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East Greek and Cypriote Ceramics of the Archaic Period*

Sabine Fourier

The relations between Cyprus and the Aegean, as evidenced by the circulation of ceramic vessels and other artefacts, are marked by a major change in the 7th century BC. Before that time, Cypriote imports were numerous in the Dodecanese and Crete, where they prompted local imitations (Coldstream 1984); and Aegean imports to Cyprus were mostly of Euboean, Cycladic and, to a lesser degree, Attic production (Gjerstad *et al.* 1977; Coldstream 1988; Lemos and Hatcher 1991). After a gap in the first part of the 7th century –which still has to be explained but might be related to the expansion of Assyrian power in the East Mediterranean and the subsequent reorganization of the trade networks to the benefit of the empire– from *ca.* 650 onwards, a large number of Cypriote imports, mostly terracottas and small limestone sculptures, were consecrated in East Greek sanctuaries, and East Greek ceramics (commercial amphorae as well as fine wares) dominated the Greek ceramic assemblage from Cyprus (Gjerstad *et al.* 1977).

Despite clear evidence of direct relations –which are also mirrored in the historical sources and which culminate in the Cypriote participation in the Ionian revolt– East Greek and Cypriote Archaic products nevertheless follow different paths of development and they do not seem to be much influenced by each other. The Cypriote impact on East Greek pottery is restricted to minor series, for example the so-called ‘Cypriote group’ of Rhodian plastic *aryballoi* (Ducat 1966, 72-4), and to the use of some Cypriote motifs or designs in vase-painting, as the ear-caps (Hemelrijk 1963). Similarly, East Greek influence on Cypriote Archaic products, although evenly distributed in all regions of the island (Flourentzos 1997), is also rather limited and varies greatly in its effects. I shall try to study this complex process of impact and assimilation by examining three different series of Cypriote products, which show three different ways of imitating, or rather adapting, East Greek prototypes.

1. East Greek drinking cups

The importation, and local imitation of Greek drinking cups have a long tradition in Cyprus. As early as the 9th century BC, pendent semicircle *skyphoi* were imported to the island and were imitated in the local Bichrome technique (Catling 1973). The same practice was pursued and increased during the following period (Coldstream 1979). Some of the Geometric drinking cups were Aegean (mostly Euboean) imports to Cyprus; others, found in Cyprus but also in the Levant and especially at Al Mina, were close imitations of Greek *skyphoi* (Jones 1986, 694-6); lastly, others were loose imitations, or adaptations, in a Cypriote fashion, of Greek prototypes. It is not surprising, then, to see the Geometric *skyphoi* replaced, from the middle of the 7th century BC onwards, by East Greek vases and more specifically by the so-called ‘Ionian cups’, also imported (Fig. 1), and closely or loosely imitated (Gjerstad *et al.* 1977, 32-4, pls XIII-XVI).

But the Greek shape, which owes its basic characteristics to the Mycenaean repertoire and was made in Cyprus from the beginning of the Cypro-Geometric I period onwards (Gjerstad 1960, figs 2-3), does not summarize alone the whole repertoire of Cypriote Archaic drinking vessels. To put it in a very schematic way, one could say that the Greek shape differs fundamentally from the Phoenician shape because it possesses handles, whereas the Levantine shape is without handle. Then, from the end of the Cypro-Geometric III period onwards, Cypriote potters also adapt a model without handles, of Phoenician origin. Two main shapes are attested. The

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first one is the hemispheric bowl with thin rim (Fig. 2a). It owes its specific shape to the imitation of metal and organic prototypes, i.e. ostrich eggs horizontally cut in two halves (Caubet 1995, fig. 1; *eadem* 2007). The second type, less popular, is footed and has a deep conical carinated body. It seems, at least to judge from the currently available evidence and with rare exceptions (for example, Salamis T. 79, Karageorghis 1973b, pl. XLVIII.61 and 54) to be restricted to the Kition area where Phoenician imports (Bikai 1981, pl. XXII.9) as well as close local imitations (Karageorghis 2006, pl. LXX) were found.

Greek and Phoenician drinking vessels thus represent two clearly distinct shapes and they imply different ways of drinking. To put it in a very schematic way again, handleless cups usually imply the use of two hands, whereas vessels with handles are usually held with one hand only. This fits the contemporary representations well. Besides very oriental fashions, as on the Hubbard amphora (Karageorghis and des Gagniers 1974, 6-9) –but the enthroned goddess cannot be drinking wine!– both attitudes are depicted. Thus, a terracotta figurine from Kition (Fig. 2b) shows an enthroned man drinking in a hemispheric handleless bowl (which may actually be metal), which he holds with two hands. Other figurines, of the Kamilaria type, hold a footed bowl with carinated body with two hands; this bowl is very close indeed to the actual ceramic vessels (e.g., Karageorghis 1998, pls XL-XLI). On the contrary, on a small amphora of the ‘Amathus Style’, the banqueting men hold Greek-style cups with one hand; the shape of the cup, especially the raised foot, is so specific that we could even suggest that the painter attempted to represent a Chian chalice (Karageorghis and des Gagniers 1974, 516-7).

The distribution of Greek drinking vessels in the East Mediterranean is linked to the practice of banqueting and to the world of the elite. As Coldstream once remarked, the relations between Cyprus and the Aegean in the Early Iron Age are ‘largely a story of Greek Geometric drinking cups going east, and of small flasks of East Mediterranean type travelling to the west’ (Coldstream 1986, 321). So how can the presence of both Phoenician and Greek shapes in the Cypriote repertoire of Archaic drinking vessels be interpreted? One might be tempted to associate a specific shape with a specific context, to restrict the use of Greek drinking cups to the practice of banqueting among the elite. The archaeological evidence seems to support this hypothesis. At Amathus, ‘Ionian cups’ and their imitations, and Greek imports in general, are almost completely lacking in the Aphrodite sanctuary, which yielded masses of hemispheric handleless cups (Fourrier and Hermay 2006, 90-126). On the contrary, Greek imports, and especially drinking cups, are numerous in the palace, as evidenced by the finds from two large Archaic palace deposits, on the West Terrace (Thalmann 1977) and close to the North Wall. Similarly, Gjerstad insisted on the quantity of East Greek bowls and *skyphoi* found in the palace of Vouni (Gjerstad *et al.* 1977, 33). But the large number of ‘Ionian cups’ and of their local imitations retrieved from the excavations of the Kition-Kathari sanctuary (Karageorghis 2006) should warn us against too rapid an assumption. As a matter of fact, the evidence from Kition shows that Greek shapes were very popular in the ‘Phoenician’ city, even before the vogue of Attic wares. If, as Boardman argues, ‘Easterners had no use for Greek-style drinking cups’ (Boardman 2001, 39), Cypriots, and Cypriots from Kition, certainly did.

2. Plastic *aryballoi* in the shape of a helmeted head

Contrary to the Greek-style drinking cups, the Cypriote plastic *aryballoi* represent only isolated examples. A few East Greek clay *aryballoi* were imported to Cyprus in the Archaic period (e.g., Caubet (dir.) 1998, 395, no. 671), but they never prompted local series of imitations. As isolated as they are, the three specimens listed below nevertheless show how Cypriote craftsmen adapted East Greek prototypes.

The first clay *aryballos* (Fig. 3a-b) was found in a tomb at Amathus (Karageorghis 1986, 52-4, pl. X.6-8). The similarity to East Greek *aryballoi* in the shape of a helmeted head is striking (Ducat 1966, 7-29). But the discrepancies are nevertheless manifold and they point to a local adaptation of a Greek prototype. Some oddities of the shape are obvious. East Greek *aryballoi* wear the so-called ‘Ionian helmet’; the helmet of the

Amathus imitation is closer to 'Corinthian' types, with a nose protection. This last kind of helmet is well known in the coroplastic art of Archaic Cyprus, where two main types are attested, sometimes mixed on the same representation: the Oriental, 'Assyrian' helmet, and the 'Corinthian' helmet (Karageorghis 1993, 86-7). The closest parallels are to be found on a series of terracotta moulded archers from Salamis (Monloup 1984, pl. 33). Besides, the Amathus aryballos possesses two identical heads. The model is certainly to be sought in the Oriental repertoire, where double-headed vases are known in the Late Bronze Age, with examples from Ugarit, Enkomi and Tell Abu Hawam (Matoian 2005, 50, no. 99, 54). In Egypt, plastic vases in faience often represent two opposed and distinct heads, one of a Syrian, the other of a negro, the two traditional neighbours and enemies of the Pharaoh. This type was imitated in East Greek Archaic faience, which must be the ultimate source of inspiration for the Cypriote potter/coroplast. Two such faience *aryballoi* were found in Cyprus (Webb 1978, 130, nos 874 and 876). The technique employed for the manufacture of the Amathus aryballos is typically Cypriote. On the roughly moulded head, the coroplast added many incised or impressed details. The impressed circles of the beard are one of the hallmarks of Cypriote Archaic coroplastic technique. This conclusion is confirmed by the style of the face, whose large eyes, big nose and thin mouth are typical of the 'Idalion school' (Fourrier 2007, 42). Certainly inspired by an East Greek prototype, the Cypriote coroplast thus created his own model, without using an imported mould and without attempting to give a close imitation of a Greek vase.

The same is true for the second, somehow cruder, aryballos (Fig. 4), found in a tomb at Ypsonas, not far from Amathus (Hadjisavvas 1998, 666-8, fig. 13). The style of the head is very close to the preceding example and it may point to a common place of manufacture. The Ypsonas aryballos wears a helmet of a mixed 'Corinthian' and 'Oriental' type, which is, as already mentioned, attested in the coroplastic art of Archaic Cyprus (for example, Karageorghis 1993, pl. XXVIII.2). The added clay disc on the forehead gives another Cypriote touch to the Greek-style shape.

The last aryballos, of unknown provenance, is now in Berlin (Kunisch 1971, pl. 166.5-6; Karageorghis 1986, 53, fig. 6). The helmet is of the Ionian type, and the head looks Greek. But the side-view shows a Cypriote jug.

In contrast to the drinking cups, the East Greek *aryballoi* thus did not prompt close Cypriote imitations. The Cypriote craftsmen freely adapted their models, which they interpreted in a typically Cypriote fashion.

3. The 'Amathus Style' of vase-painting

With the 'Amathus Style' of vase-painting, which appears towards the middle of the 6th century BC, East Greek influence is less specific and more pervasive. The Amathusian painters did not reproduce or imitate Greek models but they freely adopted East Greek motifs and techniques. Many studies have already been devoted to this original figurative style, some of them underlining the many Oriental, and more specifically Egyptian, influences (Lagarce and Leclant 1976, 237; Hermay 1997), others the many borrowings from the East Greek repertoire (Karageorghis and des Gagniers 1974, 91-3; Karageorghis 1989; *idem* 1990 and in this volume; Raptou 1999). There is no need to repeat those already well-known arguments here, rather, I shall concentrate on new evidence from recent excavations and studies at Amathus.

Besides Phoenician and Egyptian motifs, such as, for example, the Hathoric head, the sphinx and the 'Tree of Life', the painters of the 'Amathus Style' introduce new motifs, alien to the Cypriote repertoire proper: 'wild goats' (Fig. 5), roosters (Karageorghis and des Gagniers 1974, 512, no. 9) and dolphins (*ibid.*, 515, no. 12). Other compositions are real scenes, covering the whole width of the amphora between the handles, as, for example, the representation of banqueting men in the open air, under trees (Karageorghis and des Gagniers 1974, 516-7, no. 13). A small fragment from the North Wall deposit at Amathus (Fig. 6) shows that this scene was not unique but repeated on at least another amphoriskos. All motifs find very close parallels in East Greek vase-painting, even sometimes on East Greek pieces imported to Amathus. Thus, the 'wild goat' of the 'Amathus Style' vase,

with its long curved horns and its head turned back, looks very much the same as those that decorate some East Greek fragments from the West Terrace (Thalmann 1977, pls VII-XIII). The same deposit yielded a sherd with a representation of a rooster (*ibid.*, pl. XXII.11). Another piece, found during the Department of Antiquities' excavations on the same spot, shows men banqueting in the open air (Karageorghis 1961, 312, pl. X.1). But, even if the models copied by the Amathusian painters were sought in the East Greek repertoire, they are not of Greek origin. As Caubet has shown, the banquet in the open air, under trees with birds, has a long tradition in the Orient (Caubet 2008). Besides, the motifs were not chosen haphazardly. The rooster has a funerary meaning in Greek art; the dolphin evokes the tilapia fish, the 'wild goat' the gazelle, all images thematically affiliated to Hathor, whose mask decorates many amphoriskoi (Peltenburg 2007, 382-3). Another fragmentary amphoriskos from the North Wall deposit at Amathus, which shows two 'wild goats' on each side of a mound, presumably the Egyptian primordial mound, provides support to this hypothesis (Fig. 7). The same is true of the lotus friezes which are often to be found around the base of the vases: their style shows that they were copied from East Greek models, but the motif is ultimately Egyptian and it is part of the marsh landscapes which decorate blue faience Hathoric bowls (Peltenburg 2007). The 'Amathus Style' amphoriskoi may, indeed, have had a similar function to the Egyptian New Year vases (Lagarce and Leclant 1976, 237). All motifs constitute a coherent repertoire alluding to rebirth and regeneration, attributes of Hathor, 'Mistress of Life'. The Amathusian painters may have picked up influences from different sources, their representations are nevertheless meaningful.

The technique of decoration is also specific and reveals East Greek inspiration. The frequent use of incisions, imitative of Greek black figure style, has often been noticed (Karageorghis and des Gagniers 1974, 91-3; Karageorghis 1989; *idem* 1990). The 'Amathus Style' vases are also characterized by a fine ware and a whitish surface. Chemical analysis of samples showed a very high concentration of calcium in the clay: up to 44%, whereas it is around 19% for the rest of the products. The potters may thus have added chalk to their usual clay, in order to obtain harder and finer wares without, or with little, grit. The vases, fine and white, were very different from the other, generally coarser, Amathusian ceramics. They looked closer to East Greek, and particularly Chian, products. But this technique could only be applied to small shapes. For larger shapes –and the excavation of the North Wall deposit revealed the existence of real amphorae of the 'Amathus Style'– the plastic clays of the Amathusian region made the use of grit necessary. In order to obtain a smooth surface, the potter thus had to cover the exterior of the whole vase with a white slip. Sometimes, the decoration process is even more complex. A section through the successive decoration layers applied to the surface of a large amphora (Fig. 8a-b) revealed that the painter first covered the whole surface with a red slip, in order to obtain a fine and even surface. He then painted it all white, and only then applied decoration in black and red, with a few white dots on the black. In doing so, the craftsman managed to imitate East Greek fine wares, but he also kept to local Cypriote traditions: this technique is known as Bichrome/Polychrome Red.

'No doubt the imported *skyphoi* were admired in Cyprus for their precise potting, and for the smoothly painted surface of their interiors. The occasional attempts to imitate them closely are an expression of this admiration; but they form no more than a curiosity in the history of Cypriote Iron Age pottery, which continued on its own lines without undergoing any lasting influence from the Geometric schools of the Aegean' (Coldstream 1979, 269). The same could be written about the following Archaic period. East Greek replaces Euboean and Cycladic influence. Greek-type cups are still imported and locally imitated. But Cypriote ceramics do not undergo any profound influence from East Greek production. Greek-type drinking cups may be part of the Cypriote repertoire, but they have to share it with other, Phoenician, shapes. No doubt the type of the clay *aryballoi* in the shape of a helmeted head is East Greek, but the style of the Cypriote imitations owes as much to local traditions and to the art of the Orient as to Greek prototypes. The reference to East Greek motifs and techniques

is certainly obvious in the 'Amathus Style' of vase-painting, but it is mixed with other, Phoenician and Egyptian, influence. This amalgamation is the hallmark of Cypriote Archaic art, it is genuinely Cypriote.

Paradoxically, some Oriental motifs are reintroduced to Cyprus through East Greek models, as already noticed for the lotus friezes on amphoriskoi of the 'Amathus Style'. Similarly, East Greek phialai were imported to Cyprus, and they prompted occasional imitations (e.g., Karageorghis 1973a 664-5, fig. 98). But the East Greek shape is an imitation of Phoenician metal bowls, which were already made in Cyprus in the 8th century BC (Markoe 1985). Besides, the penetration of East Greek models in Cyprus does not follow any cultural or ethnic pattern: 'Phoenician' Kition was particularly fond of Greek-type drinking cups and 'Eteo-Cypriot' Amathus invented an original style of vase-painting which shares many East Greek and Oriental motifs with the 'Bird Style' of 'Greek' Marion (Vandenabeele 1997).

The influence of East Greek ceramics on Cypriote products may be limited, but East Greece and Cyprus, nevertheless, had much in common. East Greeks and Cypriots took part in the same enterprises, for example as merchants and mercenaries in Egypt. Both places accumulated luxury goods, in the sanctuaries of the East Aegean –because East Greece is a world of cities– in the royal tombs and palaces of Cyprus –because Iron Age Cyprus is a world of kingdoms. This common experience, on the western borders of the great Oriental empires, may explain their common participation to the Ionian revolt, no doubt better than a supposed adherence to a 'Greek' identity, which was only created after the Persian Wars.

Key to Figures 1-8

Fig. 1. Inv. no. g/i.8 (EfA, J.F. Humbert).

Fig. 2a. Inv. no. b/co.1 (EfA, Ph. Collet).

Fig. 2b. Larnaca T. 61 (2006)/7 (courtesy of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus).

Fig. 3a-b. Amathus T. 436/12 (courtesy of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus).

Fig. 4. Ypsonas T. 27/14 (courtesy of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus).

Fig. 5. Inv. no. d/a.bichr.103 (EfA, Ph. Collet).

Fig. 6. Inv. no. d/a.bichr.15 (EfA, Ph. Collet).

Fig. 7. Inv. no. d/a.bichr.14 (EfA, J.F. Humbert).

Fig. 8. Inv. no. d/a.bichr.r.1 (a. EfA, J.F. Humbert, b. EfA, Ph. Collet).

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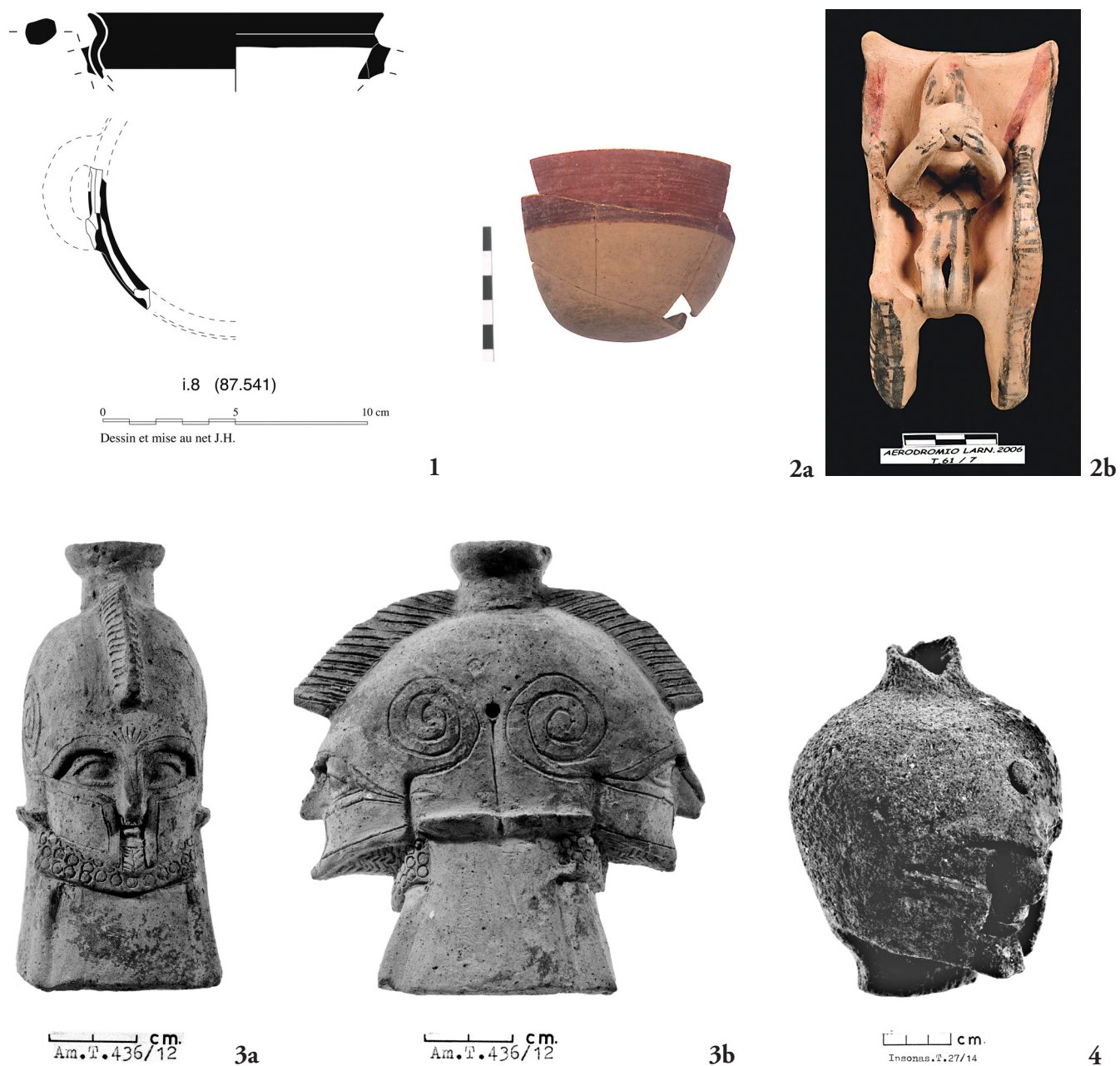


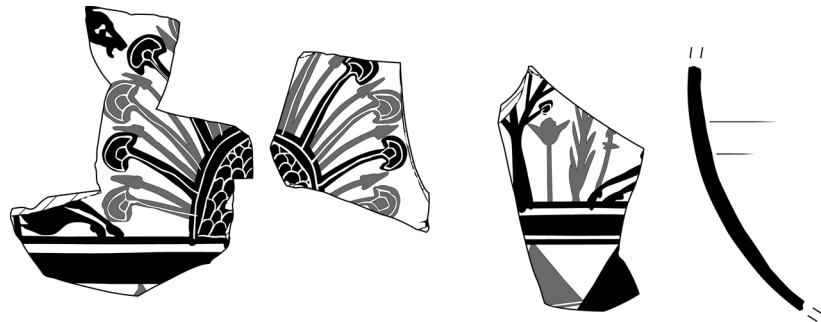
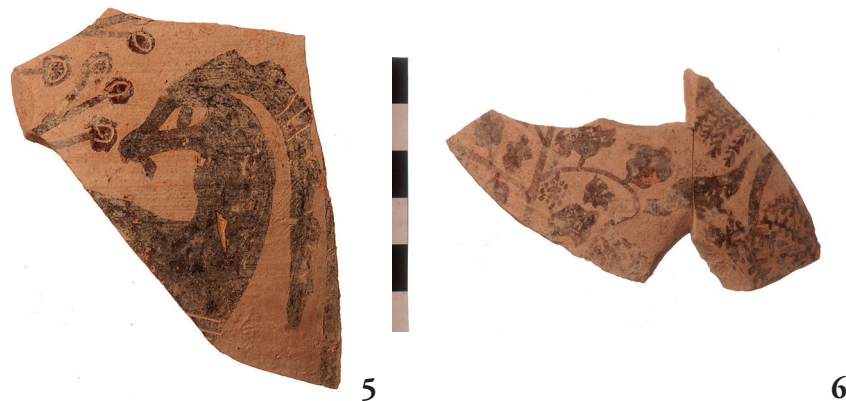
Fig. 1. Fragmentary Ionian cup from the Aphrodite sanctuary at Amathus.

Fig. 2a. Hemispheric bowl from the Aphrodite sanctuary at Amathus.

Fig. 2b. Terracotta figurine from Kition.

Fig. 3a-b. Clay aryballos from Amathus.

Fig. 4. Clay aryballos from Ypsonas.



Peintures :



0 5 10 cm
Jean F. Humbert 12/2004

7



■ Peinture noire
■ Peinture rouge
□ Peinture blanche
▨ Engobe rouge



8b

8a

Fig. 5. Sherd from Amathus, North Wall deposit, with a 'wild goat'.
Fig. 6. Sherd from Amathus, North Wall deposit, with birds in trees.
Fig. 7. Fragmentary amphoriskos from Amathus, North Wall deposit.
Figs 8a-b. 'Amathus Style' amphora from the North Wall deposit.