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EAST GREEK AND ETRUSCAN POTTERY IN A PHOENICIAN CONTEXT

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Introduction

The mutual ignorance of students of the Phoenician world handling archaeological data at either end of the Mediterranean may at times give rise to conclusions that are questionable and in many cases are strained, as well as to contradictions in the historical interpretation of similar archaeological evidence. This is what has occurred in the matter of the presence at Phoenician centers in the Mediterranean of imported Greek pottery dated to the late seventh and early sixth centuries BC, which has been interpreted from very different historical perspectives that in some cases bear witness to a clear ideological bias. There is obviously something lacking in the methodological approach when opinions are so disparate.

In general, these interpretations tend to overvalue the importance of the imported ceramics, the presence of which in any given context may derive from many causes and is not always linked to foreign ethnic groups (see Liverani 1986). The "pots-and-people" dilemma has always been particularly apparent in studies of decorated Greek pottery. The fascination wielded by luxury Greek pottery in non-Greek contexts has fostered a tendency to associate material of this type with the presence of Greek people; but this does not occur with less glamorous pottery like Phoenician or Archaic Etruscan wares. A well-known instance is that of the Levantine cities of Al Mina, Ras el Bassit, and Tell Sukas, for which a Greek origin has long been defended, based on the analysis of imported Greek pottery; the results, however, have been shown to be partial, deliberately selective, and sometimes manipulated (see Perreault 1993: 68; Waldbaum 1997: 4).

In this study, I propose alternative suggestions for the identification of the "people behind the pots."

Greek Mercenaries?

The recent publication of the results of the excavations at the important Middle Bronze Age site of Tel Kabri in Galilee has highlighted the presence of an Iron Age IIB–C fortress that was occupied during the seven–sixth centuries BC (Lehmann 2002). Situated in the southwestern corner of the tell (in Area E), the fortress occupied a strategic position on the southern frontier of the kingdom of Tyre, 7 km from the coast and to the north of the Plain of Acco. The construction is notable chiefly for its solid wall of casemates, built using a typically Phoenician technique, which housed a small garrison of soldiers in the service of the king of Tyre. In Phase E2a (ca. 600 BC), the fort was abandoned immediately after a violent destruction that has been linked to the conquest of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar II in 605–603 BC (Pastor Borgoñón 1995; Lehmann 2002).

An abundance of Phoenician pottery was recovered from the destruction levels of the fortress: storage jars, red-slipped fine ware, and local black-on-red and bichrome ware. Outstanding among the non-Phoenician pottery is a small assemblage of Greek ceramics, representing only 2% of all the pottery found in this level. Apart from an Attic "SOS" amphora, all the Greek pottery consists of vessels from eastern Greece, among which "bird bowls," Ionian cups, amphorae, and cooking pots predominate (Niemeier 2002b). The imported material also includes an Etruscan oinochoe of *bucchero* ware.

The Tel Kabri assemblage of Greek pottery con-

sists of Archaic Greek types that are widespread throughout the eastern Mediterranean between the second half of the seventh and the early sixth centuries BC. In terms of archaeological context, the parallel nearest to Kabri is that of the fortress of Meẓad Ḥashavyahu to the north of Ashkelon that was under the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Judah, where an assemblage of East Greek pottery has also come to light. Based on the Greek cooking vessel sherds in the two assemblages, Niemeier has interpreted them as evidence of the presence of a small contingent of Greek mercenaries stationed at the two forts (2001: 15–16; 2002a: 328–30). The written Assyrian and Greek sources could be seen as support for this hypothesis; they mention Carian and Ionian mercenaries in the service of the kings of Lydia and Egypt in the time of Psammeticus I (Herodotus *Histories* II: 152–154 [Aguilera 1960]). In the Niemeier's opinion, Ezekiel, too, could allude to Ionian mercenaries in the Kingdom of Tyre, although the prophet is less explicit on this point (2001: 19–20).

In fact, the chief difference between Kabri and other Levantine centers that have also yielded East Greek ceramics from the Archaic period, like Al Mina, which are used to support the hypothesis of the Greek mercenaries, lies in the fact that the latter have yielded no Greek cooking pots, thus ruling out the presence of Greeks (Niemeier 2001: 14–15). In the case of Al Mina, it would have been trade rather than the military element that was responsible for the presence of these manufactured articles, although the conditions under which the excavations were carried out in this port city do not in my opinion allow for confirming or denying the presence of foreign domestic pottery at the site at the end of the seventh century BC (see Waldbaum 1997: 12).

It is surprising how little interest was shown in the presence of Etruscan *bucchero* ware in the analysis of imports at Kabri. Although it is of minimal proportions—only one vessel—the fact that in the eastern Mediterranean, Etruscan pottery (cups, kantharoi, oinochoai, and amphorae, mostly from workshops in the south of Etruria) almost always appears in association with East Greek ceramics, for example, at Ras el Bassit and Kition (see Naso 2000), warrants attention. In this context, the high proportion of Etruscan *bucchero* ware vessels found in the principal cities of Asiatic Ionia, like Miletum, Ephesus, and Samos, is also noteworthy (Naso 2000: 175–78). This seems to reflect a clear integration of Etruscan commercial interests in the international exchange networks of the period, dominated by the Ionian cities.

A very similar or almost identical phenomenon can be seen in the western Mediterranean, where the presence of these imported Ionian wares cannot be related to the arrival of Greek mercenaries.

Greek Colonists?

In the 1980s, an important assemblage of Ionian pottery was found in the warehouses of the ancient Tartessian port city of Huelva. Situated in the environs of the Phoenician port of Gadir, this center had from the eighth century BC been the main point of trans-shipment for silver from the mines of the hinterland—Riotinto and Aznalcollar—a source of wealth that had brought huge profits to the Phoenician colonial world and to the native elites of the interior.

The presence of Ionian potttery from the end of the seventh century BC in the Phoenician colonial world and its sphere of influence marked a significant change in preferences in terms of the demand for Greek merchandise in the markets of the West. Until then, and from the second half of the eighth century BC, it had been the extremely rare and sporadic imports of Attic pyxides, Proto-Corinthian kotylai, Attic and Corinthian amphorae, Euboean bird skyphoi, Euboean imitations of Proto-Corinthian kotylai, and cups from Thapsos that had predominated in the Phoenician colonies of southern Spain and Carthage. The context of these finds would suggest a limited circulation of Greek merchandise forming part of Phoenician colonial trade, rather than Greek trade as such. Indeed, a few luxury Greek vessels had given rise to Phoenician imitations made in western workshops (Briese and Docter 1991). Generally, it was a matter of very choice imports, found in the Phoenician colonies of Gadir-Doña Blanca, Carthage, Sulcis, Cerro del Villar, Toscanos, Almuñecar, Fonteta, and in their indigenous sphere of influence (Huelva, Carambolo).

The new finds from Huelva demonstrate changed trends in the range of Greek imports in

the Phoenician colonies of southern Iberia and a restructuring of the international exchange networks around the years 620–600 BC. This change is reflected in the considerable increase in Greek ceramics at Huelva, the bay of Gadir, Toscanos, and Cerro del Villar, representing homogeneous assemblages of East Greek pottery, among which amphorae from Samos and from Chios, Ionian A2 cups, "bird bowls" from Northern Ionia, and cups and hydrias from Samos predominate. At Huelva, East Greek imports, together with a few black-figured Attic pieces, represent 10% of all the pottery found in this indigenous city, and their importation ceased abruptly around 540 BC (Fernández Jurado 1984; Niemeyer 1988–90: 283). It is significant that the East Greek pottery at the site was found in very specific zones of the city, probably in merchandise depots or warehouses in the harbor area.

In the 1980s, the exceptional volume of Ionian imports found at Huelva caused a great flurry among archaeologists, and the idea of the presence of Ionian or Phocean Greeks in Tartessos received a strong impetus. They would have been engaged in activities connected with the founding of colonies in southern and southeastern Spain (Olmos 1982; Shefton 1982; Cabrera and Olmos 1985). This hypothesis rested on three main arguments: the presence of common Ionian pottery among the imports at Huelva; the significant presence of Ionian ceramics at Massalia and in its sphere of influence (Emporion) at the time of the founding of the Phocean colony around 600 BC; and the reference in several texts of Herodotus and Strabo to the presence of Greek traders and colonists in Tartessos (Morel 1975; 2001; Niemeyer 1988–90: 270–74; Rouillard 2001).

In one of these passages, Herodotus (*Histories* I: 163) mentions that around 630 BC, the Phoceans succeeded in establishing very cordial relations with the Tartessian king Arganthonios:

> The Phoceans were the earliest of the Greeks to make long sea voyages; it was they who discovered the Adriatic Sea, Tyrrhenia and Iberia and Tartessos, not sailing round freight ships but in fifty-oared vessels. When they came to Tartessos they made friends with the king of the Tartessians, whose name was Arganthonios; he ruled Tartessos for eighty years and lived a hundred and twenty. The Phoceans so won this man's friendship that he first entreated them to leave Ionia and settle in his country where they would; and then, when he could not persuade them to that, and learnt from them how the Median power was increasing, he gave them money to build a wall round their city therewith, for the circuit of the wall is of many furlongs and all this is made of great stones well fitted together.

In another passage, Herodotus relates (*Histories* IV: 152):

> But meanwhile, a Samian ship, whose captain was Kolaios bound for Egypt, was driven by storms to Platea [= an island of the coast of Libya]. The Samians who arrived in it, being informed of all that had happened by Corobius, provided it with food for a year and then raised anchor, and left the island, eager to get to Egypt, although a strong wind was blowing; and as it did not abate, it obliged them to go beyond the Pillars of Hercules and drop anchor by good fortune in Tartessos. Tartessos was then a virgin empire for the Greeks and one they had just discovered.

These two famous episodes related by Herodotus that describe the commercial travels of Phoceans and Samians to Tartessos have been dated to the late seventh century BC and would have pre-dated the Phocean foundation of Massalia ca. 600 BC and the establishment of the Massalian colonies of Emporion, Mainake, Hemeroskopeion, Alonis, and Akra Leuke, as they are described by Strabo (*Geographia* III: 4, 6 [Scholten 1958]; see Rouillard 1982). Except for Emporion/Ampurias, the rest of the Greek colonies would have been situated in southeastern Iberia.

Although the archaeological evidence appears to support the written texts, the Phoceaphile euphoria has decreased considerably in recent times, for several reasons.

In the first place, attempts to locate Greek colonies in the south and southeast of Spain have proved

fruitless, and it is currently admitted that Strabo may have got it wrong, since not a single archaeological datum exists for the presence of Greek colonies south of Emporion/Ampurias (Morel 1984: 127; Niemeyer 1988–90: 276). Strabo probably relied on sources of information that would today be described as tendentious, forming part of a trend of thought very typical of the Hellenistic period, which claims the existence of Greek colonies in places where there never were any, as in Rome, Sardinia, or southern Iberia. Today, historians adopt a much more cautious stand, and it is thought that Mainake, Alonis, and Hemeroskopeion were very ancient Greek toponyms; their coastal distribution would then reflect the existence of navigational charts that were in circulation for generations among Greek sailors and navigators. The toponyms could be explained as being homophonic with some earlier Phoenician or indigenous names, by means of which the Greek sailors tried to approximate to sound like their own language the non-Greek names that they had come across when frequenting these coasts.

The case of the "Greek" Mainake is more significant, since its location, according to the text of Strabo and the *Ora Maritima* of Avienus (vv. 426–30 [Mangas and Plácido 1994]) coincides with a stretch of coastline—the bay of Malaga—the archaeological evidence from which shows an absolute predominance of Phoenician colonies at the time. Possibly Mainake was the Greek version of a toponym that was originally Phoenician, *menaha* or *mnq* (place of rest, virgin soil) (Warning Treumann 1979–80; Aubet 2000).

In the second place, the discovery of East Greek pottery in unequivocally Phoenician contexts in the central and western Mediterranean has given an unexpected twist to the hypothesis of the presence of Greek colonists in the West at the end of the seventh century BC, as will be seen below.

International Trading Networks around 600 BC

One of the colonies in southern Iberia that offers the best opportunity to document the horizon of the late seventh and early sixth centuries BC is Cerro del Villar—probably ancient Mainake—situated on an ancient island in the mouth of the river Guadalhorce and 4 km to the west of Málaga/Malaka (Aubet, Carmona, and Delgado 1999).

The final phase of occupation of the colony, which had been established at the end of the eighth century, corresponds to Stratum IIa–b, very rich in archaeological finds. In relation to the earlier strata, this horizon implies an important restructuring of the central area of the settlement, where a sector of domestic buildings, market streets, and warehouses of the eighth–seventh centuries BC gives way to a vast complex of potters' workshops devoted to the specialized production of Phoenician amphorae and large containers (Aubet, Carmona, and Delgado 1999: 92–127). The Greek imports date this stratum to 620–570 BC.

The imported ceramics constitute a homogeneous assemblage in which cups from Samos, Ionian A2 cups, hydrias from Samos, the so-called "bird bowls," amphorae from Chios and Samos, and Aeolian *bucchero* ware predominate, representing roughly 2% of all the pottery found in Stratum II (Figs. 1–5). Also of note among the imports are amphorae from Carthage and, most significantly of all, a group of Etruscan ceramics (Figs. 6–9), the majority from workshops in southern Etruria, made up of amphorae and *bucchero* ware kantharoi and oinochoai (Cabrera 1994; Aubet, Carmona, and Delgado 1999: 137–43). As at Huelva, the East Greek ceramics and Etruscan *bucchero* ware appear to be concentrated in one specific place in the city, which suggests that the material had not been distributed and derived from a depot or storehouse for merchandise.

The presence of East Greek ceramics in association with Etruscan *bucchero* ware in a Phoenician colonial context of the late seventh and early sixth centuries is not a phenomenon exclusive to Cerro

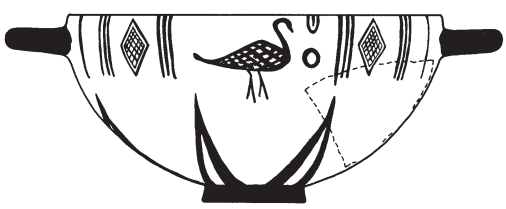

Fig. 1. Cerro del Villar (Málaga), "bird-bowl" (reconstruction; scale 1:2).

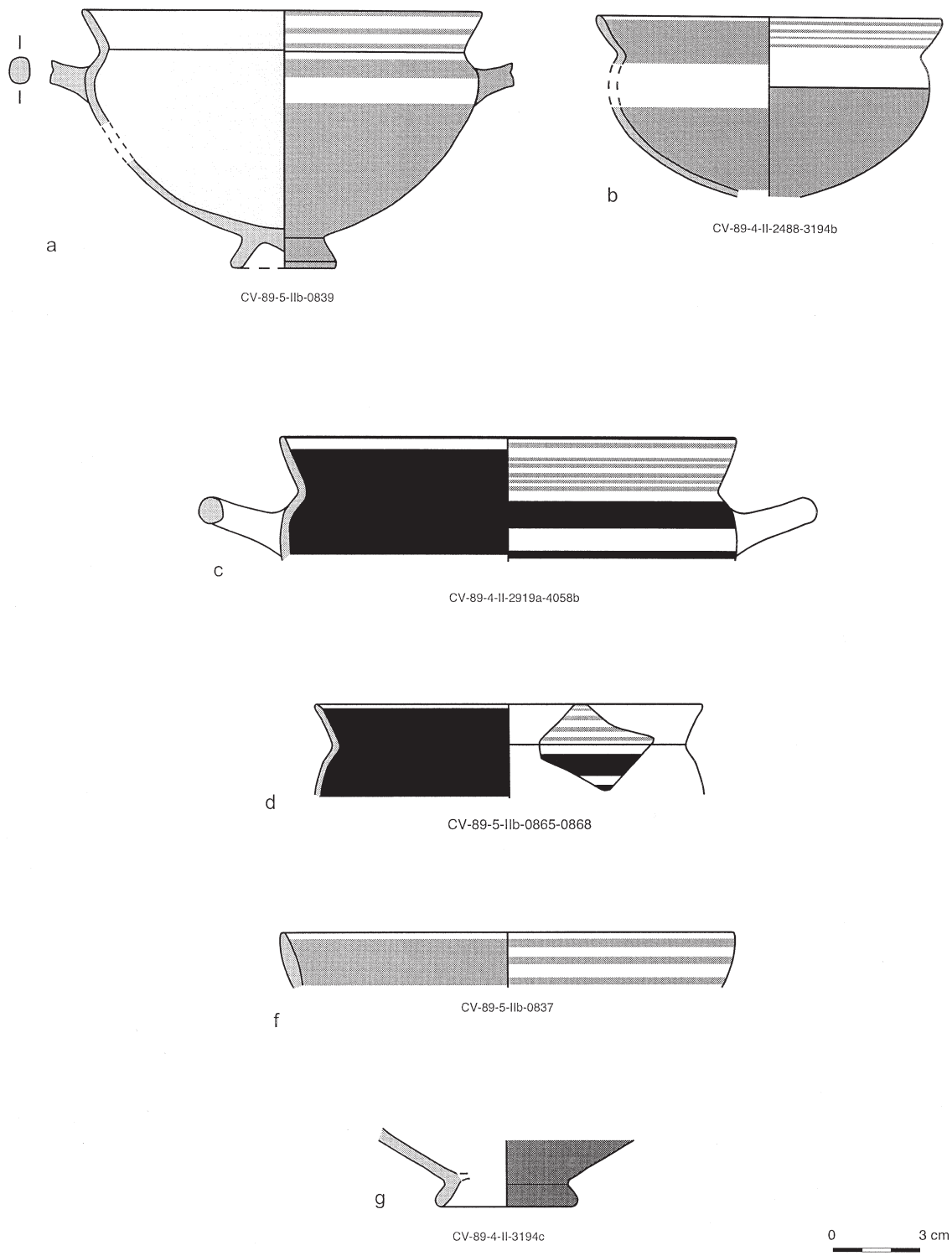

Fig. 2. Cerro del Villar, Ionian cups.

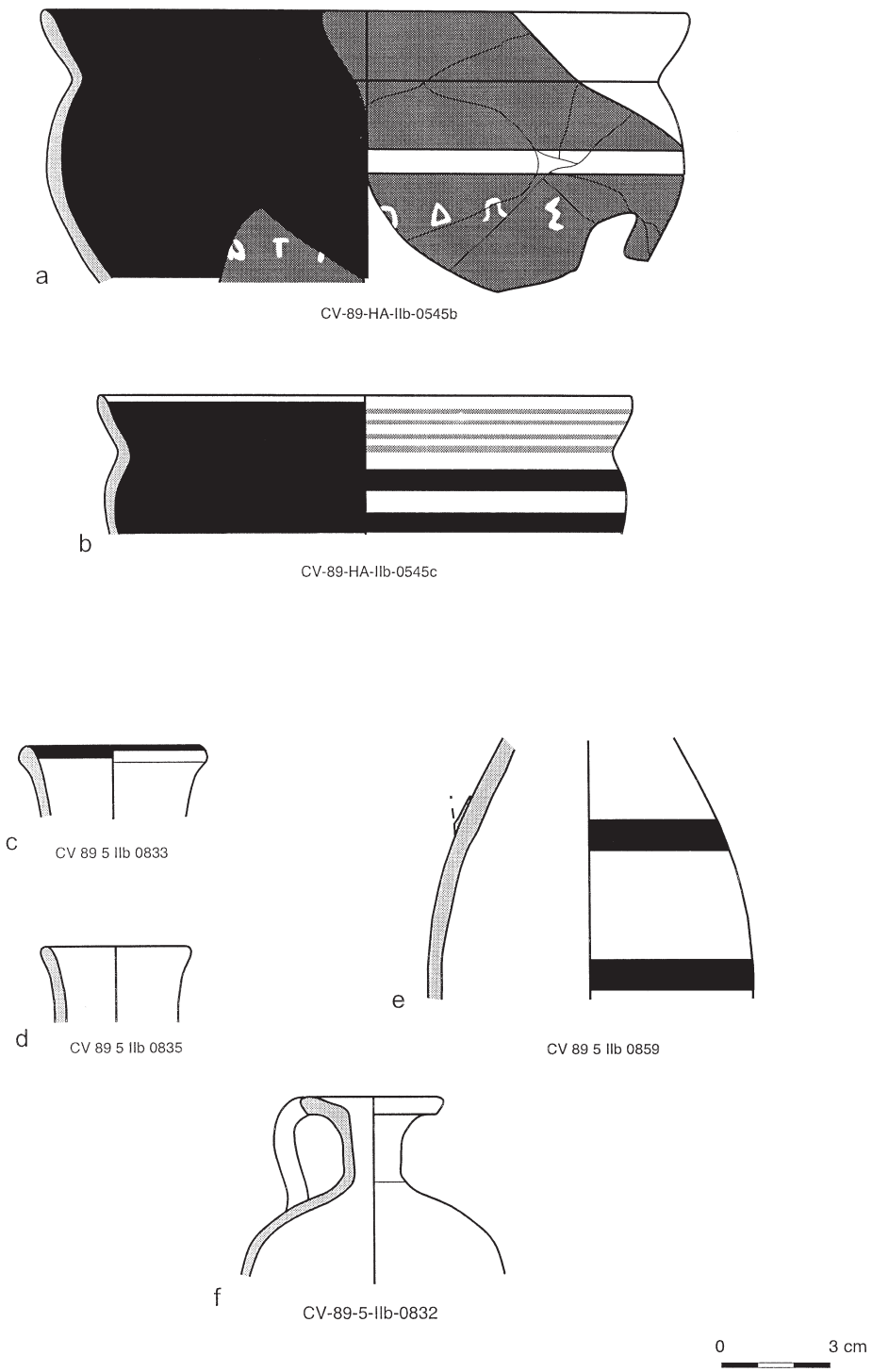

Fig. 3. Cerro del Villar, East Greek pottery: a–b: Ionian cups; c–e: juglets; f: aryballos.

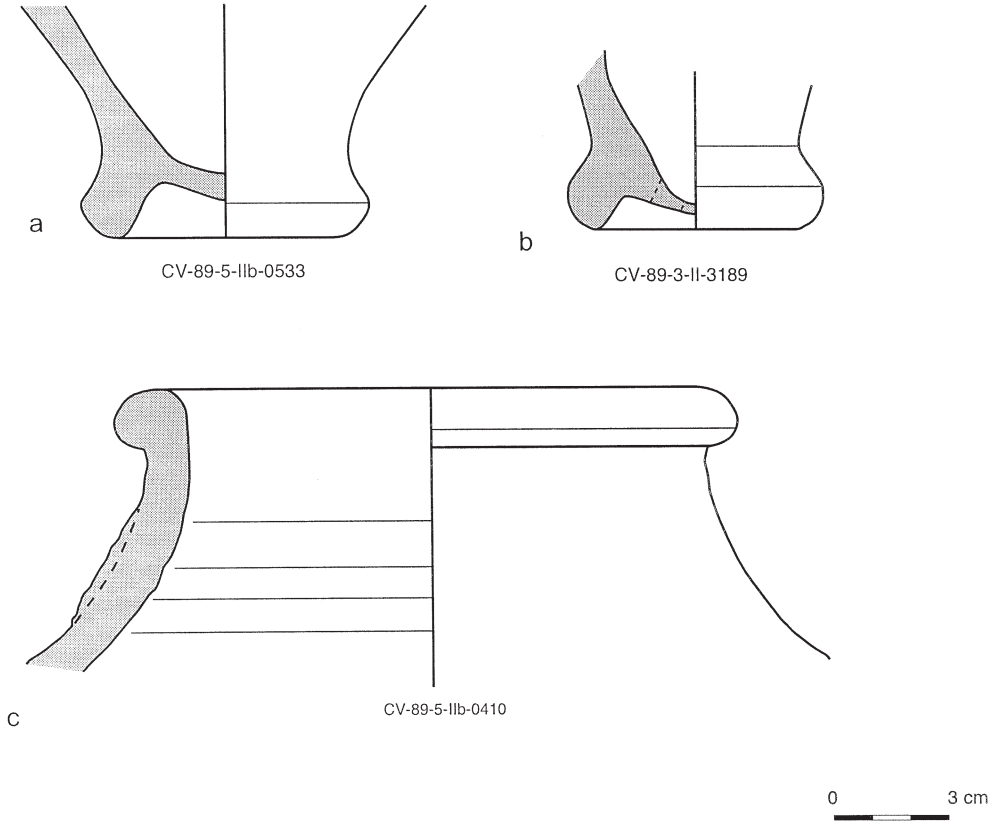

Fig. 4. Cerro del Villar, trade amphorae: a–b: amphorae from Samos; c: Etruscan amphora.

del Villar. This colony was abandoned at the beginning of the sixth century at the height of production and trade in surplus agricultural produce with the indigenous hinterland, during Stratum II, in which Phoenician material culture offers evidence of direct relations with the earliest level of occupation in neighboring Malaka, another Phoenician settlement. Around 600 BC, Malaka is characterized by the presence of a large number of Ionian cups, amphorae from Chios and Samos, and Etruscan pottery (Gran Aymerich 1991: 128–43). This is the same import horizon as that documented in Stratum V in the Phoenician colony of Toscanos, in the port area of which amphorae from Chios and Etruscan *bucchero* ware came to light (Arteaga 1988: 134–35). As at Cerro del Villar, this phase at Toscanos corresponds to a period of strong spatial and architectonic growth and coincides with the construction of an extensive fortification wall in the immediate environs at Alarcón, where amphorae from Samos and local imitations of Greek ceramics have also been found (Schubart 1988; 2002).

Although we are still dealing with a period in the Phoenician colonial world about which not enough is known, it is obvious that around 600 BC, the archaeological record of the principal colonies in the West reveals a relatively homogeneous horizon, characterized, *inter alia*, by the appearance of East Greek imports and, to a lesser extent, Etruscan pottery. The same can be seen at Carthage (Docter 2001), Ibiza (Costa and Gomez Bellard 1987; Gomez Bellard 1991), Tharros, Bithia, and Nora (Tronchetti 1988: 48–52, 92–93), Palermo (Merra 1998), and Solunto (Tardo 1997).

To sum up, the archaeological evidence suggests a profound restructuring of the Mediterranean trading networks in the late seventh and early sixth centuries BC, affecting the sphere of the Phoenician colonies and cities in the West. For the first time, the cities of Ionia—the new commercial powers emerging in

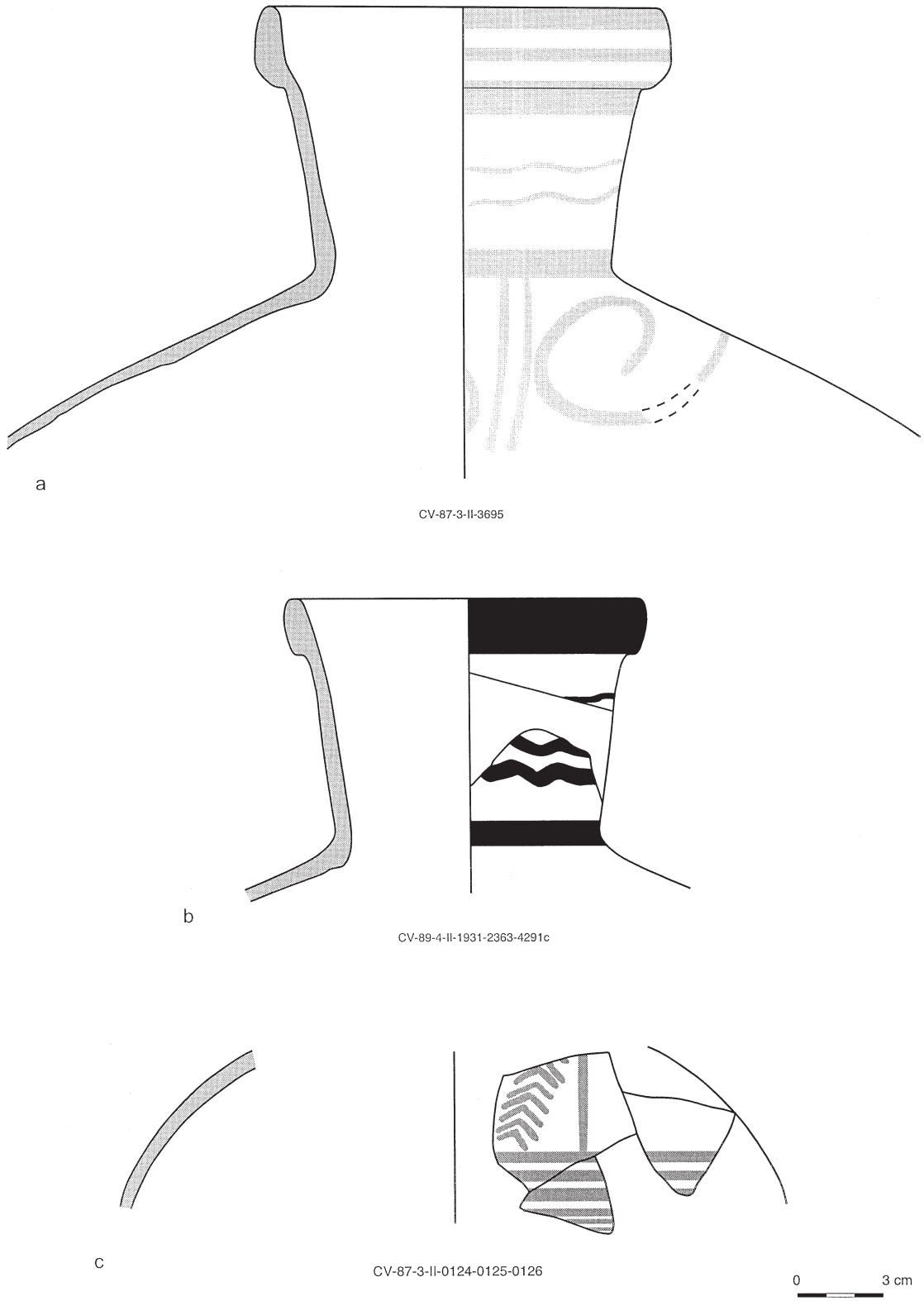

Fig. 5. Cerro del Villar, Ionian pottery: a–b: hydrias (a is probably from Samos); c: oenochoe.

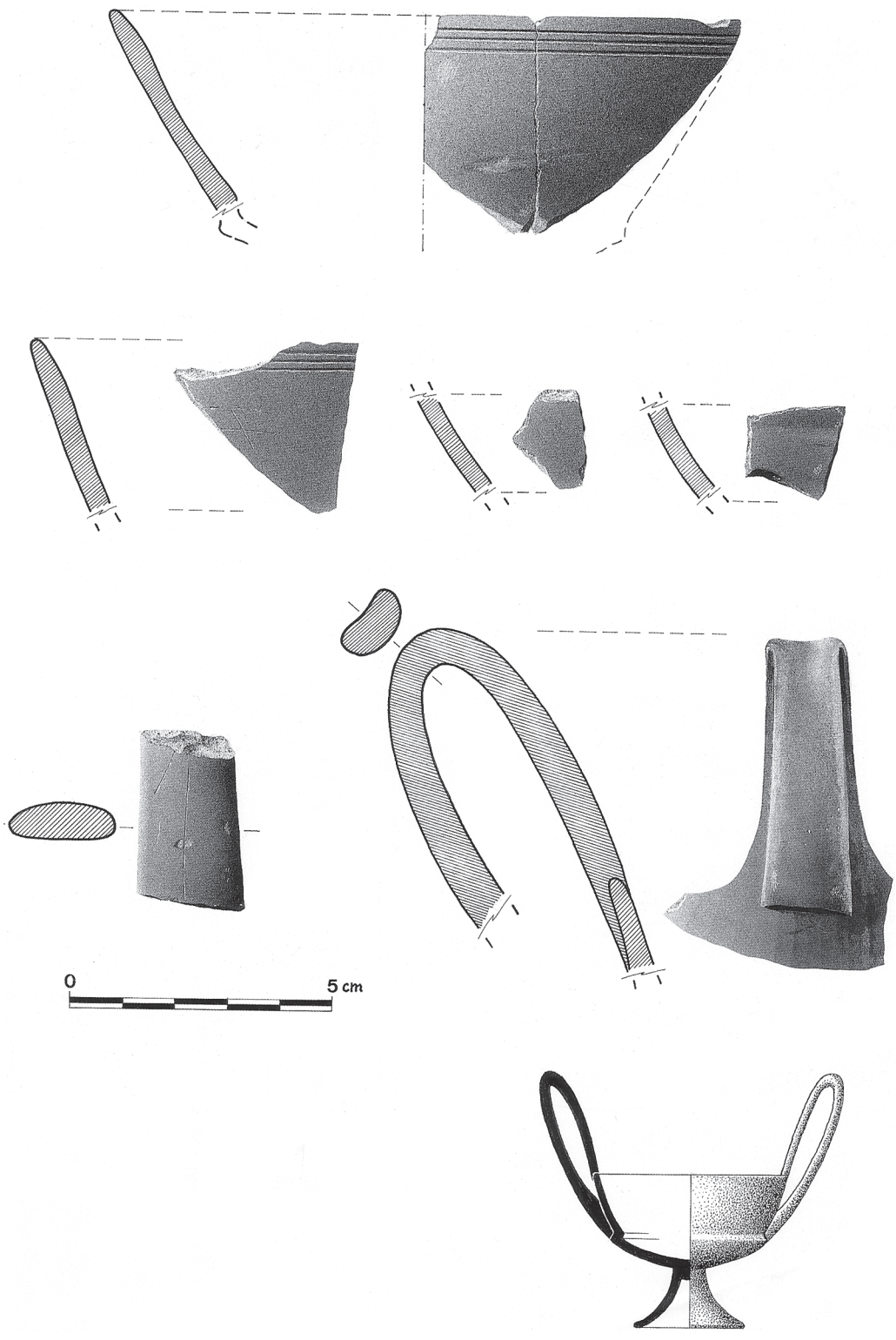

Fig. 6. Cerro del Villar, kantharoi in Etruscan *bucchero* ware.

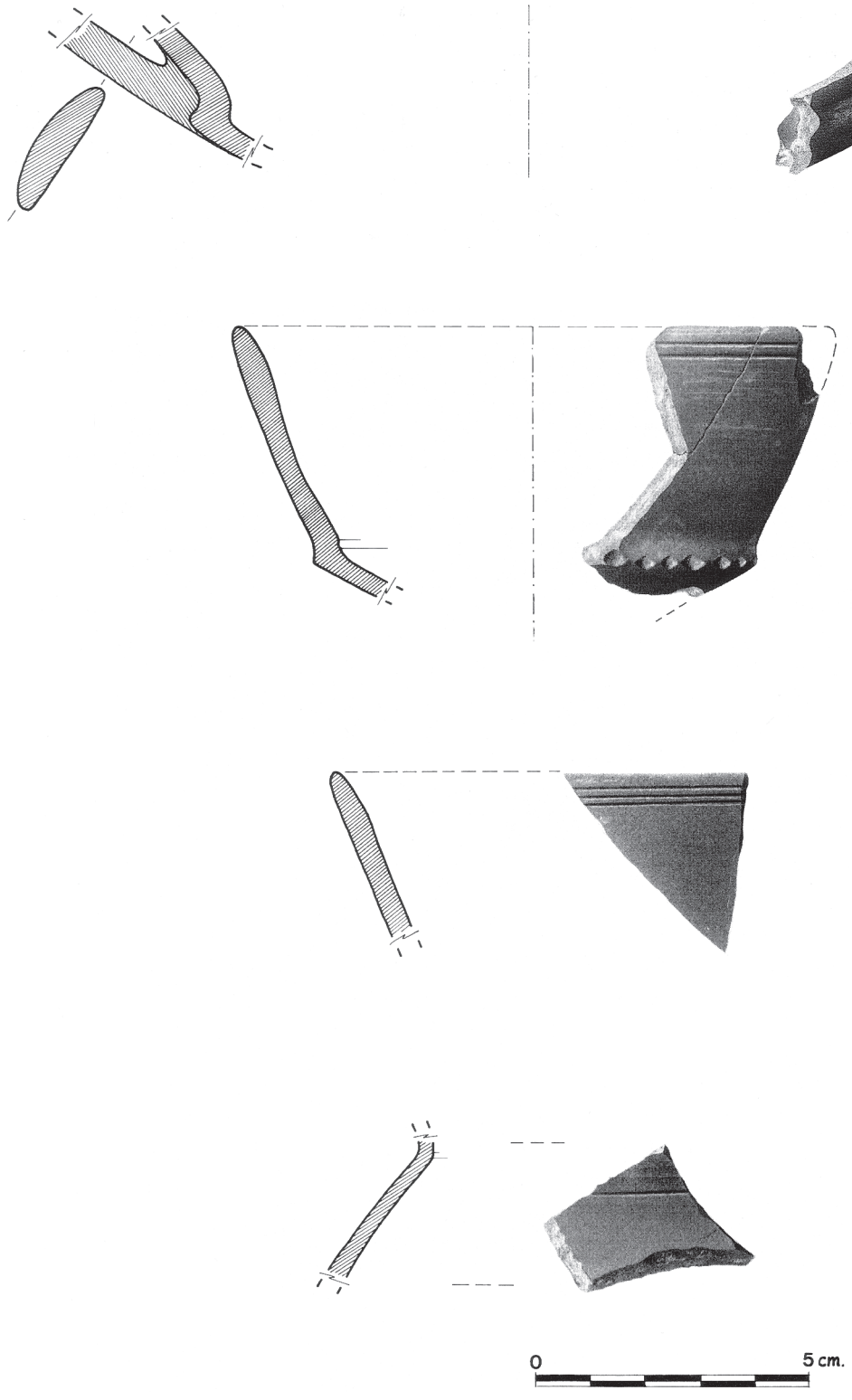

Fig. 7. Cerro del Villar, Etruscan *bucchero* ware.

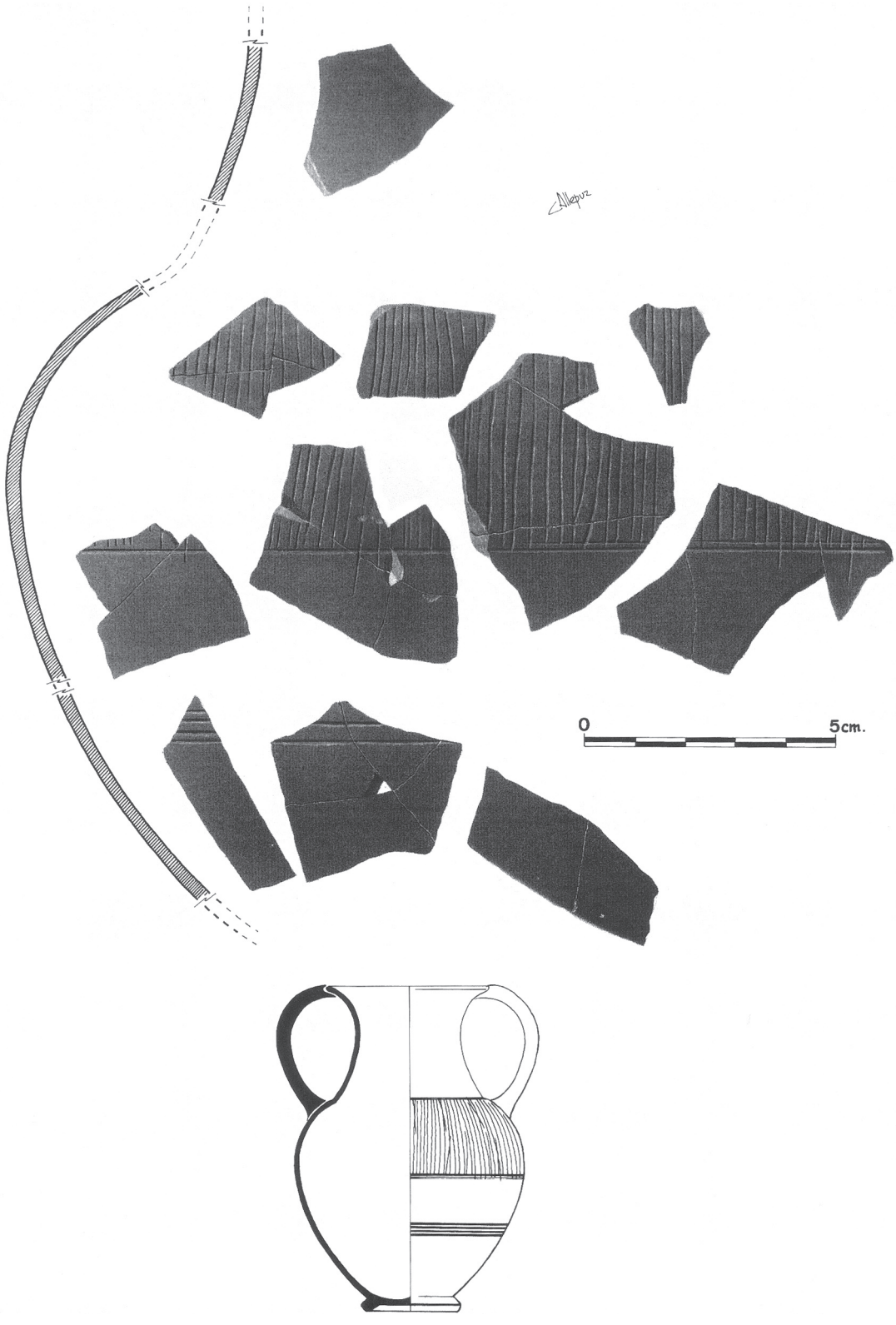

Fig. 8. Cerro del Villar, small amphora in Etruscan *bucchero* ware.

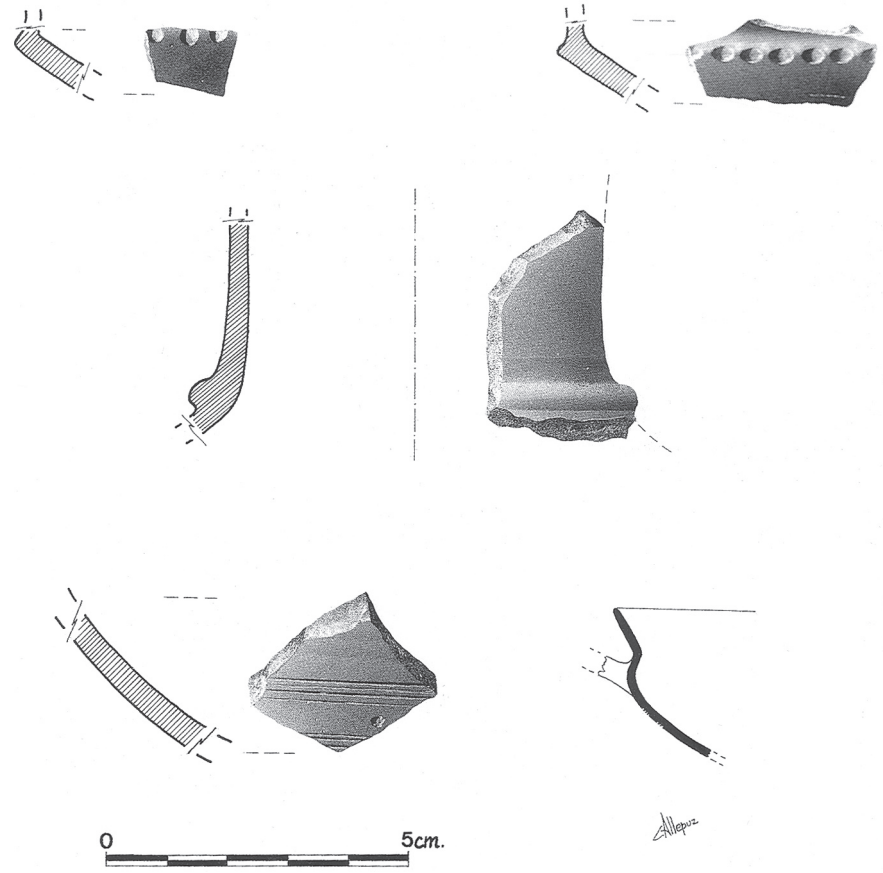

Fig. 9. Cerro del Villar, Etruscan *bucchero* ware.

the eastern Mediterranean—find their place in the international maritime trade in wine, olive oil, and luxury goods. The significant presence of Etruscan pottery at Miletum and the Heraion of Samos, particularly *bucchero* ware (Naso 2000), suggests the direct involvement of the cities of southern Etruria in this new exchange network. Not only were centers in the Levant like Bassit and Al Mina included in one way or another in the Ionian-Etruscan commercial axis, but the Phoenician colonies in the central and western Mediterranean played an active part in it as well. This occurred within a system of relationships or alliances between separate partners, which is seen to be much more direct than contacts with the Greek world had been in earlier periods. The fact that prestige goods of the late seventh century from workshops in the Phoenician area of Gadir are present in the Heraion of Samos (Freyer-Schauenburg 1966: 104–10; Kyrieleis 1981: 31–32; Aubet 1982: 24) seems to confirm the participation of Tyre's chief colony in the West in this important Ionian-Etruscan network. It was an international trade network of huge scope that impinged in a special way on all of the Phoenician cities, from Tyre to Gades, Tharros, Ibiza, and Carthage. The presence of goods of this type in the West does not appear to be a response to a specific historical event, as would be the arrival of Greek colonists in certain territories that had no Greek colonies.

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