

χύτρα

Lexicalia / Containers

var. κύθρα

lat. --

Definition

Pot ordinarily made of clay, but also of other materials, variable in size, with globular body, round bottom, large mouth and little ear-like handles. The term is widely attested in all kinds of written sources. In ancient Greek literature it chiefly occurs in comic playwrights and in medical and alchemical authors according to the primary function of the pot: its usage to cook and stew food in everyday life, as well as during the preparation of therapeutic remedies and alchemical compounds in medicine and alchemy. Bronze χύτραι are often offered as votive gifts to the gods in inscriptions containing temple inventories. Moreover, especially in documentary papyri, the implement is documented as a container for the transport and the temporary storage of solid or semi-solid foodstuffs, honey and milk.

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A. Linguistic section

1. Etymology

The etymology of χύτρα from the verb χέω, «to pour», is certain and the Byzantine writers of etymological and grammatical works were already aware of it¹. As a matter of

¹ Cf. e.g. Choerob. in *Theod.* II 146,19-23 Hilgard οἱ γὰρ Ἰωνες ἔθος ἔχουσι καὶ τὰ παρ' ἡμῖν ψιλὰ εἰς δασέα τρέπειν, καὶ τὰ παρ' ἡμῖν δασέα εἰς ψιλὰ. ἰδοὺ γὰρ τὴν παρ' ἡμῖν χύτραν λεγομένην (εἴρηται γὰρ χύτρα παρὰ τὸ χέειν ἡμᾶς ἐξ αὐτῆς) κύθραν λέγουσι κατὰ μετὰθεσιν τοῦ <χ> τοῦ δασέος εἰς τὸ ψιλὸν <τὸ> <κ> καὶ τοῦ <τ> τοῦ ψιλοῦ εἰς τὸ δασὺ τὸ <θ>, Sophr. *Excerpta ex Joannis Characis commentariis in Theodosii Alexandrini canones* IV 2 423,32-3 Hilgard ὁ γὰρ ἢ κοινῇ χύτραν καλεῖ ἀπὸ τοῦ χέειν, ἐκεῖνοι κύθραν φασὶ and *Et.M.* 454,41-4

fact, the water was poured and heated in the χύτρα and then the meat and other foodstuffs were put to boil and stew into it. Thus, the container derives its name from the practical action, expressed by the verbal root of χέω, which denotes the main function of the object. The term is so formed by the zero degree χϋ- (< *ghu-) plus the feminine suffix -τρα, which often produces deverbative nouns denoting *instrumenta*, as well as the neuter -τρον².

2. General linguistic commentary

Attic χύτρα has different graphic forms according to the dialectal areas, with variations in the position of aspirated and voiceless stops: Ion. κύθη (cf. Herod. fr. 12,1 Cunningham), Sicil. κύτρα (cf. Greg. Cor. *De dialectis* 341,1-2 Schaefer), though χύτρα is found in the Doric of Epich. fr. 30 K.-A. There are also some masculine forms: χύτρος / κύθηρος³, and χύτρινος in Hp. *Mul.* II 133,39 [VIII 284,9 L.] and in Gal. *Ling. s. dict. exolet. expl.* χ (XIX 155,17 K.), derived from the corresponding adjective⁴. Galen (*ibid.*,15-6) glosses with the *interpretamentum* χύτραν also the paroxytonic χυτριδέαν and the proparoxytonic χυτριδέαν, unattested elsewhere.

The most attested form in literary and medical sources is χύτρα, even if also κύθηρα counts several occurrences. On the contrary, the last one is extremely rare in the inscriptions⁵, whereas it becomes overwhelming in the papyri, especially from the I century CE.

The word is very productive and originates many derivatives and compounds. Among them only the following ones occur in medical texts. Some diminutive forms: χυτριδίων, formed by the widespread suffix -ίδιον⁶, significantly attested (41 occurrences), with the graphic alternatives κυθηδίων (6 occurrences), χυθηδίων (3 occurrences) and κυτριδίων (2 occurrences); χυτρις (3 occurrences)⁷; χυτριών (1 occurrence) and κυτριών (1 occurrence)⁸; whereas χυτρισκή⁹, found in *Fr. Alch.* 30,12 (I 119,21 Halleux), *i.e.* P.Holm. 6,28 εἰς χυτρισκιν (*l.* χυτρισκήν), never occurs in medical writers. Neither compounds nor adjective formations (χυτραῖος, χύτριος, χυτρεοῦς, χυτρικός, «of earthenware»)¹⁰ are attested, with the only exception of χύτρινος¹¹ in the aforementioned substantivized form.

No trace of the word in Coptic, since nouns like ψιω¹² are semantically equivalent but with no phonetic connection with it. On the contrary, the term has kept a lexical and

Kallierges οἱ γὰρ Ἴωνες ἔθος ἔχουσι τὸ παρ' ἡμῖν φιλούμενον εἰς δασὺ τρέπειν· τὴν γὰρ χύτραν, παρὰ τὸ χέειν ἡμᾶς ἐξ αὐτῆς, κύθηραν λέγουσιν.

² Cf. CHANTRAINE, FN 330-4 (especially p. 333). See also CHANTRAINE, DELG II 1255 *s.v.* χέω; FRISK, GEW II 1090-2 *s.v.* χέω; BEEKES, EDG II 1628 *s.v.* χέω.

³ Cf. LSJ⁹ 2014 *s.v.* II and ThGL 1779B-1780A.

⁴ Cf. LSJ⁹ 2014 *s.v.* and ThGL 1783B.

⁵ Cf. SB XVIII 13646,1 (Roman period, Hawara) and ASAtene (1941-1942) 104,22, 6 (III AD, Lemnos).

⁶ Cf. CHANTRAINE, FN 68-71. See also LSJ⁹ 2014 *s.v.* and ThGL VIII 1782C-D.

⁷ Cf. CHANTRAINE, FN 341. See also LSJ⁹ 2014 *s.v.* and ThGL VIII 1784A-B.

⁸ Cf. CHANTRAINE, FN 64-8.

⁹ Cf. LSJ⁹ 2014 *s.v.*

¹⁰ Cf. LSJ⁹ 2014 *s.vv.* and ThGL VIII 1782A-B. On the suffixes -αῖος and -εἰος, the last one often denoting materials, see CHANTRAINE, FN 46-53, on the suffix -ικός see *ibid.* 385-93.

¹¹ Cf. LSJ⁹ 2014 *s.v.* On this suffix, often denoting materials, see CHANTRAINE, FN 201-3.

¹² Cf. CRUM, CD 549 *s.v.*, as well as 813, and CHERIX, IGC 177 *s.v.*

functional continuity in modern Greek, as it indicates a ceramic or metal kitchen σκεῦος¹³, especially the pressure cooker, emblematically called χύτρα ταχύτητας, for it reduces the cooking time of food.

2. Abbreviation(s) in the papyri

χ]υτρ(): P.Oslo in. 1657,1 (= GMP II 6). [med]

χυτρ(ων): SB XXII 15302,657.

κύθρ(αι): PSI VII 794,5, 10, 11.

κυθρίδ(ιον): O.Petr. 357,6.

χυθρ(ων): P.Heid. V 361,21.

B. Testimonia – a selection of representative sources

1. Ar. Ec. 734-6 – V-IV BCE

ἡ χύτρα, δεῦρ' ἔξιθι· νῆ Δία μέλαινά γ'· οὐδ' ἂν εἰ τὸ φάρμακον / ἔψουσ' ἔτυχες ᾧ
Λυσικράτης μελαίνεται.

«Cooking pot, come outside here. My God, you're black, as if it was you that boiled the concoction Lysicrates uses to dye his hair!».

(Transl. J. Henderson [Cambridge-London 2002] 347)

3. Hp. Mul. I 51,8-12 (VIII 110,5-9 Littré) – V-IV BCE

ἦν (*scil.* αἰ μῆτραι) φλεγμῆνωσι καὶ ὀδύνη ἔχη, ῥόδων φύλλα, κινάμωμον, κασσίην
τριψας ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ λεῖα, ἐπιχέειν νέτωπον, καὶ ποιήσας φθοῖσκους ὅσον δραχμιαίους,
ὄστράκινον κυθρίδιον καινὸν διάπυρον ποιήσας, περικαθίσας, καὶ περιστείλας
ἱματίοισι, θυμῆν ἐς τὰς μήτρας.

«If there are inflammation and pains in the womb, take leaves of rose, cinnamon and cassia, grind together making them fine, pour oil of bitter almonds over them and make some pastilles weighing one drachma, then, heating strongly a new earthen pot, cause to sit the woman over, wrap her up with clothes and fumigate her womb».

4. Dsc. MM V 75, 14,1-15,1 (III 44,5-10 Wellmann), cf. Orib. XIII χ 1,1-6 (CMG VI 1,2, 177,23-8 R.) – I CE

λαβὼν τοίνυν μυρσίνης τὰ φύλλα σὺν τοῖς ἄνθεσι καὶ τοῖς μύρτοις ἄωροις ἔτι οὖσιν
ἔμβαλε εἰς ὠμὴν κύθραν, καὶ περιπλάσας τὸ πῶμα κατατετρημένον συνεχέσιν ὀπαῖς
δὸς εἰς κάμινον κεραμεικὴν <ὀπτᾶν> ὅταν δὲ ὀπτηθῆ ὁ κέραμος, εἰς ἄλλην χύτραν
ὠμὴν μετέρασον αὐτό, καὶ πάλιν κατοπτηθείσης καὶ τῆς δευτέρας ἐξελὼν πλῦνε καὶ
χρῶ.

«Take the leaves of the myrtle with its blossoms and its berries while they are still unripe, throw them all in an unbaked pot, then, plastering the lid over (with clay), after having

¹³ Cf. BABINIOTIS, ANEG 1975 s.v.; DIMITRAKOS, MA XV 7946-7 and NA 1459 s.v.; STAMATAKOS, ANEG III 2938 s.v.

perfored it with many holes, put it to bake in a kiln; when the clay is baked, transfuse the content into another unfired pot and, when this is well baked, take it out also of the second one, clean and use».

5. Id. II 70, 4,1-2 (I 144,14-5 Wellmann)

σχίζεται δὲ τὸ γάλα ζεννύμενον ἐν καινῇ χύτρῳ κεραμεῖ καὶ κινούμενον κλάδῳ συκίνῳ νεοτμήτῳ.

«The milk curdles when boiled in a new earthen pot and stirred with a newly cut off branch of figtree».

6. Gal. De comp. med. sec. loc. V 5 (XII 887,6-9 K.) – II CE

κόψον, ὡς γενέσθαι μάζαν ψαφρωτέραν, εἶτα ἐμβαλὼν εἰς χύτρῳ καινῇ περίπρασον πηλῷ κεραμικῷ. τὸ δὲ πῶμα ἤρμωσμένον, κατὰ μέσον τρηῖμα ἔχον, δι' οὗ κινείσθω ῥάβδῳ ἐξ ἀνθρακιᾶς ὠπτημένῳ.

«Cut so that it becomes a mass more friable, then put in a new pot plastered over with clay. Close it well with a lid having a perforation in the middle and move the content with a rod smoked by charcoal inserted into the hole».

7. P.Flor. II 117r,6 (LDAB 4294, MP³ 2397) – late II CE¹⁴

χ]ύτρῳ καῦσον. [

«Put a pot on the fire».

8. P.Oslo inv. 1657,1 (= GMP II 6,1; LDAB 118693, MP³ 2408.01) – III CE

χ]υτρ() δι' οἴνου ῥόδων.

«[Put / burn / cook *vel sim.*] in a (small) pot, using wine, of roses».
(Transl. MARAVELA 2009, 106)

9. Orib. XI α 16,9-10 (CMG VI 1,2, 82,29-30 Raeder) – IV CE

ἀναλαμβάνεται (*scil.* τὴν ἀκακίαν) εἰς κυκλίσκους. καίεται δ' ἐν ὠμῇ χύτρῳ μετὰ κεράμου.

«Prepare some pastilles with it, then burn in an unbaked pot together with the clay».

10. Aët. I 379,11-3 (VIII 1, 135,15-7 Olivieri) – VI CE

ἢ (*scil.* σταφυλή) μὲν οὖν ἐν χύτρῳ συντιθεμένη, πωμασθείσης δηλονότι τῆς χύτρῳ ἀκριβῶς καὶ πιπρωθέντος τοῦ πώματος πρὸς τῷ μηδαμόθεν διαπνεῖσθαι.

¹⁴ Previously assigned to the I century CE, this date has been proposed by DEGNI in CAVALLO *et al.* 1998, 138 no. 57 on the basis of paleographic evidence.

«put the grapes in a pot, cover well the pot with a lid and smear the lid with pitch so that the content does not dissipate by exhalation».

11. Id. II 96,10-1 (CMG VIII 1, 185,20-1 Olivieri)

ἐγγέοντα εἰς χύτραν γάλα πλήν προβάτου καὶ χοίρου – τούτων γὰρ τὸ γάλα ἀνεπιτήδειον εἰς ὄρου ἡψιν – ἐψεῖν.

«Pour milk in a pot, except milk of sheep and of sow, because it is unfit for producing the whey, then boil».

12. Paul. VII 11, 6,10-2 (CMG IX 2, 296,12-4 Heiberg) – VII CE

πωματίσας καὶ πηλώσας ἐπιμελῶς τὴν χύτραν τρισὶν ἢ τέτρασίν που τρήμασιν περὶ τρησον αὐτῆς τὸ πῶμα, ἵνα δι' αὐτῶν ὁ ἀτμὸς διασημήνη σοι τὸ μέτρον τῆς ὀπτήσεως.

«Covering the pot with a lid and smearing it carefully with clay, perforate the lid with three or four holes, so that the steam leaking out through them indicates to you the measure of the cooking».

13. Hippiatr. Par. 1026,13-5 (II 98,13-5 Oder-Hoppe) – IX CE

καύσεις εἰς χύτραν καινὴν καὶ ἡσφαλισμένην τὸ στόμα ὑπὲρ τοῦ μὴ διαπνεῖσθαι τὴν ἐνέργειαν.

«Burn in a new pot and secure its mouth, so that the effectiveness of the remedy does not dissipate».

Commentary

1. χύτρα and its medical sources

The word χύτρα counts a very large amount of occurrences in all written sources, literary as well as papyrological and inscriptional ones¹⁵. In literature it is mainly attested in comic authors, especially in Aristophanes (like in [1], where a φάρμακον is mentioned, *i.e.* not a «healing remedy», but a concoction of drugs to dye hair), and in medical writers. In medicine the pot is always used in the intermediate phase of preparation of therapeutic remedies. Rather attested already in Hippocrates and in the *Corpus Hippocraticum*, the term has a peak of references in Galen (more than one hundred attestations), but it occurs several times also in Aëtius, Oribasius and in the *Hippiatrica*, whereas it has only eight occurrences in Alexander of Tralles and seventeen in Paulus of Aegina.

In spite of the wide presence of the term in medical literature, χύτρα is mentioned only in two papyri which seem to belong to a medical context. P.Flor. II 117r ([6]) is a small fragment containing ten lines of text in which the words τ[ρ]ίχας (l.4) and

¹⁵ For all these aspects in detail see BONATI 2013 *s.v.*

θεραπευομ[ένην (1.9) probably suggest a pharmacological treatment for hair diseases¹⁶. The instruction χ]ύτραν καθύσον is consistent with the use of the pot during the cooking of medicines. Less certain is the medical nature of GMP II 6 ([7]), since some identifiable words denoting ingredients (1.1 οἴνου and ῥόδων, 1.2 κρόκου) are found in alimentary as well as in therapeutic and cosmetic products. But the low dosages expressed in drachmas seem mostly to address to a recipe / prescription, perhaps for a *kollyrion*, for individual use¹⁷. The wavy abbreviation stroke after]υτρ suggests χύτρα(α) or a diminutive form: χυτρ(ίς) or most likely χυτρ(ίδιον), as it is the most attested, whereas χυτρ(ιον) is too rare to be considered. On the one hand, the usage of a diminutive might seem more plausible if there is consistency between the low quantities of the ingredients and the small dimension of the container employed to prepare them. On the other hand, according to the abbreviations of the term in documentary papyri, χύτρα() is usually rendered as χύτρα, like in P.Heid. V 361,21, in which the fact that χύθρ() does not correspond to a diminutive is assured by χύτρας in the next line. In SB XXII 15302,657 there is no other occurrence of the word and the abbreviation is written χυτρ(ῶν) in the edition. Likewise, in PSI VII 794,5, 10 and 11 the three attestations of the term are rendered as κύθρ(αι). The only sure abbreviation of the diminutive form is found in O.Petr. 357,6, κυθρίδ(ιον), where the not abbreviated portion of the word is longer than in the Oslo papyrus. As a consequence, the actual presence of a diminutive in GMP II 6,1 remains uncertain. Finally, according to the formulas commonly documented in medical texts, one can expect an imperative or participle form indicating the phase of preparation followed by εἰς χ]ύτρα(αν / -ίδα / -ίδιον) or ἐν χ]ύτρα(α / -ίδι / -ιδίω).

Medical literature provides relevant information on several aspects in connection with the χύτρα.

Material and features The material is often mentioned, very probably due to the attention given to the possible interference of the material itself on the drugs and the pharmacological substances contained, in phase of preparation as well as of conservation, like in the case of the πυξίς. The majority of the adjectives denoting a material emphasizes the earthen nature of the χύτρα, *i.e.* κεραμεῖα¹⁸ / κεραμία¹⁹ or ὄστρακίνη²⁰, but it can even – not seldom – be made of bronze²¹, and sometimes of silver²² and of stone²³. It is also

¹⁶ To the bibliography in MARGANNE 1981, 159 no. 86 add ANDORLINI 1993, 518 no. 110 and DEGNI in CAVALLO *et al.* 1998, 138 no. 57.

¹⁷ Cf. MARAVELA 2009b, 105-9.

¹⁸ Cf. *e.g.* Dsc. *MM* II 70, 4,2; 76, 3,1-2 and 4,7 and 5,7 and 6,9 and 12,5 and 15,1 (I 114,15; 152,3-4 and 19-20 and 153,3 and 13 and 155,19 and 156,21 Wellmann), as well as V 87, 10,3 (III 60,6 Wellmann); Orib. XII σ 45,5 and 47,4 and 48,3 (CMG VI 1,2, 145,18 and 146,7 and 15 Raeder).

¹⁹ Cf. *e.g.* Gal. *De comp. med. per gen.* VII 12 (XIII 917,5 K.) and Orib. *Syn.* III 13, 1,5-6 (CMG VI 3, 6525-6 Raeder).

²⁰ Cf. Hp. *Mul.* I 51,11 (VIII 110,8 L.); Dsc. *MM* II 76, 13,3 (I 156,3 Wellmann); Gal. *De comp. med. sec. loc.* I 5 (XII 458,9 K.) and *De ther. ad Pis.* 19 (XIV 291,11-2 K.) εἰς χύτραν ἐξ ὄστράκου γενομένην; Orib. *Syn.* III 3, 2,2-3 e 21, 1,2 (CMG VI 3, 61,19-29 e 72,15 Raeder); Aët. XIV 216; *Hippiatr. Berol.* IV 6,2 (I 35,13 Oder-Hoppe).

²¹ Cf. *e.g.* Hp. *Ulc.* 12,6 (VI 412,8 L.); Dsc. *MM* V 76, 2,5-6 (III 45,13-4 Wellmann); Sor. *Gyn.* IV 14, 4,1 (CMG IV 145,4 Ilberg); Gal. *De comp. med. per gen.* VII 2 (XIII 879,11-2 K.) ἀποτίθει εἰς χύτραν χαλκῆν ἐρυθροῦ χαλκοῦ. In Hp. *Ulc.* 17,12 (VI 420,17 L.) a remedy can be put in alternative ἐς χυτρίδιον χάλκεον ἢ κεραμεοῦν.

²² Cf. Sor. *Gyn.* IV 14, 4,1-2 (CMG IV 145,4-5 Ilberg), where it is indicated to put some *aromata* εἰς χύτραν ἀργυροῦν ἢ χαλκῆν κασσιτέρω περιεχυμένην.

noteworthy that in an alchemical passage a glass *κυθρίδιον* is called *ἀσύμποτον*²⁴, «made of non-absorbent material» (LSJ⁹ 265 *s.v.*), since this adjective, not attested elsewhere, stresses one of the reasons why the glass was very appreciated in Antiquity to produce containers destined to *medicamenta* and *aromata*, *i.e.* the non-absorption of the substances in contact with it, preserving intact their properties²⁵.

Although the dimensions of the *χύτρα* employed in medicine were in all likelihood rather or very small – but this is never said explicitly –, its mouth could be either large or narrow, as sometimes it is defined *πλατύστομος*²⁶ and *στενόστομος*²⁷.

Some adjectives and some attributive participles identifies a “state”. The major part of these points out the necessity that the pot was “new” or “clean”, especially when it was made of clay. It was frequently recommended to use new and/or clean ceramic vessels in order to prevent the absorption of the content and the consequent alteration of other substances in case of reuse of the container. Likewise, the Latin equivalent of the *χύτρα*, the *olla*, is defined *nova* for instance in the *Compositiones* by Scribonius Largus²⁸. The most common qualifier is *καινός*, «new» (more than one hundred attestations), like in [2], [4], [5] and [12]. Other adjectives are: *καθαρά* (cf. Ps.-Gal. *De remed. parab.* III [XIV 512,13K.]), «clean», *ἄθικτος* (cf. Moses II 301,21 Berthelot), literally «untouched» (LSJ⁹ 32 *s.v.*), *i.e.* “new”, “never used before”, as well as the participles *προπεπλυμένη* / *προπλυθεῖσα*²⁹, «washed clean before» (LSJ⁹ 1495 *s.v.*), *i.e.* “well cleaned” before new use, and *ἐγκεκαινισμένη*³⁰, «restored» (cleaned) as if it was new, or «inaugurated», *i.e.* “used for the first time”, according to the values of *ἐγκαινίζω* (cf. LSJ⁹ 469 *s.v.*).

Also *ὠμός* occurs several times as a qualifier of *χύτρα*. Its generic meaning is «raw, uncooked», and «unbaked» when referred to pottery (cf. LSJ⁹ 2033 *s.v.* I). The extensive analysis of the sources in which the term accompanies *χύτρα* contributes to some clarification on the word. In some cases, it seems to designate the so called *terra cruda*, *i.e.* clay naturally dried, not fired in the kiln – in contrast with *terra cotta* –, which has remarkable properties of cohesion and thermal insulation. For this reason, probably, some *χύτραι ὠμαί* / *χυτρίδια ὠμά* are used to keep apples in *Gp.* X 21,1-2 (280,4-15 Beckh). The term is referred to another container, the generic *ἀγγεῖον*, in some papyri of the I century CE from the Herakleopolites concerning a shipment of grain, in the formula *τὸ δεῖγμα*

²³ Cf. Ps.-Gal. *De remed. parab.* III (XIV 553,1 K.) *βάλλε ἐν χύτρῳ λιθίνῃ*.

²⁴ Cf. Afric. *Cest.* IX 3,1-3 (pp. 320-1 Vieillefond) *ap.* Olymp. Alch. II 75,17-9 Berthelot *τὸ δὲ ἄλας ἐπενοήθη ἐκ τῶν ἀρχαίων ἵνα μὴ κολληθῆ ὁ ἀρσένικος εἰς τὸ ὑελοῦν κυθρίδιον, ὅπερ ὑελοῦν κυθρίδιον «ἀσύμποτον» Ἀφρικανὸς ἐκάλεσεν.*

²⁵ On this topic see especially TABORELLI 1992, 309-28 and 1996, 148-56.

²⁶ Cf. Gal. *De comp. med. sec. loc.* VIII 2 (XIII 40,17 K.) and *De comp. med. per gen.* VII 12 (XIII 920,14 K.).

²⁷ Cf. Gal. *De comp. med. sec. loc.* III 1 (XII 654,11-2 K.).

²⁸ Cf. Scrib. *Comp.* 60,6 and 12 (35,16 and 22 Sconocchia). On this aspect see TABORELLI 1996,153 and HALLEUX 1981, 34 with n. 6.

²⁹ Cf. Dsc. *MM* II 76, 3,6 (I 152,8 Wellmann), hence Orib. XII σ 45,9 (CMG VI 1,2, 145,22 Raeder); Aët. XII 53,65 (92,21 Kostomiris) *ἐν χύτρῳ καινῇ προπλυθείσῃ ἱκανῶς*, where it is recommended that the pipkin is both new and clean.

³⁰ Cf. Gal. *De comp. med. sec. loc.* VIII 2 (XIII 22,14-5 K.) and Orib. VIII 46, 16,3 (CMG VI 1,1, 297,11 Raeder).

κατεσφραγισμένον ἐπιτεθήσεται ἐν γεῖνοις (*l. γηίνοις*) ὠμοῖς ἀγγείοις³¹. In medical context ὠμός seems to be employed in a even more specific way, in the sense of clay *only* dried, not baked *yet*. This might mean the stage of the manufacture of the artifact in which the clay pottery is simply air-dried, before the firing process³². As a matter of fact, in several passages it is said that the χύτρα ὠμή is put in a kiln with its medical preparations inside until its κέραμος is completely baked. It is clearly illustrated by [3] and [8], where μετὰ κεράμου highlights the sense of the contemporaneity in the process of baking³³.

Furthermore, the χύτρα is often plastered and smeared over with clay (*e.g.* περιπλάσσω, περιαλείφω, περιχρίω) before being baked, like in [3] and [5], and it is furnished with a lid (πῶμα, πωμάζω) in order to avoid that the remedy loses or reduces its effectiveness (see [9] and [12]). The lid can be also perforated so that the steam leaking out through the holes indicates the measure of the cooking (see [11]).

Use The overview of the verbal indicators in connection with the word confirms the usage of the χύτρα during the intermediate stage of preparation of its contents. The most common verb is βάλλω, «throw, put», in recurrent formulas with the structure βάλλε εἰς τὴν χύτραν / ἐν τῇ χύτρᾳ. Also ἔψω, «boil»³⁴ (ἐν τῇ χύτρᾳ / εἰς τὴν χύτραν/ κατὰ τὴν χύτραν), occurs several times, as well as καίω, «burn» (ἐν τῇ χύτρᾳ / εἰς τὴν χύτραν, very rare). Other more or less attested verbs are: τίθημι, «put» (εἰς τὴν χύτραν / ἐν τῇ χύτρᾳ), χέω, «pour» (εἰς τὴν χύτραν), ὀπτάω, «bake» (ἐν τῇ χύτρᾳ / εἰς τὴν χύτραν), μείγνυμι, «mix» (ἐν τῇ χύτρᾳ), ζέω, «boil» (ἐν τῇ χύτρᾳ) and φρύγω, «roast» (εἰς τὴν χύτραν).

Finally, it seems that there was no peculiar relation between the χύτρα as a container and the typology of the medicaments, since in the medical sources the widest variety of therapeutic compounds was cooked and prepared in it.

Moreover, only some medical passages mention the specific use of this pot to make milk curdle, separating the whey from the curds (cf. [4] and [10])³⁵.

2. χύτρα word and object

The shape of the χύτρα can be identified with certainty. The type indicated by literature, which sometimes provides fairly detailed descriptions of it³⁶, has

³¹ Cf. BGU XVIII 1 2736,4-5 «in ungebrannten irdenen Krügen» (87-86 BC); 2737,10-1 (86 BC), with comm. *ad l.* pp. 62-3; 2740,11-2 (87-86 BC ?); 2755,10-1 (78-77 BC); 2756,9-10 (78-77 BC); 2759,8-9 (I half of the I BC); P.Berl.Salmen. 17,10-1 «in unbaked jars» (77 BC); SB V 8754,13-5 (77 BC).

³² On the pottery production in Ancient Greece and Rome, cf. respectively DIMITROVA 2008, 108-10 and PEÑA 2007, 33. Cf. also COHEN *et al.* 2006, 4 and SPARKES 1991, 15: «when a pot is taken from the wheel, it is heavy with water and must be set aside to dry. The pots must be left until they are in a leather-hard condition, and during this time they will shrink slightly through evaporation».

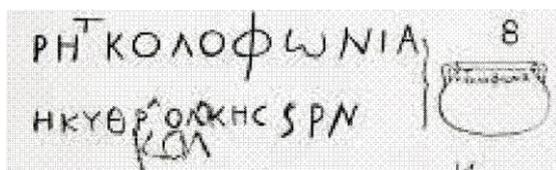
³³ Other particularly interesting passages are: Dsc. *MM* I 105, 3,1-3 (I 97,23-5 Wellmann), cf. Orib. XI κ 29,5-7 (CMG VI 1,2, 112,2-4 Raeder); V 76, 1,1-6 (III 45,3-8 Wellmann), cf. Orib. XIII χ 1,1-6 (CMG VI 1,2, 177,23-8 Raeder); V 118, 4,4-6 (III 88,10-2 Wellmann), cf. Orib. XIII α 5,16-8 (CMG VI 1,2, 116,16-9 Raeder).

³⁴ Cf. SPARKES 1962, 129.

³⁵ A connection between the χύτρα and the milk appears also in some documentary papyri of the VI-VII century AD from Hermopolis, where the container is employed simply to transport and contain the milk, cf. P.Strasb. V 482,16-7; CPR IX 26,18; SB VI 9085 inv. 10650,22 and inv. 10655,30-1; SB XIV 12132,14; BGU XVII 2685,26; P.Strasb. V 488,4; P.Lond. V 1771,10; P.Oxf. 16,15.

correspondence with many pottery exemplars of cooking ware yielded by archaeological excavations. The typical form has globular body, undistinguished foot, wide mouth, slight neck, everted lip and either one or, more commonly, two vertical little ear-like handles. The range in size is variable, as the pot can be extremely small as well as quite large, but never very big-sized. Having a round bottom, it was usually placed on a separate stand to be put on the fire, a sort of broad earthen half cylinder with handles³⁷, or a pair of rather thin standing cylinders with large base, flaring crown and curving profile called *χυτρόποδες* or *λάσανα*³⁸.

A *dipinto* inscription of the Roman period from Hawara, SB XVIII 13646, is particularly noteworthy. The *dipinto* is painted on the wide short slightly concave neck of an earthen container with two little handles set opposite each other. The vase and the inscription as a whole make possible to recover the connection – too often lost – between *res* and *verbum*, concretely confirming the shape of the container. Furthermore, the dimension of the inscription in itself compared to the surface of the vessel gives the idea of the small dimension of the object. The only available image of it is a drawing reproduction in PETRIE 1911, Pl. XXIV, no. 8³⁹.



The text is ῥητ(ίνα) κολοφώνια, ἡ κύθρα ὀλκῆς (δραχμῶν) ρν | κολο(), «Kolophonian resin, the pot weight 150 drachmae». In this case the pot is used for the transport and the storage of a product, as often in papyrological sources⁴⁰. The κολοφώνια ῥητίνη is a valuable resin exported from the Lydian city of Colophon which was frequently employed in the preparation of therapeutic remedies, especially soothing ones. Many mentions of it occur in the authors of *materia medica*, as well as in some medical papyrus, such as P.Grenf. I 52r,7 and v,9a and 10 [MP3 2396; LDAB 5432] of the III century CE, in the prescription for a *malagma*⁴¹.

Another *dipinto* contains the word *χύτρα*. It is a cursive inscription on a Hellenistic coarse-ware pot found at Corinth (Corinth C 48-65, Deposit 110). The text, in two lines, partly obscured, has been tentatively read *χωρεῖ ὄγκος τῆς χύτρας | κιννάβαριν μνᾶς τριάκοντα*, «the capacity of this *chytra* (is such that) it holds 30 mnas' worth of cinnabar»⁴². The vessel was a foreign import to Corinth, so the inscription was likely put on it at the

³⁶ Cf. esp. Pl. *Hp.Ma.* 288d,6-6,2 where, in the frame of a theoretical discussion on the nature of Beauty, is said that the perfectly formed pot is «smooth» (λεία), «round» (στρογγύλη), «well baked» (καλῶς ὠπτημένη) and is «two-handled» (δίωτοι).

³⁷ Cf. SPARKES 1962, 130.

³⁸ Cf. MORRIS 1985, 393-409.

³⁹ According to what is said in SB XVIII (p. 275) the deposit and the inventory number are unknown.

⁴⁰ Cf. BONATI 2013 s.v. **1[3]**.

⁴¹ On the Kolophonian resin in medicine see GAZZA 1956, 76 and 93-4 and ANDORLINI 1981, 20-1.

⁴² Reading proposed by Mabel Lang in AMYX 1958, 212 n. 90.

unknown place from which it was exported⁴³. The content it refers to, the cinnabar, is a type of red mercury ore from which the color vermillion is obtained. As a matter of fact, spectrographic analysis of scrapings from it showed the actual presence of a mercury compound, although there was no lump of cinnabar⁴⁴. The archaeological context where the object was found, one of the thirty-one wells (Well XIX) which supplied water to the shops of the South Stoa at Corinth, contained an impressive amount of material used in connection with pigments, such as pottery still stained on the interior with color, but also iron spikes, tacks and bronze nails. Thus, it has been supposed that it was a «supply shop», a «store where paints, nails and associated materials for house construction and decoration are on sale»⁴⁵. The cinnabar was actually used to create a red paint for decorative purpose in ancient times, but it was also employed in medicine (cf. Plin. *Nat. XXX* 116,5-6 *illa cinnabaris antidotis medicamentisque utilissima est*) and as a cosmetic pigment by women⁴⁶. In alternative, as a mere hypothesis, being Corinth the city of the temple of Aphrodite where the sacred prostitution was practiced, might one speculate on a possible cosmetic destination for the cinnabar of this χύτρα? The images below are taken from WEINBERG 1949, Pl. 16,16right and 16,15 (detail).



Finally, not only the χύτραι used to store and transport *aromata* and *medicamenta* were small-sized, but very likely also the ones involved in the preparation of remedies. Many miniature *chytrai* have been supplied by archeological excavations. These miniatures, employed only occasionally for domestic purpose (as indicated by exemplars blackened from use), were more often associated with burials or sacrificial pyres. They otherwise served as perfume-pots⁴⁷. Several *specimina* from the Athenian Agora are

⁴³ Cf. EDWARDS 1975, 120 n.6.

⁴⁴ Cf. FARNSWORTH 1951, 74.

⁴⁵ Words of Roger Edwards in FARNSWORTH 1951, 72-3. Cf. also WEINBERG 1949, 152.

⁴⁶ Cf. RAPP 2009, 216; ThGL IV 1572D-1573D *s.v.*; TLL III 107553-69 *s.v.* On the uses of cinnabar see *e.g.* Dsc. V 94, 1-3 (III 65,6-66,4 Wellmann).

⁴⁷ On the uses of the *miniature chytrai*, see SPARKES-TALCOTT 1970, 186 and 224-5 with n. 2.

representative, like for instance P 24864 (H. 6 cm x Diam. 9 cm)⁴⁸, P 19845 (H. 3,7 cm x 4,8 cm)⁴⁹ and P 7429 (H. 3,1 cm x 4,3 cm)⁵⁰. *Chytridia* of this kind were probably suitable even in medical context, especially in case of prescriptions for individual use.

Bibliography

1. Lexicon entries

ThGL VIII 1779B-1781E *s.v.*; LSJ⁹ 2013-4 *s.v.*; SOPHOCLES, GL 1176 *s.v.*; CHANTRAINE, DELG II 1255 *s.v.* χέω; FRISK, GEW II 1090-2 *s.v.* χέω; BEEKES, EDG II 1628 *s.v.* χέω; BABINIOTIS, ΛΝΕΓ 1975 *s.v.*; DIMITRAKOS, ΜΛ XV 7946-7 e ΝΛ 1459 *s.v.*; STAMATAKOS, ΛΝΕΓ III 2938 *s.v.*; SAGLIO, DA I/2 1140-1 *s.v.*; PREISIGKE, Wb II 763,27-9 *s.v.*

2. Secondary literature

KOUKOULÈS 1948, 99; AMYX 1958, 211-2; SPARKES 1962, 130; SPARKES-TALCOTT 1970, 224-6; EDWARDS 1975, 120-2; BONATI 2013 *s.v.*

⁴⁸ See <http://www.agathe.gr/id/agora/object/p%2024864>.

⁴⁹ See <http://www.agathe.gr/id/agora/object/p%2019845>.

⁵⁰ See <http://www.agathe.gr/id/agora/object/p%207429>.