Summary. This paper is the biography of a single piece of pottery found in a tomb in Sardinia. The form is one that is common in Levantine sites in the Mediterranean in the Early Iron Age, but this single vessel, its history, context, and form, allows a greater story to be told: it points to a second wave of Levantine exploration and colonization – probably Tyrian – that built upon a Euboean–northern Phoenician initial phase in the eighth century BC.

INTRODUCTION

The vessels known as ‘mushroom-lipped jugs’ are often referred to as the Phoenician ‘calling card’ and are known from Early Iron Age contexts all over the Mediterranean from the Levant to as far west as Morocco (Pritchard 1970, 17). These vessels have had a small part in the considerable research conducted in recent decades into Phoenician ceramics in Cyprus and the Levant. James Pritchard at Sarepta and Patricia Bikai in Tyre and Cyprus have attempted to define a Phoenician ceramic chronology and, to a certain extent, typology. The results of excavations at numerous sites in the Levant have also been informative, such as those at Tell Abu Hawam and Tell Keisan (Bikai 1987; 1978b; Anderson 1988; Briend and Humbert 1980; Hamilton 1935). But although these vessels are almost ubiquitous in graves from Phoenician sites in the west, particularly from the seventh century onwards, it is to be lamented that the study of these peculiar and often very fine vessels has been limited. Their presence is noted, their form used to assign vague dates, and their decoration described. Often little else is considered worthy of comment.

Among the many such vessels found in the western Phoenician sphere is a red-slipped example from the necropolis of San Giorgio di Portoscuso in Sardinia (Fig. 1). This vessel, one among many held in store in the Museo Nazionale in Cagliari (inv. 160858), has like most of its type received little attention. It has been recognized as an early example, probably from the eighth century. It is evidently of good quality and from a typical Phoenician cremation tomb of the period (Bernardini 1997, 55). This vessel, however, presents some curious characteristics. It is an early example of its type in the west, its quality is quite exceptional and even if its features conform to the characteristic shape of these vessels, there are no exact parallels in east or west. Moreover its context in an early grave in a minor Phoenician settlement in Sardinia warrants discussion. A thorough study of the vessel, in short, can illustrate that it is more than just another typical jug from a typical tomb. An investigation into its history – a cultural
biography – will show that it is in its own way unique, and capable of telling us a great deal about early Phoenician exploration and colonization of the west.

THE CONTEXT

At the site of San Giorgio di Portoscuso an early necropolis has demonstrated the antiquity of Phoenician settlement on the mainland near Sulcis (Bernardini 1997). The site was discovered along the low sandy coast that lies just south of the modern town of Portoscuso and not too far from the modern area of industrial expansion at Portovesme. The excavation was undertaken after preparations for building in the area necessitated the removal of sand dunes, partially damaging a large section of contextual material but uncovering a number of graves. In 1990 a rescue excavation was conducted in the sandy construction zone which covered an area of about 40 m by 5 m and went as deep as 6 m. This excavation uncovered six tombs, some in poor condition, belonging to a Phoenician necropolis.

San Giorgio is close to a small headland to the south of the indentation of Porto de Sa Linna. It stands near a marshy area – probably larger in antiquity than it is today – that lies between Su Stangioni and the lagoon of Boi Čerbus. It would seem likely that the lagoon of

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1 This photograph, with the others from Portoscuso, is from Bernardini 1997.
Boi Cerbus extended much further north than it does today, thus extending somewhat the headland of Sa punta e s’aliga and providing a sheltered anchorage from north-westerly and west winds, which are often the prevailing winds in this region. The position, therefore, would appear to be typical (in miniature) of Phoenician settlements consisting of headland with a sheltered sandy bay in what is now the Boi Cerbus. Moreover, the position of the site allows for easy access to the hinterland – possibly including the site of Monte Sirai which is only 7km distant – and the more important site of Sulcis to the south.

The tombs discovered at San Giorgio were cremations of a type often found in Phoenician sites both in the east and the west in which the incinerated remains were placed in a large vessel – usually an amphora. The vessel and the grave goods were placed in a cist made from stone slabs. The jug at the centre of this study was from the most interesting of the tombs from this small necropolis (tomb 10). It contained a burial in an amphora (see below) and was accompanied by some typical ceramic forms placed in a circular cist made from stones: the mushroom-lipped jug, a plate, a trefoil mouthed oinochoe, a one-handled mug and what appears to be a lump of silver.

This tomb would appear to be typical of Phoenician burials from the eighth and early seventh centuries. There are numerous examples from other Phoenician sites in the west, such as Motya, Carthage and Rachgoun (Tusa 1972; Lancel 1982, tomb A143; Gras et al. 1991). There is some suggestion that this was a type of burial particularly popular among western Phoenicians, but since there are some similar burials at Khaldeh, Achziv, and Athlit, and other
cremations not dissimilar at Tambourit, Tell er-Rashidiyeh, Azor, Tell Arqa, Tell Sukas (as well as sites on the southern coast of Palestine which may be relevant), it would seem more sensible to regard these burials as having their origin in the east (Gras et al. 1991; Saidah 1966; Johns 1938; Chéhab 1983). The fact that these burials in the east are more sporadic than in the colonies does not necessarily mean that the practice was brought to the homeland from the western colonies – as has been suggested – or that this rite was somehow transmitted by Greeks, but is simply indicative of our lack of knowledge regarding burial in the major Phoenician centres (Bienkowski 1982; Gras et al. 1991). On the other hand, the use of rock-cut tombs in many Phoenician sites in the east as opposed to cist and amphora cremations in some of the smaller sites in Phoenicia raises the possibility that many tombs in the west may have been those of descendants of such small communities. The idea has some support in Ezekiel (27, 8–9) in which Tyre at least is presented as a meeting place for people from other cities along the coast (Gras et al. 1991, 136). It is also attractive if we consider the pressure being exerted upon hinterland sites by Assyrian campaigns in the late eighth century. It is evident that these sites bore the brunt of the brutal methods of Assyrian warfare, while the cities – such as Tyre in 734 BC – were left unscathed, probably in recognition of their commercial importance to the Assyrian empire (Markoe 2000, 42).

The material accompanying the mushroom-lipped jug consists of an amphora, a trefoil mouthed oinochoe, a one-handled mug or cooking pot, a small plate and what appears to be a lump of silver (Fig. 4). The amphora is of the type 268 as classified by P. Cintas and has a wide distribution in the central Mediterranean. Michel Gras gives 24 examples from 16 sites from Tyrrenian Italy, Sicily and North Africa (Gras 1985, 292–4). Paolo Bartoloni adds several sites in Sardinia for the same type (Bartoloni type B2) and points out that the distribution of the type seems to be centred in the southern and central Mediterranean. The majority are from Carthage, Motya and to a lesser extent Sulcis, with some also from the Canale di Sardinia, along the route

2 Bienkowski shows that it is likely that cremation had a long history in the Levant and that there is little need for external influences to explain its use in the ninth and eighth centuries there (Bienkowski 1982).
from Biserta to Cagliari and a single example in a private collection in Carbonia (Bartoloni 1988, 33). Both Gras and Bartoloni agree that this type of amphora can be dated to the end of the eighth century and the first half of the seventh century (Gras 1985, 295; Bartoloni 1988, 33). There has been some discussion about the type. William Culican noted 20 years ago that he was unable to find any Near Eastern equivalent and little has changed since, even though it is quite clear that the form derives from an earlier Canaanite jar (Culican 1982, 81; Bartoloni 1988, 33). There have been suggestions that since they are closely related to the Etruscan shape from about the same period this is evidence of the adoption of the shape by the Etruscans, possibly directly from Phoenician examples. There is also an implication that since these amphorae have been found thus far only in the west, the shape may have derived from Italic examples. Culican, however, did not consider this likely and pointed out that in early tombs at Gela both this type and definite Near Eastern examples were used before Corinthian types began to appear in the seventh century, an interesting point in itself.3

The trefoil mouthed oinochoe is of a form very common in the west. One can find numerous examples from tombs at Phoenician sites in Spain, North Africa, Sicily and Sardinia. Perhaps the best are those from Motya, Carthage, Bithia and Sulcis (Tusa 1972; Lancel 1982; Gras et al. 1991). An example from Bithia is very close in shape (Bartoloni 1983, fig. 2b). Curiously, however, there are few from the eastern Mediterranean. Patricia Bikai has noted some examples from Cyprus, but the forms on the mainland are squatter and more globular in shape (Bikai 1987, pl. XVI; Lehmann 1996, taf. 49, forms 301, 302 and 307; Anderson 1988, 211; Birmingham 1963, 26).4 The type in the west evidently underwent change from this more globular shape to a more elongated oinochoe through the seventh and sixth centuries (Fig. 5). Silver examples are known from the Italian mainland from sites in Etruria and Campania that are usually dated to the first third of the seventh century (Fig. 5).

3 The use of Levantine vessels in what are considered Greek tombs in Gela at this early date lends credence to the idea of a close relationship between Levantines and Greeks before the seventh century (Culican 1982, 81).

4 A good example, somewhat globular but not too far removed from this example, is from Tell er-Rashidiyeh (Chéhab 1983, tav. XXII, 2).
This oinochoe might, on the basis of similar examples from Motya, be dated to around 700 BC. The shape is piriform and it is red-slipped, but the slip is not of the quality of the mushroom-lipped jug and lacks the deep red, almost plum colour distinctive of the best red-slip vessels. It also shows somewhat uneven firing and a slightly rougher surface. Its carination is low on the body and it does not have the incised lines that one often finds in these examples, though the strap handle is typical. A date of around 700 BC is therefore most likely. Both Culican and Birmingham would assign the first appearance of this type in the west to the last quarter of the eighth century and because this example is not of the globular form, yet retains a reasonably good slip, it is probably not from too far into the seventh century (Culican 1982, 67; Birmingham 1963, 26). Nevertheless, a sporadic find of the same type at San Giorgio shows that the globular form had not disappeared when this necropolis was being used (Fig. 6).

The one-handled mug or olla, and the red-slipped plate are also typical of tombs in the west. The mug – surely a cooking pot – is coarse ware and has many parallels in tombs in the major Phoenician sites of the central Mediterranean. There are numerous examples from Motya and Carthage, and the excavator notes their presence in Sulcis (Tusa 1972; Lancel 1982; Bernadini 1997, Catalogue no. 39). Tracing the origins of this shape is difficult. The type does not have an apparent direct connection with types in the Levant (Lehmann 1996; Gjerstad 1948,

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5 Culican notes that by the end of the red-slip tradition, which he seems to suggest is in the seventh century, the slip has become thin and powdery and should best be described as a wash. The oinochoe has not quite reached this stage (Culican 1982, 67).
fig. LXX, 11 – cup 2). It is, of course, not impossible that the shape was used in the Levant and brought by Levantine settlers and deposited in their tombs in the west, even though parallels have not been found in the Levant, but we must consider this unlikely given the present corpus of coarse-ware pottery in the east. The similarity, on the other hand, of this shape with indigenous pottery in the central Mediterranean in the eighth century strongly suggests that it was adopted by Levantines in Sicily, Sardinia and Africa in the eighth century and became by the seventh century typical of western Phoenician burials (Bartoloni 1983).6

The plate on the other hand is a good quality burnished and red-slipped example of what is often called at Sardinian sites a ‘coppa carenata’. It has many parallels both east and west and can be dated anywhere from about 750 to 650 BC (Lehmann 1996, taf. 104).

A most interesting addition to the ceramic vessels is the lump of silver. It has been suggested that this lump is in fact the remains of an amulet corroded into an indeterminate shape (Bernardini 1997). This is possible, but considering possible parallels, unlikely. Silver amulets are rare in Sardinia and Sicily and there are none dating to the eighth or early seventh century (Höbl 1986). On the other hand, ingots of metal are attested from tombs like those at San Giorgio di Portoscuso. An amphora very similar to that from tomb 10 at San Giorgio has been found at Sant’Imbenia containing ingots of copper (Ridgway et al. 1997). The exact purpose of deposits of metal, precious or otherwise, in tombs in Sardinia from about this time is unknown.

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6 This suggests a close relationship between early Levantine settlers or traders and natives in the west.
but it is perhaps important to bear in mind the importance of silver and other metals as currency and an indicator of wealth, since it would seem that silver had no known magical or ritual characteristics (Moorey 1994, 237–8). Of course, the proximity of Portoscuso to the metal-rich region of the Iglesiente mountains – a region with a high concentration of silver-bearing lead mines – and the proximity of Sant’Imbenia with the copper-rich region of the north-west suggest a more obvious explanation.

The archaic tombs from Motya show distinct similarities with those of tomb 10 and appear to date from the same period or a little later, often with similar grave goods. Indeed, it would seem that the mushroom-lipped jug, trefoil mouthed oinochoe, one-handled mug and a cup or plate are the standard grave goods for Phoenician tombs at this period in the west. There are numerous tombs at Motya from what may be eighth century contexts, and many more from what is certainly the seventh century that are not only the same type of burial but contain virtually the same grave goods. The Motya archaic tomb no. 6 is a case in point. The amphora is of the same type as that at tomb 10 at San Giorgio, though since it has a flat base it probably dates a little later, as does the mushroom-lipped jug. The trefoil mouthed oinochoe and mug are almost identical, though in place of the plate there is a skyphos of Greek type (Figs. 7–8) (Tusa 1972, 68).

What then can be said about the context of the mushroom-lipped jug? The burial is of a type known from the Levant and from numerous Phoenician sites in the west. The grave goods are typical of western Phoenician burials, particularly from the central Mediterranean, but they do have some precedents in the east. The burial recalls tombs in sandy deposits from coastal sites in the Levant, but the grave goods seem closer to inland Levantine sites. The necropolis is situated close to a headland and giving good access to the mineral-rich area of south-west Sardinia. The date of the burials in the necropolis would point to the late eighth or early seventh century. All this suggests a Levantine settlement on the headland with a nearby necropolis. The lack of evidence for later burials or settlement indicates that this was either a trading post that

Figure 7
Mozia Tomba arcaica 6.
was later abandoned or a settlement similar to Monte Sirai set up to secure Phoenician access to the minerals trade in the region.

THE VESSEL

The mushroom-lipped jug was reconstructed from many joining fragments to produce an almost complete vessel. Small sections of the body and lip were missing, but the overall shape of the base, body, neck, handle and lip is quite clear from what remained.

The vessel is 16.6 cm high and has a discoid base that is rather higher than usual with this type of jug. The body is globular and quite thin-walled, almost perfectly spherical except that the angle at the top is faintly less, creating a very slight shoulder. The neck is cylindrical for its entire length, unlike most examples of mushroom-lipped jugs that have the neck widening at the middle and then tapering to the lip. Just below halfway is a relief ring to which is attached the handle, rather small, the other end of which is attached to the shoulder of the vessel. This ring suggests that the vessel is derived from metal prototypes, though the connection was probably remote. The neck terminates in a wide ‘mushroom’ lip, flat and tapering towards a fine edge. As such it constitutes a ‘true’ mushroom lip as opposed to what Bikai calls the earlier squared-rim (Bikai 1978a, 49). Pritchard considers the shape of the lip curious and that it ‘did not facilitate the pouring of a liquid such as oil, wine or water’ (Pritchard 1970, 20). On the contrary, the lip could have functioned much as did similar lips for Greek aryballoi and would indeed be well suited to such a task as the application of oil to the body. One might speculate upon whether Corinthians took the wider lip of their seventh century aryballoi from just such a shape, either directly or indirectly.
The clay contains inclusions typical of production both in the Levant and at western Phoenician sites with inclusions of both black and white, the latter usually being crushed shell. The fabric is fired to a reddish-yellow on the surface with a slight greyish tinge inside. The vessel has been burnished: wheel-burnished on the body and hand-burnished on the neck. The slip has adhered well, only flaking off in very small parts of the lower body. The colour is brick-red tending towards a darker almost plum-red shade. There is what appears to be some fire damage on the lower body and neck, producing a black tinge on the red-slip, which may have occurred during the cremation. The overall result is an excellent quality, smooth red finish that may have its origins in attempts to emulate copper vessels.

Mushroom-lipped jugs with a globular body and cylindrical neck are rare in the west; the vast majority of such jugs are either the pear-shaped variety common in the seventh century (such as the one in tomb 6 at Motya, above) or with a globular body, but having a neck that tapers out then inwards towards the base of the lip. An example of the latter was discovered from the same necropolis, but did not have a secure context (Fig. 9).

The jug in Figure 9 has a very similar body shape, though the quality of the slip is a little poorer and the neck is of a different type. The closest parallels to these vessels are from...
Kition where Bikai has published two bichrome mushroom-lipped jugs from Temple 1 (Fig. 10). Unfortunately, the jug from Kition with the cylindrical neck does not have an intact lip, and Bikai mentions the possibility that this vessel may have had a squared-off rim, which would date the vessel considerably earlier than the late eighth century (Bikai 1981, 28). Such globular examples from the east are relatively common, but extremely rare in the west – the author has been unable to find a globular example with a cylindrical neck from a site in the west (Bikai 1978b, 35 Jug type 4; 1987, esp. no. 253; Lehmann 1996, forms 239 and 243; Peserico 1996).9

**Figure 10**  
Mushroom-lipped jugs from Kition.

Assigning a date to the mushroom-lipped jug from tomb 10 at San Giorgio, the excavator of the site, Paolo Bernardini, suggested a time around the middle of the eighth century (Bernardini 1997, 55). This date, it appears, was arrived at mainly due to the type of burial, though surely Bernardini also considered the forms of the grave goods (Bernardini 1997, 55). A number of details, however, combine to suggest a date somewhat later. Firstly, the burial is of a type that might date anywhere from the middle of the eighth through to the middle of the seventh century. Van Dommelen has shown that by this latter date the dominant burial rite in Phoenician sites in Sardinia had become inhumation (Fig. 11). Moreover, burials from sites such

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9 At least three examples of mushroom-lipped jugs have been found in Spain, and one at Carthage, which must be described as globular but are not altogether similar to the jug studied here in other respects (Stampolidis 2003, cat. 40, 44–6).
as Motya indicate that the use of amphorae had more or less disappeared by the second quarter of the seventh century and that a simple cist burial sufficed (Tusa 1972). Secondly, it has already been pointed out that the form of the oinochoe suggests a date around 700 BC, certainly not before 730 BC (Birmingham 1963, 26). Finally, the amphora would be at the earliest from around 720 BC. Examples, very similar in form, from tombs 339 (along with a Phoenician inscription) and 523 at Pithekoussai would appear to date from the end of the eighth century (Buchner and Ridgway 1993, Tomba 339-1, 523-1).

It has been pointed out that red-slipped mushroom-lipped jugs usually have pear-shaped bodies with an angular shoulder, and that globular jugs almost always are bichrome; this vessel is an exception (Bikai 1981, 28). As such the dating of the vessel poses considerable problems. The globular shape is known from Tyre strata I–III, loosely dated to about 740–700 BC, and from Cyprus contexts that Bikai places in her Kition horizon of 750? to 700 BC (Bikai 1978b, 35; 1987). The example closest to the jug from San Giorgio – that from Kition Temple 1 – has been regarded as possibly fitting in with material from Tyre V/IV to Tyre III/II and that the globular shape may date from before the middle of the eighth century to as far as 700 BC (Bikai 1981, 33). The latter date is confirmed by a globular mushroom-lipped jug found at Kition with an inscription dating it to the end of the eighth century (Masson 1971).

The fact that the mushroom-lipped jug from San Giorgio is red-slipped makes it exceptional. All the globular jugs thus far mentioned in comparison are bichrome, while the good quality red-slipped examples from Tyre III, Kition, Carthage and Motya are the pear-
shaped variety and can be dated from the end of the eighth century into the first half of the seventh. There are also many bichrome pear-shaped examples from Motya that can also be dated to this latter period, which does not make the situation easier. Red-slip cannot be used to date the vessel since this style (Gjerstad’s Red Slip II) has a history going back well into the ninth century, and continues well into the seventh before it deteriorates into the wash mentioned by Culican (Tusa 1972; Lancel 1982; Gras et al. 1991; Birmingham 1963, 25).

The possibilities for dating this mushroom-lipped jug are:

1. That this is a globular jug from the same horizon as those from Kition 3 and Tyre IV, but demonstrating a very early fine lip and the use of red-slip before most examples in the west. The accompanying material from the tomb may, unless this jug was kept as an heirloom, thus require their chronologies pushed back by up to 50 years. This would date the vessel to about 750 BC.
2. That the jug is an early transitional type, showing characteristics of Kition 3 and Tyre III, thus placing the vessel with the earlier red-slip tradition in the west. This would place the vessel in the third quarter of the eighth century.
3. That the vessel belongs firmly in Tyre III. The fine lip and quality slip support this hypothesis. There is also the supporting evidence of the accompanying material from the tomb. This would date the jug to the last quarter of the eighth century.

Although there is no reason to dismiss the possibility that this vessel was an heirloom – a possibility too often dismissed – the third option remains the most likely. While the jug may be of a globular shape that usually places it earlier in the sequence of mushroom-lipped vessels, it has numerous characteristics which place it in the late eighth century. Its fine lip and good quality red-slip suggest a date in the last quarter of the eighth century, even if its globular body and cylindrical neck might suggest a date around 740 BC – transitional from Tyre IV to Tyre III. These characteristics when combined with the chronological pointers of the other grave goods place this vessel in the last quarter of the eighth century.

THE ORIGIN OF THE VESSEL

Although this mushroom-lipped jug has not previously been published in detail, Paolo Bernardini described it, on the basis of the quality of the slip, as most likely to have been an import from the Levant (Bernardini 1997, 55). This is an understandable deduction given the rarity of such quality red-slip in the west, but it might be premature. Production sites in the central Mediterranean cannot be discounted. Sardinia itself is a possibility. Bartoloni considered some transport amphora from Pithekoussai to have been products of Phoenician colonies in Sardinia (T. 342, T. 350, T. 402, T. 487, T. 489, T. 523) (Docter and Niemeyer 1994, 110). These amphorae, however, were considered by Docter and Niemeyer more likely to be Carthaginian. Upon inspecting a number of the red-slipped plates and bowls from Pithekoussai, these scholars were convinced that these too were produced at Carthage (Docter and Niemeyer 1994, 111).

There can be little doubt that Carthage was a centre of pottery production at least by the seventh century (Niemeyer and Docter 1993). Other production centres in Phoenician colonies in the west must also be considered likely, and proof is available from analyses of fabrics from Carthage which show material imported from Spain (Vegas 1989, 224). Nevertheless, the ceramics from the German excavations at the Decumanus Maximus indicate
that imports from the Levant continued to arrive in the west in a fairly continuous flow from the eighth century down well into the third century (Niemeyer and Docter 1993, 216–17). This site also contains an amount – usually less than 10 per cent of the total – of red-slip, as well as small quantities of Greek and Italian wares (Niemeyer and Docter 1993, 216–17). From the recent excavations at Carthage, however, there is little in the way of red-slip mushroom-lipped jugs. Those discovered appear to be seventh century examples with the neck ridge incised and the lip smaller than in the examples from San Giorgio. There are no globular jugs of the type we are discussing here (Vegas 1999, 414–15). Nor are there parallels at Carthage for the deep red of the slip at San Giorgio, and most examples in the west, and even in Cyprus, have a colour closer to an orange-red that seems to lead to the orange wash of the later seventh century (Figs. 12 and 5a, above).

It is notoriously difficult to ascertain the origin of pottery of Levantine manufacture or inspiration. Bikai notes that Cypriot wares can be recognized in the mainland Levant, but that the reverse is not the case: deciding what is mainland Phoenician and what is made locally in Cyprus is very difficult indeed and can often be noticed only by the rarity of certain forms (Bikai 1981, 23). Elsewhere the same author states that Phoenicians may have been great craftsmen, but that their ceramics were their poorest quality material ‘with few exceptions’ (Bikai 1987, 48). This mushroom-lipped jug must be seen as one of these exceptions. It is, without a doubt, a magnificent piece of the potter’s craft.

10 Dated to the eighth century, though this date would appear a little early (Markoe 2000, pls. XI and XII).
This is not to say that good quality slip is unknown in the west. There are oinochoai from Motya that appear to have the same deep red slip (Tusa 1972, esp. tomb 6). There are also plates from Sardinia that show a similar quality (Bernardini 1995, fig. 16). But it is the rarity of this quality that is informative. It may appear overly simplistic to suggest that because there are few deep-red slipped vessels in the west that these vessels must have been imported from the east – because these are quite rare in the east also – but even if an expert potter had relocated himself in a western colony, to expect that this potter would have been immediately capable of finding both the market and the raw materials to copy exactly the best of red-slip is to stretch credulity. These were evidently not mass-produced items. It therefore seems most likely that since we have more examples of quality red-slip in the east, that this was the source. One might lend credence to the idea of western production, but without microscopic examination and analysis of the fabric it would seem most likely that Bernardini had it right at the beginning: this is probably an import from the Levant.

MUSHROOM-LIPPED JUGS AS A ‘PHOENICIAN CALLING CARD’ AND EARLY PHOENICIAN SETTLEMENT IN SARDINIA AND THE TYRRHENIAN

Is it a good example of a Phoenician ‘calling card’? To answer this question we should first ask ourselves what we mean by Phoenician. There is a good case for differentiating between northern and southern Phoenician zones in the Levant. Sidonians and north Syrians may have been the earliest ‘Phoenicians’ in the west, operating in a cooperative relationship with Greeks and locals, while Tyrians established colonies and kept a greater distance between themselves and – at least – the Greeks (Fletcher 2004; Peckham 1998). To call north Syrians ‘Phoenician’ may appear to stretch a point, but given the wealth of evidence for a close relationship between the cities of Sidon and Byblos on the one hand and those of north Syria on the other, it remains no more than a question of terminology (Fletcher 2004). What, after all, is the difference between a north Syrian and a Phoenician? Both are artificial constructs. It is also clear that the division continues to cause confusion among modern scholars about whether to separate these two groups or keep them as one, which is why we usually talk of ‘Levantines’ rather than ‘Phoenicians’ and ‘north Syrians’. When Ridgway talks about amphora 575-1 from Pithekoussai with its Aramaic inscriptions he speaks of it as possibly being made at either Al Mina or at Ialysos, ‘held by later Rhodian historians to be the most important Phoenician settlement’ (italics added; Ridgway 1992, 113). Annette Rathje describes Al Mina as Phoenician (Rathje 1979, 181; cf. Culican 1982; 79). Perhaps north Syria was Phoenician, but if so we must see it as northern Phoenician and associate coastal north Syria with the northern Phoenician cities.

There are definitely different patterns of early and later material that support the proposition that northern Levantines were operating in cooperation with Greeks and natives. This is apparent in the nature of that material, associated goods, and in the places where they have been found. The Phoenician material at Pithekoussai, for example, is not quite the same as contemporary material from other Phoenician sites. Among all the Levantine material in the first publication of the site there are just two mushroom-lipped jugs (T. 272 and T. 545) and these are of the pear-shaped variety evidently from the early seventh century (Buchner and Ridgway 1993). On the other hand, there are numerous oil bottles from earlier contexts of the type with narrow mouths and globular bodies, which Niemeyer considered imports from the Levant (Culican 1970; Docter and Niemeyer 1994, 112). Indeed, Culican has noted that these bottles are often at the very earliest levels of Phoenician settlements in the west (Culican 1970,
5). At Pithekoussai there is also the example of the ‘face’ aryballos (T. 215) and several plain aryballoi of the same shape but without the face (e.g. T. 166) which have their closest parallels in north Syria and Cilicia, but have not been discovered in other Phoenician sites in the west (Coldstream 1969; Buchner and Ridgway 1993; Docter and Niemeyer 1994, 112; Lehmann 1996, taf. 40, form 242). Lyre Player seals are also present which have been shown by Boardman to have had a distribution quite different from scarabs and seals associated with ‘Phoenicians’, and are agreed to have an origin in the northern Levant and north Syria (Boardman 1990a; 1990b; 1994; Docter and Niemeyer 1994, 112). Finally, there are the Aramaic inscriptions (Ridgway 1992, 113).

Furthermore, if one looks at the sort of material that can be associated with early Euboean pottery in the central Mediterranean, one often finds Levantine objects. At Sant’Imbenia we have some of the earliest Euboean material in the west associated with eighth century Samaria ware and Nuragic material. At Pontecagnano the earliest Phoenician object is an oil bottle of the narrow mouthed variety – already mentioned at Pithekoussai – among the large number of Euboean vessels (Fig. 13).

At Sulcis there are similar oil bottles, tripod bowls, oinochoai and plates in red-slip, as well as Euboean vessels (Bernardini 1991). A similar picture is evident from Tharros in the late eighth century. One might also note that the distribution of so-called ‘pre-colonial’ finds is entirely different from the locations of the later Phoenician colonies (Fig. 14). Van Dommelen puts forth a convincing argument for Sardinia having a native circuit of trade beginning in at least the late ninth century and continuing through to the sixth, and a Phoenician circuit not necessarily related to it (Van Dommelen 1998, 71–85).
There are three important points to be made here. The first is that the early Euboean material and the early Phoenician material are evidently closely associated with each other. The second is that the sites with this material are often inclusive of indigenous material, most evidently at Sant’Imbenia and Pithekoussai, and the last is that at none of these sites does one find mushroom-lipped jugs before the seventh century – and very few even then. If we can believe that Sidon and Byblos were aligned with the coastal cities of northern Syria, while Tyre looked to Egypt, Arabia and the south (Peckham 1998, 348; 1992), and that the Sidonians, moreover, would appear to have kept a relatively low profile and to have been content to work with locals wherever they went: ‘they did not establish colonies or even build settlements, but

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merely settled among the natives’ (Peckham 1998, 349), then we have a tantalizing possibility that these were the people who were responsible for the early Phoenician presence in the central Mediterranean. If we add to this the evidence that Euboeans in the Aegean, in north Syria and most likely also in the west at sites such as Pithekoussai, may have been working in cooperation with Sidonians and following their method of discretion in their trading ventures, then the possibility becomes more and more likely (Winter 1995). This is particularly the case when we contrast Tyrian ventures which were characterized by little or no assimilation, a more eclectic style, a deliberate maintenance of their individuality and the foundation of colonies (Peckham 1998, 353).

When one looks at the Tyrian colonies in the west, mushroom-lipped jugs are indeed quite common. We have already noted the large number at Motya, Carthage and a number of other sites, but these are really quite ubiquitous from the late eighth century onwards (Bartoloni 1983; Peserico 1996). The point is that these jugs are all from Phoenician colonies, that is, Tyrian colonies. And it should be noted that, with the exception of Carthage, few of these Tyrian colonial sites have had Euboean pottery found in them.

The time frame for the change between the early distribution of Phoenician material and the later material is also instructive: it occurs precisely at the time when Assyrian pressure was being exerted upon the northern Levant. It is clear that north Syria and Phoenicia came under increasing pressure from the Assyrians in the second half of the eighth century. This was particularly the case for Syrian and inland Phoenician sites. All coastal sites north of Byblos seem to have been made into an Assyrian province by 738 BC. It is noteworthy that the major Phoenician sites were spared Assyrian attack during this period, even after the revolt of Tyre in 734 BC – one can imagine, however, that smaller sites would not have been so fortunate (Markoe 2000, 41–3). Even so, it seems too much of a coincidence that Sidon, the chief city of the northern Phoenicians, was destroyed in 677 BC when Esarhaddon overcame the revolt of Levantine cities after the assassination of Sennacherib and that after this date there is a distinct change in the distribution of Levantine material in the west (Fletcher 2004; Markoe 2000, 43). It is to be noted that while Sidon was destroyed and all the cities of the Levant and eastern Anatolia were brought under Assyrian control, Tyre was rewarded with the southern portion of Sidon’s mainland territory (including Sarepta) and added these to holdings in the Akko plain (Markoe 2000, 43). Quite clearly, Tyre had by the middle of the seventh century become the dominant Phoenician city. Tyre’s policies of colonization in the western Mediterranean meant that ‘the Phoenicians... began to go overseas’ and the region of greatest importance to them became the western Mediterranean (Peckham 2001, 37). The point is that it was the seventh century that was the heyday of ‘Phoenician’ colonization in the west, even if some major sites had been established beforehand in the eighth century (Niemeyer 1990).

Related to this is that while there is evidence for cooperation between Greeks and Phoenicians before the seventh century, there is very little indeed after it. Corinthian pottery can be found in Phoenician sites, indeed, at Motya and Carthage most tombs would seem to have at least one piece of Corinthian pottery (Tusa 1972; Lancel 1982). No evidence, however, for Levantines and Greeks seemingly living together at settlements like Pithekoussai has yet been found for the seventh century – or later.

What all this evidence points towards is that mushroom-lipped jugs would seem for the greater part to be not so much a Phoenician calling card but a Tyrian calling card. They appear in largest numbers in the seventh century in Tyrian colonies, but are rare in the Phoenician settlements of the west before that date.
Why then is the material from San Giorgio so early? Two possibilities among the many available come to mind. The first is that the nature of the vessel – globular, high quality slip, and of a rare type in comparison to the ubiquitous pear shape in Tyrian colonies – suggests that this may have been the grave of a traveller from the northern Levant. Unfortunately, however, there is no evidence that globular shapes can be associated with northern Phoenicians. The shape is used throughout the Levant; if anything it is found more often in the south (Lehmann 1996, taf. 40–1). Nor can we associate the type of burial with either northern or southern Phoenicians. The other possibility is that the site is an early Phoenician settlement of the so-called ‘second wave’ of colonization.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that there were phases of Phoenician activity in the central Mediterranean. There may have been what is often called a pre-colonial phase, in which one should consider the cooperative ventures of Greeks and Phoenicians, particularly Euboeans and northern Phoenicians, into which one might position some of the evidence from the Aegean (since there is, when one considers it carefully, nothing from Lefkandi that precludes it being a Phoenician trading station among Euboean natives). The activities of this pre-colonial phase would have overlapped with the first wave of colonization at sites such as Sulcis, Tharros, and Nora. The fact that there is a quantity of Corinthian, Euboean and Pithecusan material at Sulcis and Tharros does not invalidate the hypothesis, but supports the contention that these sites may have been Sidonian before they were Tyrian (Peckham 1998, 352; Bernardini 1993, 61–8; Docter and Niemeyer 1994; Ridgway 1992, 111–18). The ‘second wave’ is said to have been concerned with the establishment of secondary settlements in the vicinity of the earlier sites, presumably to secure contacts with the interior (Van Dommelen 1998, 81). The example often given is that of Monte Sirai. Established in the first half of the seventh century, this site is described as a stronghold, probably linked to Sulcis, securing the coastal plain of Palmas and the Cixerri valley and thus exerting control over the rich mineral deposits of the southern Iglesiente mountains (Bartoloni 1995; Bartoloni et al. 1992). Other such ‘second wave’ colonies included Othoca near Tharros, Bithia near Nora, and possibly Villasimius also associated with Nora – all of which might be seen as securing access to the interior and metal deposits (Barreca 1983, 296–8; Marras 1991). Bernardini assumes that San Giorgio is another of these sites, associated with Sulcis to secure the region of the Iglesiente mountains (Bernardini 1997; Tronchetti 1995, 721, 724).

If this was indeed the case, then San Giorgio di Portoscuso is the earliest of such ‘second wave’ colonies: a late eighth century settlement by Tyrian colonists securing the territory around Sulcis for their trade with the interior. The fact that Monte Sirai was established somewhat later may give an explanation for the apparent brevity of the establishment.

One can easily imagine a Levantine traveller, having fled the disturbances of his homeland, possibly from an inland site, making his way to a major Phoenician city and from there to the west. Seeking his fortune in Sardinia, he may have found his end at a small settlement newly established by Tyrians from Sulcis to secure access to the mineral-rich interior of the island and was buried with those vessels considered most important and fitting for his funeral, vessels he may have brought with him from the east. The mushroom-lipped jug was probably the best of these vessels, but may have significance beyond its original simple funerary purpose.

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12 Hans Niemeyer has mentioned a model for Phoenician expansion in the west, consisting of a ‘seafaring’ phase, a ‘settlement’ phase, and an ‘impact’ phase when Phoenician/Oriental ‘influence’ was absorbed. Thus the idea of phases in Phoenician activity is well known (Niemeyer 1990, 1984).
It might be the tip of an iceberg and point towards a large number of ‘second wave’ settlements established outside the circuit of the northern Phoenician–Euboean cooperation that preceded it.

Classical Archaeology, Main Quad
University of Sydney, NSW 2006
AUSTRALIA
Email: Richard.Fletcher@arts.usyd.edu.au

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