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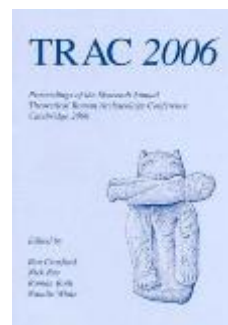
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Amphora Burials and Burials with Amphorae: on the Reuse of Amphorae in the Northern Necropolis of Potentia (Porto Recanati, Marche)

Patrick Monsieur

Introduction

For more than five hundred years the waters of the Adriatic Sea must have reflected the graves of the northern necropolis of Potentia. This cemetery yielded a considerable amount of amphorae. The importance of these amphora finds lays not only in their provenance or in their typology and chronology, but also in their reuse within varying funerary contexts. It is the disagreement of time, space, and their reuse that makes them so peculiar. Even their previous content could have been of significance when selecting them for the departed. Finally, there is the complex situation of the immediate surroundings of Potentia, where different amphora production centres are located or presumed to have been. Indeed, it is worth considering the impact of locally made and imported amphorae on funerary sites. This paper will present the different levels in the meaning of amphorae found within funerary contexts as they occur in the case of Potentia: their origin, previous contents, chronology, presence or absence of different types, and residuality.

Potentia and her necropolises

The Roman colony of Potentia (*Regio V*, Picenum) was founded in 184 B.C. (Liv. 39, 44, 10). Until the last quarter of the second century A.D., the town flourished. After a gradual decline, the site, despite some temporary revivals, seems to have been abandoned in the second half of the sixth century, probably as a result of the Gothic-Byzantine war and the incursions of the Longobards. In 1962, 1967, and 1982, the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici delle Marche (Ancona) excavated a substantial part of the northern necropolis, the north-eastern quarter and the monumental centre of the town (Mercando 1974; 1979: 180–280; Percossi Serenelli 2001a; 2001b). In 2002, the Ghent University started a survey (Potenza Valley Survey) in the lower valley of the river Flosis, the actual Potenza. Field walking also included the site of Potentia *intra muros* (Vermeulen *et al.* 2005; Monsieur *et al.* 2003).

Aerial photography plays an important role in the Ghent project, and one of its merits was the recent discovery of the southern necropolis. On some of his photographs Frank Vermeulen correctly interpreted crop marks showing rectangular features as representing the bases of funeral monuments along the road that led to the southern city gate. The western necropolis is evident by the presence of the brick and concrete core of such a funeral monument (Mancini 2001). Being a substantial feature in the landscape, this construction used to be called ‘il Torraccio’. As a matter of fact, aerial photography revealed further bases of funeral monuments. The northern necropolis that is the focus of this study came to light during industrial extraction works (Mercando 1974). Rescue excavations took place between 1962–1965 and 2003–2004. In the past, some funeral inscriptions have been discovered in the

vicinity of the ancient town, but unfortunately none seem to have been found *in situ* at any of the three known necropolises of Potentia (Figs. 1 and 2) (Paci 2001: 103–104).

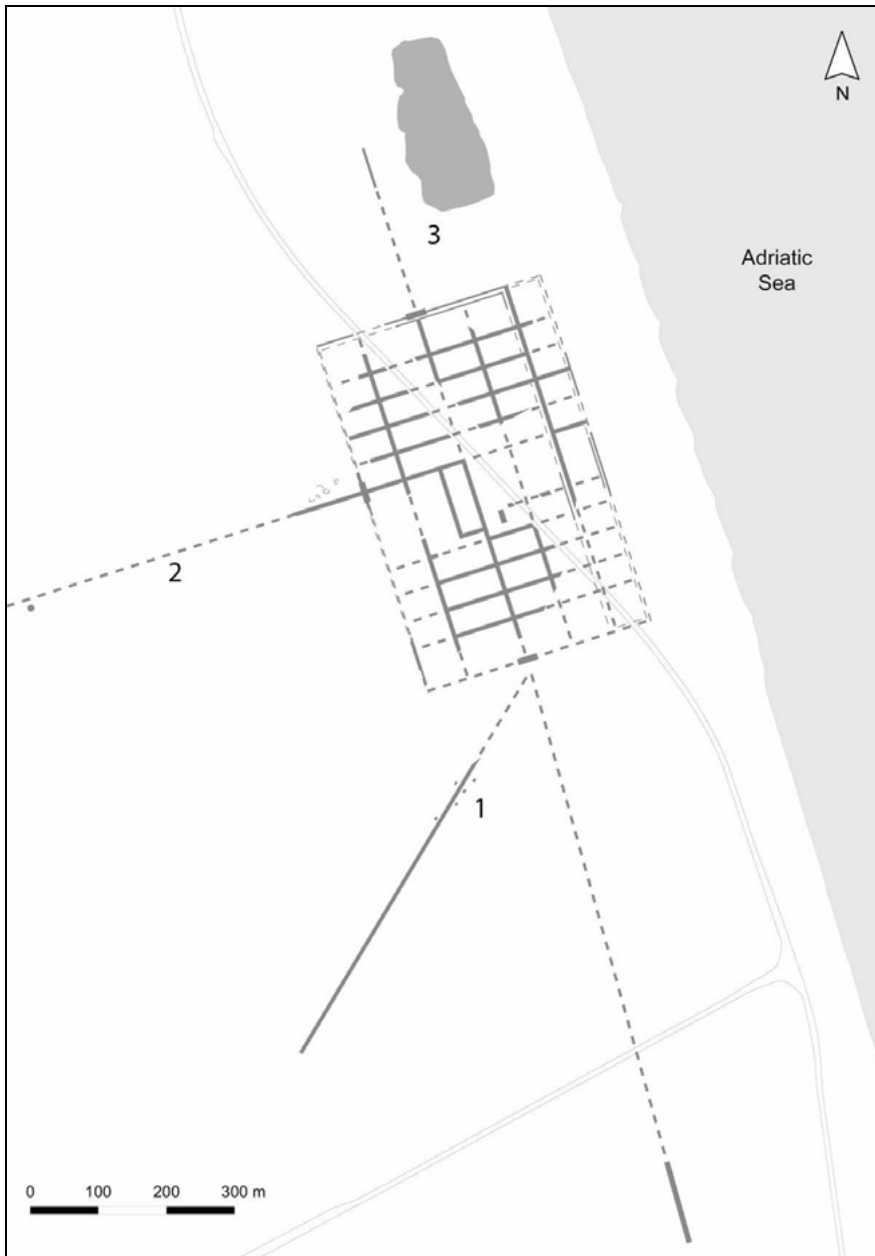


Figure 1: Location of the necropolises of Potentia. Dots along the roads refer to grave monuments. The dark zone shows the sector that was excavated by Mercado and later used for further industrial extraction; grids mark the zones surveyed intra and extra muros (map G. Verhoeven).



Figure 2: Aerial photograph of Potentia with: the street pattern visible in crop marks; the excavation of the monumental centre with temple; in the upper right corner the northern necropolis with part of the destroyed zone now filled with water; the south part explored by L. Mercado (monuments); and to the west the field where the Soprintendenza carried out recent excavations (monuments) (photography F. Vermeulen).

The northern necropolis ‘la Pineta’

When Mercado arrived at the place named ‘la Pineta’ in 1962, it soon became clear that the industrial sand and gravel extraction had already destroyed an enormous portion of the necropolis. Nevertheless, she managed to explore the terrain extensively and suggested that there were 385 burials. In fact in the eastern part of the cemetery, where Mercado primarily excavated, tombs from all periods were discovered. All of them were rather simple cremation and inhumation graves, where the housing of the dead is largely represented by the current ‘alla cappuccina’ installation. The tombs of the late Republican, and the early and high Imperial periods regularly contained an appreciable set of burial goods (Mercado 1974; Percossi Serenelli 2001b; Frapiccini 2001; Ramadori 2001). However, no presence of monumental tombs was attested within this area; these were uncovered in the southern and western sectors of the northern necropolis. Unfortunately, Mercado only carried out three trial trenches in the south exposing the stone bases of monuments and the long negative marks of dismantled walls. There can be no doubt that these long ‘shadows’ represent vanished enclosure walls marking the burial plots of the wealthy families. Sometimes their foundations are preserved, and as is the case with the funeral monuments themselves, are partly built up with amphora sherds,

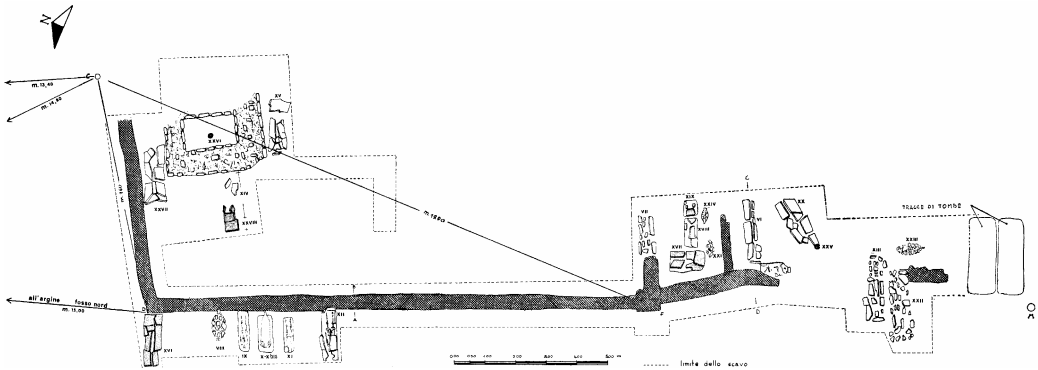


Figure 3: Trial trench by Mercado in the south part of the northern necropolis with monuments and enclosure walls; more recent graves (some with amphora burials) were cut into these walls (after Mercado 1974, 151, Fig. 5).

especially wall fragments (Mercado 1974, 150–152, 391–405 and esp. Fig. 318, wall with amphora sherds). In a later stage, new individual graves were cut into the enclosure walls, which were perhaps themselves dismantled at that time (Fig. 3).

In 2004, the planning of a holiday resort on the still untouched grounds of the western part of the necropolis necessitated new rescue excavations under the direction of Edvige Percossi Serenelli. A wide area of this part of the cemetery could be investigated. The same type of monumental graves and enclosure walls again displayed the reuse of amphora fragments within the foundations. What became immediately apparent when visiting this new excavation, besides the reuse of amphora fragments for building purposes, were the incredible quantities of amphora sherds just simply scattered around the whole site. Moreover, they comprised not only small fragments belonging to different parts of the vessel, but also large fragments, including complete upper parts. These amphorae belong to locally made productions and represent three (probably four) different types. It remains unclear if they all served construction purposes, or if some of them were reused in more specific burial contexts. At any rate, this new excavation provides the impression of this mass presence of amphorae on the site; one not reflected in the publication of Mercado, which only indicates those that were found in the graves that she recorded rather meticulously. Furthermore, nearly all of them turned out to be imported amphorae, mainly originating from different regions of North Italy and the Aegean.

Finally, in 1965 and 1971, Mercado conducted another rescue excavation in the north-eastern quarter of Potentia that adjoins the northern cemetery. In this city quarter, she discovered thirteen tombs installed in the streets as well as in the dwellings, proving that at an undefined moment in late Antiquity, this sector was abandoned and reused as a cemetery, maybe even as an ultimate extension of the northern necropolis. No datable evidence was recovered as none of these graves contained any objects. Tomb 13 yielded some amphora fragments (no type was identified), pointing to the use of it as a cover for the grave (Mercado 1979, 180–280, esp. 275–280).

Since the results of the new excavation are awaiting publication, the data for this study is mainly that from the publications of Mercado, the results from the surveys of the Ghent team, the information available for the excavations in the monumental centre (kindly provided by the

Soprintendenza), and personal experience and knowledge on Mediterranean amphorae. Nonetheless, at this stage of research, the information is so rich that we dare to present some preliminary results. The necropolis dates mainly from the first and second centuries A.D., but some tombs are from the late republican period, while others are late antique in date. Of the 385 excavated and published tombs, nearly 14% yielded one, sometimes two, exceptionally three amphorae; 70 amphorae in total, from which at least 14 different types were identified. The monumental tombs date from the Augustan period to about A.D. 100 or shortly after. They probably possessed no amphorae in a specific burial context: all amphorae in such contexts come from the mass of more simple burials. Of these burials, no grave markers of any kind were found, at least not *in situ*, nor were inscribed funeral slabs identified. In view of other examples, such as the well-known necropolis of Isola Sacra between Ostia and Portus, the possibility that amphorae functioned as markers on some graves must be taken into consideration, although there is no direct evidence for it.

The reuse of amphorae in the northern necropolis

Five levels in the reuse of amphorae can be distinguished in the northern necropolis of Potentia:

1. amphorae as building material
2. amphorae as burial goods (gifts or deposits from a funerary meal)
3. amphorae as tombs (covers or coffins)
4. amphorae for funerary libations
5. amphorae as grave markers

The first level of amphora reuse is in fact not surprising since it gradually becomes clear that Potentia and its *agger* was an important centre for amphora production. In the 2002 survey campaign our team ‘rediscovered’ an amphora production site, located 3 km south of the town, but previously noted in 1952 without any further substantial information (Vermeulen *et al.* 2005: 54–55; Monsieur *et al.* 2006). New investigation of the surroundings demonstrates that this hillock, consisting of refuse material and wall fragments built up with tiles, is only an exiguous remnant of a vast production area of several hectares that was destroyed by the industrial extraction of sand and gravel. The northern fringe of this production area was undoubtedly a site near the Fosso Pilocco that Mercado investigated in 1969 and interpreted as the ‘pars rustica’ of an ‘edificio rurale’ (Mercado 1979: 281–293). In the north-eastern quarter of the town itself, Mercado excavated two huge cess tanks in a street connected with a domus. Hundreds of amphora necks and rims were reused for the retaining walls of the tanks (Mercado 1979: 184–186; Monsieur *et al.* 2006). It is difficult to refute that this mass presence of locally made amphora fragments may indicate another production site close by. Since the adjoining northern necropolis presents a similar situation, it is suspected that at least a part of this cemetery was installed on an ancient production site, or that it was located nearby. This is corroborated by the numerous amphora fragments found on a site identified during our survey in 2002 on the Colle Burchio, only 1.5 km north-west of the necropolis (Monsieur *et al.* 2005: 39). Consequently, these large quantities of amphora fragments that were reused in funeral buildings, or just scattered around the site, can be considered as a ‘useless’ dump from amphora production. The problem remains, however, that entire vessels or large fragments may

have been burial goods, or have been used for the covering of the tomb, for libations, or as grave markers.

Examples of amphorae used as burial goods or as deposits of a supposed funeral meal are very rare in the northern necropolis of Potentia. Therefore, acceptance of this interpretation remains problematic; only two tombs, both child inhumations, could belong to this level of interpretation. Tomb 116, one of the oldest in the cemetery, can be dated in the second century B.C. by a small incomplete Greco-Italic amphora, and by regionally made black gloss pottery. The covering is 'alla cappuccina', and the amphora surely belongs to the burial since the shoulder is partly covered by the tiles. Unfortunately, it is impossible to ascertain the origin of the amphora by the published information. Tomb 229 has no burial goods and there is no information on the covering. As with Tomb 116, the amphora lies at the feet. The type is a locally made Dressel 6 amphora dating from the Augustan or early Tiberian period, although only the superior part is preserved (Fig. 4). The function is problematic: a gift, libation device, grave marker, or simply a residual find?

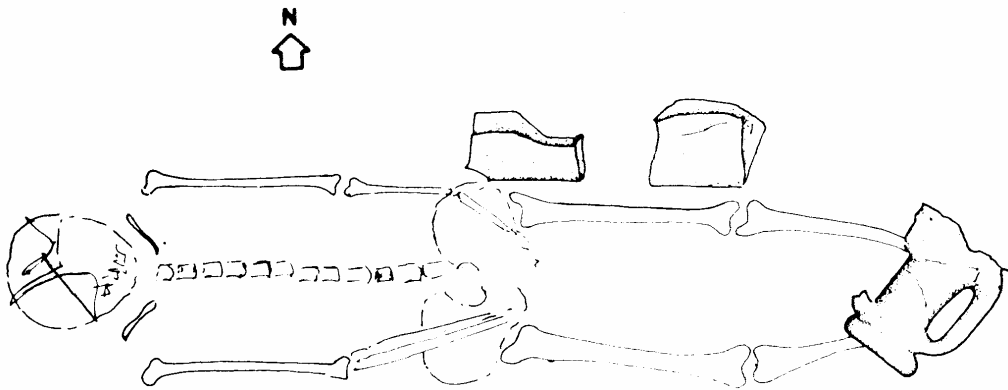


Figure 4: Inhumation 229 with the superior part of a locally made Dressel 6 amphora of the early Imperial period at the feet (function unclear) (after Mercado 1974: 358, Fig. 280).

The reuse of amphorae as the cover of a tomb, or as a coffin, appears to be confined mainly to the mid and late Imperial periods, and is a practice for child burials, and lack associated grave-goods. Of the 27 examples, only one has an early chronology. Tomb 122 is dated between 125 and 50 B.C. by a lamp of probable Greek origin (Pergamene?), a Sicilian coin, and locally made amphorae of the Lamboglia 2 type. Four large fragments (one upper part, two wall fragments, and one lower part with spike) of at least two different amphorae were reused to cover the body. The upper part is placed on the head, the wall fragments in the middle, the lower part on the feet. Tombs 270 and 273 are dated to the third century A.D. by Empoli amphorae used for the burial. In the first tomb, the amphora functions as a coffin for the child. In the second tomb, the amphora with the neck missing was cut lengthwise to cover the body; one half was placed on the head and the chest, the other on the legs. At least three African amphorae of the third and fourth centuries A.D. were reused as a burial, two as a coffin (Tombs 252 and X bis), one, of a very fragmented unidentified type, as a cover (Tomb 259). The remaining 21 tombs, all badly preserved, are most probably child burials with amphorae or amphorae fragments reused as covers or burial containers. The amphorae types, however, are

not specified within the publication. Due to the large size and the frequency of African amphorae within the excavations and surveys in and around Potentia, we presume that most of these unidentified amphorae reused as a burial container or cover are of African origin.



Figure 5: Tomb 18, the last quarter of the first century A.D., built up with roof tiles. The North Italian Forlimpopoli wine amphora is placed upside down with a hole in the bottom for a tube as part of a libation device; note the second libation device in the middle constructed with two imbrices (after Mercado 1974, 186, Fig. 54).

The most recurrent reuse of amphorae in the northern necropolis is undoubtedly as part of a libation device (Figs. 5 and 6). This practice, for which not only amphorae were reused, but also a pair of *imbrices* forming a tube, was common in the first and the second centuries A.D. here. The tombs are generally of the ‘alla cappuccina’ type, or covered in some manner with tiles. With the exception of Tomb 54, all of the tombs are cremation burials. In all cases the amphorae were put upside down, reminiscent of the reversed torches in ancient funerary iconography, probably pointing to the underworld, or symbolising that life has passed. The majority are wine amphorae of North Italian and Aegean origin, with 22 in total probably referring Dionysiac eschatology. Some, however, used to contain other products. Six funnel-mouth amphorae of North Italian origin were designed for the transport of olives, possibly preserved in *defrutum*, and one smaller amphora for fish-sauce that maybe an Adriatic production. These installations for funerary libations, or *profusiones* as they are named in the inscriptions, demonstrate how the family must have returned during the year to the tombs of their beloved at the occasion of private celebrations, such as the birthday of the departed, or during the official *dies parentales* in February. When offering to the dead or having a meal together, wine or other liquids probably first passed through lead or terracotta pipes, or even pipes of organic material that were connected with the amphorae or the *imbrices* tubes. Although the pipes do not exist anymore, the holes made in the bases of the amphorae betray their earlier presence (for example, a flat-bottomed Forlimpopoli type in Tomb 18: Fig. 5). There is no mention of any fragments of terracotta pipes in the excavation report. Those that were in lead must have been removed by metal robbers, whilst the pipes in organic materials

are likely to have rotted away. Finally, it should be remembered that at the annual celebrations, these libation installations formed an essential connection with the surface for the souls of the dead. A remarkable but unexplained fact is that regularly two or even three libation installations were fixed within the tomb; there were three amphorae in Tomb 203, one pair of *imbrices* and two amphorae in Tomb 52, and one amphorae and pair of *imbrices* in Tombs 14 and 18. Does this refer to different types of liquids that were poured, such as wine, milk, water, and honey? Or does it refer to a specific rite for different celebration days? Another unexplained phenomenon was discovered in Tomb 14. At the opposite side of the grave where the fish-sauce amphora was found, the pair of *imbrices* also contained amphora fragments of an unidentified type.



Figure 6: Tomb with a Knossos 19 wine amphora probably from Kos, dated to the second century A.D., the connections between the Adriatic and the Aegean still remained important (after Mercado 1974, 297, Fig. 207).

There is no clear evidence for the fifth level in the reuse of amphorae as grave markers in the northern necropolis of Potentia. Nevertheless, there may be some indications pointing in that direction. The presence of the upper parts of locally made amphorae found in large quantities in the new excavation in the western part of the cemetery has already been mentioned (see also Tomb 229). It could be that some of them were set up on the graves. Another possibility is that they were placed upside down, and that the lower part with spike was sticking out, although is now missing. This would match with the amphorae set upside-down, as found by Mercado. The majority were truncated on the lower part. Perhaps this was done deliberately, but it seems preferable that the lower part disappeared by activities after the abandonment of the cemetery. One detail could reinforce this view. The completely preserved flat-bottomed amphora in Tomb 18 has, on the lower part, an area of a lighter colour, possibly an indication for exposure in open air. In this manner, the amphorae positioned upside-down and sticking out of the ground could have simultaneously functioned as both a libation device and as a grave marker.

The typology, origin, contents and chronology of the amphorae

Two large groups of amphorae can be distinguished, those that were locally produced, and those that were imported. The locally produced amphorae are represented by three or four main types. Their production started in the second century B.C., possibly with a Greco-Italic version. The Lamboglia 2 (Fig. 7, No. 1), a type that was probably widely made along the Adriatic coast, appeared in the last quarter of the second century and was replaced by a more sturdy version during the third quarter of the first century B.C., called Dressel 6 (Fig. 7, No. 2). Greco-Italic and Lamboglia 2 amphorae were designed for the transport of wine. The Dressel 6 is divided into two subtypes; Dressel 6A, with a spike, transported wine, and the Dressel 6B, with a knob, carried olive oil. When only the upper part is preserved, these two subtypes become indistinguishable. The Dressel 2–4 type is an imitation of the late Hellenistic version of the Coan wine amphora and appeared at the end of the first century B.C. (Fig. 7, No. 3). The bifid handles are typical. Amphora production in Potentia and its surroundings ceased presumably at the end of the first century A.D. (Brecciaroli Taborelli 1984; Cipriano and Carre 1989: 77–88; Monsieur *et al.* 2005: 54–55; Monsieur *et al.* 2006).

Two amphora types could be Adriatic productions, but most probably not from the Potentia region. Greco-Italic wine amphorae, a form that seems to be elaborated on in Sicily, were also widely produced in the third and second centuries B.C. on the Tyrrhenean as on the Adriatic coasts. Little is known about the fractional type that has been found in the northern necropolis (Toniolo 2000: 189–214). The fish sauce amphora (Fig. 7, No. 6) matches the types discovered in a wreck laying off the shore of Grado (Aquileia). Another example with *titulus pictus* that was recovered in Urbisaglia confirms its content (Auriemma 2000; Fabrini and Marengo 2002). Nothing is known about a production centre, but their rareness suggests a place somewhere in the Adriatic. Tomb 14 provides a valuable dating clue with a coin of Faustina the Elder.

Forlimpopoli wine amphorae were very popular and widely distributed, especially in the second century A.D. (Fig. 7, No. 4), and are the most commonly occurring amphora type in the northern necropolis of Potentia. The name refers to one of the main production centres in the Po-valley (Aldini 1978). Their production started in the last quarter of the first century A.D., which seems to be confirmed by the date of Tomb 52 (from a coin of Vespasian and

Firmalamps signed NERI). The fabric of the ‘funnel mouth’ amphorae (Fig. 7, No. 5) also indicates a North Italian production centre (Bezczky 1987: 34–36). It is very probable that the peculiar rim was designed for the filling and emptying of olives, perhaps preserved in *defrutum*. This can be derived from the resembling Baetican Haltern 70 and Gaulish London 555/Augst 21 types. *Tituli picti* on Haltern 70 amphorae mention the contents of these amphorae. Most researchers agree that *defrutum* is a sweet syrup made by boiling down grape must. This does not, however, mean that these amphorae could not have carried wine as well (Colls *et al.* 1977: 33–40, 71–78, 141–143; Sealey and Tyers 1989; Monsieur 2001; Van der Werff 2002) (Fig. 7). The production site of Empoli in North Etruria assures the origin and typology of two other wine amphorae types recovered in the northern necropolis (Manacorda 1987).

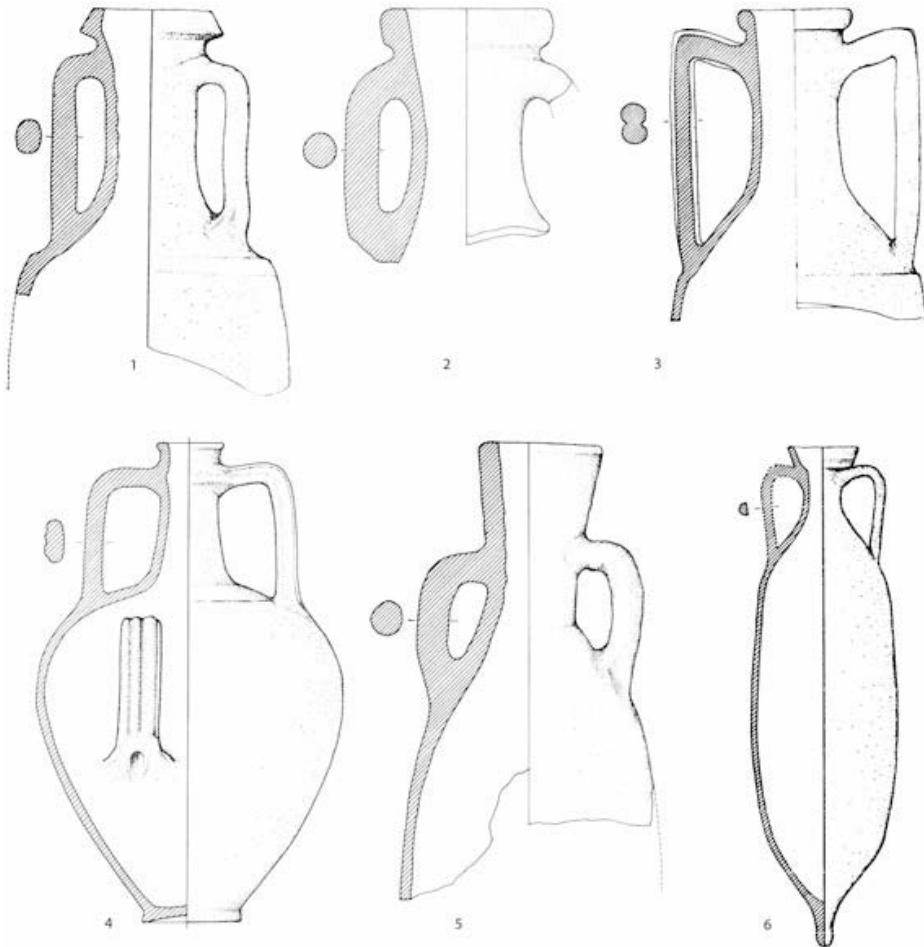


Figure 7: Italian amphorae from the northern necropolis, the first three are locally made: 1) Lamboglia 2, 2) Dressel 6, 3) Dressel 2–4, 4) Forlimpopoli, 5) ‘funnel mouth’, 6) Adriatic? fish sauce amphora (after Mercado 1974: 285, Fig. 190; 349 Fig. 275; 338 Fig. 259; 188 Fig. 59; 246 Fig. 133, and 178 Fig. 42).

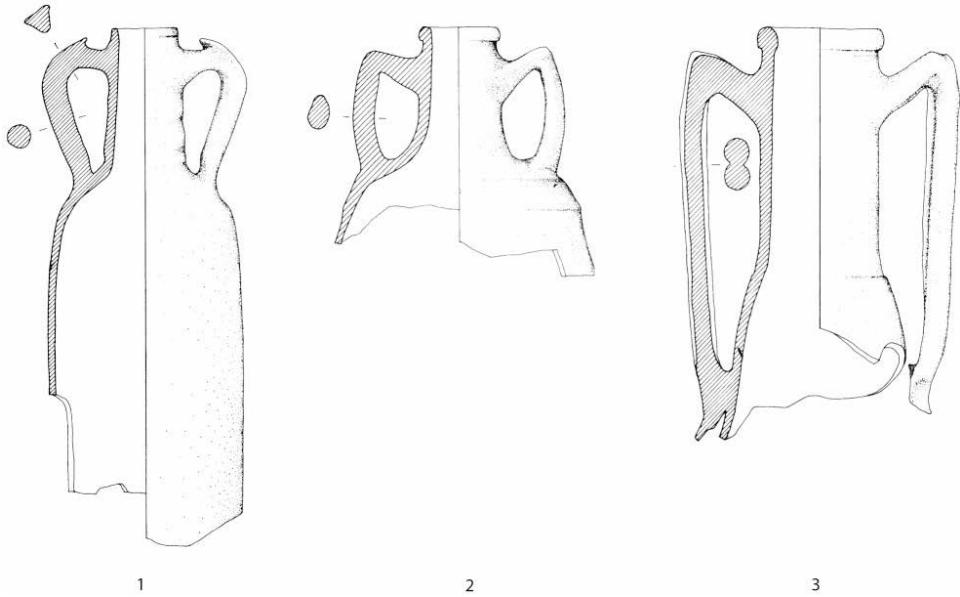


Figure 8: Aegean amphorae from the northern necropolis: 1) Dressel 43/Crétoise 4, 2) Dressel 35, 3) Knossos 19 (after Mercado 1974: 240, Fig. 126, 52; 349 Fig. 275; 240 Fig. 126, 54).

At least three, probably four types of wine amphorae originate from the Aegean (Fig. 8). Only the body is preserved, and so it is therefore not possible to confirm with confidence a Rhodian type (Tomb 216 with a late republican coin and a black gloss plate) (Hesnard 1986: 72–75; Empereur and Picon 1989: 227–229). Cretan Dressel 43/Crétoise 4 with their typical horned handles are also present in the material collected during the survey of the Ghent Project. In the necropolis, two examples were recovered in association with early Forlimpopoli amphorae (Tombs 40 and 45). The contexts of the tombs of Potentia (75–125 A.D.) and the last phase of Pompeii and Herculaneum provide a date range after the second half of the first century A.D. (Marangou-Lerat 1995: 84–89). An exceptional amphora type is the Dressel 35. We only know of one parallel, in the famous Castro Pretorio deposit in Rome with a closing date in 40–50 A.D. (Dressel 1899=CIL XV, 2, 4874). A *titulus pictus*, consisting of two Greek letters on the example from Rome makes an Aegean origin acceptable. The form is reminiscent of a wine amphora. Tomb 215 in which this amphora was found yielded a coin struck in 72 A.D. of Titus. The Knossos 19 type, of which there were five in total, is derived from the early Imperial amphora of Kos, better known as the Dressel 5 type. The origin and the chronology of this amphora type is problematic due to its form, especially the bifid, horned and bowed handles, and the elongated body, and the context dates of Tombs 9 and 293 (three Corinthian lamps and a coin of Antoninus Pius). We suspect this amphora type to be a second century A.D. evolution of the Koan Dressel 5 (Dressel 1899; Maiuri 1925: 245–246; Panella and Fano 1977: 147–148, 153, 160–161; Hayes 1983: 149–151; Hesnard 1986: 75–78; Empereur and Picon 1989: 225–229).

Only two North African olive oil amphorae from Byzacium could be well defined. The Africana II from tomb 259 is a rare early subtype (Keay 1984: 115–116; Bonifay 2004: 111–112). The Africana II D of Tomb X bis was widely spread (Keay 1984: 187 and 196; Bonifay

2004: 119). As mentioned above, lots of undefined amphora fragments all dating to the third and fourth centuries A.D. and used in child burials presumably belong to the same family of African amphorae.

Table 1: Types of amphorae and their reuse function in the northern necropolis of Potentia.

Origin		Type	Contents	Date range	Number	Burial	Reuse
<i>Adriatic?</i>	1	Greco-Italic	Wine	200–100 B.C.	1	inhumation	gift/meal?
<i>Adriatic</i>	2	Lamboglia 2	Wine	125–50 B.C.	2	inhumation	cover
<i>Aegean</i>	3	Rhodian?	Wine	25 B.C.– 75 A.D.	1	cremation	libation
<i>Adriatic</i>	4	Dressel 6	Wine/oil	25 B.C.–40 A.D.	1	inhumation	gift/meal/ residual?
<i>Adriatic</i>	5	Dressel 2–4	Wine	10 B.C.–100 A.D.	1	cremation	libation
<i>Aegean</i>	6	Dressel 35	Wine?	25–100 A.D.	1	cremation	libation
<i>Aegean</i>	7	Dressel 43	Wine	50–150 A.D.	2	cremation	libation
<i>Aegean</i>	8	Knossos 19	Wine	50–200 A.D.	5	4 crem./ 1 inhum.	libation
<i>N-E Italy</i>	9	‘funnel mouth’	Olives/ <i>defrutum</i>	75–200 A.D.	6	cremation	libation
<i>N-E Italy</i>	10	Forlimpopoli	Wine	75–225 A.D.	12	cremation	libation
<i>Adriatic?</i>	11	‘Grado wreck’	Fish sauce	100–200 A.D.	1	cremation	libation
<i>North Etruria</i>	12	Empoli	Wine	200–300 A.D.	2	inhumation	1 coff./ 1 cov.
<i>North Africa</i>	13	Africana II early	Olive oil	200–225 A.D.	1	inhumation	coffin
<i>North Africa</i>	14	Africana II D	Olive oil	300–400 A.D.	1	inhumation	coffin

Of a total of 70 amphorae from the publication of the northern necropolis by Mercado, 37 were identified, and 33 remain unidentified. It was possible to distinguish at least 14 different types. 12 other amphorae remain unidentified, and these probably represent 10 different types. Most of the 21 amphorae reused for the covering of inhumation burials apparently belong to African types of the late Roman period. Of the 385 tombs, 55 contained reused amphorae (14.2%).

Discussion, first conclusions and perspectives

Five main periods are distinguishable in the northern necropolis of Potentia:

1. Late Republican 200–25 B.C.
2. Early Imperial 25 B.C.–50 A.D.
3. High Imperial 50–200 A.D.
4. Middle Imperial 200–300 A.D.
5. Late Imperial 300–400 A.D.

We may assume that the northern necropolis dates from the time of the foundation in 184 B.C.; Tomb 116 with the small Greco-Italic amphora may date from this period. The latest evidence for the chronology of the cemetery are the Africana II D amphora (Tomb X bis), an undefined coin of the fourth century A.D. (Tomb 278), and a coin of Constantius II and Constantius Gallus struck in Nicomedia in the period 357–364 A.D. (Tomb 323). There exists, however, a large number of graves that could be more recent, although it is not possible to ascertain this because they were devoid of burial goods.

This study has been affected by the destruction of a substantial part of the necropolis by modern industrial extraction, and, even if the excavator's careful publication can count as a model for her time, there are still too many incomplete descriptions of the tombs. Furthermore, the chronology of some of the tombs needs to be revised through a renewed study of the material.

Amphorae being reused appear in all five periods, but they are rare in the late republican and early Imperial periods, except as building material. We distinguished five levels in the reuse of amphorae in the northern necropolis. The first level has, in fact, little to do with funerary practices; the only relationship is that fragments of locally made amphorae are massively used as building material for monuments and enclosure walls. Strong arguments can be advanced for the existence of an earlier amphora production site located where part of the northern necropolis was installed, or at least at a place nearby. It provides not only a reasonable explanation for the massive use of amphora fragments in funeral construction, but also for the enormous quantities of fragments scattered around, representing most probably residual dumps.

Amphorae as burial goods are exceptional. Only one case is certain, and it should be noted that the grave in question is of the republican era, and the small Greco-Italic amphora a rare specimen. In the second case, a grave of the early Imperial period, the locally made amphora could also be residual, or reused as a grave marker or as a libation device. When reused as a cover or coffin for an inhumation, the majority of the amphorae reused date from the middle and the late Imperial periods. The exception is a republican grave with at least two locally made Lamboglia 2 amphorae. There is a preference for African amphorae, probably because of the practicality of their large size, but possibly also because they were a common import. All of the inhumations are child burials.

The fourth level of reuse as a libation device is the most recurrent. These libation installations with amphorae are typical for the first and the second centuries A.D. and probably started, or at least became customary, in the Neronian or Flavian ages. Apart from one locally made Dressel 2–4, all are imported amphorae of Italian and Aegean origin. This is only partly explained by the fact that local production stopped at the end of about A.D. 100. It should indeed be noted that in general, although their shape is not inappropriate, locally made amphorae are rarely reused in specific funeral practices, with the exception maybe as grave markers. Why is there only one Dressel 2–4 amphora, and why are Dressel 6A and Dressel 6B amphorae absent? We have no explanation for this. The fact that the majority used to be transport vessels for wine may give them a Dionysiac symbolic meaning. Referring to the discussion on the different contents of the Baetican Haltern 70 amphorae, it is possible that the 'funnel mouth' amphorae also might have functioned as wine amphorae. The absence of olive-oil amphorae, North Italian, and locally made Dressel 6B, is striking and puzzling. The possible Dionysiac symbolic meaning of wine amphorae could be part of the explanation. Alternatively, the absence of local Dressel 6B is connected with the problem of the absence of locally made amphorae in general. Dressel 20 olive-oil amphorae (as well as the other Baetican

amphorae like Haltern 70 and Dressel 7–10) are not very common in the Adriatic, and if occurring (for example, one wall fragment in the Ghent University survey), their presence is to be explained by specific attraction poles such as the military installations in Illyria, Noricum and Pannonia. Their globular shape, however, was probably not appropriate for pouring libations. Finally, it should be noted that apart from the olive-oil amphorae, those reused in the northern necropolis could simply reflect the types in circulation in Potentia. Considering the variety of amphorae types circulating in the Adriatic (Toniolo 1991), this may not be the case. Only extensive research on amphorae from the excavations of the town could give any clues.

Apart from the fact that they are wine vessels selected for their possible symbolic meaning, North Italian Forlimpopoli amphorae were a very common import, which offers a part explanation for their preponderance. The appreciable number of Aegean wine amphorae could be explained by the centuries-old Greek presence in the region (Ancona and Numana are only a short distance away), and the traditional trade contacts of the Adriatic with the Eastern Mediterranean. Two documents can possibly shed more light on the Greek roots of a part of the population in the high Imperial period. One funeral inscription mentions the Greek names of three women, all apparently of servile origin: Ionis, Licetis, and Arsinoe (CIL IX, 6382; Paci 2000: 104). More striking is a fragment of a schist (make-up?) plaquette with incised Greek letters forming a magic text, discovered in Tomb 22 of the northern necropolis (Mercando 1974: 194; Paci 2000: 104). Finally, it is opportune to reiterate the occurrence of two rare amphora types, the exceptional Dressel 35 (probably used for wine), and the ‘Grado wreck’ type. We currently have no explanation for the reuse of this latter small fish sauce amphora.

The fact that the amphorae were placed upside down possibly acknowledges the underworld. There is also the recurrent phenomenon that in a grave, together with one or more amphorae, a second libation device formed by two *imbrices* was regularly installed. Does this refer to specific rites at different moments? It is not clear when and why the libation rite disappeared. The last examples with a libation device are four tombs, three of which contain coins of Faustina the Elder, and the fourth a coin of Antoninus Pius, giving *termini post quem* of A.D. 139–140. All are cremation burials with two North Italian Forlimpopoli, one undefined fish-sauce type, and one Aegean Knossos 19 amphorae.

The third century A.D. is an ill-documented period for the region, a situation that is also reflected in the northern necropolis. Only three tombs can be assigned to this century: one is dated with a coin of Maximinus (295–299 A.D.), while the other two through the presence of Empoli amphorae. All are inhumations and do not have burial goods, thereby demonstrating the same pattern as the tombs in the next century. A coin of Gordianus (238–244 A.D.), although interesting for its presence on the cemetery, was most probably a loose find. In our opinion it did not belong to Tomb 2, a cremation burial, as suggested by Mercado, as the precise find spot is unclear, and the heavily disturbed burial goods (scant fragments of a glass *balsamarium* and of a thin walled vessel) suggest a date of the first or second century A.D. approximately. The disappearance of the libation device, the burial goods, and also of the cremation rite seems to show a change in relationships with the deceased. Presumably this is related to new beliefs under influence of neoplatonism and the oriental religions that became strongly rooted from the third century A.D. onwards. On the other hand, neither in the third, nor in the fourth century A.D. is there any evidence of Christianity in the northern necropolis.

That amphorae were sometimes reused as grave markers is a valuable hypothesis suggested by some indirect evidence, but at this stage of our research, there is no direct proof since the cemetery lacks intact upper layers. Apparently, there is no evidence that the amphorae were

reused for housing the ashes of the deceased, so in the case of the northern necropolis there is no need to create this sixth level of reuse of amphorae.

It is our aim in the near future to refine the chronology of the tombs and the amphorae themselves, and to work out a spatial analysis of the amphorae in the northern necropolis. It will be essential to control the finds in the storerooms at Ancona. A future study of the amphora types from the excavations of Potentia is necessary for a comparison. Such studies will enable a comparison with cemeteries where the reuse of amphorae is attested. Finally, we hope that this work can attract attention to the potential of Potentia (if we may say so) as a promising site for the study of locally made, as well as imported amphorae, in different contexts, and from the point of view of different methods. Indeed, Potentia offers the unique situation where amphorae can be studied in production, export, import, consumption, reuse, and residuality with material from surveys of production, urban and rural sites, and from the excavation of a considerable urban centre.

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