



Necropolis of Is Pirixeddus

Patrimonio culturale
SARDEGNA Virtual Archaeology



■ Glass paste polychrome ointment-holders

Two ointment-holders of polychrome glass paste were found in the Phoenician-Punic necropolis of Sulky, i.e. decorated with multiple colours, which will be examined in the future.

These are two *Amphoriskos*- (fig. 1) and a *oinochoe* (fig. 2) They both have an intense blue base which is the natural colour of the glass, and a lively decoration of alternating lines whose colour is obtained by adding other elements to the basic chemical compound (silicon, calcium carbonate, sodium alkalines and potassium) and other elements such as iron oxides to obtain yellow, oxide copper for blue and manganese oxide for black.

The *amphoriskos* (10 cm high x 5 cm diameter) made up of several fragments, has a small gap on the body; it has a widened rim from where the two handles start that join at the shoulder. A yellow line winds around the neck from the mouth to the shoulder and then to the body, where it stops and leaves room for a wavy decoration with a light blue background with yellow and thinner black grooves that cover the body of the container. Lower down there is another yellow band, just above the foot.





Fig. 1 - Glass paste polychrome *Amphoriskos*. Municipal Archaeological Museum "F. Barreca" (photo by Unicity S.p.A.)

The *oinochoe* (10 cm high x 6 cm diameter) has a trilobate rim, from where the handle starts that joins at the shoulder, and the round body; it has also been made up of several fragments. A line of light blue glass decorates the edge and the foot; from the bottom of



the neck, there is a yellow line winding round to the shoulder and the top part of the body, and then stops to make room for a wavy decoration similar to that of the *amphoriskos*, with the same yellow, light blue and black colours.



Fig. 2 - Glass paste polychrome *Oenochoe*. Municipal Archaeological Museum "F. Barreca" (photo by Unicity S.p.A.)

Sardinian-Punic documentation of multi-coloured glass repeats, as we have seen in the two Sulky vases, the shapes usually found in the Punic necropolises and generally throughout the Mediterranean base in the pre-Roman age. They are usually shapes based on Greek traditional shapes, therefore in addition to the *oinochoai* and the *amphoriskoi*,



there are also round *aryballoi* (fig. 3) and *alabastra* (fig. 4), that can be dated to the 6th and beginning of 4th century B.C. Such items can be found throughout the Western Punic world, the rest of Sardinia, Carthage, Sicily and Ibiza.

A type of ointment-holder with a human figure kneeling in front of a canopy is also documented in Sant'Antioco. The figure, from Rhodes or Egyptian style, can be dated to the 6th-5th century B.C., comes from the Sulky *tophet* (fig. 5).

One of the most common techniques for making Phoenician and Punic ointment-jars is the one known as "on a base of sand, clay or flaky". The core should be moistened and moulded, wrapped in a piece of canvas and fixed to the end of a cane or a rod. Thus prepared, it was immersed in a container of molten glass and rotated on a smooth sheet made of stone or metal so as to obtain a smooth surface. The mouth and foot were then modelled and the handles applied, probably with the use of forceps; the filament decoration was then inserted on the still hot and fluid base, perhaps with the aid of a pointed instrument. Once obtained the shape, it is emptied of its crumbly centre.

The ointment-holders were luxury items, designed to contain valuable oil and balsamic perfumes and were used in everyday life. For this reason, they were part of the personal grave goods of the deceased and were therefore placed in the tomb with him.



Figs. 3-4 - Aryballos and alabastron from Ibiza (VI-IV century B.C.)
(From Uberti 1988, p. 486; <http://www.luckyjor.org/phoenixsito/arte/pagvetro.html>).



Fig. 5 - Glass paste unguentarium with human form kneeling before a canopy
(from <http://www.comune.santantioco.ca.it/cms/images/stories/archeo/profumi01.jpg>).

■ Credits

Deepening card edited by Dr. Cinzia Olianas

■ Bibliographic abbreviations

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