



**HAL**  
open science

## Cultural Exchange in the Stone Vessels Production of the First Millennium B.C.E.

Luisa Bonadies

► **To cite this version:**

Luisa Bonadies. Cultural Exchange in the Stone Vessels Production of the First Millennium B.C.E.. Cultural & Material Contacts in the Ancient Near East : International Workshop 1-2 December 2014, Torino, 2016, Dec 2016, Torino, Italy. halshs-03176353

**HAL Id: halshs-03176353**

**<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-03176353>**

Submitted on 27 Mar 2021

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

# **CULTURAL & MATERIAL CONTACTS IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST**

Proceedings of the International Workshop  
1-2 December 2014, Torino

EDITORS

E. Foietta, C. Ferrandi, E. Quirico, F. Giusto,  
M. Mortarini, J. Bruno, L. Somma



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI TORINO

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

Stefano de Martino, Carlo Lippolis, Vito Messina

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Enrico Foietta, Carolina Ferrandi, Eleonora Quirico, Francesca Giusto, Mattia Mortarini, Jacopo Bruno, Lorenzo Somma

© 2016 apice libri - Sesto Fiorentino (FI)

ISBN 978-88-99176-19-8

[www.apicelibri.it](http://www.apicelibri.it)

## INDEX

### Session 1.

#### THE INTERNATIONAL PERIOD: COURT GIFTS, IMPORTATIONS, TRADES AND CRAFTS IN THE 2<sup>ND</sup> MILLENNIUM BC

|  |    |    |
|--|----|----|
| VIOLETTA CORDANI, Exchange and Use of Iron in the Old Assyrian Period. The Anatolian Perspective . . . . .   | p. | 3  |
| MARCO DE PIETRI, Relationships between Egypt and Karkemish during the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Millennium BC: A Brief Overview . . . . .  | »  | 9  |
| ANGELO DI MICHELE, From Babylonia to Assyria: Reflections and Considerations on the Nabû Temples. . . . .  | »  | 16 |
| FEDERICO MANUELLI, What Remains when Contact Breaks Off? Survival of Knowledge and Techniques in the Material Culture of the Peripheral Regions of the Hittite Empire after Its Dissolution. . . . . | »  | 26 |
| VALENTINA OSELINI, Traces of Elamite and Mittani Culture in the Hamrin Basin: The Case of Fine Pottery in the Kassite Contexts of Tell Yelkhi . . . . .  | »  | 36 |
| GIULIA SCAZZOSI, Interconnections and Trade in Late 2 <sup>nd</sup> Millennium BC Mesopotamian Temples: The Case of the Kassite Temple of Enlil at Nippur . . . . .                                  | »  | 46 |
| BERNHARD SCHNEIDER, Remarks on the Archaeology of the Kassite Ekur of Nippur, Including Some Lapis Lazuli Findings in Context . . . . .  | »  | 54 |
| GIULIA TUCCI, New Kingdom and Southern Levant: Egyptian Finds in Coastal Sites during the Late Bronze Age. . . . .   | »  | 63 |

### Session 2.

#### TRADES, DEPORTATIONS, MOVEMENTS OF PEOPLE AND OBJECTS IN THE 1<sup>ST</sup> MILLENNIUM BC

|  |   |    |
|--|---|----|
| LUISA BONADIES, Cultural Exchange in the Stone Vessels Production of the First Millennium B.C.E. . . . .                             | » | 73 |
| PETRA M. CREAMER, A Comparison of Resinous Artifacts in the Ancient Near East . . . . .  | » | 83 |
| LUIGI MALATACCA, Movements of Fibers, Dyes and Textiles in First Millennium BC Babylonia (Neo- and Late-Babylonian Periods). . . . . | » | 91 |
| SURESHKUMAR MUTHUKUMARAN, Tree Cotton ( <i>G. arboreum</i> ) in Babylonia. . . . .   | » | 98 |

### Session 3.

#### CULTURAL CONTACTS, CIRCULATION OF IDEAS, TRADES AND INNOVATIONS IN THE ACHAEMENID, SELEUCID AND PARTHIAN PERIODS

|  |   |     |
|--|---|-----|
| ILARIA BUCCI, New Religious Images from Hatra. Unpublished Pictorial Graffiti from the Iraq Museum, Baghdad . . . . .  | » | 109 |
| SÉGOLÈNE DE PONTBRIAND, Europos-Dura at the Convergence of Hellenistic, Parthian and Roman Architectures: The case of Governor Lysias' Residence . . . . .   | » | 118 |
| MAHDOKHT FARJAMIRAD, Burial Customs during the Seleuco-Parthian Period of Iran; Greek or Local Culture? . . . . .  | » | 129 |
| ALEKSANDRA KUBIAK, Some Reflections on the Continuity of Mesopotamian Religious Traditions in Partho-Roman Hatra and Palmyra . . . . .   | » | 138 |
| ENRICO MARCATO, <i>Nny dy htr'</i> : The Characterisation of the Goddess Nanaya in the Pantheon of Hatra, as to Epigraphic Evidence. . . . .   | » | 141 |
| GIULIO MARESCA, Notes on Eastern Iran during Post-Achaemenid, Parthian and Sasanian Period: A Preliminary Reappraisal of the ISMEO Excavations at Qal'a-ye Tepe and Qal'a-ye Sam in Sistan . . . . . | » | 148 |
| ALESSANDRO POGGIO, Impressions of Power: 'Greco-Persian' Seals in Perspective . . . . .  | » | 157 |
| FABIANA RAIANO, Pottery from Kojtepa: Joint Uzbek-Italian Archaeological Mission in Samarkand Area . . . . .   | » | 164 |
| MAJA RZEPLIŃSKA, Terracotta Riders - a Powerful Image That Lasted through Dynasties . . . . .  | » | 170 |

LUISA BONADIES

## CULTURAL EXCHANGE IN THE STONE VESSELS PRODUCTION OF THE FIRST MILLENNIUM B.C.E.

### ABSTRACT

According to common practice in many pre-industrialized societies, stone vases were involved in the exchange of gifts between Near Eastern and Egyptian dynasties.

In archaeological researches it is common to assign the production of these objects to Egyptian craftsmen, based on a long tradition of stone cutting, that goes back to the 4<sup>th</sup> Millennium B.C.E. and that excels especially during the New Kingdom.

Actually, several studies show that stone vase cutting was practised in many other countries of the ancient world.

Through a morphological analysis of some soft stone jars coming from Near East, Egypt and the Mediterranean, this paper aims to show that the ascription of these artefacts to the Egyptian world is not always certain for different reasons.

The main purpose of this study is investigating the possibility that a vase usually considered as Egyptian could have been made by foreign craftsmen maybe living in the Nile Valley.

### KEYWORDS

Stone vases, Egypt, Near East, Mediterranean area, Phoenician craftsmen.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Stone vessels played an important role in the exchange of gifts between Near Eastern and Egyptian dynasties because of their economic, political and symbolic values (e. g. diplomacy, marriage, kinship ties, etc.)<sup>1</sup>.

Archaeologists commonly tend to assign the production of these artefacts to the Egyptian world because of the existence of a long tradition of stone cutting that stretches back to the predynastic period.

Lilyquist suggests that «the possibility that an unusual vase (or even vase type) excavated in Egypt today could have been made abroad or be the product of a foreign craftsman living in ancient Egypt is rarely considered»<sup>2</sup>.

Based on previous remark, this paper aims to reconsider the question of the ascription to the Egyptian world of some soft stone jars coming from Near East, Egypt and Mediterranean, generally dated from the 8<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, in order to show that their

production in Nile Valley is not always certain for different reasons.

The sample for this paper includes items coming from Iberian Peninsula: beyond some vessels from Trayamar's necropolis, our study focused on the well-known *corpus* found in the 1960s in the Cerro de San Cristóbal necropolis, located to the northwest of the Iberian town of Almuñecar, where several pits-tombs were discovered<sup>3</sup>. Vessels of different shapes, some of which display a hieroglyphic inscription, were used as cinerary urns and were placed in a side niche, closed with stone slabs.

Iberian items has been compared to samples from the Assyrian palaces of Ashur and Nimrud, as well as to some vessels found in Egypt and in some tombs of Carthage<sup>4</sup>.

### II. THE STONE CUTTING TRADITION

The existence of a long tradition of stone cutting allows scholars to consider vessels as Egyptian in origin. This industry excels especially during the New Kingdom: according to Bourriau, «in the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> dynasties there is an enormous proliferation of shapes and materials to match the increase in products from outside Egypt now available»<sup>5</sup>. Indeed, from the 11<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries BC this production seems in decline: with the exception of Lahun, burial assemblages of 21<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> dynasties show a scarcity of stone vessels in the tomb equipment that could not be attributed to a simple grave goods looting<sup>6</sup>.

Actually, stone vases cutting was practised in many other areas of the ancient world. As it is well known, Cyprus and Anatolia have long traditions of this production that stretches back to the 8<sup>th</sup> millennium BC; in the Aegean area (in the Cyclades and in Crete) a manufacture of these artefacts emerges during the Early Bronze Age<sup>7</sup>. Moreover, in her study on ar-

<sup>1</sup> BEVAN 2007.

<sup>2</sup> LILYQUIST 1996, 134.

<sup>3</sup> PADRÓ 1985.

<sup>4</sup> For vessels from Assyria, see SEARIGHT, READE, FINKEL 2008; for Carthage's material see REDISSI 1997. For Egypt, we refer especially to Aston's typology (ASTON B. 1994).

<sup>5</sup> BOURRIAU 1984, 365.

<sup>6</sup> ASTON D. 2009, 386.

<sup>7</sup> BEVAN 2007, 79-99.



Fig. 1 - Stone jar from the Palace of Ashurnasirpal II [Berlin, Vorderasiatisches Museum ASS2258]. Photo: Fontan-Le Meaux 2007, 310, cat. 56.

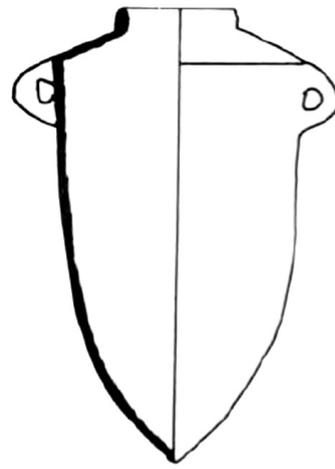


Fig. 2 - Type 7 of Sagona. Drawing: Sagona 1982, 81, fig. 2.

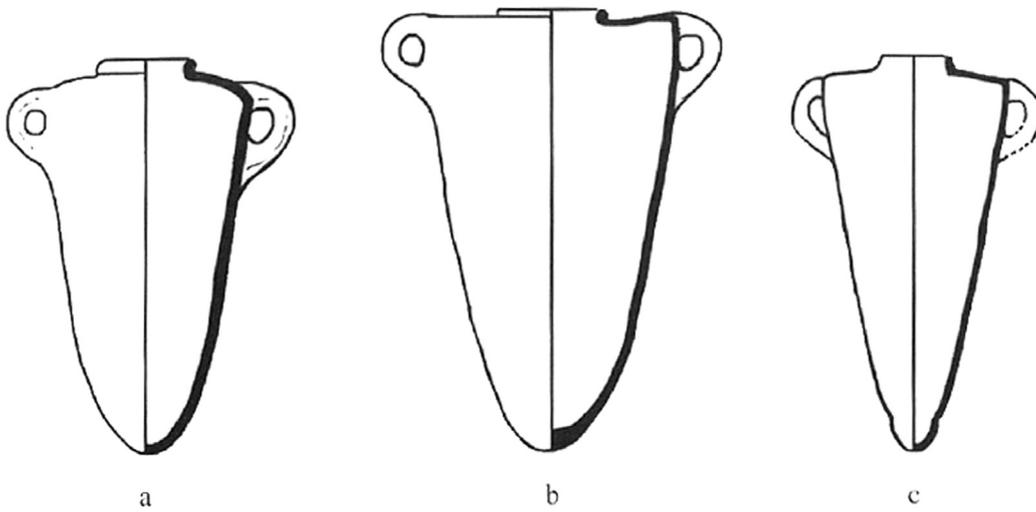


Fig. 3 - Type 5-2 of Pedrazzi. Drawing: Pedrazzi 2007, 74, fig. 3.22.

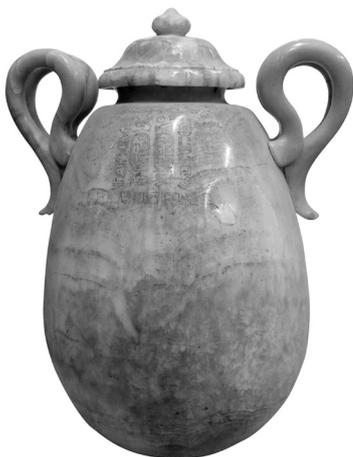


Fig. 4 - Stone jar from Louvre Museum, Paris. [Department of Egyptian Antiquities P.Mus.D.34]. Photo: Pierrat Bonnefois 2010, 36.

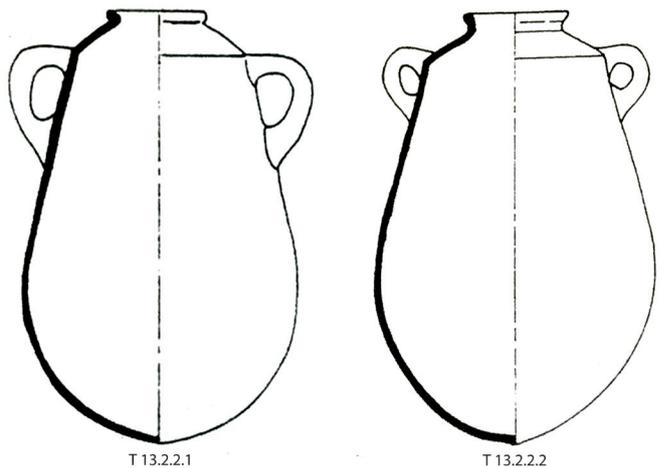


Fig. 5 - Types 13.2.2.1 and 13.2.2.2 of Ramon Torres. Drawing: Ramon Torres 1997, fig. 214.

archaeological material found in Ugarit, Caubet has suggested that stone objects for domestic use could be assigned to a local manufacture<sup>8</sup>.

More recently, Lilyquist has stated that, even if there is also evidence of several possible Egyptian imports, many stone vases discovered in the “Schatzhaus” at Kāmid el-Lōz (Lebanon) should be considered as locally made<sup>9</sup>.

### III. THE RAW MATERIAL

Lacking an adequate identification of raw materials, even most vases found outside Egypt have been usually interpreted, only on the basis of their physical appearance, as Egyptian alabaster. This generic terminology is used to refer to «a translucent stone, whitish to pale yellow in colour, and often with bands of darker and lighter shades»<sup>10</sup>.

Actually, distinctive banded or mottled calcite, in appearance very similar to the Egyptian alabaster, occurs at various localities in Palestine, e.g. in the Negev Desert, within the Shagur formation<sup>11</sup>, and in western Anatolia where there is evidence for an exploitation during the Roman period<sup>12</sup>.

Some scholars suggest that only petrographic analysis can help to identify the place where an artefact come from, combining data from vessels and from potential quarry sources. Even if this information will be obtained, there is the possibility that «a particular stone, made into a local shape, had come from abroad as a raw material»<sup>13</sup>. The remark suggests that, even if the stone come from Egypt, this not means necessarily that the manufacture of the vessel has been located in the Nile Valley or that Egyptian craftsmen have been responsible for its production.

### IV. MORPHOLOGICAL FEATURES: THE BODY PROFILE

#### IV.1 *Type A: Conical Body Profile*

Many vessels analysed for this study display a conical body profile, characterised by straight sides tapering towards a pointed base and short slightly rounded shoulders. The neck, generally short, has a slightly everted lip with a rounded edge (Fig. 1)<sup>14</sup>.

The morphology of these artefacts questions a certain attribution to the Nile Valley: the sharper profile, in fact, seems not to be close to Egyptian ceramic and stone repertoires<sup>15</sup>, but rather usual among Levantine productions of the Iron Age.

According to Culican's assumption, it recalls the morphology of some ceramic transport jars known under various names: Torpedo jars, Carinated-shoulder amphora and, more generally, Canaanite jars<sup>16</sup>.

Produced with different variations from the Middle

Bronze Age in the Levant through the Punic times in the Western Mediterranean, they can be generally assigned to the Type 7c (Fig. 2) of the Sagona's typological classification<sup>17</sup> and, more precisely, to the type 5-2 of Pedrazzi's typology (Fig. 3)<sup>18</sup>. This is a group of storage jars widely distributed along the Lebanese and Palestinian coasts during the Iron Age I and II<sup>19</sup>, as shown by numerous items found in strata III-II of Tyre, dated of the second half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC<sup>20</sup>.

Conical body profile jars could be generally assigned to a Levantine production and they should be considered as an evolution of the Canaanite amphora that is present in large amounts in Egypt especially from late Middle Kingdom/Second Intermediate Period<sup>21</sup>. In the Third Intermediate Period they became so popular that from 6<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC (Saite Period) local copies are documented<sup>22</sup>.

#### IV.2 *Type B: Cylindrical-Ovoid Body Profile*

In 1615 a soft stone jar was found near the Theatre of Marcellus in Rome: the vessel displays a profile that widens in the lower half and a round bottom; the maximum diameter is located in the last third of the body (Fig. 4). Two volute-shaped elements that replaced original handles have been added in a second time<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> CAUBET 1991, 219.

<sup>9</sup> LILYQUIST 1996, 155.

<sup>10</sup> BEN-DOR 1945, 95.

<sup>11</sup> LILYQUIST 1996, 140.

<sup>12</sup> BEVAN 2007, chapter 6, note 3.

<sup>13</sup> LILYQUIST 1996, 136. The same idea has been suggested also by A. Caubet for Ugarit manufacture; see CAUBET 1991, 207.

<sup>14</sup> A comprehensive analysis concerning the production of this type of vessels has been proposed by the author on the occasion of the Conference “*The Crossroads II, or There and Back Again*” held in Prague in September 2014. See BONADIES 2015.

<sup>15</sup> ASTON D. 1996; ASTON B. 1994.

<sup>16</sup> CULICAN 1970, 31, footnote 24; SAGONA 1982, 73.

<sup>17</sup> SAGONA 1982, 83-85. Actually, this shape includes jars that cannot be assigned to the same group, because of different morphological elements, as maximum diameter location and shoulder inflection (RAMON TORRES 1995, 272).

<sup>18</sup> PEDRAZZI 2007, 72-73.

<sup>19</sup> We adopt here the chronology proposed by PEDRAZZI 2007, 39 and by MAZAR 2005, 15-30, that means second and third quarter of the 12<sup>th</sup>- first quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. On the problem of Iron Age chronology, see PEDRAZZI 2007, 17-39.

<sup>20</sup> BIKAI 1978, 67.

<sup>21</sup> The list of scientific publications on this topic is too long to be detailed here; we would just like to quote BOURRIAU 1990, 18-26.

<sup>22</sup> PADRÒ, RAMÓN 2004, 77-102; DEFERNEZ, MARCHAND 2006, 68-71.

<sup>23</sup> PARIS, Musée du Louvre, inventory n. MR 889 (n. usuel AE 005658); MARTINEZ 2004, 525, n. 1057, et 581, n. 1167.



Fig. 6 - Stone jar from tomb 20 of Almuñecar's necropolis [Museo de Granada, CE. 8. 335]. Photo: Fontan-Le Meaux 2007, 178, cat. 106.

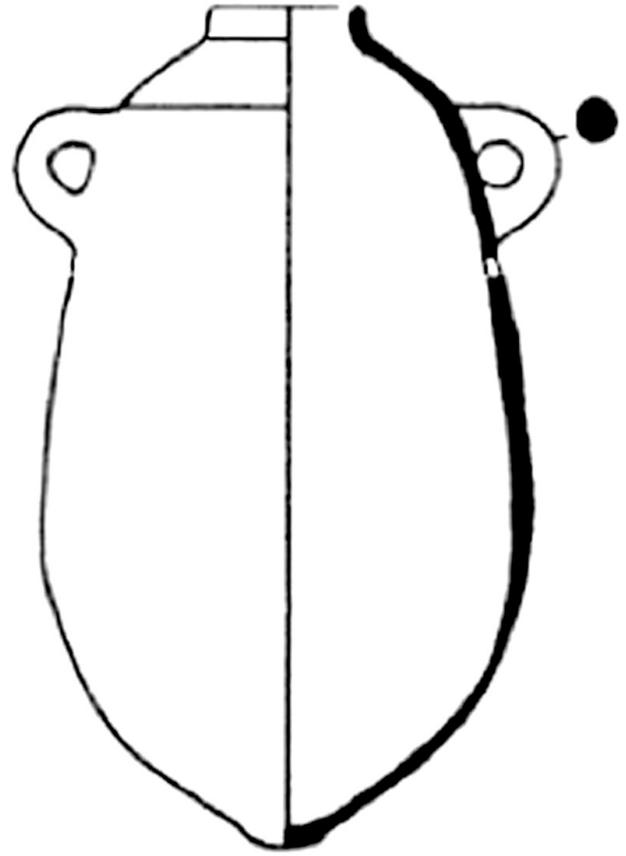


Fig. 7 - Pottery Amphora from Liban, 9th century BC. Drawing: Rossi, CMAO 1997, fig. 3.

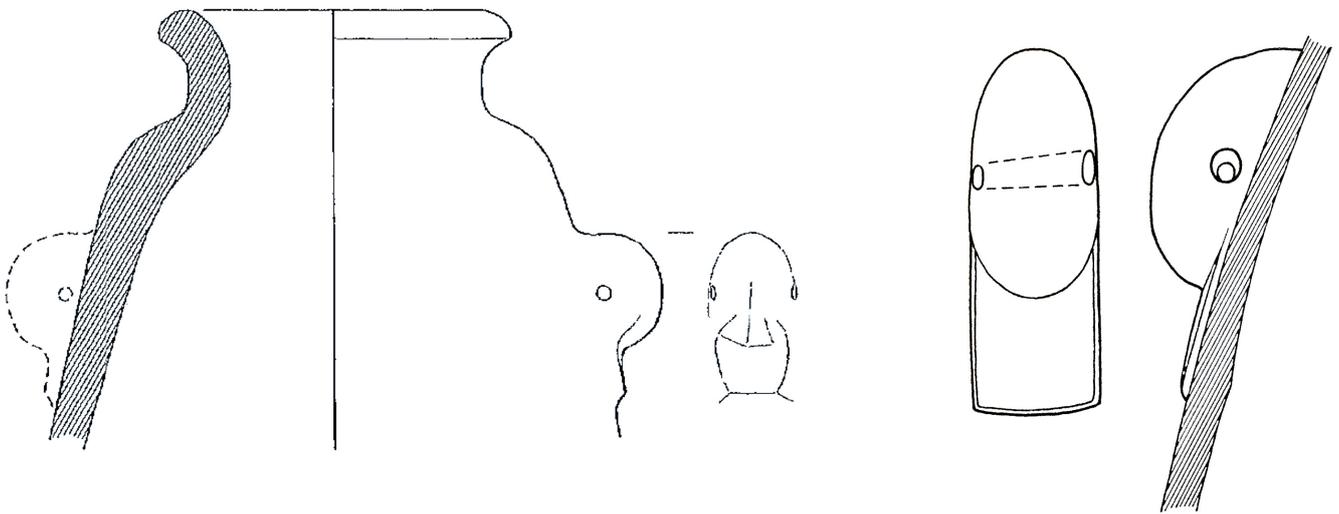


Fig. 8 - Duck-head handles. Drawing: Searight *et alii* 2008, pl. 13, fig. 98 and 105.

The item, which joined the Borghese collection of the Louvre Museum in 1807, bears an inscription in Egyptian hieroglyphs, with a dedication to the god Amun from a priest of Amun and Montu-Rê, accompanied by a cartouche of Osorkon III, Pharaoh of the 23<sup>rd</sup> dynasty (787-759 B.C.). In the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, the vessel has been used as a cinerary urn by a Roman magistrate, Publius Claudius Pulcher, who added a second inscription in Latin characters.

Apart from three other unpublished vessels from the Louvre Museum of unknown provenance<sup>24</sup>, stone vessels with a similar profile have been discovered in the 1960s in the tomb 3 of Trayamar necropolis in Spain<sup>25</sup> and during excavations in Heracleopolis Magna (Egypt)<sup>26</sup>.

The British Museum in London has two more vessels of the same shape: the first one of doubtful provenance bears three lines of cuneiform characters, with an inscription of Sennacherib (704-681 BC)<sup>27</sup>. The other one comes from Nineveh and has been found in the SH area that contained 7<sup>th</sup> century houses<sup>28</sup>. According to the editors of the recent study on Assyrian stone vessels in the British Museum, a slightly larger jar resembling Louvre item has been also found in Ziyaret Tepe (probably the ancient Tushhan), in Turkey<sup>29</sup>.

The cylindrical-ovoid body profile of these vessels could relate to pottery storage jars of the Types 13.2.2.1 and 13.2.2.2 (Fig. 5) of the Ramon Torres's typological classification of Phoenician and Punic amphorae from the Central and Western Mediterranean (Fig. 5)<sup>30</sup>. Pottery jars of these shapes dated by the author from the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, are not really widespread in Mediterranean area and they have no parallels among western productions. According to Ramon Torres, Types 13.2.2.1 and 13.2.2.2 could be inspired by a generic ovoid form of Eastern Mediterranean/Cypriot origin. The shape recalls a variety of the well-known bag-shaped jar, produced during the Iron Age II and widespread across Syria, Palestine and the Lebanese coast<sup>31</sup>.

Remarks made here make it difficult to determine whether this shape was originally produced in stone or in ceramic: if we accept the assumption that the presence of a cartouche of an Egyptian Pharaoh indicates the time of the vessel's manufacture, we should think that stone samples preceded pottery items and maybe inspired the ceramic production. Actually, several scholars have questioned the contemporaneity of Egyptian royal names and objects on which the cartouche is engraved<sup>32</sup>: it is especially true for the Third Intermediate Period and for the scarab production.

Given the paucity of samples for both stone and ceramic production, we cannot advance for the moment any hypotheses for the origin of this shape.

## V. MORPHOLOGICAL FEATURES: THE HANDLES SHAPE

### V. 1 *Type A: Rounded Shape*

The most part of soft stone jars analysed has little handles placed on the top of the body, which display a rounded shape and a circular cross-section (Fig. 6). This type seems to be an element that marks especially Palestinian and Levantine storage jars of the Iron Age (Fig. 7)<sup>33</sup>.

### V.2 *Type B: Duck-Head Handles*

Of major interest is another type of handles that seems to characterise especially samples from Assyria and from El-Kurru (Sudan)<sup>34</sup>: the so-called stylized duck-head handles (Fig. 8), perforated oval lugs preserved above a rounded lappet and finely cut and contoured, suggesting the head of a bird.

Duck-head handles are typical of a small group of *alabastra* from Rhodes, made with the core forming technique originated in Mesopotamia: unfortunately, it is not clear if the vessels, generally dated from the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, are all imported from the Near East or if craftsmen migrated to Rhodes produced them<sup>35</sup>.

Anyway, it is interesting to note here the existence of a connection between stone and glass production in the Mediterranean of the First Millennium BC. The idea does not sound really singular if we take into account two jugs respectively made of stone and glass,

<sup>24</sup> Paris, Musée du Louvre, inventory n. N1075, E23315, N1112. The last two samples are miniature versions of the same shape. For N1075 see PIERRAT-BONNEFOIS 2010, 34. I was able to study these samples thanks to the permission of Mrs. Gèneviève Pierrat-Bonnefois, Chief Curator of the Department of Egyptian Antiquities at the Musée du Louvre in Paris. I would like to extend many thanks to her for the discussion about stone vessels of Louvre Museum and especially for the prolific exchange of ideas about Levantine presence in Egypt.

<sup>25</sup> MARTÍN RUIZ 1995, 171.

<sup>26</sup> LOPEZ GRANDE, QUESADA SANZ, MOLINERO POLO 1995, pl. LXXX, h: 6 and i: 7.

<sup>27</sup> British Museum n. 1882, 0522, 300.a; SEARIGHT, READE, FINKEL 2008, 23, n. 61.

<sup>28</sup> British Museum n. 1932, 1212, 1131; SEARIGHT, READE, FINKEL 2008, 27, n. 97.

<sup>29</sup> See footnotes 27 and 28.

<sup>30</sup> RAMON TORRES 1995, 243, fig. 214.

<sup>31</sup> Type 14-3-1-1 of Pedrazzi; concerning the distribution in Near East, see PEDRAZZI 2007, 217-219.

<sup>32</sup> The problem of contemporaneity of Pharaohs' cartouches and objects has been discussed especially concerning the production of scarabs in Naukratis.

<sup>33</sup> AMIRAN 1970, pl. 81.

<sup>34</sup> For samples from Assyria, see especially SEARIGHT, READE, FINKEL 2008; for material from Sudan, see DUNHAM 1950.

<sup>35</sup> Scholars are generally agreed on considering these artefacts as Oriental in origin; see ARUZ, GRAFF, RAKIC 2014, 169, n. 61.

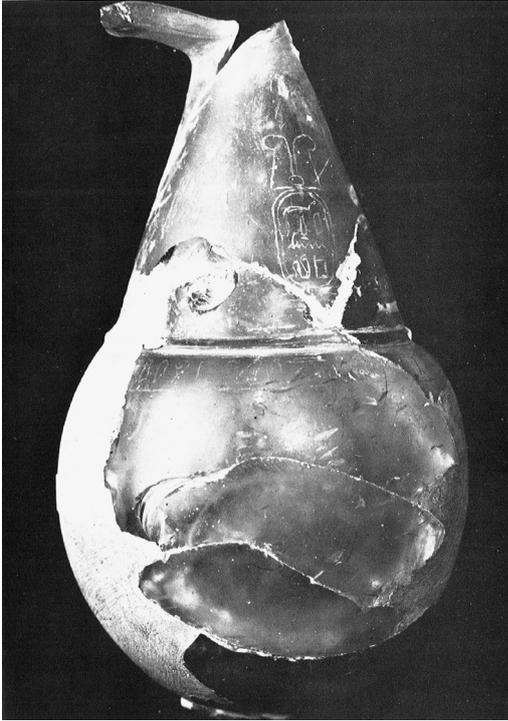


Fig. 9 - Glass trefoil-mouth jug from the La Aliseda Treasure. Photo: Gamer-Wallert 1978: Taf. 31.

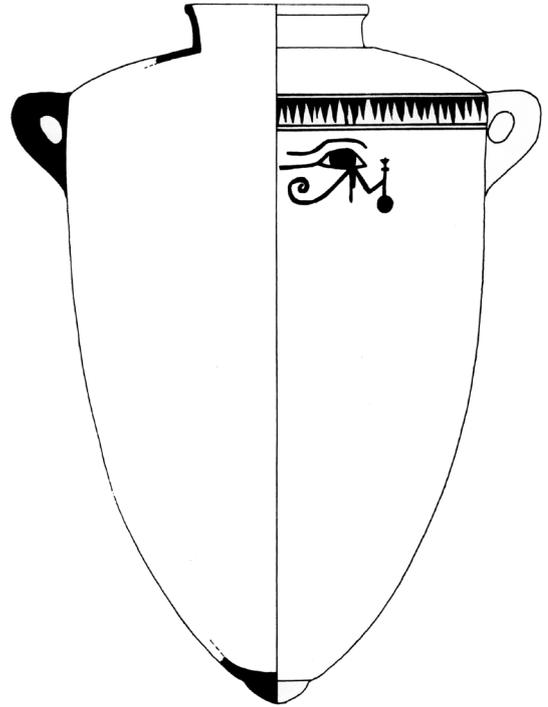


Fig. 10 - Faience Torpedo jar, Carthage, hill of Juno. Photo: Redissi 1992-1993, pl. 1.

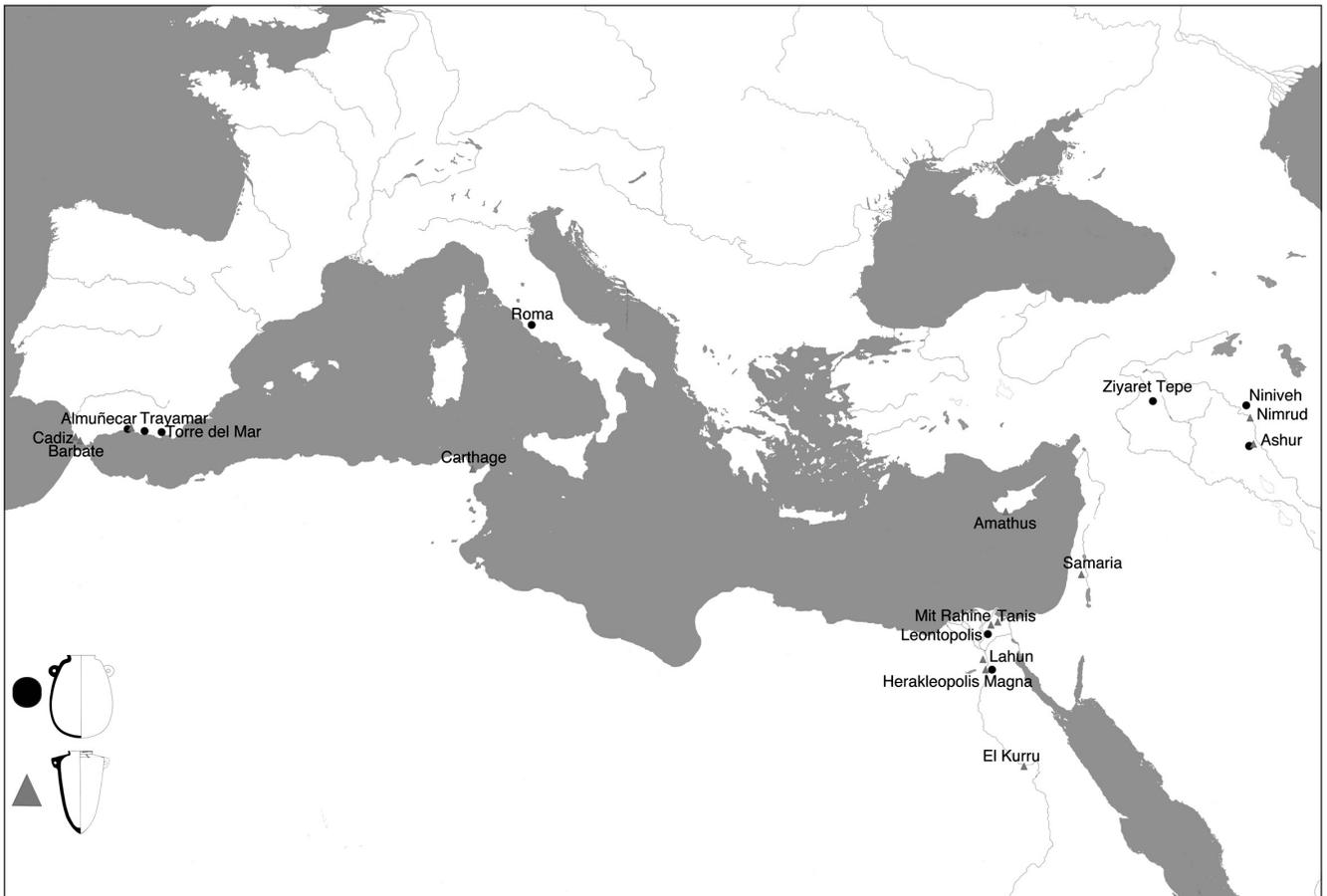


Fig. 11 - Geographical distribution of soft stone jars. Drawing: L. Bonadies.

which exhibit the characteristic pear-shaped (piriform) profile of Phoenician ewers from the Iron Age<sup>36</sup>. The stone item was part of the grave goods of the queen Khenisa, wife of the Pharaoh Piankhy (25<sup>th</sup> dynasty) and it has an incised band of red hieroglyphics around the shoulder, including two cartouches of the queen<sup>37</sup>. It has a moulded palmette below the join of handle and body, usually considered as an element of Phoenician origin very widespread in all the Mediterranean area and object of various reinterpretations.

At the beginning of the last century a glass jug of the exact same shape was discovered in Western Spain, in the famous Treasure of Aliseda (Fig. 9): as the stone sample, the vessel has a band of hieroglyphs around the shoulder and two cartouches on each side of the neck, but the understanding of them is problematic<sup>38</sup>.

Moreover, a faience amphora discovered by Delatre in a tomb of the hill of Juno<sup>39</sup> could offer a further evidence of connection between stone and glass production. The vessel (Fig. 10) has a conical body profile similar to soft stone jars mentioned earlier, except for the bottom that displays a slight bulge. The faience amphora has been considered as an Egyptian import, despite the absence of parallels in the Nile Valley and despite the fact that its profile is clearly similar to Storage Jars 9 found by Bikai in Tyre<sup>40</sup>.

Unfortunately, given the paucity of typological classification and researches on Phoenician glass vessels, for the moment we cannot go any further on the issue of a connection with the stone production in the 1<sup>st</sup> Millennium BC.

## VI. HIEROGLYPHS FORM AND LOCATION

The presence of hieroglyphs and cartouches of Egyptian Pharaohs on stone vessels found outside Nile Valley has been always considered as a proof that the vase was made in Egypt.

A closer examination at samples from Mediterranean reveals that the most common inscription shape is an encircling band of hieroglyphs enclosed by two parallel lines, engraved on the upper part of the body, that end on the front of the vase with two feather-topped cartouches (Fig. 1). Looking at Egyptian inscribed stone vessels, one could remark that this shape is not really widespread: the cartouche, indeed, is usually engraved in the centre of one side of the vessel, in such a way that it fills all the space and it is clearly visible.

The trefoil-mouth jugs found at El-Kurru and in the Treasure of Aliseda mentioned above are a clear example of association between a shape of foreign origin and an Egyptian inscription.

These items suggest that the presence of Egyptian characters does not necessarily define the cultural identity of craftsmen involved in the production of

the vessel. In the same way, incorrect or pseudo-hieroglyphic inscription cannot be considered as clear evidence of a foreign production of the artefact, as supposed by many scholars.

According to these examples, I wonder whether we can imagine different reasons that could explain the presence of inscriptions on vessels: in the case of El Kurru jugs, it seems suitable that the person who commissioned the vase maybe gave a copy of inscriptions to be engraved too. Rather, if we can accept the Gamer-Wallert conclusion that Egyptian characters on the jug from La Aliseda seem to be a copy of a fragmented text, we can suppose that some examples of inscriptions with classical formulas could be found in workshops. Of course, the quality of the result was not necessarily linked to the knowledge of the language, but depended on the skill of the craftsmen who engraved the characters.

## VII. CONCLUSION

The geographical distribution of soft stone jars (Fig. 11) analysed in the present paper shows that the most part of samples comes from sites located outside Nile Valley. This has prompted different explanations: Gamer-Wallert indicates that soft stone jars from Spain are the result of Egyptian royal tombs' looting at Tanis and they may have been part of Takelot II's tomb equipment<sup>41</sup>.

On the basis of the cuneiform inscription of the jar found at Ashur in the Assurnasirpal II's palace, Culican suggested if even the "Almuñecar alabastra" could be considered as part of Abdimilkuti's palace treasure, looted by Asarhaddon during his campaign of 677 B.C. and then traded by Phoenicians<sup>42</sup>.

According to another hypothesis, Assyrians got soft stone jars in the third quarter of 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, after the second invasion of Egypt and they gave them to the Phoenician merchants for trading<sup>43</sup>.

Actually the last two interpretations have some problems of chronology: the study of tomb equipment, in fact, has shown that some of the graves of Almuñecar can be dated from the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC<sup>44</sup>, so that they precede the looting of the Abdimilkuti's palace

<sup>36</sup> For a comprehensive analysis concerning the origin and diffusion of this type of vessels, see TALONI 2012, 77-97.

<sup>37</sup> Boston Museum of Fine Arts, 21.2783.

<sup>38</sup> GAMER-WALLERT 1976a; *idem* 1976b.

<sup>39</sup> REDISSI 1992-1993, 325-341.

<sup>40</sup> BIKAI 1978, 46.

<sup>41</sup> GAMER-WALLERT 1978, 224-225.

<sup>42</sup> CULICAN 1970, 30-31.

<sup>43</sup> PERNIGOTTI 1988, 275-276.

<sup>44</sup> MEDEROS MARTÍN, RUIZ CABRERO 2002, 41-47; AUBET SEMMLER *et alii* 1991, 21; NEGUERUELA 1991, 199-207.

at Sidon and the second Assyrian invasion of Egypt<sup>45</sup>. Moreover, as noted by Lopez Castro, the number of soft stone vessels found in the Iberian Peninsula is too large for classifying all these items as stolen.

The most common accepted hypothesis explains the spread of soft stone vessels in the palaces of Near Eastern sites (Assyria, Sidon and Samaria) as luxury gifts within a network of long-distance inter-dynastic contacts. Instead, the Iberian artefacts could be considered as the result of Phoenician trade with rich artisans and merchants of western Mediterranean during the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC.

All hypotheses concerning the geographical distribution of soft stone jars in the First Millennium BC are based on the assumption of an Egyptian origin of these vessels, that, given our remarks, is not really certain.

In a recent paper on a stone amphora found in the Roger Saidah's reserve at the Beirut National Museum, Oggiano suggests that Phoenician craftsmen have been involved not only in trading, but in the production of stone Torpedo jars too<sup>46</sup>. Therefore she proposes three different scenarios for the manufacture of these artefacts:

- a manufacture in Egypt by Egyptian craftsmen, inspired from Levantine ceramic production;
- a manufacture in the Near East, then traded in the Mediterranean;
- a manufacture in Egypt by Phoenician craftsmen, who combine elements of different origins.

Unfortunately, despite the interest of these suggestions, the scarcity of archaeological findings for the moment does not allow us to detect possible workshops of these artefacts.

Anyway, it is of some interest to remark here that data presented in this paper reveal that not all stone

vessels found in the Near East and Mediterranean should be considered as Egyptian in origin. It seems quite clear, instead, that during the Third Intermediate Period/1<sup>st</sup> Millennium BC commercial contacts originate a cultural syncretism, resulting in a kind of hybrid style where combination of elements of different origin maybe produced new shapes.

The vessels analysed here could be considered an expression of the so-called "International Style", the existence of which has been suggested for the Late Bronze Age<sup>47</sup>.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Millennium BC, indeed, is a moment when exchanges across the Mediterranean reach their peak, as shown by the so-called orientalisising phenomenon, known to have occurred in different sites of the Mediterranean area (Greece, Etruria, south of Italy, Iberian Peninsula especially) between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, and to be characterized by the increase of diffusion of goods, ideas and customs originated or inspired by Near Eastern and Egyptian cultures.

Stone vessels production of the 1<sup>st</sup> Millennium BC reveals how relations between Egypt, Near East and the Mediterranean are not the result of simple commercial and political activities, but also of an important mutual exchange of ideas and technical knowledge.

<sup>45</sup> LÓPEZ CASTRO 2006, 79.

<sup>46</sup> The amphora from Beirut National Museum has a conical body profile as vessels mentioned early; see OGGIANO 2010, 181-205.

<sup>47</sup> International Style has been the subject of numerous studies; we would like to mention here the study of Feldman, who examines the profound connection between art and its social context (FELDMAN 2006).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- AMIRAN, R.  
1970 - *Ancient Pottery of the Holy Land*, New Brunswick.
- ARUZ, J. - GRAFF, S.B. - RAKIC, Y.  
2014 - *Assyria to Iberia at the Dawn of the Classical Age*, New York.
- ASTON, B.  
1994 - *Ancient Egyptian Stone. Materials and Forms*, Heidelberg.
- ASTON, D.  
1996 - *Egyptian Pottery of the Late New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period*, Heidelberg.  
2009 - *Burial Assemblages of Dynasty 21-25: Chronology - Typology - Development*, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, vol. 21. Wien.
- AUBET SEMMLER, M.E. *et alii*  
1991 - *Sepulturas fenicias en Lagos*, Sevilla.
- BEN-DOR, L.  
1945 - "Palestinian Alabaster Vases", *The Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine* 11, 93-112.
- BEVAN, A.  
2007 - *Stone Vessels and Values in the Bronze Age Mediterranean*, Cambridge.
- BIKAI, P.  
1978 - *The Pottery of Tyre*, Warminster.
- BONADIES, L.  
2015 - "Stone jars in the Mediterranean of the First Millennium BCE", in J. MYNÁŘOVÁ, P. ONDERKA, P.

*Cultural Exchange in the Stone Vessels Production of the First Millennium B.C.E.*

- PAVÚK (eds.), *There and Back Again - the Crossroads II, Proceedings of an International Conference Held in Prague, September 15-18, 2014*, 529-548.
- BOURRIAU, J.  
1984 - "Salbgefäße", *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, vol. 5, cols. 362-366.  
1990 - "Canaanite Jars from New Kingdom Deposits at Memphis Kom Rabi'a", *Eretz-Israel* 21, 18-26.
- CAUBET, A.  
1991 - "Répertoire de la vaisselle de pierre. Ougarit 1929-1988", in M. YON (ed.), *Ras Shamra-Ougarit VI, Arts et industries de la pierre*, Paris, 205-264.
- CULICAN, W.  
1970 - "Almuñecar, Assur and Phoenician Penetration of the Western Mediterranean", *Levant* 2, 28-36.
- DEFERNEZ, C. - MARCHAND, S.  
2006 - "Imitation égyptiennes de conteneurs d'origine égéenne levantine (VIe s. - IIe s. av. J.-C.)", in Mathieu B., Meeks D. and Wissa M. (eds.), *L'apport de l'Égypte à l'histoire des techniques. Méthodes, chronologie et comparaisons*, Le Caire, 63-99.
- DUNHAM, D.  
1950 - *The Royal Cemeteries of Kush. El Kurru*, Cambridge.
- FELDMAN, M.  
2006 - *Diplomacy by Design: Luxury Arts and an 'International Style' in the Ancient Near East, 1400-1200 BCE*, Chicago.
- FONTAN É. - LE MEAUX H. (eds.)  
2007 - *La Méditerranée des Phéniciens : de Tyr à Carthage*, Catalogue de l'exposition de l'Institut du Monde arabe [6 novembre 2007-20 avril 2008], Paris.
- GAMER-WALLERT, I.  
1976a - "Die hieroglypheninschrift auf dem Alabastergefäß in Puerto de Santa Maria", *Habis* 7, 223-228, pl. I-II.  
1976b - "Die hieroglyphen der Glaskanne von La Aliseda (Cáceres)", *Revista de l'Universitat Complutense* 25, 127-131.  
1978 - *Ägyptische und ägyptisierende Funde von der Iberischen Halbinsel* (TAVO B/21), Wiesbaden.
- LILYQUIST, C.  
1996 - "Stone Vessels at Kamid el-Loz, Lebanon: Egyptian, Egyptianizing or Non-Egyptian? A Question at Sites from the Sudan to Iraq to the Greek Mainland", in HACHMANN, R. (ed.), *Kamid El-Loz 16 - "Schatzhaus" - Studien*, Bonn, 133-173.
- LÓPEZ CASTRO, J.L.  
2006 - "Colonials, merchants and alabaster vases : the western Phoenician aristocracy", *Antiquity* 80, 74-88.
- LOPEZ GRANDE, M.J. - QUESADA SANZ, F. - MOLINERO POLO, M.Á.  
1995 - *Excavaciones en Ehnasya el Medina (Heracléopolis Magna) II*, Madrid.
- MARTINEZ, J.-L. (ed.)  
2004 - *Les antiques du musée Napoléon: édition illustrée et commentée des volumes V et VI de l'inventaire du Louvre de 1810*, Paris.
- MARTÍN RUIZ, J.A.  
1995 - *Catálogo documental de los fenicios en Andalucía*, Sevilla.
- MAZAR, A.  
2005 - "The Debate over the Chronology of the Iron Age in the Southern Levant, its history, the current situation, and a suggested resolution", in LEVY T.E., HIGHAM T. (eds.), *The Bible and Radiocarbon Dating. Archaeology, Text and Science*, London-Oakville, 15-30.
- MEDEROS MARTÍN, A. - RUIZ CABRERO, L.A.  
2002 - "La fundación de Sexi-Laurita (Almuñácer-Granada) y los inicios de la penetración fenicia en la vega de Granada" *Spal* 11, 41-47.
- NEGUERUELA, I.  
1991 - "Sobre la fecha de la necrópolis Laurita de Almuñécar", in *I-IV Jornadas de Arqueología fenicio-púnica (Ibiza 1986-89)*, Ibiza, 199-207.
- OGGIANO, I.  
2010 - "Nuovi dati sul ruolo degli artigiani fenici nella produzione delle anfore in pietra tra Egitto e Levante", in G. BARTOLONI, P. MATTHIAE, L. NIGRO, L. ROMANO (eds.), *Tiro, Cartagine, Lixus: nuove acquisizioni, Atti del Convegno Internazionale in onore di Maria Giulia Amadasi Guzzo, Roma, 24-25 novembre 2008*, Quaderni di Vicino Oriente 4, Rome, 181-205.
- PADRÓ, J.  
1985 - *Egyptian-type documents from the Mediterranean littoral of the Iberian peninsula before the Roman conquest III*, Leiden.
- PADRÓ, J. - RAMÓN, J.  
2004 - "Les amphores phéniciennes en Égypte et le commerce du vin", in B. MENU (ed.), *La dépendance rurale dans l'Antiquité égyptienne et proche-orientale*, Le Caire, 77-102.
- PEDRAZZI, T.  
2007 - *Le giare da conservazione e trasporto del Levante: uno studio archeologico dell'economia fra Bronzo Tardo II e Ferro I (ca. 1400-900 a.C.)*, Pisa.
- PERNIGOTTI, S.  
1988 - "Aspetti dei rapporti tra la civiltà fenicia e la cultura egiziana", in E. ACQUARO (ed.), *Momenti pre-coloniali nel Mediterraneo antico*, Rome, 267-276.

*Luisa Bonadies*

PIERRAT-BONNEFOIS, G.

2010 - "L'alabastre : un vase à parfum d'origine égyptienne ?", *Les Dossiers d'archéologie* 337, 34-39.

RAMON TORRES, J.

1995 - *Las ánforas fenicio-púnicas del Mediterráneo central y occidental*, Barcelona.

REDISSI, T.

1992-1993 - "À propos d'une amphore égyptienne en faïence", *Reppal* 7-8, 325-341.

1997 - "Les vases d'albâtre égyptiens de Carthage", *Reppal* 10, 115-132.

ROSSI M.

1997 - "Tipologia delle anfore fenicie dell'età del Ferro", *CMAO (Contributi e materiali di archeologia orientale)* VII, 523-559.

SAGONA, A.G.

1982 - "Levantine Storage Jars of the 13th to 4th Century B.C.", *Opuscula Atheniensia* 14, 73-110.

SEARIGHT, A. - READE, J. - FINKEL, I.

2008 - *Assyrian Stone Vessels and Related Material in the British Museum*, Oxford.

TALONI, M.

2012 - "Le oinochoai cosiddette fenicio-cipriote: introduzione, rielaborazione e trasformazione di una forma vascolare", *Mode e Modelli. Fortuna e insuccesso nella circolazione di cose e idee*, *Officina Etruscologia* 7, 77-97.