

Chapter IV

CREMATION BURIALS

In the southern cemetery burial cremations were not found in the built and shaft tombs. Ben-Dor and Prausnitz observed the same phenomenon in their unpublished excavations of the shaft tombs at the eastern cemetery. Yet, six broken vessels: two jars, two trefoil jugs, a rimless jug and a rim of a mushroom jug (locus 500), were found on surface level above the natural bedrock fissure connecting shaft tombs T.A.68 and T.A.69 (Figs. 29, 69; Photos 159-160). No remains of cult activity were preserved around the vessels. Only very white cremated bones, from different body parts of adults, were found inside the vessels without any burial gifts. If we assume that these burials' proximity to the shaft tombs was intentional, owing to a desire of these people that inhumations and cremations be close together, then family relations might be a motive for such behavior.

Two sites of solely cremation burials, Tophet sites, are found at Tyre and Achziv. The excavators date the Tophet at Tyre to the ninth century (Seeden 1991, Aubet & Sader 1999, Aubet, Nuñez and Trellisó 1999). This site is located on the seashore, directly east of the island of Tyre. It is highly likely that the Tyrians on the island used it as their cremation cemetery. Examination of cremated bones found in three of the burial jars were those of adults (Conheaney & Pipe 1991: 83-85). The Tophet site at Tyre is very similar to the tenth-century Tophet in the northern cemetery of Achziv.³⁶ At Achziv the crematorium structure itself was found. This is the only Phoenician cremation structure discovered so far. Such a crematorium structure probably existed in every Tophet site in every Phoenician city. The crematorium in Achziv is surrounded by dozens of cremations buried in pottery vessels and accompanied by stelae. Each vessel contained a burial of an adult male or female. So far, no child cremations were found at Achziv or in Tyre.

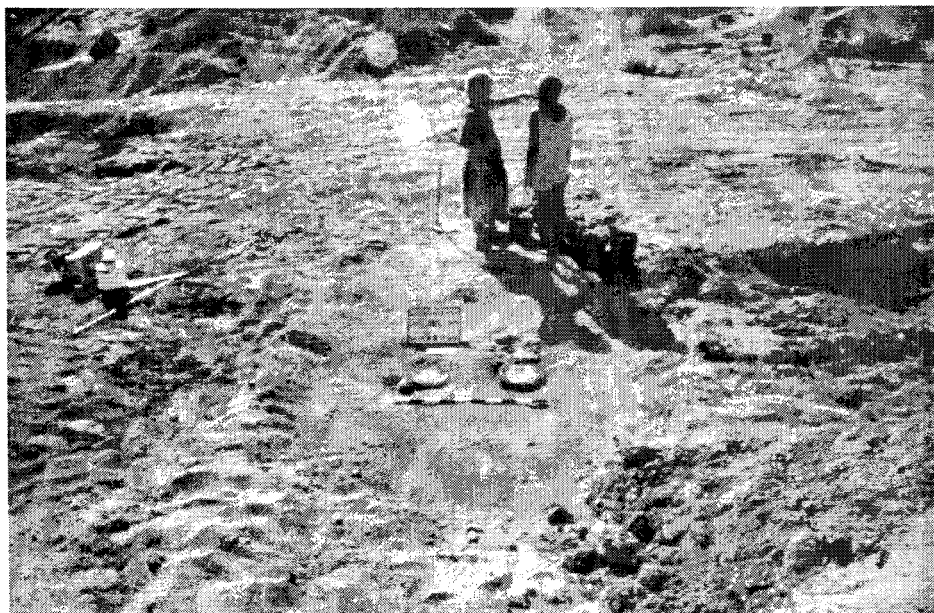
In cases of cremation burials that were found outside Tophet sites, the cremated remains were not only separated from the inhumation burials but also concentrated in pits or in tombs. One example is the

shaft tomb IV in Rashidieh, south of Tyre, dated by the excavator to the eighth and seventh centuries (Doument 1980: 78, Pls. E.I-IX). In this tomb in 26 jars only cremation burials were found. Another example is the round pit grave found in Tambourit, southeast of Sidon, in which merely five burial jars containing cremations were found. These date to the second half of the ninth century (Saidah 1977: 135-146).

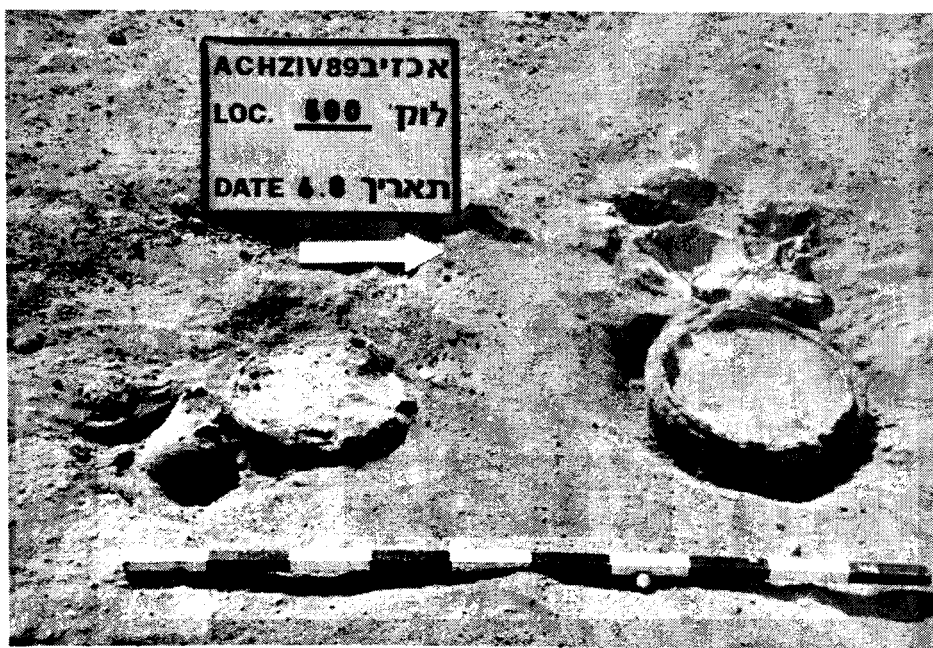
However, a combination of these two practices is seen. Cremation and inhumation burials existed together. In Iron Age II shaft tomb A in Rashidieh, five cremation burials inside jars, together with two inhumations were found *in situ* on the beds in the tomb (Macridy 1904: 568-569, Pl. VI). In the Iron Age II built cist tomb no. 121 in Khaldeh two inhumations were found, together with a pottery vessel containing a cremation burial (Saidah 1966: 66-67). These are the only documented examples from Phoenicia in which we find cremation burials inside a tomb together with inhumations.

³⁶ In light of the finds from the 2002 season, it seems to be more accurate to date the Tophet at Achziv to the very end of the tenth, or the beginning of the ninth, centuries BCE.

159



160



Photos 159-160. L. 500 - six pottery vessels with a cremation burial, found on surface level above a fissure in the bedrock, which connecting tombs T.A. 68 and T.A. 69

Fig 69 – Pottery from L. 500

No.	Type	Reg. No.	Locus	Description
1	Jar	2538	500	Brown clay
2	Jar	2539	500	Light brown clay, large white grits
3	Jug	2537	500	Orange clay, red slip
4	Jug	2523	500	Light brown clay, red slip
5	Jug	2506	500	Light brown clay, red slip
6	Jug	2529	500	Brown clay, small black grits

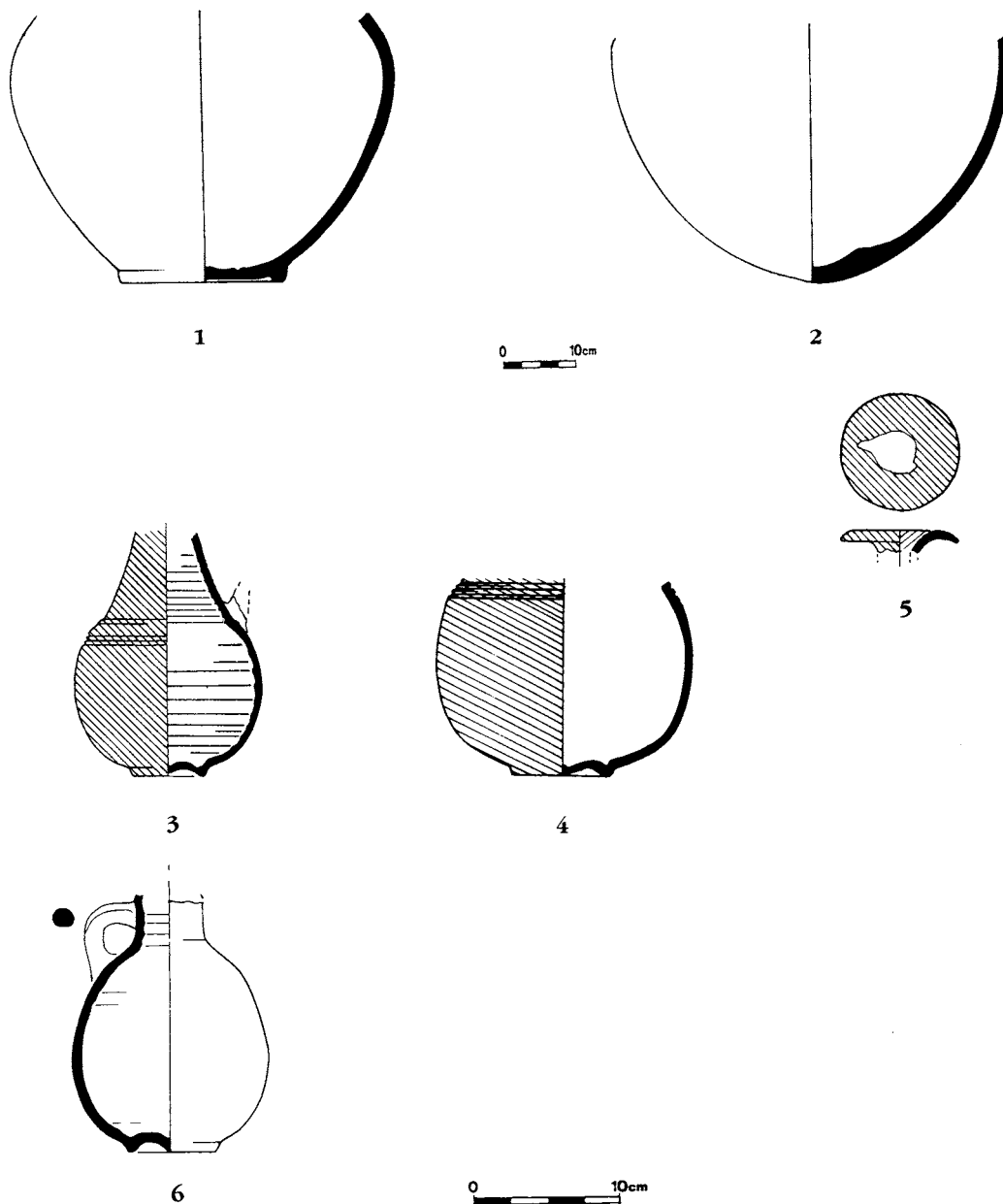


Fig. 69. L. 500