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Indice

AGE GROUPS AND FUNERARY SPACE: SUBADULT BURIALS IN THE VALLE TREBBA NECROPOLIS OF SPINA (END OF 6TH-3RD CENTURY BC)

Anna Serra

The city of Spina, founded in the late 6th century BC, held a pivotal role within the territorial system of the Etruscan Po Valley due to its strategic position in the Po Delta. The city is mostly known for its necropolises, about 4000 tombs dating back from the end of the 6th to the 3rd century BC. The grave goods displayed a dynamic community strongly projected towards maritime activities. The necropolis of Valle Trebba of Spina, the northernmost burial area investigated from 1922 to 1935, represents a privileged case study to observe spatial/ritual dynamics on a large scale, considering the entire "necropolis system". Thanks to an integrated approach, it is now possible to analyze gender and age categories in a diachronic perspective. This paper focuses on child funeral treatment, burial disposition and their participation in the development of the necropolis.

In 2016, during the annual excavation in the Etruscan city of Marzabotto, an infant deposition was unearthed in the urban sanctuary of *Uni* in *Regio* I (Govi 2018)[1]. This exceptional discovery shed light on the importance of child funerary practices, a field only recently investigated in Etruscan studies[2]. Consequently, a new research focus was directed primarily towards the funerary customs of the Etruscan Po Valley, given its extensive burial grounds: over 2500 tombs recovered in the necropolises of Bologna, Adria, and Valle Trebba at Spina (fig. 1), which are at present the subject of study by the Chair of Etruscology at the University of Bologna (Gaucci, Morpurgo, Pizzirani 2018: 653-655).

This contribution focuses on the spatial configuration of the Etruscan Po Valley necropolis, especially considering the arrangement of age categories within the burial grounds and the subadult burial layout[3]. In international archeological research, the spatial analysis of child burials has a long study tradition: many authors have examined the location of infant/child depositions, their relationships with other deceased in the same community, and the symbolic value that some of these burials seem to embody[4], such as their atypi-

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[1] The research project *BIRTH (Burial/Infant/Ritual/Theme). The rituality of child death in the Etruscan world* funded by the University of Bologna through the grant *Alma Idea Grant Senior* (P.I. E. Govi) was dedicated to the analysis of this exceptional discovery.

[2] On this topic: Cuozzo 2003; Becker 2011; Tabolli 2018a; Boccuccia, Rodriguez, Trocchi 2020; Fulminante, Stoddart 2021.

[3] This paper presents the preliminary results of an ongoing PhD project of XXXIV Cycle (*Le sepolture di individui sub-*

adulti in Etruria padana fra VI-III/II sec. a.C.) at the University of Salerno with the supervision of Professor Carmine Pellegrino, whom I thank for guidance and suggestions. My sincere gratitude goes to Professor Elisabetta Govi for allowing me to study this exceptional site, to Paola Desantis, Director of the National Archaeological Museum of Ferrara, and to Professor Andrea Gaucci, who helped me through the analysis of this complex context.

[4] Many publications, international congresses and exhibitions had been dedicated to subadult funeral treatment: recently, see on this topic the sections in Lally, Moore 2011; Terranova 2014; Murphy, Le Roy 2017; Crawford, Hadley, Shepherd 2018; Tabolli 2018a; Lambrugo 2019; Boccuccia, Rodriguez, Trocchi 2020; Beaumont, Dillon, Harrington 2021. Moreover, it should be mentioned the project *EMA* (*L'enfant et la mort dans l'antiquité*) developed in 2010, which led to international conferences focused on child funeral practice across the Mediterranean Sea (Guimier-Sorbets, Morizot 2010; Nenna 2012; Hermary, Dubois 2012). More references can be found in bibliographies dedicated to the archaeology of children such as *Bibliographie* 2001 (until 2001), Marone 2017 (2001-2016) and *Children in the ancient world and the early middle ages. A bibliography* (9th edition updated to 2018) edited by V. Vuolanto, R. Aasgard and O.M. Cojocaru at the University of Oslo (online resource).

Fig. 1. The main cities of the Etruscan Po Valley (Author's elaboration based on map data from Mapbox and Open-StreetMap and their data sources).

cal deposition inside houses (on this topic, Murphy, Le Roy 2017: 6; Lillehammer 2010: 28, 33; Dasen 2010). In recent years, a spatial perspective has also been applied to Etruscan funeral studies, focusing mostly on atypical depositions recovered in inhabited areas or sanctuaries (Bartoloni, Benedettini 2007-2008; Zanoni 2012; Bonghi Jovino 2018), and on burial grounds[5].

The necropolis of Valle Trebba at Spina represents an exceptional case study to apply an integrated approach to spatial analysis and age groups. As the necropolis study is nearing conclusion, it allows us to investigate child burials in the light of the whole context, observing the relationship among various social categories (age, gender, status). In this regard, A. Muggia made the first attempt at subadult spatial analysis when study of the site had just begun (Muggia 2004a; Muggia

2004b: 164-167). More recent progress allows us to assess the topic with a systematic and diachronic approach, considering the whole "necropolis system" to highlight how gender and age affect the internal organization.

Integrated approaches to spatial analysis

The topographic reconstruction of the Valle Trebba funerary landscape has been a primary aim since the beginning of the study, in 2008-2009 (Govi 2017: 99-102). Previously, a general plan of the necropolis was published in the 1993 Exhibition Catalogue (Berti, Guzzo 1993), based on partial layouts of the excavated areas (Aurigemma 1960; Aurigemma 1965). This plan represented the first attempt to rebuild Field 52, the area with the highest burial concentration (*infra*); however, this reconstruction lacked both grave numbers and physical landscape features. Despite its limits, this plan enabled an initial analysis of the burial layout to be carried out: B. D'Agostino recognized

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[5]   Cuozzo 2003; Cuozzo, Pellegrino, D'Andrea 2004; Nizzo 2011; Piergrossi, Tabolli 2018: 18; Tabolli 2018b.
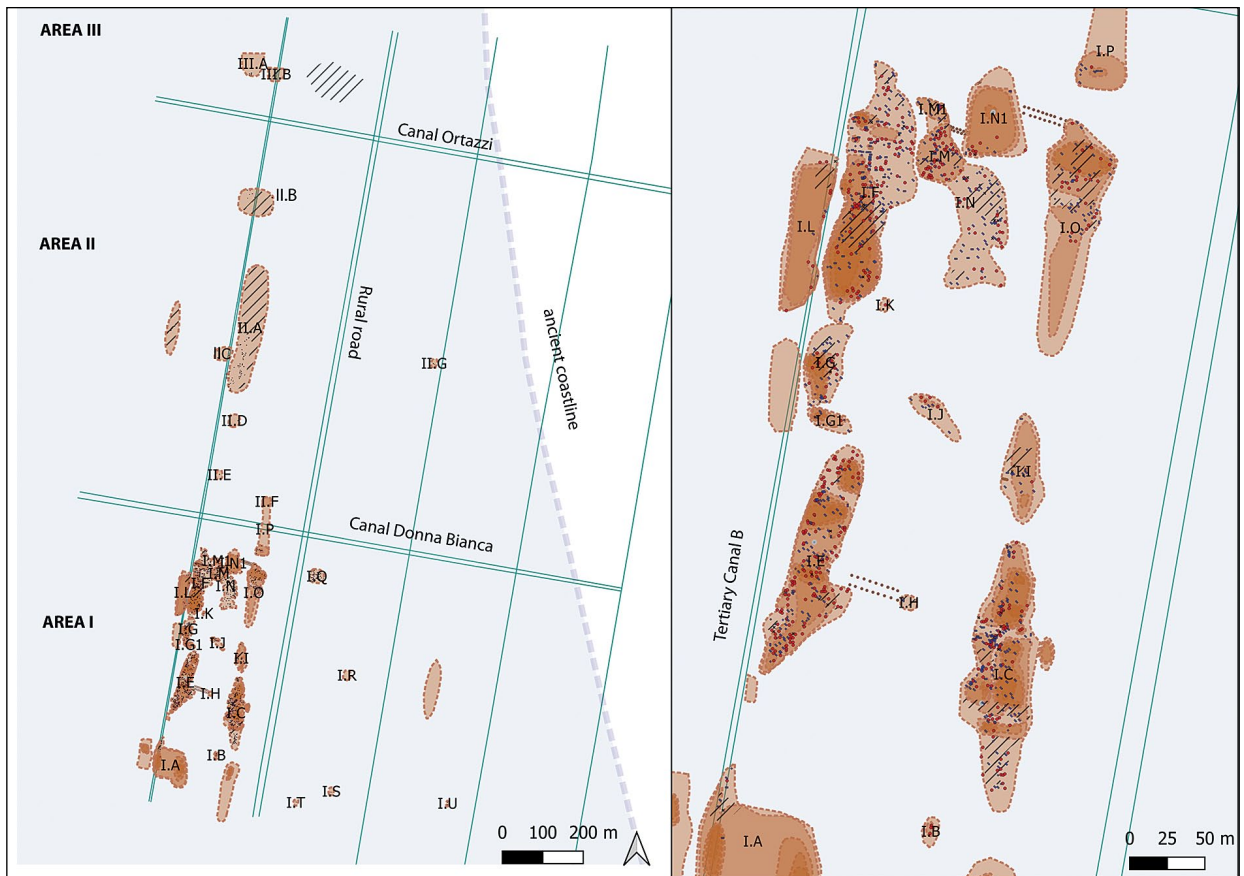
Fig. 2. Plan of Valle Trebba Necropolis; to the right, Field 52. Dashed areas indicate looting. The blue lines indicate the ponderal boundaries and channels of the 19th-century reclamation.

a spatial pattern in the necropolis, based on small clusters of tombs (D'Agostino 1998: 53-54).

Subsequent investigations of the necropolis were developed on this assumption: from the early stages of the project (Gaucci 2013-2014; Romagnoli 2014-2015), the spatial analysis was integrated into the study of funerary practices and grave goods. Thanks to the work of A. Rosa, a detailed plan of the entire funeral area was presented during an international conference in Zürich in 2012 (Romagnoli 2017)[6], overcoming the problems of the previous plan and integrating Field 52 with the other sectors. The reconstruction was based on the Ms. *Journal of Excavation*, written in 1922-1935 by F. Proni, the first assistant to the excavation. During this process, it was possible to understand that only Field 52, which has produced the largest number

of tombs (over 90%), has been extensively and systematically investigated (Gaucci 2015: 120-122, fig. 5). In contrast, the northernmost and westernmost areas of the necropolis (Areas II-III and Field 53) have been partially explored by trenches, limited to sporadic findings during the area's reclamation. In addition to the incomplete scenario, these sectors were extensively pillaged over the centuries: it is, therefore, impossible to exclude that the necropolis initially occupied a larger area, as sporadic findings suggest[7].

At the same time, great attention was paid to geomorphology. The integration among plan, documentation, and stratigraphic data has allowed us to reconstruct the ancient landscape. The tombs were located on parallel emerging sandbanks,

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[6] In this paper, the nomenclature used for areas, fields and sandbanks refers to this plan. The 198 tombs excavated by N. Alfieri between 1962 and 1969 have not been included (Alfieri 1993).

[7] See T. 1213 of a teenager (Sandbank I.T), dating back to the late phase, which was found partially looted during the night of 9th May 1936 (Ms. *Letter from F. Proni to the Superintendent*). Pillaged areas were located also in Field 52, see: Gaucci 2015, fig. 7.

placed between the sea and the town of Spina to the west (Gaucci 2015: 122-123)[8]. The geomorphological reconstruction has made it possible to enhance the "visibility" of the burials compared to other physical features (hills, sandbank ridges, or barriers) and to identify spatial continuities/discontinuities and concentration areas in a historical perspective. It was also possible to formulate considerations of the internal network, which in some cases lasted until the Roman age, evaluating how this may have conditioned the organization of the necropolis (Gaucci 2015: 124-125). The integration between the plan and the funeral practices (tomb structure, grave goods composition, and chronology) has also made it possible to reconstruct a complex hierarchical system, based on an aggregate pattern of variable clusters that indicate discontinuous dynamics. The rite and grave goods associations suggest multiple reasons for aggregation, indicating various self-representation strategies and confirming the great dynamism of the funerary area[9].

The plan's georeferencing has permitted to generate a GIS system (Gaucci, Mancuso 2016), which was then connected to the database (Zampieri 2014-2015). The final necropolis plan (fig. 2) represents the primary prerequisite for a systematic observation of the spatial dynamics.

Moreover, the collaboration established with the National Archaeological Museum of Ferrara and the Laboratory of Archaeo-Anthropology and Forensic Anthropology at the University of Ferrara enables the integration of this context with the anthropological data from the systematic study of osteological materials, preserved in 15% of the burials (Serra, Bramanti, Rinaldo c.s., with references).

A methodological foreword

Firstly, the scenario previously outlined indicates a significant difference in the achievable re-

construction of the various sectors. Only Field 52 (fig. 2, on the right) was systematically investigated during the excavation, whereas the sandbanks in Areas II and III were located due to sporadic trenches[10]. Therefore, the analysis focuses mainly on the better-known area, in order to avoid distortions dictated by a fragmentary state of knowledge.

A second observation concerns the distinction among age groups: in this study, the term "subadults" indicates individuals under 15. If the data allowed further distinction, the age categories were divided into infants (0-2/3 years), children (2/3-10/12 years), and adolescents (10/12-15 years) (Serra, Bramanti, Rinaldo c.s.). Data collected from the excavation documentation and anthropological analyses made it possible to accurately classify 20% of the burials in Field 52 by age. Besides, a comparison between the skeletal remains and the descriptions in the Ms. *Journal of Excavation* has confirmed the high correspondence (79%) of the documentation, despite some problematic cases due to misplacement and mixing after excavation.

A. Muggia had already suggested that not every child burial may have been identified during the excavations, since the osteological remains were scarcely visible in the swampy soil (Muggia 2004b: 29-35). The bioarcheological study has confirmed this hypothesis: the bones were indeed poorly preserved and severely fragmented. Moreover, the reassessment of the osteological remains leads to the identification of another 20 child burials that had not been identified during the excavations. Due to the scarcity of osteological remains, the systematic analysis of all the doubtful contexts was impossible, leading to the need to verify whether the funerary rituals could allow age classification for burials lacking anthropological data.

This analysis focused primarily on the subadult burials identified to a certain degree[11]. The comparison among anthropological data, funeral treatments, and the composition of grave goods indicated patterns characteristic of different age classes. It has therefore been possible to expand the number of tombs identified by age. This process has proved remarkably successful for inhumations, reducing undetermined burials to 30% (fig. 3); however, cremations remain mostly un-

[8]   On the evolution of the Po Delta landscape in antiquity: Balista, Bonfatti, Calzolari 2007.

[9]   Firstly, parentage and family represented the key to analyze the necropolis clusters (Muggia 2004a: 284-286; Muggia 2004b: 166-167), then systematic analyses discovered associations based on rites, ethnicity, epigraphy, or cultural associations (Gaucci, Pozzi 2009: 56; Pizzirani 2009: 45-48; Gaucci 2015: 125-133; Gaucci 2016: 186-193; Govi 2017: 101-102; Pizzirani 2017: 121-122; Gaucci, Morpurgo, Pizzirani 2018: 201; Gaucci, Tonglet 2019; Gaucci, Govi, Pizzirani 2020).

[10]   For problems related to the placement of burials 0-123 excavated before 13 August 1923 in Areas I and II, see Romagnoli 2017: 110; Gaucci, Mancuso 2016: 42.

[11]   Pillaged burials were excluded from the analysis since they did not enable an optimal reconstruction of the funerary ritual.

certain[12]. Indeed, the combustion process greatly affected the osteological remains, conditioning their identification and the written reports of the excavations lacked the information required to define age (e.g., dimension of bones, which is documented in the inhumations). Moreover, the possibility of further analysis was also affected by the different quantities of osteological remains: in fact, fewer were collected from cremated burials (nearly 5%) than from inhumations (19%).

The integrated study of the burials confirmed the underrepresentation of subadults in the necropolis, as already recorded by A. Muggia (2004b: 34): their incidence varies from a minimum of 7,8% (tombs identified through analysis and excavation) to a maximum of 10-14% (after adding the identification based on funerary treatments). The percentage is much lower than the child mortality rate for a pre-industrial society, estimated to have been 40-60% in the most recent studies (Chamberlain 2006; Scilabra 2013: 22, with references), and therefore cannot correspond directly to the number of deaths at the time. Many factors could have led to this discrepancy, such as poor osteological preservation, the excavation methodology and the documentation, which, as we have seen, did not always record the age of the deceased (on documentation problems, see Serra, Bramanti, Rinaldo c.s.). Nor is it possible to exclude the presence of differentiated ritual practices between infants and children, making it more challenging to recognize these depositions, or even the presence of a discriminated access to the funerary area. The latter hypothesis could justify the small number of infants (eight tombs) that contrasts with the expected mortality rate, which must have reached its highest level during the early years of life. Future comparison with the nearby necropolis of Valle Pega (Desantis 2017, with previous references), excavated in more recent years,
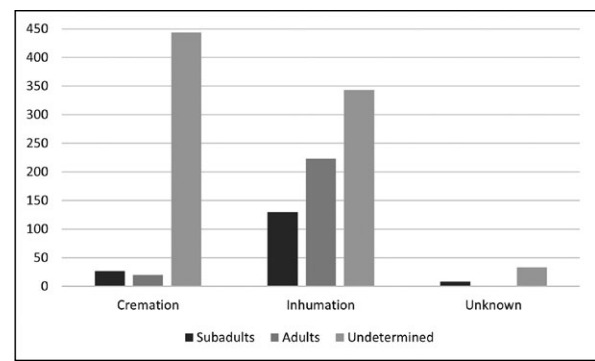

Fig. 3. Classification by age groups compared to rite selection based on the bioarcheological analyses, the excavation data, and the funeral practice. In the diagram, also pillaged tombs were considered (180 inhumations, 36 cremations) that are mostly undetermined by age.

will probably enable new considerations to be made in this regard.

Therefore, the integration of spatial analysis, ritual practices, and anthropological data represents a fundamental key to a better understanding of the norms concerning access to formal burial and internal dynamics. This analysis must necessarily be conducted in a diachronic sense to highlight changes in funeral treatments.

From the end of the 6th to the beginning of the 5th century BC: the first generations

In the earliest phase of the necropolis, the subadult presence is significantly reduced. As already noted, the oldest tombs were located on emerging sandbanks, occupying the westernmost area of Field 52 (Sandbanks I.E and I.F) in a strategic position for the internal routes (Muggia 2004: 164; Gaucci 2015: 125-133; Gaucci, Mancuso 2016: 43). The oldest burial plots were, in fact, placed along one of the main N/S canals of the necropolis (fig. 2), probably connected to a broader lagoon network, heading south towards the necropolis of Valle Pega and the town of Spina and north towards the city of Adria and the western sector of the Po basin.

The oldest burials of children, dating from the beginning of the 5th century BC, are placed in the two main clusters dated to the initial phase: T. 762 in the northern sector of Field 52 (Sandbank I.F, see fig. 2) and T. 482 in the southern sector (fig. 4). Both tombs are neither ritually nor spatially distinguishable from the other burials of the groups to which they belong, but instead, share the same strategies of self-representation as adults.

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[12]   The occurrence of cremation as funeral treatment for children is still a debated topic: recent discoveries have shed light on the increasing presence of infant and child cremations within common burial grounds both in pre-Roman Italy and in Etruria (see Lambrugo, Cattaneo 2019: 227, 235, with references). It should be mentioned that F. Berti suggested that the under-representation of child in the Spinetic necropolises could be related to the prevalence of cremation as subadult treatment (Berti 1994: 187-188). Bioarcheological analysis has confirmed the presence of some child cremations both in Valle Trebba (Serra, Bramanti, Rinaldo c.s.) and Valle Pega (Desantis 2015: 181); however, it is difficult to sustain this hypothesis in the absence of more osteological data.
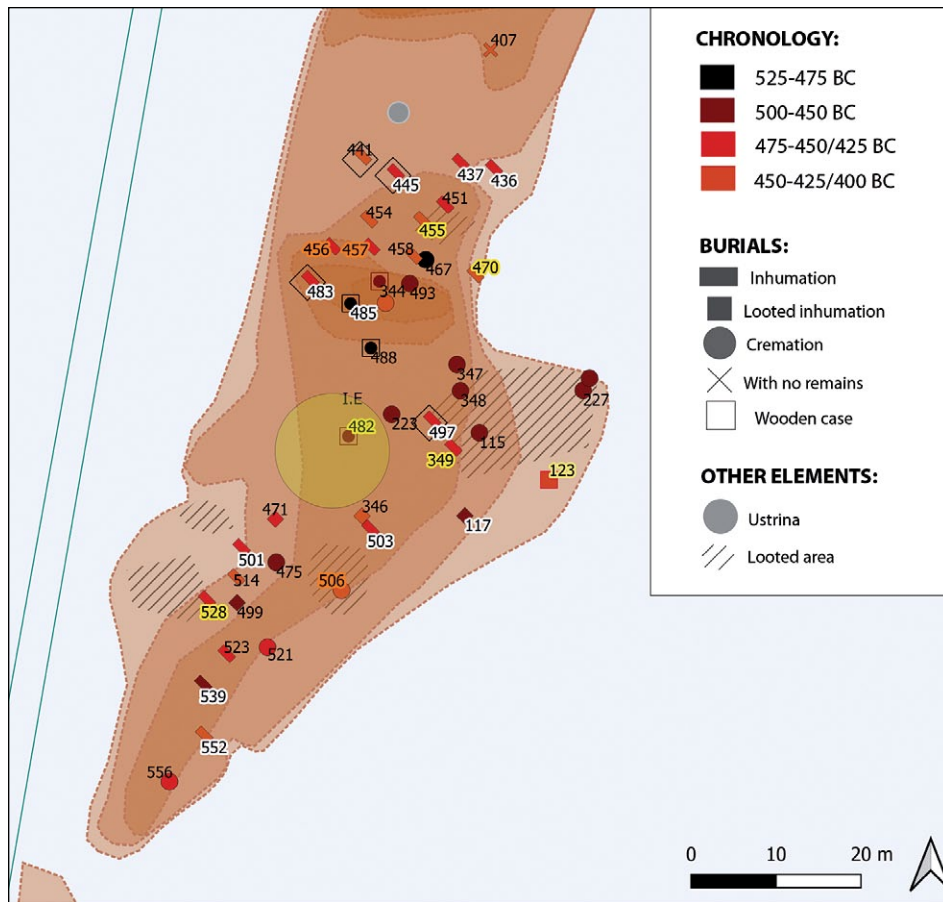
Fig. 4. Plan of the southern sector of Sandbank, I.E. Labels indicate age categories: adults (black on white ground), subadults (black on yellow ground), and undetermined burials (simple black).

T. 762 (2 years ± 8 months) shares the inhumatory practice, the deposition of the grave goods on the left side, and a similar composition of the funeral kit (such as the presence of ornaments, imported goods, and the allusion to chthonic cults) to its group. Moreover, the necklace made of amber, glass, and bronze pendants indicates that the child was probably a little girl, as most of the group was composed of female tombs (Gaucci 2015: 129-130; for analysis Serra, Bramanti, Rinaldo c.s.).

T. 482 is even more explicative of this phenomenon: as indicated by the osteological analysis (Serra, Bramanti, Rinaldo c.s.), the tomb contained the cremated remains of a child, aged 7-12 years[13]. The burial was part of a family cluster, characterized by prestigious funerary practices (the prevalence of secondary cremations buried in large pits and wooden cases and a rituality marked by Hellenization) strategically located on the highest sandbank ridge, the most visible position in the lagoon landscape[14]. T. 482 adheres perfectly to the group's representation choice: the body underwent cremation, and the burial was enclosed in a large wooden case (2 X 1.60 m). Moreover, the lime[15] scattered over the tomb and the absence of a cinerary urn closely recall the plot's oldest tombs (TT. 485 and 488).

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[13] The burial is unpublished, except for the Attic column krater attributed to the Painter of the Flying-Angel (ARV: 182; ARV²: 281.32; on the krater Riccioni 1977: 49).

[14] The analysis of the cluster was initiated by E. Govi (2017: 102-103), and systematically carried out by S. Romagnoli (2014-2015) and A. Gaucci (2015: 126-127).

[15] The presence of lime has been variously interpreted in the studies (Gaucci 2013-2014: 68). The use, even in cremations, would seem to indicate not a practical reason, since the caustic function had already been performed by the funeral pyre (Berti 2007: 113), but rather a symbolic-ritual value. A. Muggia recalls the symbolic meaning of "white" as an allusion to rebirth (Muggia 2004b: 174, no. 4), citing the practice of «coprire i morti con coltri bianche» (Iamb., *VP* XXVII, 155).

The tomb shares an important consistency in the funeral kit's composition, in which stands out an Attic column-krater, representing a male symposium that could identify the deceased as a young boy[16] (fig. 5). Although the krater is extremely rare in subadult burials, its presence could be justified by the group's characteristics. In fact, references to wine consumption and the Dionysian dimension are standard in other tombs, as suggested by selecting the iconographical themes[17] and vascular shapes connected with wine preparation[18]. Similarly, the alabastron laid above the cremated remains is attested in other burials of the cluster, recalling the body's preparation as in the Hellenizing funerary practice (Gaucci 2015: 135; Govi 2017: 106; Ruscelli *et alii* 2019). Therefore, the young man of T. 482 adopts a shared ritual language directly recalling the first generation "founders" of the plot.

Both burials are ritually similar to the group's adult graves, making it extremely difficult to recognize additional subadults among the undetermined tombs in this chronological phase. Therefore, the scarce presence of subadults in this phase, already identified by A. Muggia (2004b: 172), has been confirmed and reinforced by the integrated spatial-ritual analysis: both young and older children could have access to formal burials; however, the practice was regulated by the group, and strongly influenced by its ritual customs (grave goods, rite, tomb structure). The assimilation of child funeral treatment led to the ritual "invisibility" of this class, who cannot be identified without osteological analysis.

The position of T. 482 prompts a final spatial consideration: this burial is liminal with respect to the circular plot development[19], where the central place is occupied by the most ancient and impor-
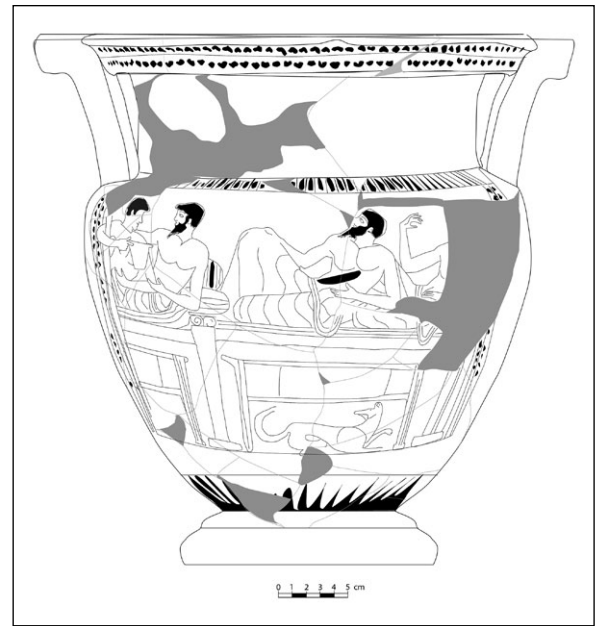

Fig. 5. T. 482: red-figured krater of the Painter of the Flying-Angel (480-460 BC).

tant burials, almost suggesting a possible distinction. As noted by E. Govi (2017: 103), the tomb is central to a large circular area of respect (fig. 4), a space that other burials never occupied despite the necessity of space suggested by overlapping burial phenomena in the later periods[20]. Although it is not possible to exclude that the empty area was generated by looting (as the nearby TT. 117, 225, and 496), this area of respect could indicate the presence of a spatial delimitation of which no trace is recorded during the excavations (a "mound" or fence), perhaps aimed at perpetrating the condition of marginality of the tomb over time. If this hypothesis was correct, T. 482 would represent the oldest "monumentalization" attested in the necropolis, since the other known case can be dated between the mid- and the end of the 5th century BC[21].

[16] Osteological analyses seem to confirm a correlation between this iconography and the male sex (cf. TT. 51, 598 and 612 *infra*), a hypothesis already advanced for the Bologna necropolises (Govi 2009b). A link between the iconography of symposium and male gender is also suggested in Dasen 2010: 31.

[17] T. 117: black-figured Attic lekythos with symposium scene (unpublished); T. 347: black-figured Attic lekythos with symposium scene (PARA: 280); T. 488: Attic oinochoe with *thiasos* (CVA *Ferrara* II: 10, pl. 11, 1-2).

[18] T. 223: column-krater with *thiasos* (Rausa 1989: 57, no. 18 with references); T. 344: column-krater with dancing menade (ARV²: 281.31).

[19] The circular development found comparisons also in South Italy necropolises (as in Locri Epizefiri, see Elia 2010: 336-339, with references to similar case studies) where they probably identify cohesive familiar or social clusters.

[20] For example, cremations TT. 442, 443, and 444, chronologically attributable to the final phase of the necropolis, which overlap with previous 5th-century inhumations (TT. 456, 457, and 451): Ms. *Excavation Journals 1925*.

[21] In Valle Trebba, TT. 577 and 579, see *infra* (Gaucci 2015: 139-140); while in Valle Pega mounds made with a clay deposit were already recovered in the first half of the 5th century BC, as in T. 15C (Desantis 2015: 183; Desantis 2017).

The mid-5ᵗʰ century bc and the new configuration of the funeral area

With the second quarter and throughout the mid-5ᵗʰ century BC, there is a significant change in the spatial organization: the emergence of new forms of planning is visible both in the shared orientation (NW/SE) and in the disposition of the tombs, which are preferably arranged in parallel rows (Gaucci 2015: 138-141). The new model coexisted with the circular one that had characterized the oldest groups, creating a heterogeneous funerary context. In this period, there was also a significant increase in the number of burials, leading to an expansion to the easternmost sandbanks (I.C, I.I, and I.P) and to the north in Area II. The necropolis development suggests a different organization of the space and a great dynamism, due to the creation of many new plots.

In this phase, the incidence of child burials varies according to necropolis sector, with areas of higher density: in particular, the southern group of sandbanks I.E has the highest concentration of subadult tombs at this stage (fig. 4). In the 5ᵗʰ century BC, the oldest group maintains a circular burial disposition, but the most recent tombs were arranged in parallel rows along the central sandbank ridge. Moreover, the principal rite switched from cremation (as in T. 482) to inhumation, marking a substantial change from the first generations. In the northernmost part of the plot, subadult burials were placed among adult graves, sharing their orientation, while in the plot's southern area, a marginal and spaced disposition was preferred[22]. Thanks to the increase in the number of tombs, it was possible to identify distinctive characteristics shared by the subadult grave goods, such as the absence of elements linked to wine consumption (bronze furnishings and large container vases) and a predilection for small pouring and drinking vessels, suggesting a more symbolic, rather than functional, value. Despite the diversity in funeral kits, adherence to the plot's dynamics is expressed in other ways, such as the selection of iconography recalling the symposium and the Dionysian sphere (satyrs and maenads, *thiasos*, banquet scenes)[23] or

referring to chthonic cults, which in the southern sector seem to be particularly evident.

T. 349 of a girl, dated to 460-450 BC, perfectly fits this scenario (Muggia 2004b: 69-71). The *thiasos* (fig. 6) represented on a black-figured hydria of the Painter of the Half-Palmettes (CVA *Ferrara* II: tav. 5.1-2) is similar to the one from the nearby T. 503 of an adult (Berti 1983: 34). On the head's right side, the position occupied by kraters and large containers in adult burials, two clay statuettes were placed: a female figure seated on a throne and a turtle (fig. 7). Both elements recall the infernal ritual sphere[24], and the position enhances their importance within the deposition. These elements are widespread from the 6ᵗʰ century BC throughout the Greek world, both in sanctuaries and burials. Seated figures are often associated with chthonic deities, particularly Demeter and Kore[25], whilst turtles are connected primarily to the goddess Aphrodite, but also to infernal Hermes[26]. In the Etruscan sanctuaries, both were used as ex-voto, confirming their symbolic and religious value[27]. In addition, similar statuettes were recovered in the excavation of the inhabited area

[22]   In the last phase of the Etruscan necropolis of Grotta Gramiccia at Veio, child burials occupied also the borders of the pre-existing groups, suggesting a new spatial organization (Tabolli 2018b: 81).

[23]   T. 497: an oinochoe with itifallic satyrs (CVA *Ferrara* II: 7, tav 6, 3-4-6); T. 483: colonnette krater with Dionysus, Arianna and satyrs (Berti, Gasparri 1989: 42, no. 9).

[24]   On the votive interpretation of coroplasty: Muggia 2004b: 181, 196-197. In the 5ᵗʰ century BC, terracotta figurines are found only in seven burials, mainly subadults (tortoises in TT. 457b and 138; Rhodium mask in T. 772) or adult women (itifallic statuette in T. 457a and terracotta pomegranate in T. 910). For references: Berti *et alii* 1987.

[25]   On the type Berti *et alii* 1987: 13-14. For the discovery in sacred areas in Magna Graecia and Sicily: Caporusso 1975: 251, with references. In the archaic necropolis of Kerameikos the type is attested almost exclusively in the burials of infants or children (Knigge 1976: No. 40, 6-9; n. 41, 6; n. 42, 9-10; n. 62, 1; n. 152, 12; n. 209, 4; n. 22, 3; n. 287, n. 4; Kunze-Götte, Tancke, Vierneisel 1999: HTR 65, nn. 6-7; 39 HTR 7, n. 5; 35 HTR 17II, nn. 7-9).

[26]   In the Greek world, the animal is associated with several deities, as indicated by the widespread representations and realia recovered in sanctuaries (Zancani Montuoro, Zanotti Bianco 1938: 312-314; Caporusso 1975: 81-84; Berti *et alii* 1987: 25-26). In the literary tradition, the animal has monstrous connotations, becoming a symbol of violent death (Muggia 2004b: 195, nota 66). It can play also play a psychopomp function both in connection with Hermes and in allusion to the literary tradition that places Tartar beyond the Ocean (Settis 1966: 89-90; Caporusso 1975: 84), a theme also present in the Homeric tradition (Hom., *Il* VII, 422; XIV, 311; XXI, 195; *Od* XIX, 434; see also D'Agostino, Cerchiai 1999; D'Agostino 1999; Pizzirani 2014). For the polysemantic meaning of turtle in myth and in the Greek world: Settis 1966: 76-94.

[27]   The seated female statuette finds comparisons with specimens from the southern shrine of Pyrgi, dating back to the 5ᵗʰ century BC to Hellenism (Gentili 2013: 118-119, fig. 22); the Campetti sanctuary at Veio, dating from the end of the 6ᵗʰ century BC to Hellenism (Comella, Stefani 1990: 80-89). Similar statuettes are also attested in
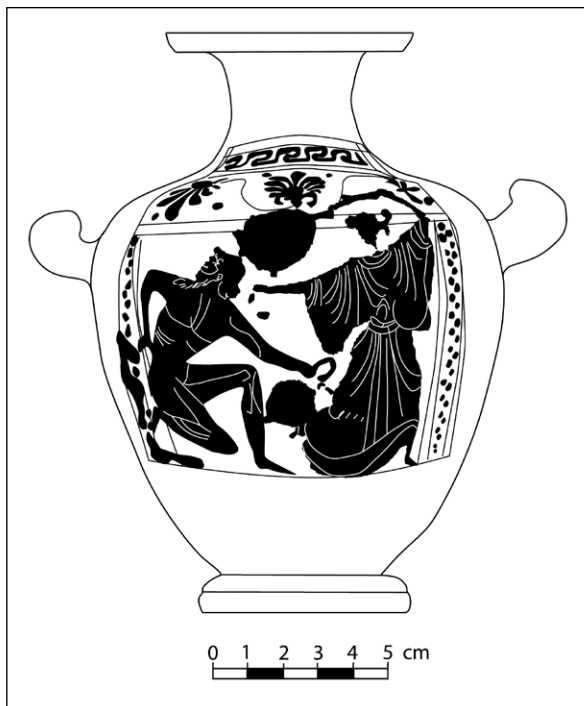
Fig. 6. T. 349: black-figured *hydria* of the Painter of the Half-Palmettes (480-470 BC).
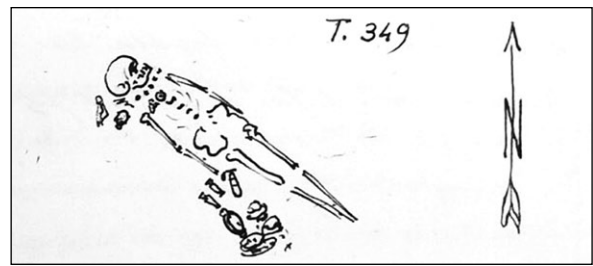

Fig. 7. Sketch from the Ms. *Journal of Excavation* (1925) of T. 349.

larly evident in the group of TT. 577 and 579, both adult inhumations with female indicators (fig. 8)[28]. The group was composed mostly of female burials, except for TT. 612 and 598, two cremations with cinerary kraters, which could probably correspond to male adolescents[29]. The high level is exemplified by exclusive ritual choices, such as "mounds", and the gravestone in TT. 577 and 579 (Gaucci 2015: 139), Hellenizing practices (the krater used as a cinerary urn[30]), and the reference to wide-ranging contacts, through the selection of imports within the funeral kits. The rich T. 564 of a 6 to10-year-old girl (Sassatelli, Gaucci 2018: 51, no. 19, with references; analysis in Serra, Bramanti, Rinaldo c.s.) exemplifies its ritual integration (fig. 9): references to the Hellenic world (miniaturized chous with an infant[31]) and to a vast commercial network through rare and unusual objects, such as the Lucanian skyphos (Bruni 2004: 93), the Attic oil-lamp (maybe an allusion to Eleusinian Mysteries[32]), and a bronze mirror from Tyrrhenian Etruria[33].

of Spina, where their use as part of domestic cults has been suggested (Desantis 1996: 170, fig. 4; Desantis 2013: 169). In these tombs, the reference to chthonic association seems to consist in selecting a different medium compared to the female-head configured oinochoai from adult depositions, as TT. 117, 346, and 501 (on the shape and significance of the Eleusinian Mysteries, see Gaucci, Morpurgo, Pizzirani 2018: 657-663).

Another area with a strong subadult presence is located on Sandbank I.C: the central plot presents many similarities to the early generations' family group, previously analyzed. This aspect is particu-

Veio within the votive deposit of Comunità (Bartoloni *et alii* 2011: 430-431). Terracotta tortoises as ex-voto were recovered in the sanctuary of Portonaccio in a votive context of female deities associated with Minerva (Baglione 1989-1990: 660) and in the southern sanctuary of Pyrgi (Gentili 2013: 119, fig. 25). A silver carapace-shaped pendant was found at Pyrgi in the votive deposit *rho*, representing a female deity recognizable in the Etruscan *Cavtha* and dating from the end of the 6th to the beginning of the 5th century (Belelli Marchesini 2012: 230; Gentili 2013: 103-104, figg. 2-4; Gaultier, Haumesser, Santoro 2014: 214, n. 251; Michetti 2018: 253). Zoological remains came from the Sanctuary of San Giovenale and the sacred complex of the Civita di Tarquinia, although in these cases it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between wildlife and ritual testimonies (Donati, Rafanelli 2004: 142, 156, 161).

[28] The sector has been completely analyzed by F. Timossi (Timossi 2017-2018: 119-130).

[29] Osteological analysis confirms the presence of a boy, aged 12-20, in T. 612 (Serra, Bramanti, Rinaldo c.s.), for the edition of the tomb: Curti 1993: 294, n. 327. The attribution of T. 598 is based on excavation data (the krater is published in ARV²: 1184.3). Both burials display on the krater a banquet similar to T. 51 (a man 20-25 years old) and T. 482 (*supra*).

[30] On the ritual value underlying the choice of the krater as a cinerary urn: Pontrandolfo 1995; D'Agostino2003.

[31] On choes in Spina: Berti 1991a: 47; Govi 2017: 104, with references.

[32] Lamps were found in about ten tombs, mainly inhumations dating from the second half of the 5th century (T. 664 of an adult; TT. 306 and 857 not determinable) and the beginning of the 3rd century BC (TT. 17 and 52). In the funeral practice, the object could recall a chthonic ritual, an association not so unlikely, given the importance of light in Eleusinian Mysteries (Parisinou 2000: 136-145). The oil-lamp is indeed one of the believers' attributes on the path to eternal salvation and represented the main votive gift for Demeter and Kore (Govi 2006: 124-125).

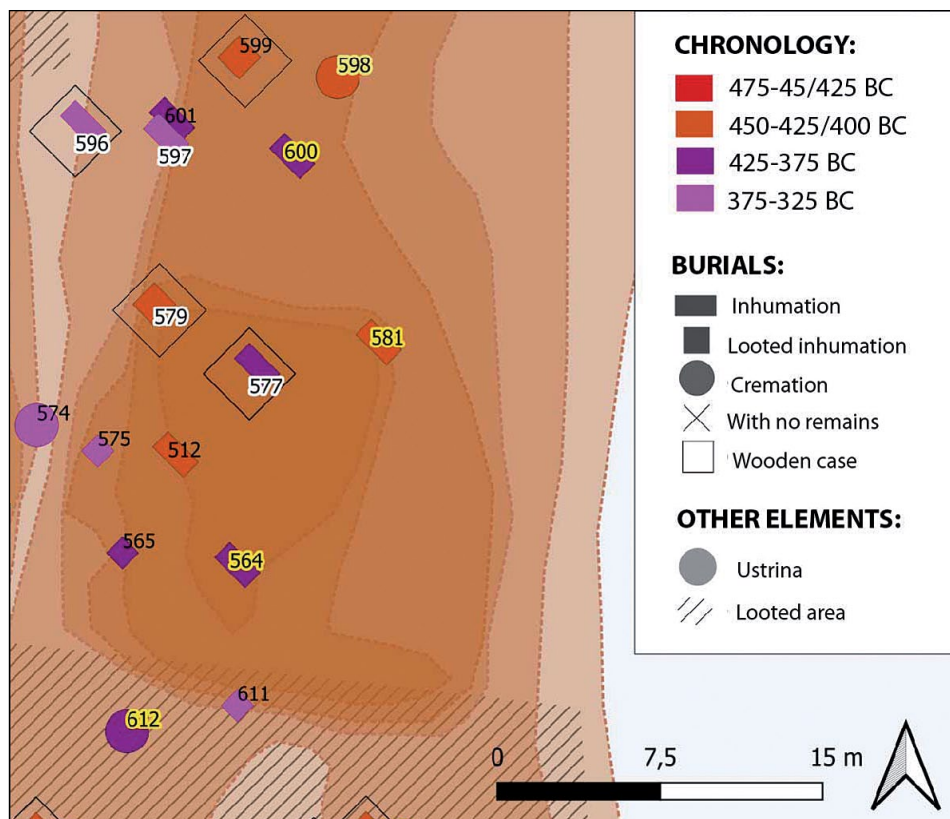[33] On the mirrors from Spina: Sassatelli, Gaucci 2018: 49-

Fig. 8. Plan of Sandbank I.C. The labels indicate age categories: adults (black on white ground), subadults (black on yellow ground), and undetermined burials (simple black).

As for their disposition, child graves were placed around the central adult tombs and along the group's eastern limit, where a free area was maintained until the late phase. Even though it is not possible to determine whether that area was somehow delimited with wooden structures (maybe an enclosure), child graves spatially defined the cluster.

If both the clusters on Sandbanks I.E and I.C present a large number of child burials, some of the 5th century BC's major groups were composed substantially of adults. Among these groups can be named the clusters on Sandbank I.G, the southern group in Field 52 with the notorious T. 128 (Parrini 1993; Gaucci 2015: 139; Pizzirani 2016, with references) as well as the northern sector of Sandbank I.E. Within these clusters, burials were

arranged into parallel rows (Gaucci 2015: 138-139), and the tomb kits usually contained strong references to Dionysian cults (Pizzirani 2017, with references). Therefore, both the funerary practices and the osteological analyses seem to indicate the lack of child burials or references to the child world[34], suggesting different access to formal burial according to the group and necropolis areas.

Therefore, two contrasting trends seem to be attested: on the one hand, the presence of subadults still seems to be dependent on each plot, even though some shared practices seem to emerge in this period (spatial marginalization and specific declination in the composition of the grave goods). On the other hand, there is no constant spread over all groups, as expected from a demographic point of view, but rather, children are utterly absent in some new groups, usually characterized by a systematic organization and

50. From the Valle Trebba excavation, seven mirrors were recovered in tombs dated between the end of the 5th and early 4th century BC, except for T. 186 dating to the end of the 4th-early 3rd century BC. The spatial analysis of these burials defines two nuclei that shared this element: respectively in the sandbank I.E (TT. 364, 422 and 910) and I.C (TT. 564, 565 and 597).

[34]   The burials not determined by age do not allow us to completely exclude unrecognized subadult graves, but the ritual analysis does not indicate elements leading to a child identification.
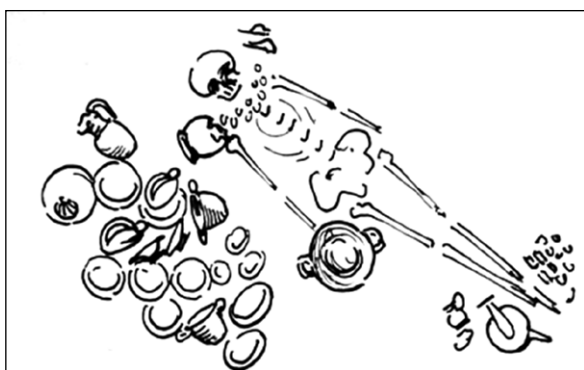
Fig. 9. Sketch from the Ms. *Journal of Excavation* (1926) of T. 564.

Fig. 10. Sketch from the Ms. *Journal of Excavation* (1925) of T. 457. On blue the oldest funeral kit (500-450 BC); on yellow, the infant grave goods (375-350 BC).

Dionysian rituality. Therefore, access to the necropolis for the immature deceased still seems to be strongly influenced by the individual group dynamics; even if the emergence of shared behaviors presupposes a more structured and generally shared organization, perhaps as an expression of the urban community's evolution (Gaucci 2015: 142-143).

Between the 4th and 3rd centuries BC: discontinuity and the "construction" of tradition

The middle of the 4th century BC marks a strong discontinuity, both in the ritual practice and in the spatial occupation. The necropolis is progressively expanded towards the east (Sandbank I.Q in Field 53), resulting in new plots and ancient group abandonment, even if, in a few cases, continuity is documented until the 3rd century (Gaucci 2015: 141-142). In this period, the burials are often characterized by perfume-containers (found in 70% of the tombs), especially aryballic lekythoi, an aspect that is markedly different in child tombs, where these vessels were multiplied to include several dozen identical specimens (Ruscelli *et alii* 2019). Therefore, a ritual language specific to subadults emerged even more clearly in this phase than in the 5th century BC.

Sometimes, continuity within plots is also marked through an ideological reference to the oldest burials, which generates peculiar practices such as conservatism (Gaucci 2016: 188-193; Gaucci, Morpurgo, Pizzirani 2018: 664-666). In the Sandbank I.E southern sector, the continuity of the plots, despite the evolution of funerary practices, is confirmed by the insertion of recent burials among the oldest ones with a standard NW/SE orientation. In this case, the ideological appeal is even more evident in the reopening of

tombs after a long time[35]. In T. 457 (Muggia 2004: 83-86; Serra, Bramanti, Rinaldo c.s.), a child was added to an adult woman's burial, dating back to the early 5th century BC, nearly a hundred years before (fig. 10).

Spatial discontinuities increased towards the end of the 4th century BC, with the progressive abandonment of many ancient plots in favor of new formations, highlighting the vitality of the necropolis. During this period there is a substantial modification in the funerary language, exemplified by the standardization of the grave goods centered on libation and offering rites (Govi 2006: 121-123; Gaucci 2016: 174-175). The vascular sets became extremely standardized with the repetition of a primary association (chous and skyphos). This widespread aspect makes it particularly difficult to distinguish the age group based on the composition of the funerary sets.

[35] At Valle Trebba, multiple depositions represented an exception to the funeral custom; although, it is not possible to reach a precise quantification in the absence of a systematic anthropological documentation: the presence of two individuals is obvious in adult inhumations (such as TT. 149, 203, 459, 506, 824-825, 1157) or cremations with multiple cinerary urns (T. 430). At the contrary, the identification of double depositions with an adult and an infant/child is normally related to bioarchaeological analyses (TT. 456, 591 and 1145), supporting the tendency to oversee subadults in multiple burials during the excavation (Chamberlain 2006). Moreover, it is extremely difficult to recognize double cremations without osteological analyses if both individuals shared the same cinerary urn, as in T. 1145 of Valle Trebba or in TT. 4E-6E of Valle Pega (Desantis 2015: 181). Thus, it is possible that the incidence of infant/child depositions in the necropolises was higher considering the loss of other double depositions (on the topic and the bioarchaeological analysis: Serra, Bramanti, Rinaldo c.s.). For the study and interpretation of multiple cremations: Manzoli, Negrini, Poli 2015; for observations on multiple burials, memory, and family ties: Bérard 2017: 253-296.

Fig. 11. Sketch from the Ms. *Journal of Excavation* (1927) of T. 772. On blue the oldest funeral kit (500-450 BC); on yellow, the most recent grave goods (300-290 BC).

In the oldest area of the necropolis, diversified funerary dynamics stand out, giving rise either to strong continuity or to a complete disruption. An example of the first trend is the northern sector (Sandbank I.F), where the strategies for self-representation of the late burials ideologically recall the oldest depositions (Gaucci, Morpurgo, Pizzirani 2018: 664-668). T. 772 shows an overlap of two tombs, both subadults, dated respectively to the first half of the 5th century and the beginning of the 3rd century BC (Muggia 2004b:119-122). The oldest tomb kit is placed to the right of the better-preserved body, according to Spina's funerary practice, while the later grave goods is laid in groups at its feet, except for two statuettes on the chest (fig. 11). It is possible that the second burial was placed at the foot of the oldest tomb, similar to T. 457 (*infra*), and that it was inadvertently removed during excavation, made particularly difficult by the nature of the soil[36]. This reconstruction seems confirmed by the composition of the

two sets, strongly consistent with the chronology and selected materials, that find comparisons in the respective periods' child funeral kits. The miniature kotyliskos, the locally produced ollae and coroplastic (and the Rhodium mask) are elements exclusive to child burials in the 5th century BC; on the other hand, the duplication of terracotta statuettes is attested in tombs of the late period, as in T. 417, of adolescence (Berti *et alii* 1987: 59-63, 65-66, n. 79; Serra, Bramanti, Rinaldo c.s.).

At the same time, small new groups were often placed in hollow areas near the sandbanks' limits. In the late phase, these areas probably became exploitable because of the progressive laguna internment. This hypothesis is supported by the discovery of late tombs in the alluvial soil that superficially covered the sandbanks where the oldest burials were laid, suggesting flooding phenomena already during the Etruscan phase (fig. 12)[37]. These new groups used cremation exclusively with ashes collected in locally produced ollae. The burials were extremely simple and almost always had no grave goods, except for a few vases made of Etruscan-Po valley ware, a production that cannot be precisely dated due to its long duration[38]. These tombs, characterized by a strongly standardized ritual, formed small and cohesive groups near the ancient abandoned plots (sandbanks I.E) or were more widely scattered within the burial clusters of the 4th-3rd century BC. These observations, combined with stratigraphic and geomorphological data, could suggest their chronological attribution to the late phase, identifying the presence of a competitive ritual for cremation burials[39].

On the other hand, the only subadults recognized in these clusters were inhumated with a modest vascular kit (a pair of skyphoi often associated with a black-glazed chous). The impossibility of carrying out a systematic analysis on the cremated remains does not exclude the possibility of child cremation, although all cremations with no grave

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[36]   The poor state of preservation of the remains and the swampy terrain made it difficult to recognize the tomb during the excavation, which was partially removed without realizing it: «Lo scheletro doveva essere di giovinetta, poiché lo spessore del cranio era sottilissimo e i dentini non denotavano che 12 o 13 anni. Le ossa erano talmente sottili e consumate, che nella parte inferiore dello scheletro gli operai le avranno buttate via senza nemmeno accorgersene» (Ms. *Journals of Excavation* 1927: 237-238).

[37]   A similar overlap is also documented in sandbank I.G at TT. 313-314 (Gaucci 2016: 193-194) and in the northern sector of the sandbank I.F for TT. 181-183 (Negrioli 1924: 297).

[38]   More than 200 olla cremations with no funeral kits would suggest an increase in the incidence of cremation, which could have become the prevailing rite in the late phase. A significant increase in cremation burials since the 4th century BC is also recorded in the nearby Valle Pega necropolis (Desantis 2015: 180).

[39]   On the definition of competitive ritual: D'Agostino 1990: 405. This hypothesis was already proposed for Sandbank I.E by A. Gaucci (2013-2014: 34).

goods that were analyzed have returned adults[40]. In these areas, child depositions seem to include a different treatment for the body, which strongly contrasts with other contemporary groups where child cremation is also attested[41].

A final observation must be dedicated to child distribution within the funeral area during the late phase. There is a higher incidence of non-adult individuals in some areas, where their number almost reaches the expected mortality level. This phenomenon is particularly significant on islet I.J, characterized by a small nucleus of five burials, which could, however, be statistically unreliable, and on islet I.Q. The latter is located in the northern area of Field 53 and was systematically investigated through parallel trenches in 1935 (fig. 13). Despite its position outside Field 52, the excavation was systematic, enabling the islet's complete reconstruction. Having been the last area to be investigated, it presents exceptionally detailed anthropological documentation, allowing us to identify the age of the deceased even in the absence of osteological remains.

The tombs were placed on a small sandy islet (about 35 m in an E/W direction) occupied entirely in the late phase, probably due to the progressive expansion of the necropolis towards the sea. The initial occupation is linked to two female cremations dating back to the mid-4th century BC, which were later surrounded by about forty tombs, until the first half of the 3rd century BC. Despite its isolated position, the plot had a strong internal cohesion. In the first place, the tombs shared specific funerary structures (a high concentration of wooden burial boxes[42] and lime), references to eschatological rituals (egg offerings[43] and the sacrifice of a piglet in T. 1199[44]), and to wine
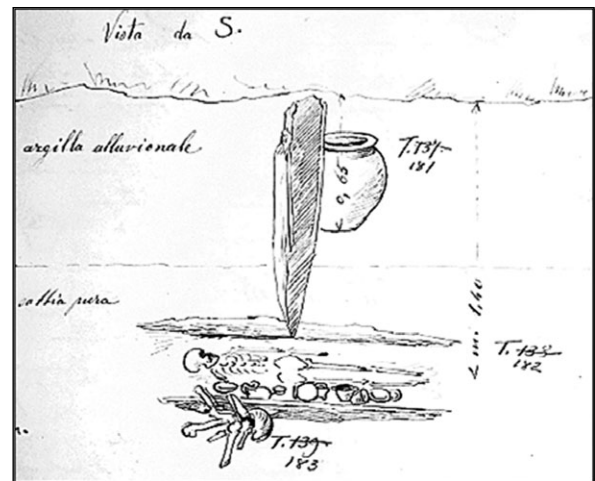

Fig. 12. Sketch of the Ms. *Journal of Excavation* (1923) of the chronological sequence of TT. 181-182-183: the oldest T. 183 moved aside to lay down T. 182 (400-375 BC) and, then, T. 181, cremation with no grave goods.

consumption, a practice that was not widespread during this phase. The selection of goods highlights obvious Greek-colonial references through productions (black-glazed vases, transport amphorae, the footed alabastra of children in TT. 1199 and 1203[45], see fig. 14) or the local reproduction of imported shapes, such as the epychysis[46]. This

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[40]   For example, T. 332, a dolio cremation with «poche ossa combuste e sottilissime» (Ms. *Journal of Excavation* 1927), where osteological analyses have recognized an adult man, 20-35 years old (Serra, Bramanti, Rinaldo c.s.).

[41]   For Sandbank I.Q (*infra*). In the 4th century BC, two double cremations of adults and infants were recovered also in Sandbank E of the Valle Pega Necropolis (TT. 4 and 6), which could confirm that the practice was generally not precluded to non-adults (Desantis 2015: 181).

[42]   T. 1182 is characterized by a wooden box internally divided by a transept that separated the kit and the body (Desantis 1993: 315-316).

[43]   Eggs offerings in tombs are widespread in Etruscan Po Valley. Normally they are interpreted as symbols of rebirth, an allusion to chthonic cults (Bertani 1994; Guarnieri 1993; for food offerings in children's burials Muggia 2004b: 192-196).

[44]   Muggia 2004b: 155-156, fig. 86. In axis with the de-

ceased, north of the body, a pig skull was found, probably a piglet, due to its size. Such a deposition could recall a sacrifice addressed to an infernal deity, probably Demeter for the prey choice (Gasparro 1986: 264-274). The burial is comparable to T. 238 of the Certosa Necropolis in Bologna, dated to the first half of the 5th century BC, where the deposition of a whole piglet was interpreted as a chthonic offering (Govi 2009: 461).

[45]   In Valle Trebba, the form is rarely attested at the end of the 4th-beginning of the 3rd century BC: T. 53 (Timossi 2017-2018: 456, n. 2); T. 353 (Gaucci 2013-2014: 613, n. 8, tav. CL); T. 360 (Timossi 2017-2018: 698, n. 8); T. 366 (Timossi 2017-2018: 714, nota 14); T. 822 (Grandi 2017-2018: 163-164, nn. 12-13, tav. XXI-XXII); T. 1203 (Muggia 2004b: 157) and T. 1199 (*infra*). It is also documented by two out-of-context alabastra from Spina (Andreoli 2004: fig. 195). On Spinetic specimens: Ruscelli *et alii* 2019: 677-678. The class of footed *alabastra* has recently been defined, and is common in central-southern Italy, where it could be made of gypsum and imitated in clay (Colivicchi 2001: 247; Colivicchi 2007: 38-39, for references and dissemination). The oldest ceramic specimens were recovered at Tiriolo (Spadea, Racheli 2013: 234, fig. 13i), Vibo Valentia (Cannatà 2011: 134, figg. 5-6), Larino and Teano (Colivicchi 2007: 40-41) and are dated between the end of the 4th and the 3rd centuries BC. The form seems to find its maximum diffusion in funerary contexts.

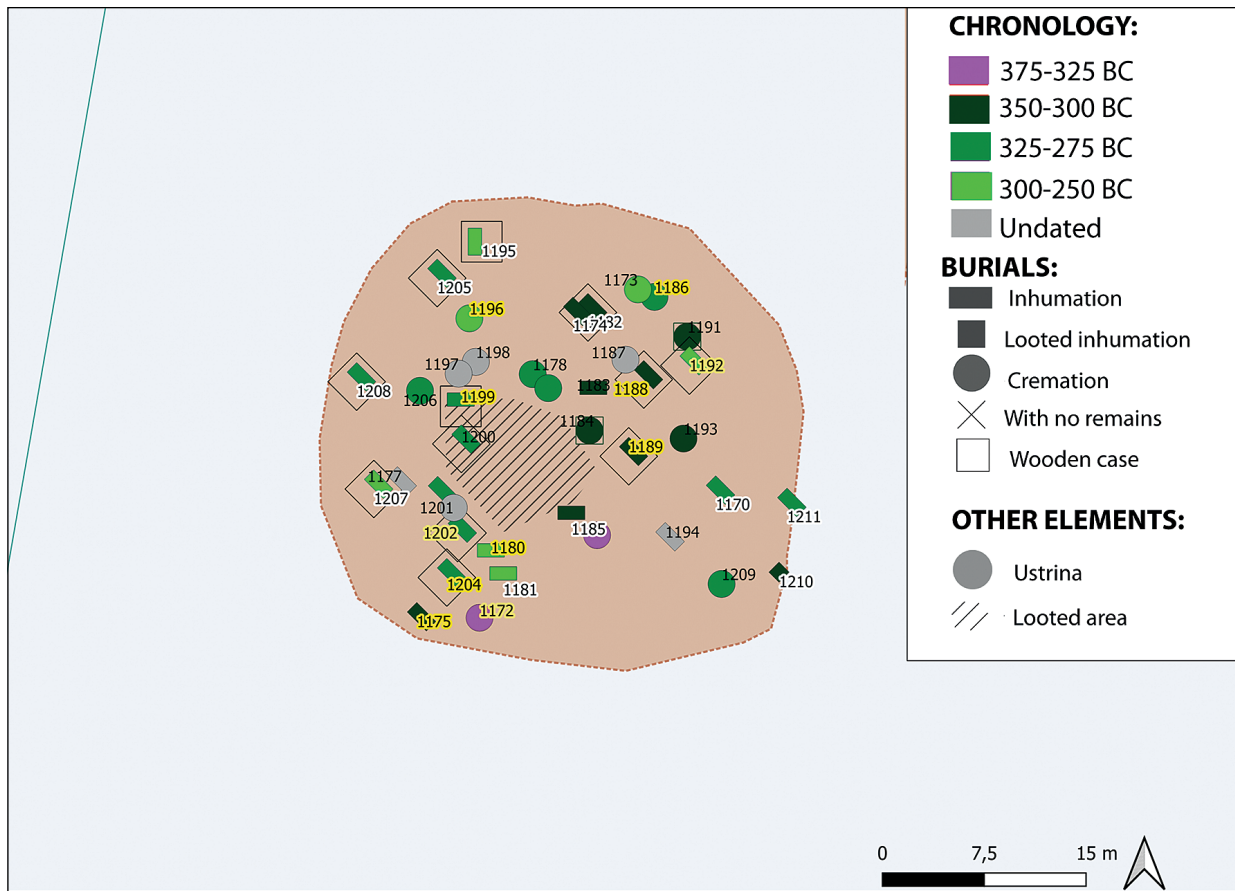[46]   The form is mainly documented in the productions of

Fig. 13. Plan of Sandbank I.C. The labels indicate age categories: adults (black on white ground), subadults (black on yellow ground), and undetermined burials (simple black).

observation would seem to be strengthen even in the presence of inscriptions with onomastics of probable Greek *(χankia* in T. 1189[47]) or Italic *(pletinés* in T. 1173[48]) origin.

The strong ritual cohesion in the nucleus and the consistent number of subadults (nearly 30%) could suggest a family cluster. The high incidence

of outsider references could hint at the presence, in this peripheral sector, of a well-structured and stable group of individuals who prefer to exploit this free area rather than the more western sandbanks, already known for generations. The desire for a distinction that emerges, and the high quality of many tombs, particularly in the second half of the 4th century BC, could indicate a strong desire for self-representation. Spina's study of onomastics in the late phase has already confirmed the city community's opening to individuals or groups of various origins, who are perfectly integrated into the community[49]. Perhaps it is possible to recognize one of these groups in the sandbank I.Q, which, in a moment of crisis for the Etruscan Po valley, is allocated to Spina, reflecting its integration into Etruscan society by being inserted into the local necropolis and adopting its conventional

central-southern Italy, as in Gnathia and Apulian ceramics. In Spina, the form is scarcely attested: in the burials, imports are documented (T. 398A in Paoli Parrini 1988: 21, n. 31, tav. V) and a local production, which could be black-glazed (T. 71 in Timossi 2017-2018: 557, n. 6; T. 147 in Gaucci 2013-2014: 185, n. 4, tav. XIV; T. 285 in *ibid.*: 387, n. 1, tav. LXXXI; T. 366 in Timossi 2017-2018: 713, n. 10; T. 585 in *ead.*: 1203, n. 1; T. 1001 in *ead.*: 410, n. 4; T. 1171 in Serra 2016-2017: 234, n. 7, tav. XXIII), made of fine ware (T. 883 of child in Natalucci 2014-2015: 274, n. 11, tav. XXXIII) or Alto-Adriatico ceramic (T. 62 in Timossi 2017-2018: 497, n. 4; T. 585 in Berti, Guzzo 1993: 126, fig. 19, 4).

[47]   Uggeri 1978: 398-399, fig. 4, n. 67; Govi 2006: 119, fig. 5; Gaucci, Pozzi 2009: 55; Gaucci 2016: 185.

[48]   Gaucci 2016: 185, with references.

[49]   The theme is introduced in Colonna 1993, and later developed in Govi 2006: 117-121; Gaucci, Pozzi 2009 and Gaucci 2016: 200-204.
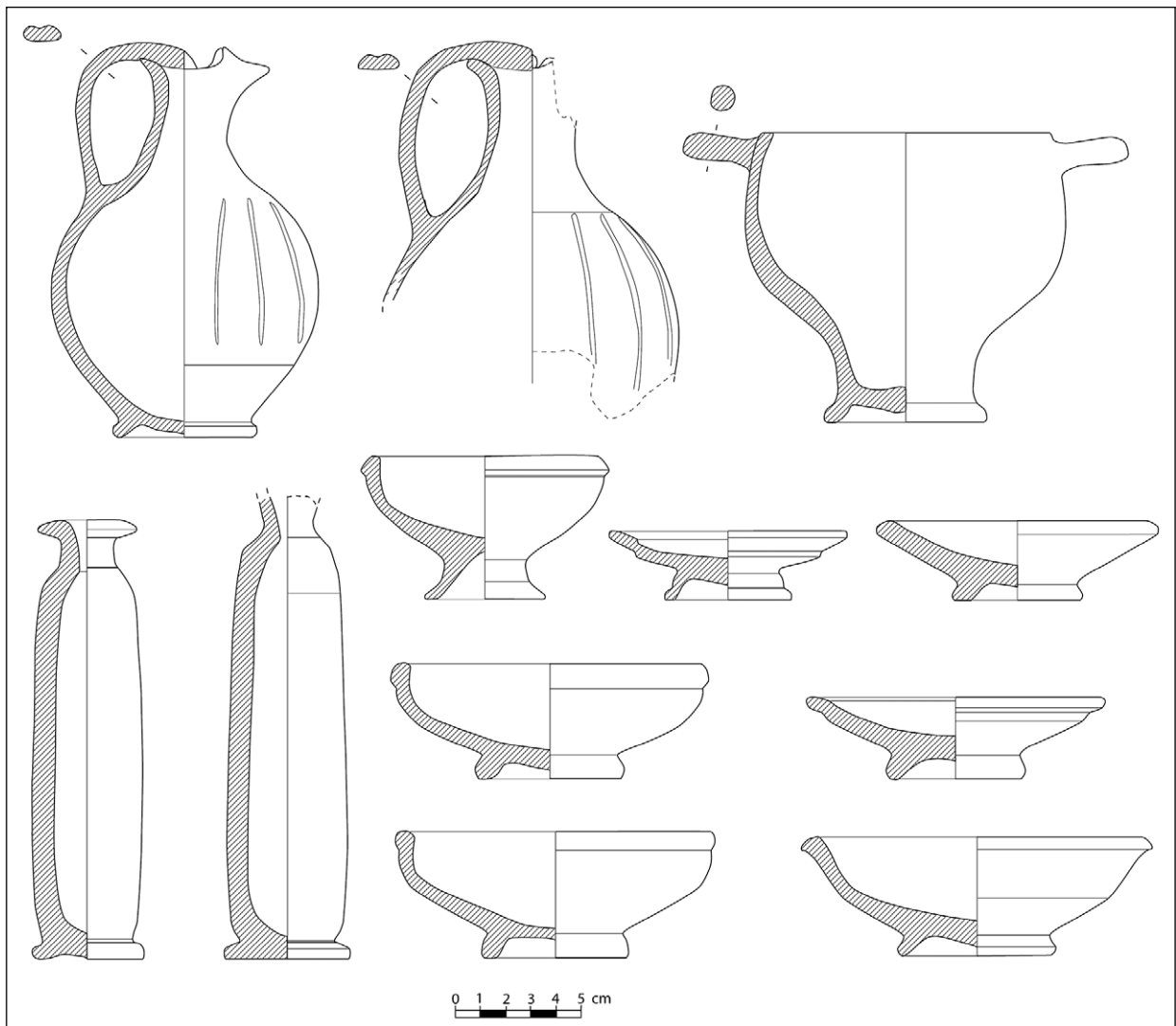
Fig. 14. Grave goods from T. 1199 (327-275 BC), with two ceramic footed alabastra.

norms[50]. The consistency shown at the ritual level would seem to be in keeping with this hypothesis, as well as the Greek or South-Italy influence. This group could represent an expression of the social and cultural complexity of the last phase of Spina, when the integration of outside elements into local funeral practice is indisputable.

Child burials are actively part of this phenomenon. Their funeral kits strictly recall both the "Spinetic" custom, as shown by the pair of local black-glazed choes Series Morel 5633 associated with a Morel Type 4321a skyphos in T. 1180[51] (fig. 15), or foreign funeral traditions, such as the clay mask of T. 1188[52]. As for their disposition, the subadult tombs are mainly concentrated in the central area, while along the sandbank limits exceptional adult burials were recovered, such as T. 1210 (Berti 1987: 359-368). The excavation documentation does not allow us to identify altimet-

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[50] This plot occupied a new area, external to the pre-existent necropolis, a spatial choice that could express its "contrastive identity" through a differentiated funeral practice (a similar dynamic has been identified in the late-archaic necropolis of Gela: Pace 2019: 219-220).

[51] Muggia 2004b: 151.

[52] Muggia 2004b: 151-153. The terracotta mask recalls a Greek and more typically Greco-colonial tradition documented in South Italy necropolises, in Lipari, and in Tyrrhenian Etruria at Tarquinia, Tuscania, Viterbo and Vulci (Gaucci 2016: 206, note 142-143, with references).
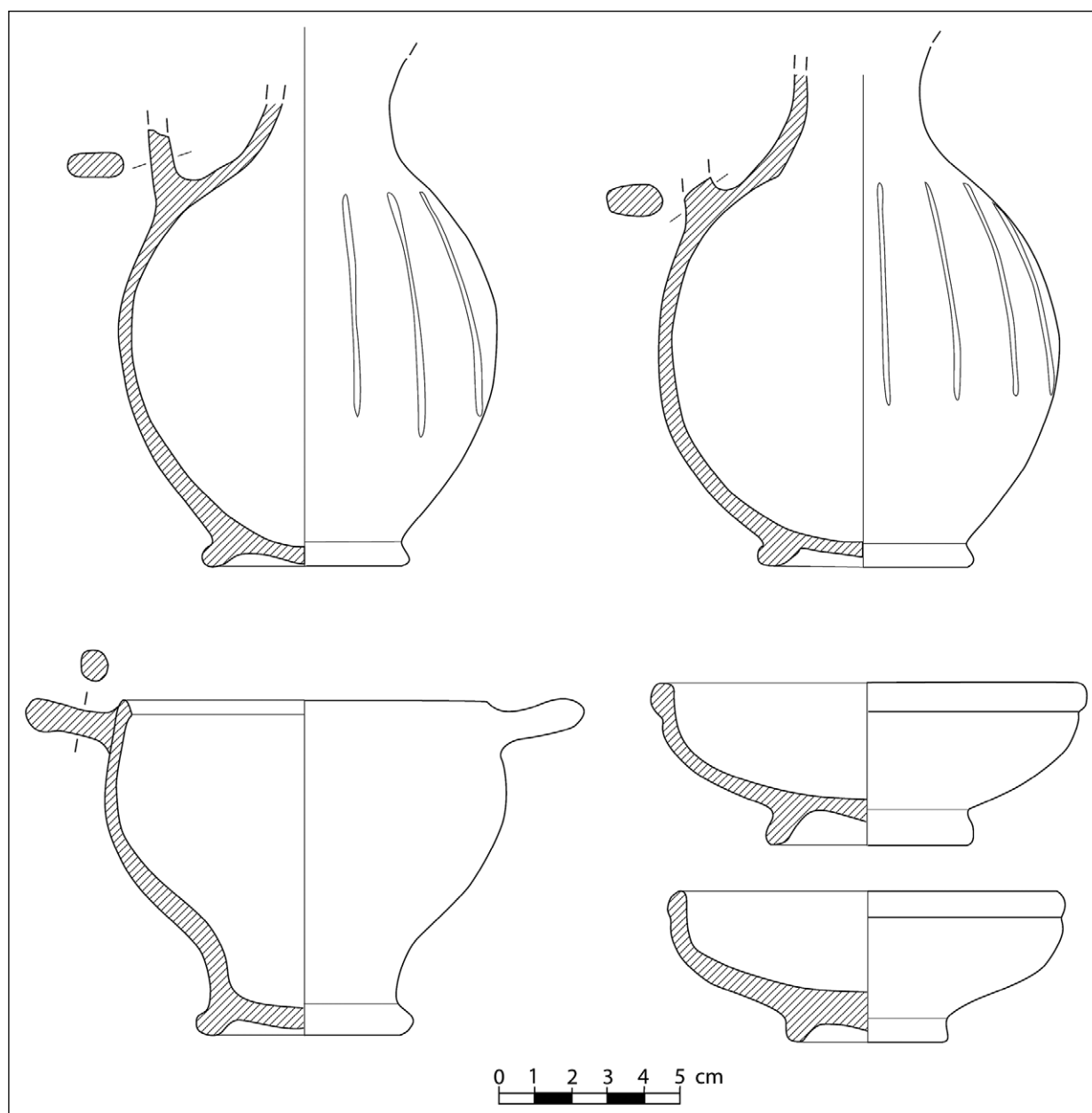
Fig. 15. Funeral kit from T. 1180 (300-250 BC) made of Spinetic black-glazed ware: a couple of choes Series Morel 5633, a black-glazed skyphos Morel Type 4321a and two bowls (Morel Types 2538 and 2537a).

ric variation in this case, and, on a flat islet, the internal burials would perhaps have enjoyed less visibility than those placed at the limits.

Conclusions

This brief examination highlights the complex articulation of the funerary area, in which an attempt has been made to enhance the evolution of child funerary treatment in a diachronic and spatial sense. It is not possible, in fact, to define a shared and constant behavior, and the spatial and ritual treatment seems to be fundamentally mediated by a dynamic relationship between shared behaviors (as in the composition of the kits from the mid-5th century BC) and the different modes of group self-representation. This ambivalence justifies the difficulty already encountered in a classificatory approach to the Spinetic ritual (Berti, Camerin, Bisi 1993; Govi 2017: 101) due to the high number of variants, combinations, and

anomalies. Therefore, a complete analysis of the necropolis must integrate both a study of the rituals and the spatial data to accurately describe the diachronic evolution in funeral treatments. Moreover, integrating bioarchaeological data provided a new fundamental key to understanding the social dynamics of the necropolis and enhance our interpretation of the site.

In conclusion, this preliminary study provides some interesting observations concerning the whole necropolis. Firstly, three main phases stand out in the selection of funeral rites: in the first generations, cremation represented the primary choice, especially in the southern sector of Field 52; later, during the 5th century BC, inhumation prevailed, and then the situation changed again in the late period, if the chronological attribution of cremations without grave goods to this phase is confirmed (fig. 16). The latter change is particularly interesting when compared to the coeval contexts in the Etruscan Po Valley: in this period, the regional system underwent an intense crisis, due to many socio-political and economic factors. One of the main consequences was an increase in the burial numbers because of the urban drift of part of the Etruscan population (Govi 2006: 123). Therefore, this substantial transformation in funeral practices could be related to these factors.

The second observation is partially related to that aspect and concerns the evolution of funerary treatment, where contradictory trends emerge over time. From the 6th to the 4th century BC, child funerary treatment seemed to be influenced mostly by the coexistence of clusters and central organization. During this time, the prevalence of one aspect over the other represented the central dynamic in the evolution of child funeral practice. In this context, subadult assimilation into plots was also achieved through the burial layout, which creates strong references among tombs. From the end of the 4th century BC, the ritual and spatial analysis revealed a more complex scenario with concurrent ritual practices differentiating clusters. The funeral practice could vary considerably among the different areas of the necropolis (grave goods, structures, and rite selection). Some groups testify a strong continuity with previous clusters (through the reopening of ancient tombs or an ideological reference to a past tradition) or a complete disruption, with the creation of new plots, the abandonment of the oldest areas and sometimes the deposition of new burials over the previous ones, probably suggesting a memory loss regarding that cluster. Therefore, despite the standardization of the funeral kit, the late period is characterized by
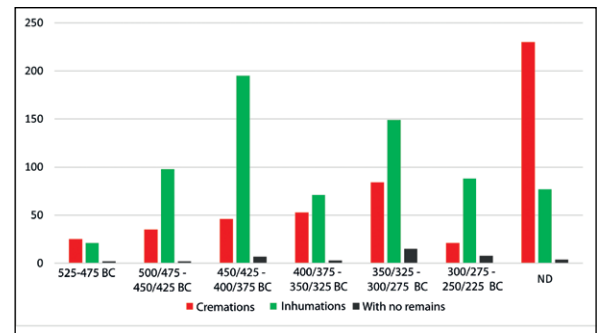

Fig. 16. The diachronic evolution of rite selection (ND = undated burials).

a strong dynamism, maybe suggesting a "co-existence of various ideologies" (Cuozzo 2000: 328-330) that could indicate complex dynamics due to ethnical, cultural, political, or social aspects that require further exploration in the future. Previous studies have already demonstrated Spina's commercial and economic dynamism during this period (Govi 2006; Gaucci 2016), particularly when compared to the regional context. In this regard, the emergence of cremation with no funeral kit, a practice that we could define as "egalitarian," could indeed express one of these concurrent ideologies. As we have seen, child funeral practice played an active part in these dynamics, strongly reflecting the group's funeral customs.

Finally, the systematic analysis of child deposition highlighted ritual aspects shared over the whole period. In fact, the marginalization of child deposition represents an interesting feature: as stated by A. Muggia (2004b: 167), the practice sometimes led to a reduced "visibility" of subadults, despite their actual integration into the group dynamics. However, the systematic analysis allows further consideration: this marginalization did not imply less importance or attention in the funeral treatment. Significant structures (mounds, enclosures, or gravestones) indicated child burials externally, probably already from the first generations, if the interpretation of T. 482 is correct. Moreover, child depositions were frequently used to mark the cluster's limits, actively defining the funeral space. Therefore, subadult burials project dual and contradictory aspects: they appear to be fully integrated in the funeral practice (funeral kits and adherence to the plot ideology) and the definition of space and group dynamics, while simultaneously displaying a spatial marginalization. Maybe, this ambivalence could somehow express their social subordination, without excluding them from accessing a formal burial.

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