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ETRUSCAN POTTERY: SOME CASE STUDIES  
IN CHRONOLOGY AND CONTEXT\*

ETRUSCAN pottery has been studied over the last 25 years or so under a variety of aspects. While some of these, like typology, chronology, and distribution, have been quite popular, other aspects have remained virtually unexplored. In this contribution only two of these aspects are discussed in more detail: chronology and archaeological context. When speaking of Etruscan pottery, both transport amphorae and fine wares - impasto, bucchero and Etrusco-Corinthian pottery - are meant. Chronologically this contribution covers the second half of the 8th till the 5th century BC. It builds on my earlier research on transport amphorae and imported fine wares from the Phoenician settlements of Carthage in Tunisia and Toscanos in Spain, the Greek settlements of Pithekoussai on the island of Ischia, Kerkyra on Corfù, Bouthrotos/Butrint in Albania, the Etruscan settlement of La Castellina, and the Latial settlement of Satricum. These sites may be considered as non-typical, since they have been chosen mainly for reasons of availability of material for study. Nevertheless, when focussing on aspects of chronology and context these sites may offer remarkable insights in Etruscan pottery.

Let me start with chronology. Until quite recently, the only Etruscan pottery known to have been exported in very small quantities abroad during the 8th century BC was impasto, and, perhaps less strictly Etruscan, the Italo-Geometric vessels. This general picture should now be reconsidered on the basis of finds from Carthage, coming from the German excavations of both H. G. Niemeyer and F. Rakob. In stratigraphical layers of the last quarter of the 8th and first half of the 7th centuries BC, fragments of transport amphorae have been found, which can be attributed on the basis of their fabric to Etruria.<sup>1</sup> These early versions of the Etruscan amphorae show close similarities with contemporary handmade transport amphorae of the Nuraghic world, both in the general ovoid shape, the handle shape, stamped decoration, and in the surface treatment, consisting of a reddish scum. These amphorae clearly stand out amongst the other amphora material from Carthage, being characterized by volcanic inclusions in their fabric and their composite production method. They were manufactured partly by hand and partly on the potter's wheel. First, coils of clay were put on top of each other and pressed against a shaping tool, e.g. a piece of wood or a pottery sherd. Then, the rim was attached while the wheel turned.<sup>2</sup> Macroscopically, five subclasses could be distinguished. For a variety of reasons the class as a whole was at first thought to be of Central-Italian provenance and referred to as «ZitA», which is short for the German «zentral-italische Amphoren». Since the memorable congress of Sulcis in September 1997, however, such provenance can no longer be sustained for the majority of the amphorae concerned. I. Oggiano clearly showed that most amphorae from the Nuraghic settlement of Santa Imbenia have the same fabric, surface treat-

\* My warmest thanks go to the organizers of the Marseille conference for their kind invitation to participate.

<sup>1</sup> R. F. DOCTER, *Archaische Amphoren aus Karthago und Toscanos. Fundspektrum und Formentwicklung. Ein Beitrag zur phönizischen Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, Amsterdam, 1997, § IX.4, fig. 423 tab. 75; R. F. DOCTER, *Die sogenannten ZitA-Amphoren: nuraghisches und zentralitalisches* (19.9.1997), in R. ROLLE, K. SCHMIDT, R. F. DOCTER (eds.), *Archäologische Studien in Kontaktzonen der antiken Welt*, Göttingen, 1998 («Veröffentlichung der Joachim Jungius-Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften Hamburg»), 87, esp. pp. 362-363, 365-366 (Proto-Etruscan).

<sup>2</sup> On this class, see: M. B. ANNIS., L. JACOBS, R. F. DOCTER, *Archaic Commercial Amphorae from Carthage: A Technological Analysis*, «Newsletter Department of Pottery Technology», 13, 1995 [1996], pp. 53-79; R. F. DOCTER, M. B. ANNIS, L. JACOBS, G. H. J. M. BLESSING, *Early Central Italian Amphorae from Carthage. Preliminary Results*, «RivStFenicci», 25, 1, 1997, pp. 15-58 (please note that none of the colour plates on pls. VII and VIII is in right order); R. F. DOCTER, *Carthage and the Tyrrhenian in the 8th and 7th Centuries B.C. Central Italian transport amphorae and fine wares found under the Decumanus Maximus*, in M. E. AUBET, M. BARTHÉLEMY (eds.), *Actas del IV Congreso Internacional de Estudios Fenicios y Púnicos Cádiz, 2 al 6 de Octubre de 1995*, vol. 1, Cádiz, 2000, pp. 329-338.

ment and morphological details as the rest of the local pottery repertoire in the settlement. These must, therefore, have been produced on Sardinia. This has led to a revision of the class.<sup>1</sup> One of the subclasses, however, had exactly the same fabric as South-Etruscan amphorae of the second half of the 7th century BC onwards. In the earliest layers of Carthage, the Nuraghic subclasses, and less so the Etruscan subclass (fragments of 8 different amphorae), form the largest find-groups. After the middle of the seventh century BC the Nuraghic amphorae seem to disappear from the archaeological record almost completely. Only Etruscan transport amphorae continue to be imported thereafter; in the excavations of the University of Hamburg below the Decumanus Maximus of Carthage there are fragments of at least 17 pieces.

The early production of transport amphorae in Etruria is not something of a novelty, though. Already in 1986, Mössbauer-analyses had been published for an amphora from the Osteria dell'Osa or Gabii grave 212, on the basis of which an Etruscan origin seemed ascertained.<sup>2</sup> This amphora, dated by its context between 725 and 650 BC, also had a reddish scum on the surface.

I will now move on to the second aspect: the way in which the archaeological context may influence the composition of the Etruscan finds.

That Etruscan pottery was traded amongst the Etruscan cities themselves is a well-known fact. However, hardly ever do we have statistics on the volume of Etruscan vessels traded within this «internal Etruscan market». The recent French excavations of J. Gran-Aymerich at the site of La Castellina of the years 1996-1999 may probably provide some information in this respect. Since the publication of the Etruscan fine wares from the site is in the hands of others, only some details on the transport amphorae may be offered in the present contribution. The total number of amphorae is remarkably low if compared with that of other contemporary Mediterranean sites. Within this low number, the proportion of (possible) Etruscan amphorae is not impressive if compared to the total number of contemporary amphorae. Only 47 out of the 143 amphorae of the 8th till 5th century BC may be attributed to Etruscan amphorae, that is to say exactly 33%. These amphorae were probably all imported from other Etruscan sites. At least, it seems very unlikely that the site once had an own production of Etruscan amphorae. In any case, not only the proportion of Etruscan amphorae is rather low, but also the total number of amphorae itself. This fact may in part be explained by the relatively high number of dolia in use in the settlement, in combination with a relatively long distance from the sea. In part it may be due to a functional or contextual difference, regarding the fact that the excavators interpret the site of La Castellina as a «political-religious» centre during the Etruscan period. It is perhaps not without significance in this respect, that the low number of amphorae reminds one rather of the finds from the acropolis of Satricum, which is clearly a religious site centred on the temple of Mater Matuta.<sup>3</sup>

Also the distribution of Etruscan pottery to the Greek world in the Eastern Mediterranean is very much dictated by the archaeological context: we are mostly dealing with kantharoi dedicated in the major sanctuaries.

The bucchero kantharos is virtually the only Etruscan pottery shape found in Greece.<sup>4</sup> Bucchero kantharoi have been found on Ithaca, in Sparta, Corinth, Perachora and Athens. Farther afield these kantharoi are known from Delos, Samos, Chios, Pitane, Smyrna, and Rhodos.<sup>5</sup> Recently, a

<sup>1</sup> The implications of this revision are dealt with elsewhere in full detail (see, p. 233, note 2, DOCTER 1998).

<sup>2</sup> A. DERU, E. CALABRESE, P. PELAGATTI, F. BOITANI, *Mössbauer Investigation on Archaic Trade Amphorae of Phoenician and Etruscan Origin*, «Hyperfine Interactions», 29, 1986, pp. 1109-1112. The amphora belongs to fabric group 2 of J.-C. Sourisseau (see elsewhere in this volume), coming from Pyrgi and its surroundings; see also DOCTER 1997, tab. 76 (p. 233, note 2).

<sup>3</sup> The publication of the amphorae, many of which of Archaic date, is foreseen in the volume on the Hellenistic Votive Deposit.

<sup>4</sup> The origin of the Etrusco-Corinthian phiale, which is now in the Louvre (said to be from Orchomenos), has been questioned; see J. G. SZILÁGYI, *Le fabbriche di ceramica etrusco-corinzia a Tarquinia*, «StEtr», 40, 1972, p. 37, 46, n. 26, cat. 64; J. G. SZILÁGYI, *Ceramica etrusco-corinzia figurata*, II. 590/580-550 a.C., Firenze, 1998, p. 468, n. 114; 536, n. 21, 693.

<sup>5</sup> F. W. VON HASE, *Der etruskische Bucchero aus Karthago. Ein Beitrag zu den frühen Handelsbeziehungen im westlichen Mittelmeergebiet (7.-6. Jahrhundert v. Chr.)*, «JahrZentrMusMainz», 36, 1989 [1992], p. 365, 408, fig. 27,67-78; IDEM,

bucchero kantharos came to light in the Apollo sanctuary of Emecik, near Old-Knidos, which is probably to be interpreted as the *Triopion* of the Dorian Pentapolis League.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps quite significantly, Corinth, with 28 pieces from sanctuary and settlement contexts, and Samos, with 12 pieces from sanctuary contexts, score high on the distribution scale. Both Corinth and Samos were fairly busy exporting fine wares and foodstuffs in transport amphorae to the West, including Etruria.

Those familiar with the subject of Etruscan finds in Greece will probably wonder, why the well-known kantharos found in pithos grave Bèta on Corfù (PL. 1),<sup>2</sup> and the oinochoe found in the adjacent pithos grave Alpha are left out from the above distribution list? This is not without reason, since at least the kantharos is a local imitation. It is, quite remarkably, made of a clay that goes with a reddish painted surface intending a black paint, a fabric which C. W. Neeft and the present author have defined «Corfiote 1» in the forthcoming Butrint publication. Already the excavator,

P. G. Kalligas, mentions it to be «melambafous» (black painted) in his 1968 publication. The possibility that a potter made an *exact* copy of an Etruscan bucchero kantharos on Corfù somewhere between 630 and 550 is highly intriguing. Is he an early colleague of Nikosthenes? Apparently, he normally worked for a local market producing other, probably local shapes, since no other Corfiote kantharoi have come to our notice. Did he make more than this single kantharos? Do

we witness here an emigrated Etruscan potter, making a vessel, which he was accustomed to make at home? Was it a specialty for his own grave or for the grave of an Etruscan relative, friend or customer? We may only guess. In any case, the burial custom seems to be typically Corfiote. I have not seen the oinochoe from the adjacent pithos grave Alpha, but perhaps it is an imitation as well. Apparently, the two pithos graves were linked, if only by the presence of these two Etruscan pottery shapes.

Opposite Corfù lies the Greek settlement of Bouthrotos or Butrint in present-day Albania, a typical Greek coastal town, which had already been in existence in the second half of the 8th century BC. Here, the joint Albanian-Greek excavations of the late A. Nanaj and K. Hadzis between 1991 and 1995 yielded the surprisingly low number of three Etruscan pottery fragments. Together, they form the base of one single Etruscan transport amphora (FIG. 1). It is fairly sure that the number of Etruscan pottery found in this settlement cannot be any higher, since I have seen every single fragment of the 74.900 finds.<sup>3</sup> It is not the place to go into typological niceties, but the flat base may be dated somewhere between 725 and 500 BC.

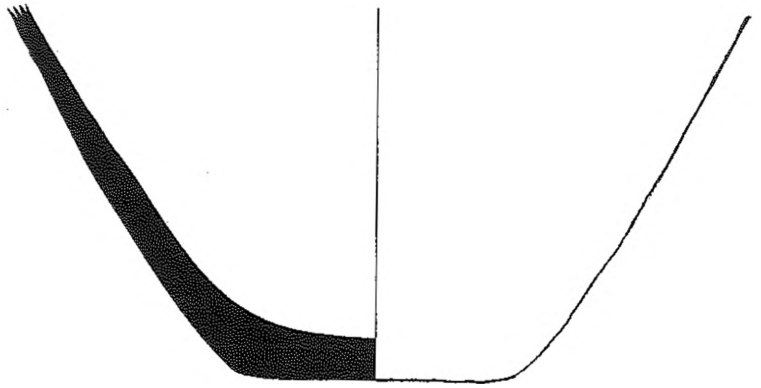


FIG. 1. Bouthrotos/Butrint: acropolis excavations: base of Etruscan transport amphora BK 5622 (Scale 1:2. Ink drawing C. W. Neeft).

*Présences étrusques et italiennes dans les sanctuaires grecs (VIII<sup>e</sup>-VII<sup>e</sup> siècle av. J.C.),* in F. GAULTIER, D. BRIQUEL (eds.), *Les plus religieux des hommes. État de la recherche sur la religion étrusque*, Actes du colloque international Galeries nationales du Grand Palais 17-18-19 novembre 1992, Paris, 1997, pp. 316-318, fig. 23 (updated distribution chart); also A. J. NIJBOER, *From Household Production to Workshops. Archaeological Evidence for Economic Transformations in Central Italy from 800-400 BC*, Groningen, 1998, pp. 55-56, n. 216.

<sup>1</sup> D. BERGES, N. TUNA, *Das Apollonheiligtum von Emecik*, Bericht über die Ausgrabungen 1998 und 1999, «IM», 50, 2000, p. 198, 200, fig. 15b.

<sup>2</sup> Now on display in the Corfù Museum inv. 1757. P. G. KALLIGAS, *Archaiotites kai mnimeia Ionion nison*, «ArchDelt», 23, 1968 [1969], p. 314, pl. 255; VON HASE 1989 (n. 8), p. 329, 365, 408, figs. 1, 27, 66; VON HASE 1997 (n. 8), p. 316, fig. 23; NIJBOER 1998 (n. 8), p. 54, fig. 7 (in the last three publications as an original bucchero kantharos). On the fabric, see C. W. NEEFT in *Bouthrotos. The Pottery* (forthcoming).

<sup>3</sup> See R. F. DOCTER, *Amphorae and Pithoi*, in *Bouthrotos. The Pottery* (forthcoming), pl. 86, 1589. In the context of the present conference it is interesting to note that also one fragment of a Massaliote transport amphora has been found.

Let us turn West again, and look at the picture in Pithekoussai. In 1993, the opportunity offered itself to study the bucchero finds in the collection of the Museum below the Santa Restituta church of Lacco Ameno (FIGG. 2-3).<sup>1</sup> The majority of these fragments had been found exactly at this spot during the excavations of P. Monti. As G. Buchner informed me later on, part of this bucchero collection must originate in the so-called Scarico Gosetti, however. Fragments of 33 bucchero vessels could be registered, of which 29 can be attributed to kantharoi or perhaps kyathoi and the like, dating roughly from the last 30 years of the 7th till after the middle of the 6th century BC. Only one fragment is of a bucchero sottile skyphos and three belong to bowls of similar chronology. In the Gosetti dump also three Etruscan transport amphorae were found sharing the same general dating of the accompanying bucchero.<sup>2</sup>

It is very unfortunate that most of the sherds do not have a very clear provenance in well-defined contexts. What does seem clear, however, is that we may exclude that they originate in a necropolis. When this rather homogeneous repertoire of Etruscan drinking vessels is compared with the finds of the Valle di San Montano necropolis, one is left with only two Etruscan vessels of a considerably earlier period. One impasto «spiral amphora» of Rasmussen's type 1B from the Early Protocorinthian (or local Late Geometric II) grave 159, and another one from grave 944 in the still unpublished part of the necropolis.<sup>3</sup>

In the Late Geometric farmstead in the South of Ischia, known as Punta Chiarito, one fragment of an impasto «spiral amphora» turned up in the oldest level, but later levels didn't yield any bucchero.<sup>4</sup> So, here again, the archaeological context influences the pattern of finds.

I will end my *periplous* and return to Carthage. As shown above, the site excavated by the University of Hamburg below the *Decumanus Maximus* between 1986 and 1993 has yielded early Etruscan transport amphorae. Moreover, Etruscan fine ware pottery from about 660 BC onwards was found in quite some numbers and in a rich variety of shapes and wares: bucchero, impasto, and Etrusco-Corinthian. This is not the place to dwell on details, but it is illustrative to give some numbers.<sup>5</sup> 28 bucchero vessels, of which 9 kantharoi, 3 skyphoi, 2 bowls, 3 undetermined open shapes, 1 «spiral amphora», 1 oinochoe, 1 olpe, and 8 other closed vessels. Three impasto vessels, of which 2 kantharoi or kyathoi, and 1 large bowl. The Etrusco-Corinthian pottery is also represented with 1 remarkably large kotyle, 4 aryballoi of Middle Corinthian type, and 1 alabastron of the «Pittore delle code annodate» from Vulci. Five of these six Etrusco-Corinthian vessels come from two adjacent rooms (A and B) of House 1.<sup>6</sup> Also if one compares the total number of Etruscan fine ware vessels (37), the majority comes from House 1 (23, or 62%). The other five houses and the street together only yielded 14 vessels. The context seems to be important, again.

It is a remarkable fact that only some 90 meters farther to the South a completely different picture emerges. Here, new excavations by the University of Amsterdam in 2000 and 2001 and jointly by the Ghent University and the Tunisian Archaeological Service (INP), co-directed by Fethi Chelbi and the present author (spring 2002), yielded only two fragments of bucchero and

<sup>1</sup> I thank Don Pietro Monti for his kind permission to study these finds and (re-)publish them on this occasion. He has provided me with additional information on the fragment with the 'SOΣINIKOS'-graffito, here FIG. 2a, which had been found in the area of the circular furnaces below the church: P. MONTI, *Ischia. Archeologia e Storia*, Napoli, 1986, p. 120. The finds had no inventory numbers.

<sup>2</sup> N. DI SANDRO, *Le anfore arcaiche dallo scarico Gosetti, Pithecusa*, Naples, 1986 («Cahiers des Amphores Archaiques et Classiques», 2; «Cahiers du Centre Jean Bérard», 12), pp. 117-118, pl. 26.

<sup>3</sup> G. BUCHNER, D. RIDGWAY, *Pithekoussai 944*, «AION ArchStAnt», 5, 1983, pp. 1-9.

<sup>4</sup> C. GIALANELLA, *Pithecusa: gli insediamenti di Punta Chiarito. Relazione preliminare*, in B. D'AGOSTINO, D. RIDGWAY (eds.), *Apoikia. I più antichi insediamenti greci in Occidente: funzioni e modi dell'organizzazione politica e sociale. Scritti in onore di Giorgio Buchner*, «AION ArchStAnt», n.s., 1, Napoli, 1994, p. 183, 200, fig. 1, A5.

<sup>5</sup> R. F. DOCTER, *Die importierte griechische und zentralitalische Feinkeramik archaischer Zeit*, in H. G. NIEMEYER et alii, *Karthago. Die Hamburger Grabung unter dem Decumanus Maximus* («Hamburger Forschungen zur Archäologie», 2), Mainz am Rhein (forthcoming), cat. 4220-4256, with full references to earlier literature.

<sup>6</sup> On these houses: H. G. NIEMEYER, R. F. DOCTER et alii, *Die Grabung unter dem Decumanus Maximus von Karthago. Vorbericht über die Kampagnen 1986-1991*, «RM», 100, 1993, pp. 201-244, esp. figs. 2-3.

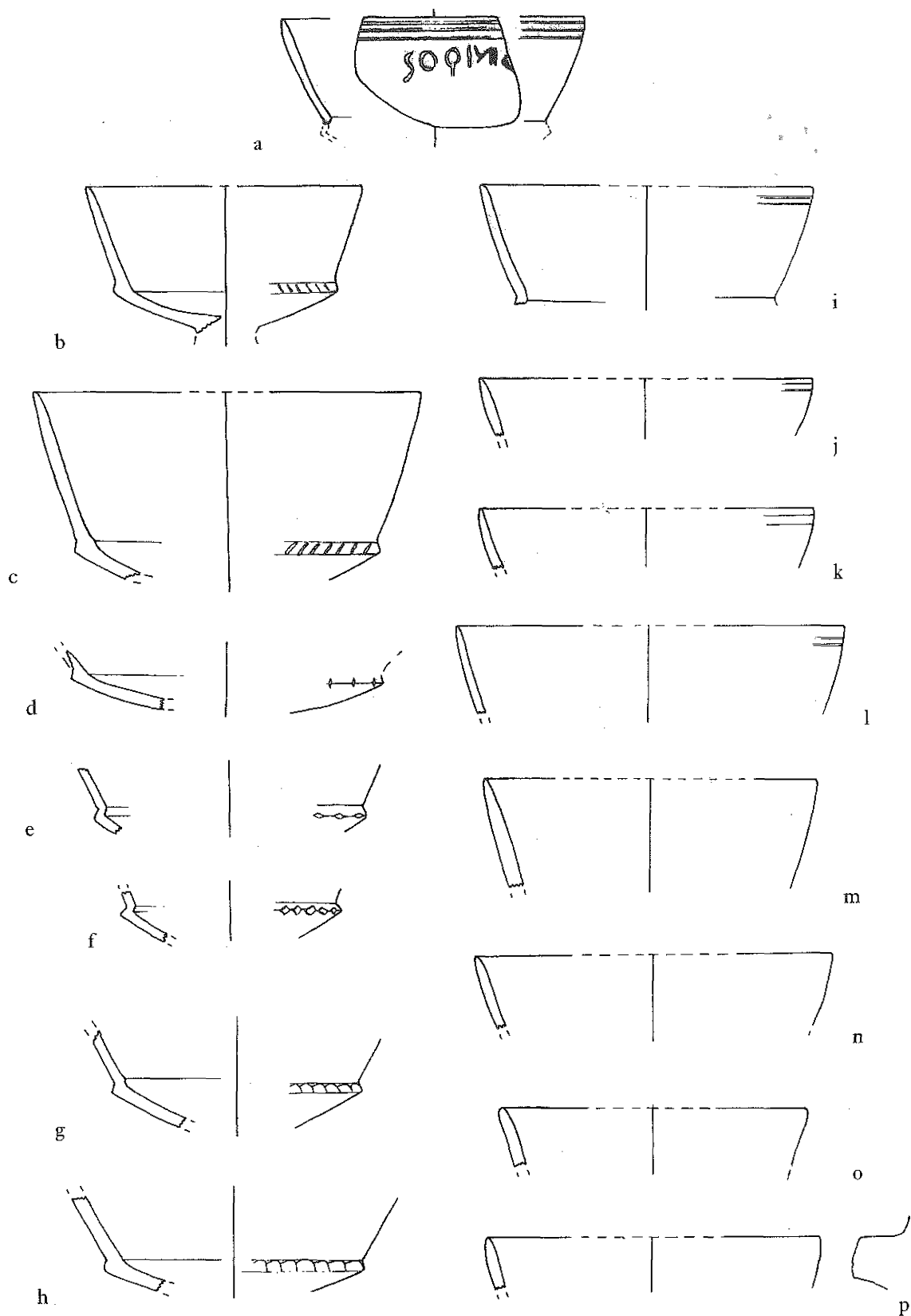


FIG. 2. Pithekoussai: bucchero kantharoi or kyathoi from the settlement area: Scarico Gosetti (acropolis dump) and area below Santa Restituta church (Scale 1:2. Ink drawings by J. Angenon).

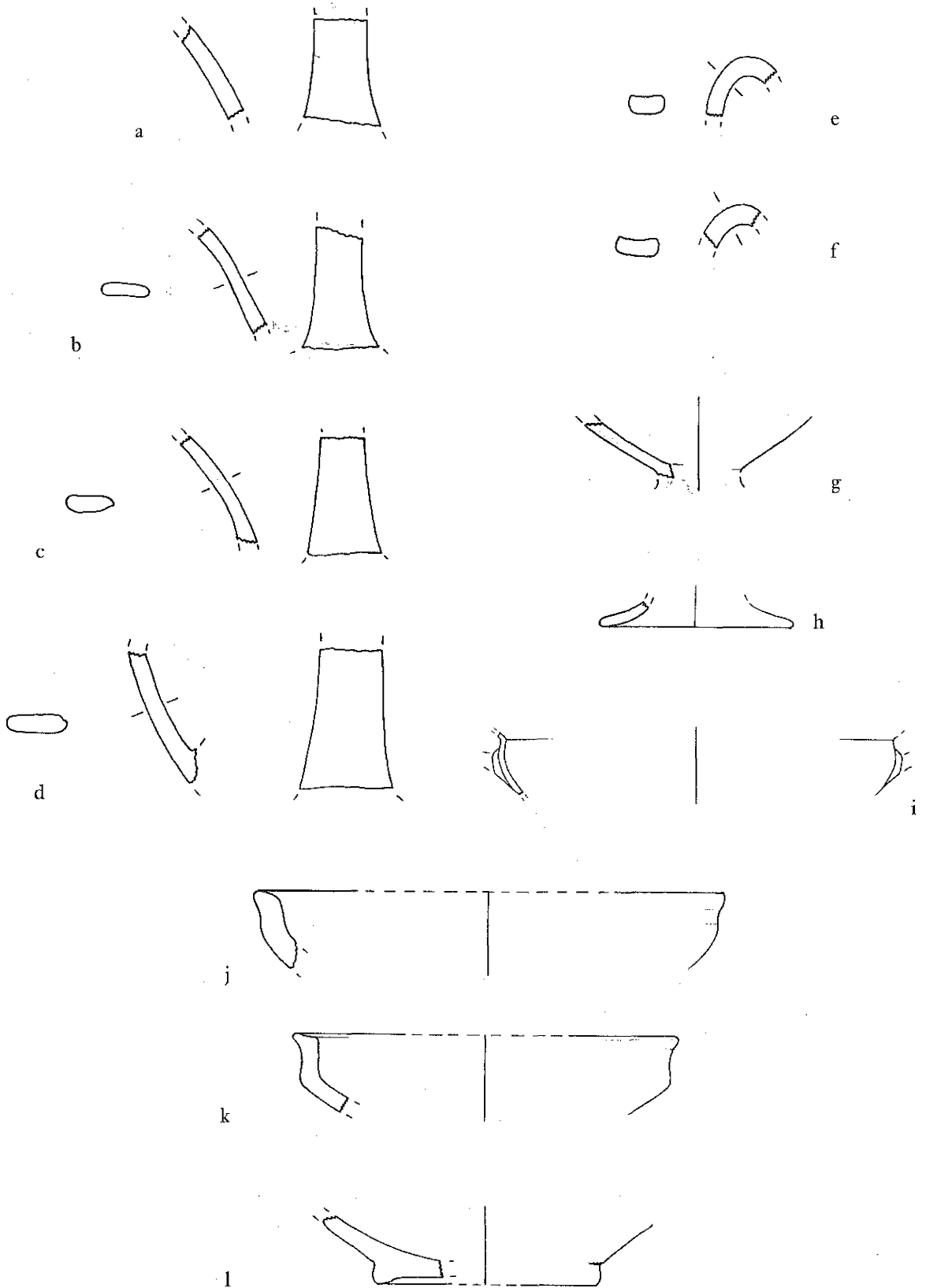


FIG. 3. Pithekoussai: bucchero kantharoi or kyathoi, skyphos and bowls from the settlement area: Scarico Gosetti (acropolis dump) and area below Santa Restituta church (Scale 1:2. Ink drawings by J. Angenon).

two fragments of impasto, all belonging to closed vessels.<sup>1</sup> No single fragment of a bucchero kantharos nor one single piece of an Etrusco-Corinthian vessel was recorded, although the total number of fragments of all classes found during these three campaigns is meanwhile as high as the total number found in the University of Hamburg excavations.

Two bucchero fragments were found in one context (BM00/1117). Of these fragments, one clearly belongs to a small «spiral amphora», which may be dated to the second half of the 7th century BC. The archaeological context is a levelling layer dated to the Middle Punic period or the late 5th century BC, so we should probably consider both fragments as residual. The excavations of spring 2002 yielded two fragments of Etruscan impasto, one of which clearly belonging to a «spiral amphora» of the type discussed before (FIG. 4, a).<sup>2</sup> Such impasto versions are known from the last quarter of the 8th century BC onwards (Pithekoussai, see above). The other fragment, with part of the vertical grooves preserved, may have belonged to an amphora or large closed vessel as well (FIG. 4, b). Such decoration seems to be typical for impasto vessels of the Orientalizing period, that is to say for the second half of the 7th century BC. Apart from these fine ware vessels, few fragments of Etruscan transport amphorae were recorded.

How can we explain the apparent difference between the two sites, which lie so close to each other? A chronological explanation seems to be precluded, since both sites have yielded material of similar dates in numbers. Rather, I would plea for a contextual or functional explanation.

The area excavated by the Hamburg team below the *Decumanus Maximus* is clearly a residential quarter, situated in what I have called elsewhere the upper town of Carthage. The finds stem from garbage layers used to raise the terrain at certain intervals of time. They reflect the pottery in use in regular Carthaginian households between the 8th and the 5th century BC and of one «Etrusco-minded» household in particular, viz. that of House 1. The material found in the recent excavations farther to the South, can be connected to an industrial zone at the fringes of the upper town. The contexts are either levelling layers reflecting the garbage composition of this neighbourhood, or layers partially composed of re-deposited necropolis material. As a working hypothesis, I have suggested elsewhere that the area between the upper town and the lower town near the tophet is the place where to look for the still missing necropoleis of the 8th and early 7th century BC. These necropoleis gave way to industrial activities by the 6th century BC. Since the integrated study of the finds from these contexts has not yet been concluded and the excavation still continues, it is too early to choose between the two functional possibilities.

In conclusion, it seems clear that, firstly, Etruria produced and exported transport amphorae already by the late 8th century BC, and, secondly, the archaeological context cannot be emphasised enough, when interpreting and discussing Etruscan pottery found in Etruria and abroad.

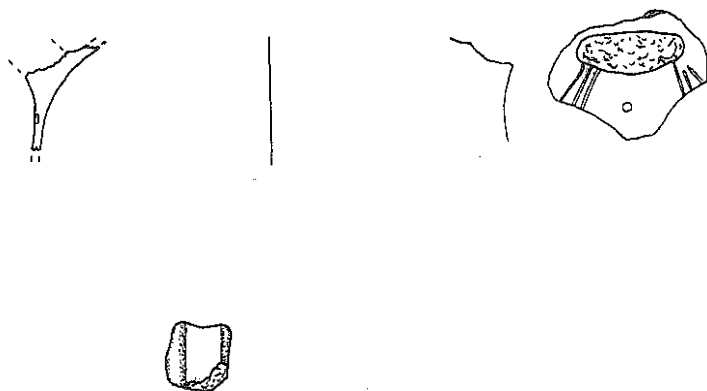


FIG. 4. Impasto finds from Carthage, Bir Messaouda. a) Fragment of «spiral amphora» BM02/32581 from context BM02/8214. b) Fragment of amphora or large closed vessel BM02/32224 from context BM02/8239 (Scale 1:2. Ink drawings by J. Angenon).

<sup>1</sup> On these excavations: R. F. DOCTER, *The topography of archaic Carthage Preliminary results of recent excavations and some prospects*, «TALANTA. Proceedings of the Dutch Archaeological and Historical Society», 34-35, 2002-2003, pp. 113-133; R. F. DOCTER, F. CHELBI, B. M. TELMINI, *Carthage Bir Messaouda: Preliminary Report on the first excavation campaign of Ghent University and the Institut National du Patrimoine (spring 2002)*, «BABesch», 78, 2003, pp. 43-70.

<sup>2</sup> The fragments stem from two levelling layers, contexts BM02/8214 and BM02/8239 respectively.



PL. I. Kerkyra, Corfù, pithos grave Bèta: Local imitation of Etruscan kantharos  
(after Kalligas 1968, pl. 255, cit. n. 2, p. 235).