 1994, 169 fig. 158 for Taranto. The use of stamnos as ash container is further mentioned in studies of the Attic stamnos of the Classical period (PHILIPPAKI 1967, xix, and ISLER-KERÉNYI 2009, 76, where also stamnoi/ash containers from Capua and Sicily are mentioned, see note 7).

handles. The body is not totally preserved, but it seems ovoid and is decorated with two incised horizontal lines at the level of the handles. It preserves its lid, with the same incised decoration.

While there is only a single 3rd century BCE grave with a stamnos, several stamnoi from multiple 3rd–2nd century BCE burials share some similar features characteristic for the earliest stage of the shape. First, they show more or less globular or elongated bodies (see **figs. 2–3**), but almost all the stamnoi from graves not passing the 2nd century BCE have a much less pronounced shoulder and more diagonal handles than those of the late Hellenistic period (late 2nd–1st century BCE, **fig. 5**). Moreover, they bear a very simple decoration, with only incised lines like the oldest well dated stamnos, while painted decoration appears only from the second half of the 2nd century BCE (**fig. 3** grave 11.S5 and **fig. 5**)¹⁴. The stamnos from grave 14.S16 (**fig. 2**) is the simplest stamnos found, without any kind of decoration. It is very close to the stamnos from grave 20.S5, in particular it has a very similar rim as well as the same general profile and the same diagonal handles, yet the stratigraphic data and the bowl used as a lid suggest for this cremation burial a lower dating to the 2nd century BCE¹⁵. Graves 21.S5 and 70.S5 share similar stamnoi (**fig. 2**). The best preserved, from grave 21.S5, has an outturned rim, a low ring foot and an ovoid elongated body, decorated with two incised lines at the level of the horizontal strip grooved handles. It is dated to the late 3rd century BCE by the coin found in it¹⁶, being then perfectly coherent with the dating of the very similar stamnos from the grave 70.S5 with goods of the 2nd century BCE.

Stamnoi from graves 69.S5 and 26.S5 (both are fragmented, **fig. 3**) share the same outturned rim, flat on the upper part, and both are precisely dated by their grave goods to the second half of the 2nd century BCE. The better preserved one from grave 69.S5 has a disk foot and shows the earliest painted decoration (traces of brownish red glaze) on both the internal and external rim and on the wall. The stamnos from grave 26.S5 preserves its lid, a black-glazed local fish plate, which is the best attested vessel used as lid for Hellenistic ash containers¹⁷. Both stamnoi from graves 46.S5 and 11.S5 (**fig. 3**) are dated to the second half of the 2nd century BCE. They distinguish themselves from the previous variants (namely in **fig. 2**) by the shoulder, now more pronounced, and by the handles with a higher arch, strongly jutting above the rim. Moreover, they show a more complex decoration, with new incised and painted motifs (always on the upper body or on the rim). All these features (pronounced shoulder, high handles and more complex decoration) remain unvaried in almost all of the following late Hellenistic stamnoi (see **fig. 5**). The stamnos from grave 46.S5 (**fig. 3**) has a vertical rim, an ovoid body and a very low ring foot. The incised wavy motif between lines on the round shoulder is attested at Phoinike starting from the late Hellenistic period and with different variants continues to decorate ash containers until the Roman period¹⁸. The

¹⁴ The increase of decoration continues in the Roman period with more complex painted and incised decoration on body, rim and handles, see ALEOTTI 2014, 44 fig. 7.

¹⁵ The family grave 14.S16 is dated to the 3rd–mid-2nd century BCE, but stratigraphic data indicate that the cremations belong to its second phase, when inhumations were physically moved to make place for ash containers and their grave goods. The lid is a plain bowl with vertical rim which at Phoinike has parallels among 2nd century BCE black-glazed bowls (GAMBERINI IN PRESS).

¹⁶ Unpublished coin, dated 232–168 BCE.

¹⁷ See **fig. 6** for plate-lids of chytrai. In addition to those well preserved specimens, the same fish plates are used as lids in graves 37.S18 (two plate-lids), 62.S5 and 64.S5.

¹⁸ The same motif, with different variants is attested on late Hellenistic stamnoi from Athens in contexts dated to the late 2nd–first half of the 1st century BCE (ROTHOFF 2006, fig. 27, nos. 165–166). At Athens it appears on a late Hellenistic lekane as well (ROTHOFF 2006, fig. 49, no. 281, from a context dated 100–50 BCE). Similar wavy motifs recur on early Roman ash containers from Samothrace of the late 1st century BCE – early 1st century CE (DUSENBERY 1998, 811–814, figs. S215-1 and S155B-1). The incised wavy motif continues to be attested at Phoinike on Roman stamnoi/ash containers until the 2nd century CE, see ALEOTTI 2014, 44 fig. 7.

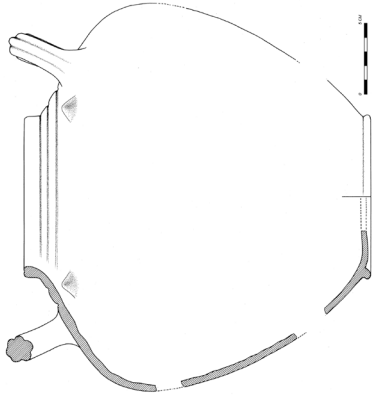
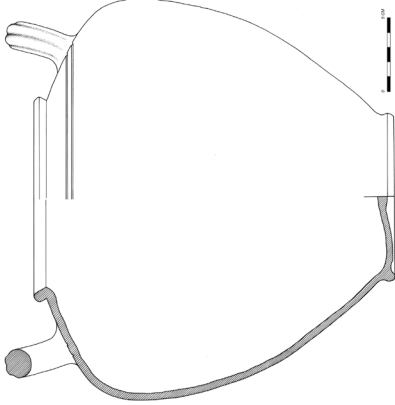
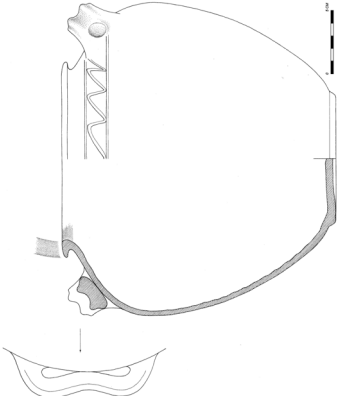
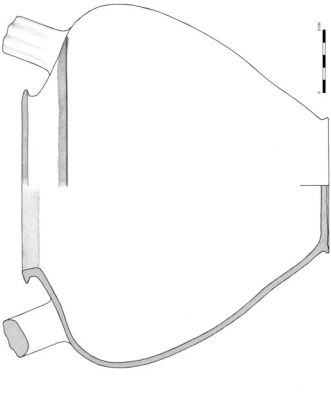
Grave	62.S5 (fam.)	62.S5 (fam.)	37.S5 (fam.)	22.S18 (fam.)
Ash Container				
Lid	Little plate with vertical rim	Little plate with vertical rim		
Grave Goods	<u>Inside:</u> Iron ring, iron pin Plain jug, 2 little black-glazed amphoras, pyxis, 3 lamps 2 unguentaria 2 hemispherical bowls	Iron strigil, iron weapon, plain jug, 2 little black-glazed amphoras pyxis 3 lamps 2 unguentaria 2 hemispherical bowls	Gold leaves of a funerary crown, kantharos, 2 lagynoi, pyxis, unguentarium, plate-lid? 2 lamps, iron nail	<u>Inside:</u> danake Kantharos, little stamnos with nipples, lamp, Megarian bowl, plain lagynos, plain jug
Dat.	200–50 BCE	200–50 BCE	200–50 BCE	200–50 BCE
Sex	F	M	M	F

Fig. 5: *Stamnoi* – ash containers, 2nd–1st century BCE.

stamnos from grave 11.S5 (**figs. 3–4**) has a similar ovoid body, but an outturned rim and rope handles, never present on stamnoi before the second half of the 2nd century BCE. In addition, it has both incised and painted decoration: two incised lines just below the rim and three brownish-red painted bands on the shoulder, attesting the increase in decoration typical of the late Hellenistic stamnoi/ash containers.

In **fig. 5** stamnoi from family graves dated to the 2nd until the 1st century BCE are presented. The two from grave 62.S5 have a simpler decoration than others from the same period of time; both have only incised lines on the upper body, together with nipples at the level of the handles on one of the vessels. It has a vertical rim, an ovoid body, a low ring foot and horizontal rope handles. The other stamnos from grave 62.S5 has the same rope handles, but an outturned rim and a concave ring foot¹⁹. Both these stamnoi used as lid a local black-glazed plate with vertical rim. The particular thumb print handles distinguishes the stamnos of grave 37.S5 (**fig. 5**) from all the others. It has a projecting rim, an ovoid body and horizontal recurved handles with thumb prints on their attachment to the round shoulder²⁰. Distinctive of late Hellenistic stamnoi it has both incised (wavy motif, v. supra) and painted decoration (brownish-red bands on the inner and upper rim). Finally, the stamnos from grave 22.S18 (**fig. 5**) has the most pronounced shoulder, nearly concave on its upper part. It has a projecting rim, a very low ring foot and horizontal strip grooved handles, jutting above the rim. The decoration consists of an incised line and a brownish-red overpainted band on the shoulder and painted bands on both the interior and external rim.

The chytra is utilized in eight cremation burials from six different Hellenistic graves, and it seems to be used from the 2nd century BCE onwards (**fig. 6**)²¹, when attested in the same function in other cemeteries of the region²². All the chytrai/ash containers from Phoinike are in coarse ware and share horizontal round handles and a rounded bottom, while they display different variants in rim and lower body. Like the stamnoi, also chytrai were primarily domestic vessels, used as cooking pots, eventually adopted for funerary use thanks to their morphological features, in particular their capacious body which made them suitable as ash containers. Two chytrai come from the grave 13.S5, a family grave that continued to be used until the Roman period, and whose Hellenistic phase is dated to the 2nd century BCE²³. Both have a globular body with the maximum diameter in the lower body, which is more angular in the complete chytra with an outturned rim, distinctly separated from the wall by a short neck,

¹⁹ Both find comparisons in other Hellenistic stamnoi: the first (with nipples) is very similar to a stamnos (called storage bin, see note 12) from Athens, with similar vertical rim and rope handles, but also with an incised motif, from a context of late 2nd–early 1st century BCE. Stamnoi with nipples come also from earliest Athenian contexts (SPARKES – TALCOTT 1970, fig.13, 1541), as well as from the cemetery of Taranto (MASIELLO 1985, 500 no. 69). However, this particular feature appears to have a symbolic rather than a chronological meaning, see *infra*. The second stamnos from grave 62.S5 (the second in **fig. 5**) is very similar to a Hellenistic ash container from Leukas (ANDREOU 1981, 277–278 and pl. 173, γ).

²⁰ Similar stamnoi with the same peculiar handles have not been found so far, but in Athens thumb print handles recur on lekanai of Form 4, dated to the 2nd–early 1st century BCE, ROTROFF 2006, 112–113.

²¹ In addition to those restored on **fig. 6**, other fragmented Hellenistic chytrai/ash containers come from graves 11.S5, 37 S5 (2 chytrai) and 64.S5.

²² Chytrai/ash containers came to light in the cemeteries of Fragma Kalama (close to Gitana) and Kephalokori (in the territory of Elea), see KANTA-KITSOU ET AL. 2008, 126 fig. 3 for Fragma Kalama (late 2nd century BCE). For Kephalokori, see RIGINOS 1997, 94 and pl. 75, α, and RIGINOS 1999, 177–179 pls. 23–25, dated to the middle 2nd century BCE.

²³ In the preliminary publication of this grave, its Hellenistic phase was dated to the 3rd–2nd century BCE (NEGRETTO 2005). However, a deeper study of the set of material (in progress) now lowers the dating to the 2nd century, excluding the use of the grave in the 3rd century BCE.

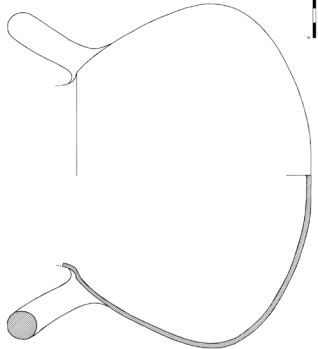
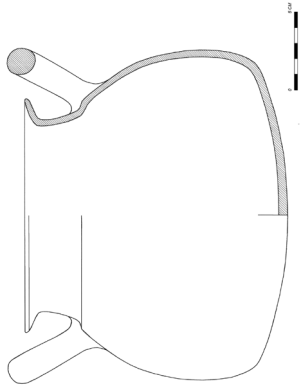
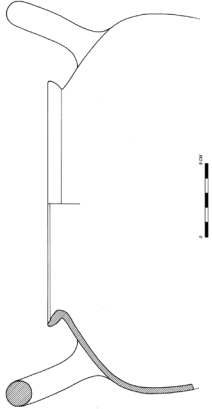
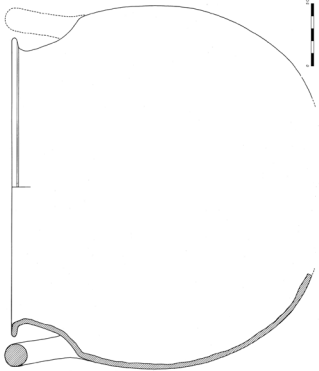
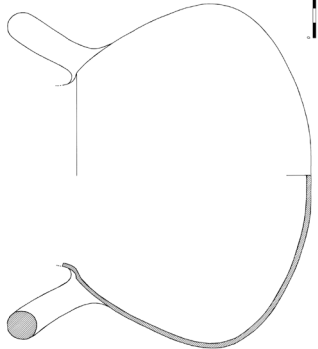
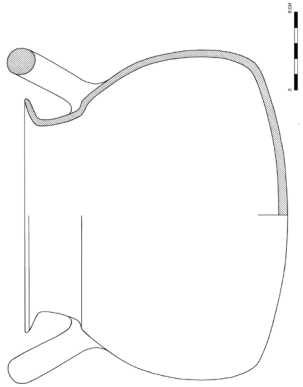
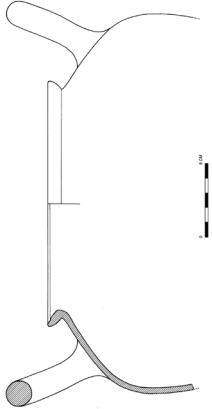
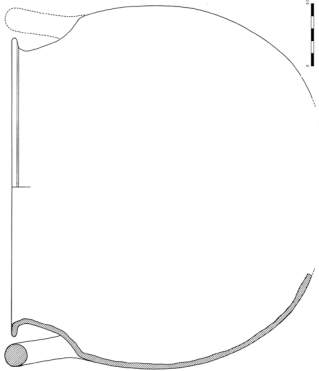
Grave	13.S5 (fam.)	13.S5 (fam.)	26.S18 (fam.)	22.S18 (fam.)
Ash Container				
Lid				
Grave Goods	Inside: Lamp Bowl, fusiform unguentarium	Inside: Danake (168-148 BCE), silver and gold ring Bowl, fusiform unguentarium, little banded handleless pot		2 iron daggers, 2 lamps, pyxis
Dat.	2nd cent. BCE	2nd cent. BCE	150-100 BCE	200-50 BCE
Sex	/	/	/	M

Fig. 6: *Chytrai* – ash containers, 2nd-1st century BCE.

horizontal round handles attached to the shoulder and jutting above the rim²⁴. The associated grave goods are dated to the 2nd century BCE. In particular, the better preserved chytra is dated to this century by the danake found inside it, with the motif of a coin from Phoinike dated 168–148 BCE, while the lamp found inside the other chytra from grave 13.S5 is dated to the late 3rd century BCE²⁵. The chytra from grave 26.S18 has an outturned rounded rim with slight internal groove for the lid, a globular body with a pronounced shoulder, horizontal round handles jutting above the rim and an indistinct foot²⁶. It carried as lid a black-glazed local fish plate, here attested in a variant dated to the second half of the 2nd century BCE²⁷. Finally, on the basis of only photographic comparisons, the chytra from grave 22.S18 has the best parallels in chytrai used as ash containers in other regional cemeteries, all from graves dated to the 2nd century BCE, being perfectly compatible with part of the grave goods found in the family grave 22.S18. With the parallels noted it shares the globular body, the concave neck and the round handles almost touching the rim²⁸.

In addition to the more common ash containers described so far, amphoras were used as ash containers in three Hellenistic graves (**fig. 7**). Grave 12.S16 was heavily damaged, but the amphora with the ashes can be identified as a 3rd century BCE Corinthian Type B amphora²⁹. The amphora/ash container from grave 25.S5 belongs to a Hellenistic Macedonian type (3rd–2nd century BCE), well attested as part of grave goods in the cemeteries of Kephelokori (Tesprotia), in the territory of Amantia as well as at Phoinike³⁰. The amphora from grave 49.S5 is the most recent Hellenistic amphora used as ash container from Phoinike, assigned to a 1st century BCE production from Apollonia³¹.

Finally, a krater and a jug are documented as ash containers in a single grave each (**fig. 8**). The krater was retrieved in the family grave 11.S5, dated from the late 4th to the 2nd century BCE, but the coin found inside it dates this deposition to the mid-2nd century BCE³². It has an outturned rim, a short neck, vertical strip handles attached to rim and shoulder and a ring foot. It is in plain ware, without traces of glaze as found on other Hellenistic kraters from Athens

²⁴ Because of their short neck, similar handles and bottom, their shape is similar to a chytra from Corinth dated to the mid-2nd century BCE, see EDWARDS 1975, pl. 27, no. 656. The lower body of the complete chytra from grave 13.S5 finds a parallel in a chytra from Athens from a context dated 175–125 BCE (but it is smaller and has different rim and handles), see ROTROFF 2006, 174 and fig. 76, no. 605, »chytra form 6«.

²⁵ The danake is published in NEGRETTO 2005, 105 fig. 8, 5 and the lamp in GAMBERINI 2005, 138 fig. 8.55 no. 13.

²⁶ The bottom is very fragmented, not drawn, but recognized and described. In spite of the absence of the neck and the pronounced shoulder, it is similar to the chytra Form 5 from Athens, from contexts of the 3rd century BCE, see ROTROFF 2006, fig. 75, nos. 598–599, these vessels have a more pronounced internal flange for the lid and a flat bottom.

²⁷ GAMBERINI IN PRESS.

²⁸ See in particular KANTA-KITSOU ET AL. 2008, 126 fig. 3 for Fragma Kalama (late 2nd century BCE) and RIGINOS 1999, 177–179 pl. 24, dated from the mid-2nd century BCE. A very fragmented similar chytra is used in Phoinike as ash container also in grave 69.S5, dated to the first half of the 2nd century BCE.

²⁹ For the evolution of the Corinthian Type B in the Hellenistic period, see KOEHLER 1992, in particular for this amphora pl. 4, b; see also KOURKOUDELIS 2013, 472 fig. 7, g.

³⁰ RIGINOS 1997, 96 nos. 16–19 and fig. 77, β for Tesprothia and BERETI 1997, 11 and fig. 83 for Amantia. Macedonian amphoras are attested at Phoinike among grave goods of graves 11.S5, 68.S5, 14.S16 and 26.S18.

³¹ VECCHIETTI 2010, 135. However, this dating is problematic, because, according to stratigraphic data, grave 49.S5 is the earliest grave of the circle S24 (see MUKA 2005). Unfortunately, this grave was found heavily damaged, with only very fragmented material. It is the only ash container found (recognized as ash container on the basis of the few ashes found inside it, in addition there was a phalanx with a ring), but it is not related to the first phase of the grave, dated by stratigraphic data to the second half of the 4th century BCE.

³² GJONGEČAJ 2005, 170 no. 199.


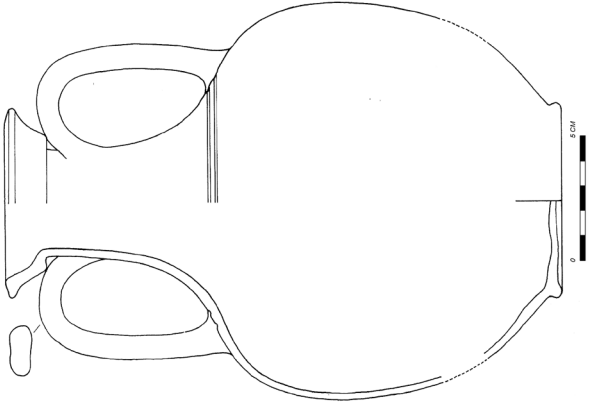
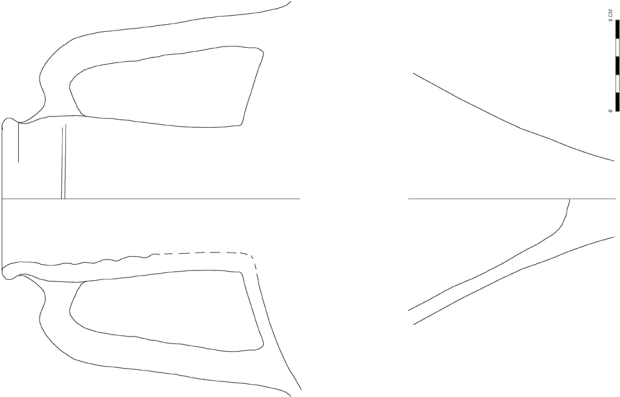
Grave	12.S16	25.S5 (fam.)	49.S5 (fam.)
Ash Container			
	Sherds of a black-glazed bowl	Jug, 2 little black-glazed amphoras, lamp	Inside: Iron ring
	3rd cent. BCE	Late 3rd-2nd cent. BCE	1st cent. BCE?
	/	/	/
Goods			
Dat.			
Sex			

Fig. 7: Amphoras – ash containers, 3rd–1st? century BCE.

and Corinth, simplified and coarser versions of the earliest column kraters of the Classical period³³.

The unique jug placed upside down in a limestone urn is certainly the most particular ash container attested at Phoinike. It comes from a family grave (14.S16), with mixed 3rd–2nd century BCE material. It is difficult to give a precise dating to each deposition, but the two cremations from this grave must belong to the last phases of the grave, when the bones of inhumation burials, found amassed in a corner of the grave, were physically moved from their original position. However, some elements of this particular ash container seem to suggest an earlier dating than the 2nd century BCE. The limestone urn has a square base, with grooves for the joint of the four side sheets (two rectangular and two trapezoidal, with traces of pink mortar). Three of the four sides of the base have incised letters (alpha, beta, gamma), that recur on the corresponding side sheets to facilitate the composition of the urn. The covering is similar to a pitcher roof, with the letter (alpha) incised on the front. Precise comparisons have not been found, but limestone urns (without jug) are attested in 2nd–1st century graves of the cemeteries at Fragma Kalama (Tesprotia)³⁴, and during the same period in the last phase of grave 14.S5. The jug has an outturned rim, a vertical handle, cylindrical neck and globular body. Similar features are well documented in plain jugs from other 2nd century BCE contexts at Phoinike³⁵, but it is the only one with the particular handle ending with a tongue at the joint with the rim. This feature recurs in Athens on common ware jugs of the early Hellenistic period, imitating black-glazed Classical shapes, while it is no more attested in later Hellenistic jugs³⁶. Applying the same chronological limits to Phoinike as well, we can suggest for Phoinike the same evolution in shape as attested in Athens, suggesting that this particular deposition would belong to the first phase of grave 14.S16 (3rd century BCE) rather than to the 2nd century BCE. However, a precise dating cannot be provided. At the current state of the research it is only a tentative suggestion, and only further investigation of this shape with more jugs from well dated contexts will clarify this hypothesis.

Ash containers, grave goods and rites

After the chronological presentation of their shapes, the second part of the paper on Hellenistic ash containers is dedicated to their potential symbolic meaning, examining associations among grave goods, sex and ash containers³⁷.

Starting with the choice of the ash containers, it is difficult to find references to a particular symbolic meaning for most of the cremations. First of all, they display a great variability in the quality of individual containers even in the same grave, with well-made or decorated ash containers coexisting, for example, with cooking pots/ash containers. This makes it difficult to suggest a common symbolic meaning for the choice of all the ash containers. On the contrary, most of them (stamnoi and chytrai) are primarily domestic vessels, then adopted for funerary use mainly because of their morphological features, suitable for this new purpose, rather than for other symbolic / ideological meanings. However, a particular meaning connected to part of a rite seems to be indicated by the ash containers found intentionally turned over. Considering that this particular deposition is attested only for liquid containers both among ash containers and grave goods (the jug from grave 14.S16 – **fig. 8** – and the amphora from grave 25.S5 – **fig. 7** – among ash containers, lagynos and amphora among grave goods of graves 46.S5 and 62.S5), it

³³ ROTROFF 2006, 105–107 and figs. 36–38 for Athens and EDWARDS 1975, 107–108 and fig. 21, no. 613 for Corinth.

³⁴ KANTA-KITSOU ET AL. 2008, 129 figs.1 and 3.

³⁵ LEPORÉ – GAMBERINI 2003, 80 fig. 66, 14.

³⁶ ROTROFF 2006, 69–81, in particular, fig. 1, nos.1, 2 e 5 for the tongue on the inner rim.

³⁷ Anthropological data are based on the analysis conducted by Dr. Zambruno (University of Bologna) in 2011. He also made a review of previous results already published in 2005 (MIRANDA 2005). For this study, most recent results have been used, namely those of the review of 2011.


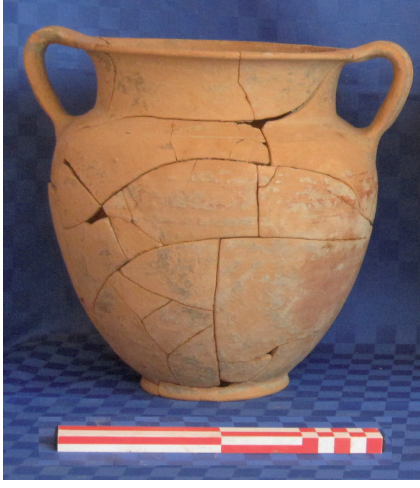
Grave	14.S16 (fam.)	11.S5 (fam.)
Ash Container		
Grave Goods	Coin (under study), 2 iron strigils, kantharos, 4 little black-gl. amphoras, bowl, pyxis, 9 unguentaria, amphoriskos, hydria, Macedonian amphora, bone weight	<u>Inside</u> : Bronze coin (post 168 BCE), shell 3 plain jugs, 2 Rhodian amphoras, Macedonian amphora, bowl-lid?, black-glazed lamp
Dat.	3rd–2nd cent. BCE	2nd cent. BCE, 2nd half?
Sex	/	/

Fig. 8: Other ash containers: jug in a limestone urn and krater, 3rd–2nd century BCE.

could be explained as a link to the symposium and to the wine consumed, maybe representing a symbolic de-functionalization of the vessels used for libations during the rite. However, I did not find parallels in the Hellenistic world for this particular deposition of both ash containers and vessels/grave goods; therefore, this interpretation remains solely a hypothesis that only further research could confirm or better explain. With regard to the relationship between sex and ash containers, anthropological data confirm the relationship between female grave and pelike/ash container, already suggested for cemeteries from southern Italy³⁸. The connection to the female sex can also be proposed for the stamnoi decorated with nipples. Due to its connection with domestic life, the Hellenistic stamnos could be in general associated with the female sex and could have been handed down from mother to daughter at the time of the wedding or specifically produced for this occasion³⁹. In this case, the stamnos would take on the function of the lebes gamikos, a specifically female vessel connected to weddings and found in female graves, especially in southern Italy. Since at Phoinike the stamnos is documented as ash container for males as well, we cannot take for granted the relationship between all

³⁸ LIPPOLIS 1994, 262 for Taranto; PIANU 1990, 227 for Heraclea. At Phoinike, among those burials contained in pelikai, only the sex of the cremated individual of grave 3-S5 has been identified, but it confirms the relationship of pelike to female sex. Moreover, these pelike/female containers was associated with a bronze mirror, a female attribute, that recurs also in grave 43-S5, associated with a pelike / ash container as well.

³⁹ ROTROFF 2006, 93.

stamnoi and the female sex, but anthropological data show a relationship between stamnoi (and stamnoid pyxides) decorated with nipples and the female sex, suggesting that this plastic decoration could be a simplification of the more complex plastic decoration of lebes gamikoi, and thus chosen for only female cremations⁴⁰.

Passing to the analysis of grave goods and always keeping in mind that the following suggestions still need confirmation through further research, based on the study of all the graves (inhumations and cremations) and on parallels from similar contexts⁴¹, some interesting considerations about funerary ideology at Phoinike can be suggested. The earliest graves (dated to the late 4th – 3rd century BCE) have coherent material, no longer attested in the later Hellenistic graves (see **fig. 1**), comprising pelikai (both as ash containers and part of grave goods), lead crowns with gilded pendants and bronze mirrors, in addition to black-glazed pottery of the same period.

The subsequent Hellenistic graves (3rd–1st century BCE) show a general standardization of grave goods (see **figs. 2–8**). They comprise mainly vessels connected to the symposium, represented by at least one element (a black-glazed kantharos, a small black-glazed amphora or an amphora) or by the combination of drinking and pouring vessels (a black-glazed kantharos or a cup associated with a lagynos or an amphora). Among the undisturbed Hellenistic graves, only two yielded very poor grave goods, with no vessels related to symposia (see grave 21.S18 **fig. 2** and grave 46.S5 **fig. 3**). Besides those vessels associated with the symposium, lamps and unguentaria are additional elements among the grave goods, probably connected to the rite.

In the general standardization of the materials from Hellenistic graves, the most important qualitative differences can be deduced from metal objects. A strigil and daggers, generally considered as male attributes, recur in two female graves as well (see grave 70.S5 in **fig. 2** and grave 69.S5 in **fig. 3**). They could have been chosen as grave goods not only as attribute of the buried person, but also for their association with athletes and the warrior world and as expression of status symbol⁴².

The symbolic meaning of metal objects is even more evident in the case of coins. The study of their distribution shows first of all that they were not common in cremations: they occur in only six graves, suggesting that they were not part of a common and widespread rite (for example chosen as »obol of Charon«), but, on the contrary, they could have been chosen for a particular symbolic meaning. Moreover, they have been found both inside the ash containers and among external grave goods, making it difficult to find a definite common answer for the presence of coins in graves. However, the fact that they almost all come from family or anyway

⁴⁰ For the lebes gamikos in cemeteries in southern Italy and the progressive impoverishment of its decoration at Taranto, see LIPPOLIS 1994, 262 and 261 fig. 196 for a lebes gamikos of the 2nd century BCE with the same decoration of the stamnoi with nipples from Phoinike. The same vessel in another publication is also called stamnos, see MASIELLO 1985, 500, no. 69. Nipples are attested at Phoinike on two stamnoi/ash containers (graves 14.S5 and 62.S5), while the sex of one individual has not been defined the second contained a female individual. Moreover, a stamnoid pyxis with the same decoration comes from grave goods of multiple graves 22- S18, it cannot be assigned to a precise deposition of this grave, but in the grave a female deposition is attested. The fact that the stamnos is attested as male ash container as well would confirm that it would have been chosen in most cases for its suitable shape rather than for a symbolic meaning. I also found interesting suggestions about the use of stamnos/ash containers as reference to the Dionysian world (ISLER-KERÉNYI 2009; BATS 2000); they originate from very far chronological and geographic contexts, preventing to suggest parallels for the cemetery of Phoinike. In particular, these studies deal with the Classical stamnos treated as wine container/pouring vessel, while the Hellenistic stamnos had different domestic uses, see note 12, preventing to extend the same symbolic meaning suggested in other contexts.

⁴¹ This second part of the study is strongly influenced by the few publications of similar contexts from the region. Publications of other Hellenistic regional cemeteries (see note 12) simply present the pottery, without attempting a study of rite; consequently, it is impossible to find parallels for the interpretations suggested for Phoinike.

⁴² The only reference I found as parallel is a single grave with both mirror and strigil from Heraclea, see PIANU 1990, 240 and 118.

rich graves, suggests that they could have had a secondary symbolic meaning, for example as symbol of earthly prosperity, or could have been connected to specific family groups⁴³. On the contrary, the explanation as obol for the definitive passage to afterlife can be suggested for the coins put inside the ash containers, in close contact with the buried individual and chosen as only object associated to the poor cremation 21.S18 (see **fig. 2**).

Finally, it is interesting to note that the danakes and gold circular bands, plain or decorated, are attested only among cremations and that they have always been found inside the ash container⁴⁴. Considering that also funerary crowns with gold leaves are never attested among inhumations, we can imagine a particular symbolic meaning of gold, related only to the crematory rite.

In conclusion, the updated study of the Hellenistic ash containers from Phoinike adds new data to our knowledge of the cemetery; it contributes to a more refined dating of the graves and offers some interesting 'food for thought' about funerary ideology at Phoinike. At the same time, it raises many questions, while reaching some important conclusions together with suggesting novel lines of research essential to proceed further.

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⁴³ Coins come from graves 3.S5, 43.S5, 28.S5, 14.S16, where they are always associated with other metal objects too. In grave 21.S18, instead, the coin is not associated with other grave goods. For the problem of the interpretation of coins from graves not only as 'obol of Charon', see CANTILENA 1995 and PRISCO 1981, where the role of the coin as symbol of prosperity is suggested. For the coins in family graves as definition of »limiti di uno spazio in cui un gruppo recupera la propria identità collettiva anche oltre la vita« see PONTRANDOLFO 1995, 483–508.

⁴⁴ The danakes come from graves 13.S5, 25.S5, 62.S5, 68.S5 and 22.S18.

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