

# SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC COMPLEXITY IN SW IBERIA (800-500 B.C.)

In SW Iberia the process of social complexity, i.e., the move towards a state society, had already begun in the Neolithic period (Gillman 1976, 1981; Chapman 1982), as it can be detected in the archaeological evidence. On the other hand, it is really impossible to separate social complexity from economic development, and when approaching primitive economy, one must bear in mind, that it is socially determined (Polanyi 1957, 1975, pp. 136-140; Sahlins 1974; Harris 1977, pp. 71-81), and associated with the perpetuation of the social order (Friedman and Rowlands 1977, pp. 269-272). At the same time the ties of dependence developed within a group, connected with subsistence and reproduction must also be considered (Gamble 1981, pp. 215-216).

I shall try to trace, in its general lines the evolution of social and economic organisation of SW Iberia between 800 and 500 B.C. and refer to the mortuary practices detected there. However biased the information taken from burial remains might be (this point was recently extensively discussed by John O'Shea 1984), it still provides a good basis for detecting group differentiation and interaction, and rank grading.

## THE ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Although famous in antiquity for its cattle, sheep and fish resources, Southwest Iberia was especially renowned for its wealth in metals.

The wealth of Southwest Iberia in silver, gold, copper and iron made it a convergent area for traders to and from the Eastern Mediterranean, who found it, despite the long distance separating them, a worthwhile enterprise. This trade network was already in use in Late Bronze Age (Schubart 1975; Briard 1976; Coles and Harding 1979; Rowlands 1980; Coffyn 1985) but underwent a tremendous increase with the impact of Eastern Greek and Phoenician commerce by 700 to 600/500 B.C.

The geological phenomenon that extends over an arcuate area of about 250 km by 35 km in southern Portugal and southwest Spain is known as the Iberian Pyrite Belt. This belt is one of the most important metallogenic provinces in Europe and copper, iron, silver and gold are produced in great quantities from a number of large scale mines.

All the rocks in the Pyrite belt were intensely folded during the Hercynian Orogeny of later Carboniferous times and the mineralised rocks of the area occurred in the Volcanic Siliceous Complex forming two types of major sulphide ore bodies: the pyrite and the sulphide deposits. In geologically recent times the whole area was eroded and covered with sand and gravel deposits with only a few large metal-rich deposits outcropping at the surface, producing thick «gossans», commonly called «ironhats», up to 30 m thick. These «gossans» consist of red and yellow-red iron

oxide and iron sulphate minerals. Underneath these iron outcrops a secondary enrichment tend to contain much higher values of copper, silver and gold than the unaltered primary deposits which occur at greater depths (M. P. Jones in Rothenberg and Freijeiro 1981, p. 23; Healy 1978). These were exactly those which were firstly exploited long before the Romans due to their extreme richness in silver and copper.

The «silver mountains» of Tartessos mentioned by the ancient authors had thus an actual real basis and were again emphasised by Strabo, who actually says:

«But as for Turdetania and the territory adjoining it, there is no worthy word to praise left to him who wishes to praise their excellence in this respect. Up to the present moment, in fact, neither gold, nor silver, nor yet copper, nor iron, has been found anywhere in the world, in a natural state, either in such quantity or such good quality» (*Geography* III, 2, 8).

Most of these inland areas, so rich in metals, were, however, poor in other resources, so they might have been always dependent on the richer ones for food and other commodities. An inter-regional trade network had probably been well established for a long time (Río Tinto calcolithic settlement sites) and is reflected in the scarcity of settlement outside the mineral rich areas.

#### SOCIAL COMPLEXITY AND THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Southwest Iberia started to present, by 900-700 B.C., signs of deep changes, which followed the long period of economic and social stability of Bronze Age.

In fact, the Bronze Age «family-type» cemeteries, constituted by 3-4 or 5-6 cists, located in peripheral zones of relatively good or very good arable soils, suggest a family-based economy. This fact is further reflected in the grave goods and in a probably general egalitarian situation, where the natural resources were similarly available to a larger number of the community. At the same time, there must have been a major demographic development, if we consider the areas of distribution of these cemeteries (Map 1). This situation might have been different in exceptionally rich areas, exactly where large necropoleis are found. Their situation is related to the rich alluvial or mineral zones, where the economic capacity exceeded the usual family exploitation, implying a central and hierarchical organization, which controlled the whole area, its exploitation and division of labour. This previous economic equilibrium in division of resources, and economic development, mainly based on agrarian exploitation, might have contributed to the isolation of the smaller groups, which could have led to instability, according to the model suggested by Bradley (1978) in his study of the so called «Celtic fields» in Britain and Europe. These agrarian, well organised and already highly ranked communities producing a high percentage of surplus, which usually led to major social hierarchisation (Harris 1977, pp. 71-81) could therefore contribute to deeper social and economic stresses, as is also emphasised by Webb (1973, pp. 371-376) and Carneiro (1970, p. 735). These circumstances seem to be in accordance with the growing emphasis put on warfare, namely the famous warrior engraved slabs (Estácio da Veiga 1891; Leite de Vasconcellos 1906-1908; Viana and Nunes Ribeiro 1958-59), fully published by Almagro (1966), and the sudden appearance of huge, fortified settlement sites (Outeiro do Circo, Coroa do Frade, Careira, Crespa, for example) (Arnaud 1979; Parreira and Soares 1980).

These internal factors, in addition to some external ones, such as the commercial contacts with other peoples in a growing and demanding trade activity, or the actual arrival of new

peoples either through the Meseta (of Central European origin, as Savory [1960], Schüle [1969] or Sangmeister [1960] suggest), or through the Mediterranean and southern Atlantic coasts, as the presence of the Villena treasure (Alicante, Spain), with its remarkably early iron jewels or the iron weapons of Alcaria cemetery (Monchique, Portugal) (Schubart 1975, l.v, 184, tomb 14), may very probably have contributed to the great changes that were about to take place in SW Iberia.

So by *c.* 900-700 B.C. extremely large and well fortified settlement sites are located at the best strategic points, dominating every water or land access to the mining areas and the best arable soils. Simultaneously, deep social hierarchisation is also reflected in the Late Bronze Age cemeteries, like that of Atalaia (Schubart 1975).

In fact, the natural evolution of Late Bronze Age communities living in SW Iberia seems to have experienced a strong stimulus, that only external contacts can bring (Clarke 1972, 1979; Johnson 1973; Sahlins 1974; Earle and Ericson 1977; Cherry 1978; Hodder 1974, 1979, 1982; Renfrew 1975, 1982 among so many others) and which led to a different settlement strategy, which is detected between 900 and 700 B.C. Among the archaeological evidence found in those settlements, we notice first new types of fine burnished wares, the so called «cerámica de retícula bruñida», with geometric patterns drawn in the burnished finish, and at the same time the slow introduction of few items such as the V-notched shields either of Central European or Mediterranean origin, or fibulae of actual oriental origin, and later, between 700 and 500 B.C. new religious cult objects: the bronze *obeloi* and the bronze bowls and ewers.

I shall now analyse briefly these different diagnosis artefacts:

1. *The stroke-burnished pottery*, called «cerámica de retícula bruñida» both in the Spanish and the Portuguese archaeological literature, was first studied by Cunha Serrão (1958) in his study of Lapa do Fumo cave (Sesimbra, Setúbal, Portugal), who called the attention to this specific type of pottery. Schubart (1971, 1976) and especially in his exhaustive study on the Southwest Iberian Bronze Age (Schubart 1975, pp. 138-144) distinguished two main areas of distribution in SW Iberia of its main types:

Type a) high conical vases with a high carination. The stroke-burnished decoration follows a geometric pattern based on triangles and parallel or checkered strokes applied on the external face of the vase. This is what Schubart calls simply «burnished pottery». It occurs in an area close to the Tagus basin.

Type b) open bowls with the rim rolled out and with a soft carination. The decoration is located in the interior part of the vase, consisting of a similar geometric pattern, but drawn on a light burnished ground, with dark contrasting burnished strokes. The ground may be either grey or yellowish grey and the pattern in dark black or brown strokes, giving sometimes the misleading impression that it is painted. It is what Schubart calls the «stroke-burnished pottery» to distinguish it from the first type. Its areas of distribution is in the Huelva and Guadalquivir valley, and appears in 9th to 8th/7th century contexts (Schubart 1975; Carriazo 1973; Pellicer 1977; Ruiz Mata 1981).

In a somehow oblique line crossing Alentejo as far as the Spanish province of Extremadura, these two types seem to converge, and the vases present burnished decoration on both sides.

This pottery seems to be the evolution of the burnished vases already produced all along the Middle and Late Bronze Age in Southwest Iberia, having acquired new decorative effects through the burnished drawn patterns.

2. *The V-notched shields* only occur as engravings on cemetery stelae forming a more recent group among the Southwest Iberian Late Bronze Age-Early Iron Age engraved burial slabs. In the archaeological milieu they are known as the «Extremadura» slabs, after the name of the Spanish province where they are most frequent (although, again, they can be detected from the Algarve coast as far as Extremadura, and other further inland areas), and to distinguish them from the «Alentejo» ones, in Southern Portugal. The «Alentejo» engraved slabs seem to have been covering slabs of Late Bronze Age cists, representing weapons and tools, closer to Bronze Age assemblages, in what could have been a Bronze Age warrior's panoply: the sword (of carp-tongue type), the dagger, the axe and the idol, all are engraved in a realistic style.

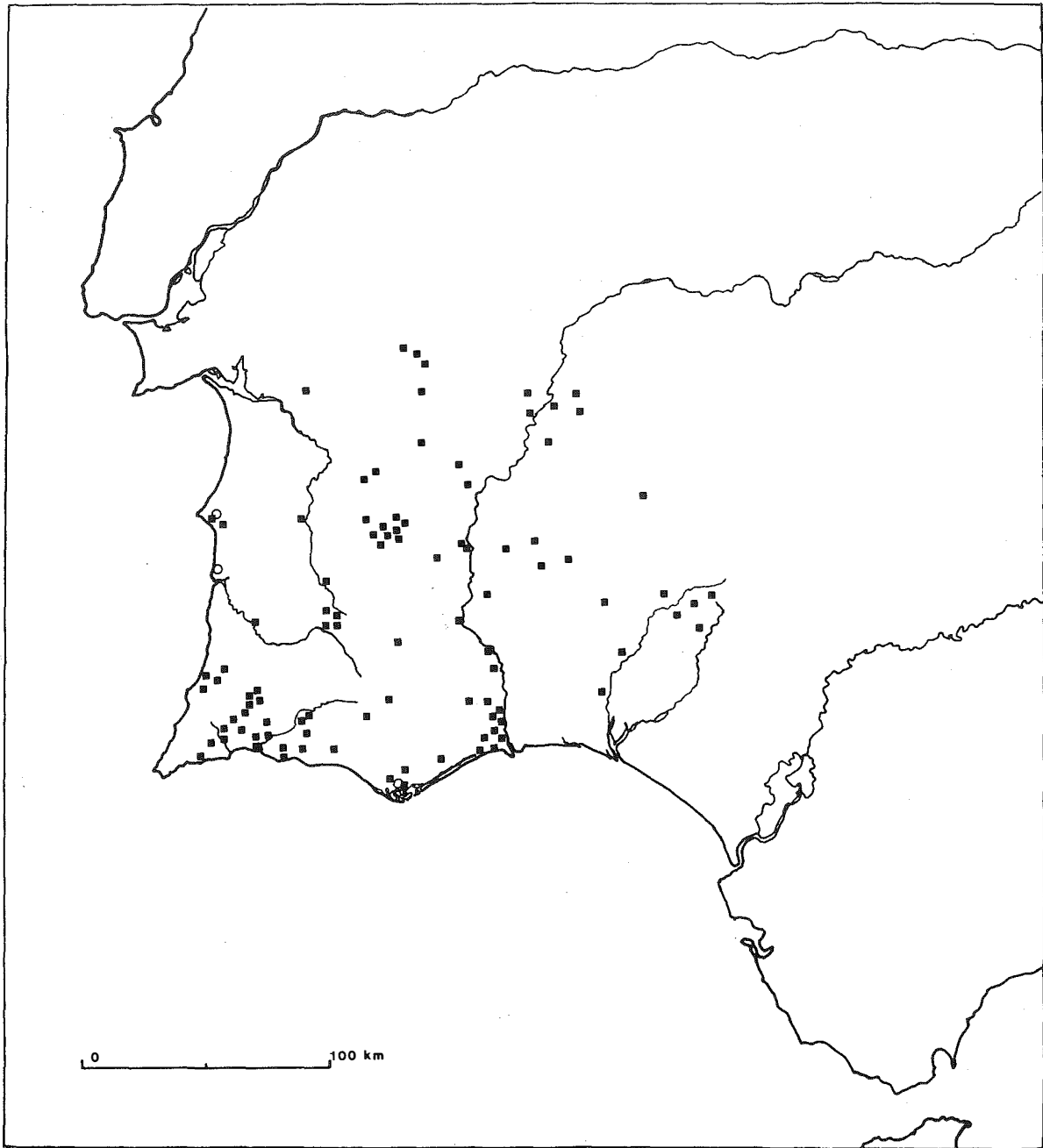
Contrasting with this first group, the «Extremadura» slabs must have been funerary memorials or actual *stelae*, standing by the tombs, marking them although the burial ritual was still using the Bronze Age cist, as is the case of Figueira (Lagos). José Ramón y Fernández Oxea (1950, p. 305) refers to another type of burial they noticed at Haza de Trillo (Jaén), where more than one individual was deposited within a chamber, the access of which was made by means of a pit, and the stela was actually closing the entrance of the chamber.

The engravings represent, in a schematic style, the warrior and his weapons: the V-notched shield, the sword, the spear, the dagger, his two-horse two-wheeled chariot, sometimes his helmet (some of Celtic type, others, the horned ones, common in the eastern Mediterranean areas but also in Denmark) (Almagro 1966, pp. 170-174; Sandars 1968, p. 208; Kristiansen 1984, pp. 89-90) and other objects, such as combs, Cassibile type fibulae, even a phorminx (Bendala 1977, pp. 187-194). This phorminx, however, presents the particularity of having nine strings, instead of the four strings, which appear on the phorminx of Homer's time, and not even the seven string instrument referred to by Strabo (XIII, 2, 4), also mentioned by Wegner (1949, pp. 29-30; 1968, pp. 9-16). This fact might be an improvement given to the instrument or due to the error of the craftsman, when carving the unusual instrument. These stelae are chronologically situated between the 8th/7th and the 6th century B.C. (Almagro 1966; Schubart 1975; Almagro Gorbea 1977; Gomes and Pinho Monteiro 1977; Bendala 1977), and their most striking feature is certainly the representation of the V-notched shields.

The origin of the V-notched shields has been a controversial point in the archaeological research. They could have occurred in the Eastern Mediterranean area, as was observed by Hencken (1950) and later by Coles (1962), by the 9th to the 7th centuries B.C., but their occurrence only in Cyprus, Samos and Delphi temples is, in itself, not a very consistent proof of having a Greek origin, for they occur in very peripheral areas and special places: the temples. Their occurrence in the West, as Sprockhoff (1930) suggested, also accepted by Hencken (1951) seems, at first sight, more consistent. Undoubtedly, they are associated with heroic deeds, and as such deposited as offerings in the temples.

The distribution map presented by Schüle (1969, Map 1) shows the areas where the V-notched shields occurred, which clearly denote a peculiar distribution. I do not think they might have had a Phoenician origin, as Blázquez, in this conference, suggested. The other objects represented on the *stelae* seem to point to different influences from equally different origins one Central European the other Eastern Mediterranean.

3. *The bronze obeloi*, which first occurred in the Eastern Mediterranean area, were apparently all objects dedicated to or associated with the cult of Hera, either in temples, such as the Heraion of Samos («Samos» 1969-1978; Walter 1976), the Perachora Heraion (Payne 1940) or



- Bronze Age cemeteries
- Bronze Age settlements

MAP 1. *Distribution map of Bronze Age cemeteries*

the Heraion of Argon (Waldstein 1902, p. 61; 1905) or in the heroes' burials, as consecrations to Herakles and Hera (Kron 1971, pp. 132-144).

In Southwest Iberia the bronze *obeloi* are apparently also cult objects and they usually appear associated with burial rituals. They occur in two main areas of distribution, as can be seen in Map 2:

1. One from the Algarve (S Portugal) coast penetrating into the Alentejo lowlands as far as the Spanish Extremadura, in an oblique line, and recently a few number of spits, of Southern Portugal type, were acquired by the Sevilla Museum, possibly from the nearby area;

2. The other in the Guadalquivir valley, and at Azougada oppidum.

The Portuguese *obeloi* are long bronze (only two are made of copper) bars of c. 1.10 m long (the maximum length was 1.15 m or c. 0.80 m even 0.60 m long for the shortest ones) with a rectangular section of c. 1 cm in the blade, with a special handle forming a beautiful decorated shank, separated from the point by a kind of winged hilt (Fig. 1).

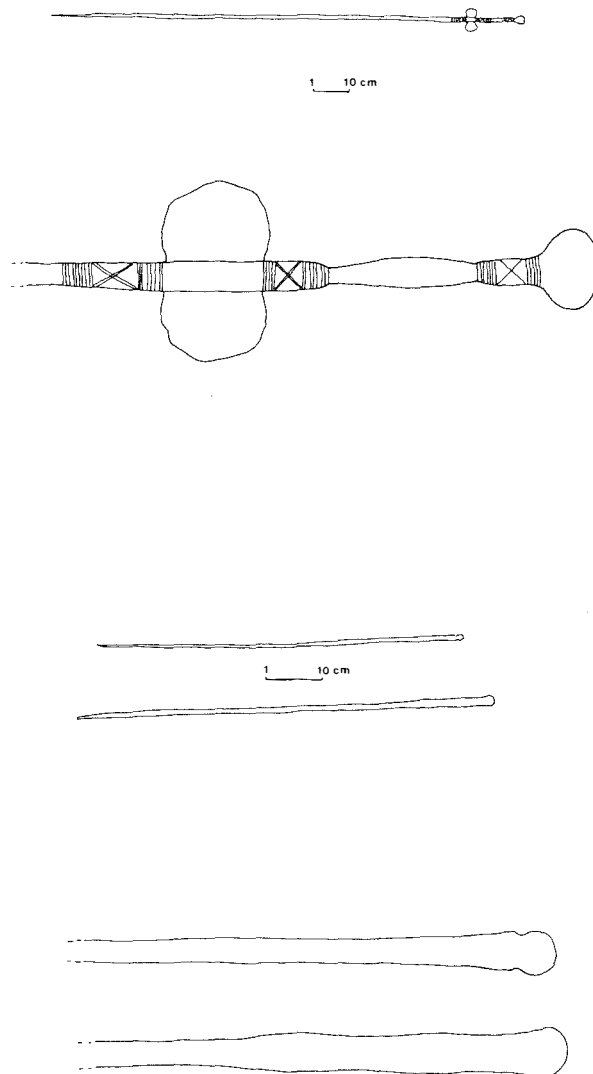
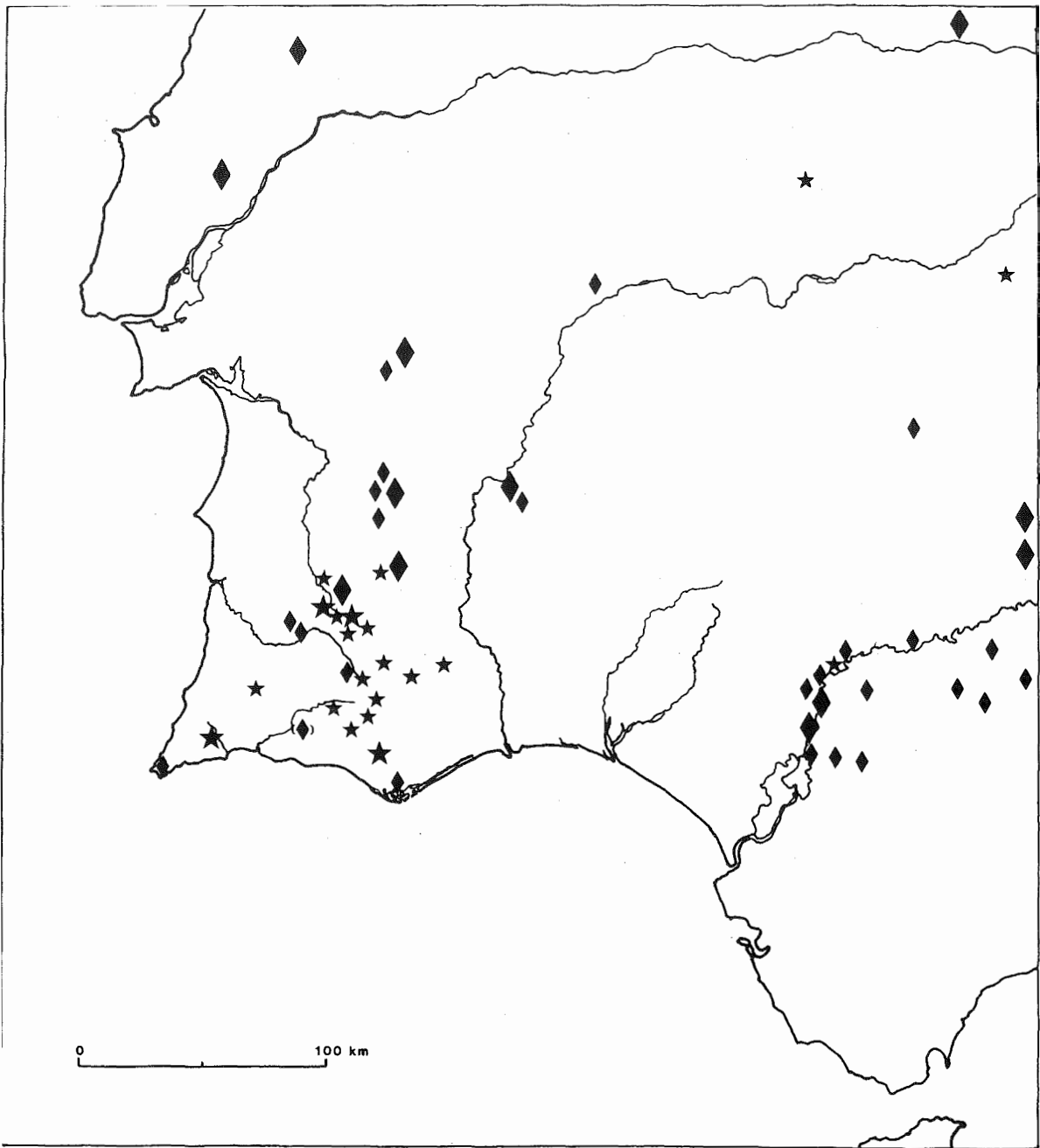


FIG. 1. The two different types of obeloi: the Portuguese and the Guadalquivir



- |   |                          |   |                                   |
|---|--------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| ★ | 1 SW-Iberian inscription | ★ | 2 or more SW-Iberian inscriptions |
| ◆ | 1 <i>obelos</i>          | ◆ | 2 or more <i>obeloi</i>           |

MAP 2. Distribution map of SW-Iberian inscriptions and the bronze obeloi

Almagro Gorbea (1974) considers them chronologically situated in the 6th century B.C. although Savory (1968) thinks the Alentejo ones must have occurred earlier, by the beginning of the 7th century, because of a possible Hallstatt influence, which the geometric incised patterns and SSS or duck decoration seems to point to.

Mohen (1977, p. 38) and Coffyn (1985, pp. 178-179 e 224), however, consider the bronze spits as having an European origin, probably related to similar artefacts from Western France, and suggest the Southwest Iberian ones should derive from this group. However, both recognised them as ritual objects. I think that the articulated spits from Northern Tagus can be connected with the spits of Western France, but the Southwest Iberian ones seem to present a very different shape which also points to a different function and possible origin.

The Spanish *obeloi* as well as those of Azougada oppidum (Moura, Portugal) seem to be from a somewhat later date, judging from the simplicity of their external aspect, with only a kind of thickening part to form the handle.

The Southwest Iberian *obeloi* usually appear associated with the burial ritual of the so-called «Southwest Iberian necropoleis», famous for their still undeciphered inscriptions. They seem to have been religious objects associated with the cult of Hera or a local deity with the same attributes, based on the following archaeological evidence:

a) The *obeloi* always occur connected with the «SW Iberian» necropoleis.

b) Hera was associated with the cow, with its big, hypnotic eyes. Representations of the goddess were often made by means of a clay cow. Beirão (1980) also found a kind of clay vessel, representing a cow [the M.N.A.E. exhibition catalogue (Beirão and Gomes 1980, p. 23, n. 186b, Lisbon), at Fonte Santa (Ourique) a necropolis of the same area and characteristics. That does not differ very much from the clay cow from the Heraion of Samos (Walter 1976, p. 38).

c) On the Alcácer do Sal (Portugal) red figured krater, close to the scene of the sacrifice, in which the priestess uses three *obeloi*, there is the face of a cow on the top right corner of the scene, as if presiding over the ceremony. I think that the cult represented on this vase might be that of Hera and not Apollo as Rocha Pereira suggests (1962, p. 76) (Fig. 2).

d) A new spit was recently referred to by Beirão and Gomes (1980) found at what they called «Fernão Vaz small settlement site» because of the evidence of buildings, sherds of ceramic vases of common use, such as large bowls and a jug, a Chalcolithic copper axe presenting evidence of reuse (there is a hole open on the top of it) and the bronze spit.

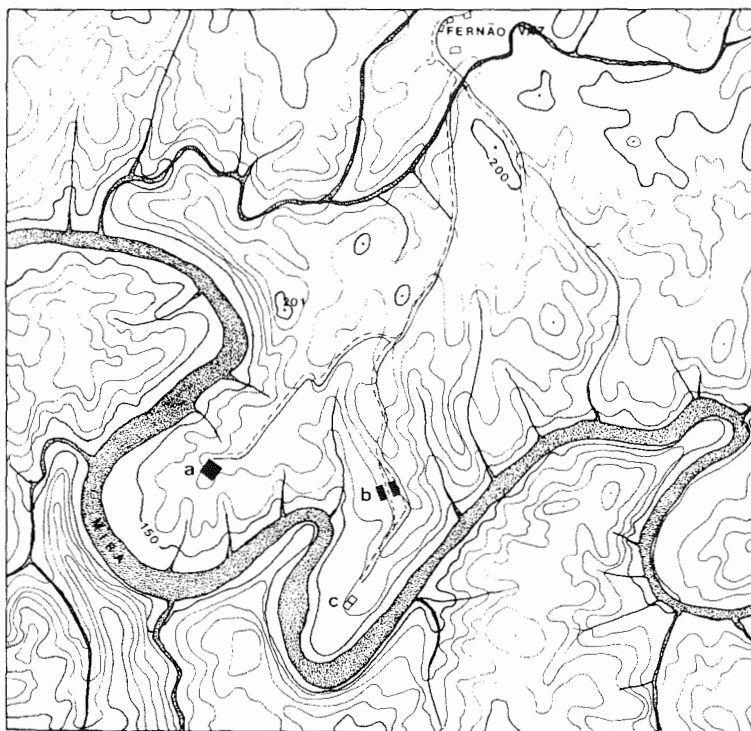
A visit to the locality (Map 3) led me to conclude that, in the area, there might, in fact, have been an altar or small temple where the cult of Hera was carried out, on the basis of different aspects of the archaeological evidence:

1. The topographic situation of the possible «altar» on the highest slope of the area, on the right bank of the river Mira, which runs quickly to its mouth (Map 3, a), and linked with the necropolis of Fernão Vaz, within sight, by means of a public way, which divides the necropolis in two symmetrical parts (Fig. 3) (Map 3, b). It has been considered as «two marked opposing territories exactly delimited by the two necropoleis. I think that, in fact, they are situated along the ritual way towards the running water of the river, where some other rituals of purification took place, besides those by the altar.

This is the case with all other Heraions. The Samos Heraion presents a similar disposition of the sacred ritual places (Walter 1976; Waldstein 1902), with burials and offerings on the



FIG. 2. *Alcácer do Sal* red-figured krater: the priestess uses three obeloi, and at the right corner of the scene the schematic face of a cow.



MAP 3. *The area of Fernão Vaz.*

sides of the way towards the sea or the river nearby, as do the Perachora Heraion (Payne 1940, p. 257), and the Argos Heraion (Waldstein 1902-05). This aspect is also referred to by Kron (1971, pp. 132-144), Karageorghis (1973, 1983) and Furtwängler (1980, pp. 89-98).

Further down and close to the river bank some other archaeological ruins suggest that underneath the medieval hamlet (Map 3, c) another Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age necropolis seems to be located, emphasising the sacred and ritual place where subsidiary ceremonies would take place (Júdice Gamito 1986).

2. The archaeological remains point to ritual vessels, necessary for the purification rituals of the people involved, as well as for collecting the blood and some parts of the victim. The presence of the bronze *obelos*, all over the Mediterranean world during the 8th-7th centuries B.C., is generally considered to reflect sacred purposes, and the «reused» Chalcolithic axe will have been for the actual killing of the victim offered to the goddess.

It is interesting to note that the earliest dates for these necropoleis are the 7th and 6th centuries B.C., with a possible continuation through the 5th century, considering the occurrence in some of Iberian penannular fibulae, according to Cuadrado Chronology (1957).

e) The cult of Hera was, on the other hand, always associated with the annual renewing of nature and vegetation cults. In that sense it was sometimes associated with the cult of Persephone (Kron 1971, p. 124), acquiring later the negative aspects of Persephone's cult, and so associated, in Roman times, with the cult of Proserpina. All over this area of Southwest Iberia a similar cult is known associated with *Araegina*, a Celtic cult as the name of the goddess suggests (Leite de Vasconcellos 1905, pp. 162-168; Schmidt 1957, p. 136; Blázquez 1975b), whose attributes were just the same of those of Hera. *Araegina's* cult reached the Roman times and was in the Southwest Iberia also associated with that of Persephone, and later of Proserpina of the Roman Pantheon (Júdice Gamito 1986).

4. *The bronze bowls and ewers.* The bronze bowls or cauldrons, and ewers also occur in SW Iberia associated with the burial ritual, as part of the offerings accompanying the deceased. The bronze bowls have the particularity of having the handles attached to the body of the bowl by means of an element in which two elongated hands are represented. The ewers present a curvilinear body which ends in a long, elegant neck. The most elaborated part of the ewer is, of course, its handle attached to the body by means of a palmette and to the rim ending in a sometimes elaborated form, which can be a mythological figure or animal, like the Mérida and Huelva examples. The spout can be either mainly slightly curved or actually the mouth of an animal, even a feline as is the case of the «Lazaro» ewer.

The distribution map of these vessels presented by Schauer (1983, Abb. 6, p. 188) gives an idea of their occurring areas in the Mediterranean, known as very specific ritual objects (Mathäus 1983; Schauer 1983). In SW Iberia they are found along the Guadalquivir, up to Aliseda, through the inland passes, and on the west coast of Portugal. Some are considered of eastern Mediterranean origin, but most of them are generally accepted as Iberian products (García y Bellido 1957, pp. 137-138; Garrido and Orta 1978, pp. 171-177; Almagro Gorbea 1977, pp. 491-499; Grau-Zimmermann 1978, pp. 208-209).

5. *The mortuary practices.* Cremation seems to have been the general method of disposing of the deceased. The ritual, however, varies in the different sub-areas, in a common chronology close to the end of the 8th and 7th centuries to 500 B.C.

Three main types of burials occur in this vast area:

Type a) This burial ritual follows the cremation urn type, possibly related to the urn-field tradition, and is located in the Celtic inland area, as far as Huelva coastal region.

The ashes were kept in an urn and this, either put within a larger container with the offerings and belongings of the deceased, or in another vessel close to the urn. This is the case, for example, of Medellín (Badajoz), Castañuelo (Huelva), or La Joya (Huelva). Social differentiation is mainly detected on the quality and quantity of the burial goods, but at Huelva, there seems to have been an accentuated social differentiation in the rich chariot burials, accompanied by luxurious imported and locally made objects.

Type b) These burials are situated in the extreme southwestern part of Iberia, from the Algarve coast to the Alentejo low lands, the 'Southwest-Iberian' necropoleis, where the SW-Iberian inscriptions occur.

These necropoleis spread over a relatively restricted area. They are formed by monuments of rectangular shape, built of stone slabs, measuring about 2 m × 2.5 m, apparently without hierarchical differentiation between them. Some of these monuments possess a kind of marker, made of stone, that would have been standing close to the tomb, with an engraved inscription, in a still undeciphered language, in a script close to the old Phoenician and archaic Greek alphabets.

The material goods accompanying these burials suggest, in their earliest forms, a chronology close to the end of the 8th and beginning of the 7th century B.C.: the torcs with sanguisuga bronze beads (Schüle 1969, pp. 159-160), the Pedubaste scarab (Gamer-Wallert 1975, pp. 189-193; Dias 1970, pp. 181, 182). All the other objects date from the 6th century B.C.: the Psammetichos scarabs, the Greek amphora, the iron spears and falcatas (Schüle 1969; Snodgrass 1964), the zoomorphic clay objects representing birds and felines, which recall the Greek iconography of the end of the Archaic Period (Boardman 1980; Otto 1983) or Celtic cult objects influenced by orientalising iconographic motives, the discussion of which can not be dealt here. Some also present typical Iberian penannular fibulae from the 5th century B.C. (Cuadrado 1957).

Almost all the burials are incinerations practised locally, i.e. *in situ*, and probably as part of the mortuary practices. A kind of hole was dug as far as the bedrock, forming a box, in which a special sand from another place (it appears to be of rich soil, Dias 1971, p. 182) was thrown and upon which the pyre would have been built. The corpse would lie there accompanied by some personal offerings and luxurious objects. The ashes would eventually collapse into the previously dug hole and some other offerings would be deposited around the burial and within the monument. This presented a step-pyramidal shape, surrounded by a plinth, that formed the frame of the monument, which usually seems to have had two or three steps (Fig. 3).

The necropoleis simply grew by the juxtaposition of one monument against another, in an expansive movement. It is now impossible to detect whether any of them enjoyed a preeminent position or special role. Only some of them had SW-Iberian inscriptions which lead us to think that they might be meant to be signalled as special individuals: the literate ones? the kings or the chiefs? the priests?

The main problems connected with these necropoleis are, of course, the SW-Iberian inscriptions. A brief summary of the history of the research will lead to the works of Gómez-Moreno (1922, *LH* 1962, etc.), Tovar (1951, 1958, *Ancient Languages*, etc.), Maluquer de Motes (1968), who made a very important contribution but gave them a very late chronology. They were again studied by Untermann (*Sprachräume*, 1979), J. de Hoz (1969, 1976, 1979), who in

1976 presented an exhaustive study of the southern Iberian inscriptions, including, for the first time the ceramic graffiti. Coelho (1971, 1976, 1979), also presented an interesting approach to the problem in 1971 (pp. 171-179), isolating what seems to have been a votive formula. Correa, in this conference, also brought new details to be taken in consideration, such as the archaism of certain forms.



FIG. 3. *An example of a SW-Iberian tomb, at Fernão Vaz necropolis.*

The language seems to have been taken from a form of archaic Greek (Lafon 1975; Tovar 1975) using an alphabet close to those of Eastern Greek areas, but certainly very much influenced by the old Phoenician alphabet, as all Mediterranean languages were (Jeffery 1961), with the introduction of some new characters probably of local origin as Tovar (1982) suggests.

Type c) The Phoenician necropoleis also follow the cremation ritual but within an hypogeum, in a more or less sophisticated burial. That is the case of Trayamar, Almuñécar and Jardim.

Schubart (1982, p. 209) is very clear emphasizing the differences between the Phoenician tombs and those cemeteries of Huelva or the Guadalquivir area. The tomb furniture recall again an atmosphere completely different from that of Huelva.

## CONCLUSION

All the evidence presented here leads us to conclude that we are confronted by a well-defined material culture in this area of SW Iberia by the 8th-7th and 6th centuries B.C.

The archaeological evidence seems to suggest that, in fact, there might have been a long slow process of social hierarchisation and differentiation in the Bronze Age period, through different stimuli: not only consisting of demographic pressures and internal competition, but also and perhaps mainly, to external ones. These probably led to further struggles and higher warfare. The emphasis put on warfare is clearly detected in the burials and the sudden appearance of huge fortified settlement sites. The dominating group would therefore succeed in achieving the subordination of the defeated groups (Carneiro 1970, p. 736; Cherry 1978, pp. 416-417) and the quick acquisition of goods and labour.

The introduction of new religious and decorative objects, and new weapons suggest that two intrusive cultural movements took place there: one through the inland areas bringing with it Central European decorative patterns in jewellery and pottery, and new bronzes, even new religious concepts the traces of which we found in the cult of Ataegina and at the Celtic sanctuary on Solomon hilltop at Río Tinto, and also in the representations of the V-notched shields and chariots; the other through the coastal areas, of Eastern, Mediterranean origin, present in all the orientalizing objects found in SW Iberia.

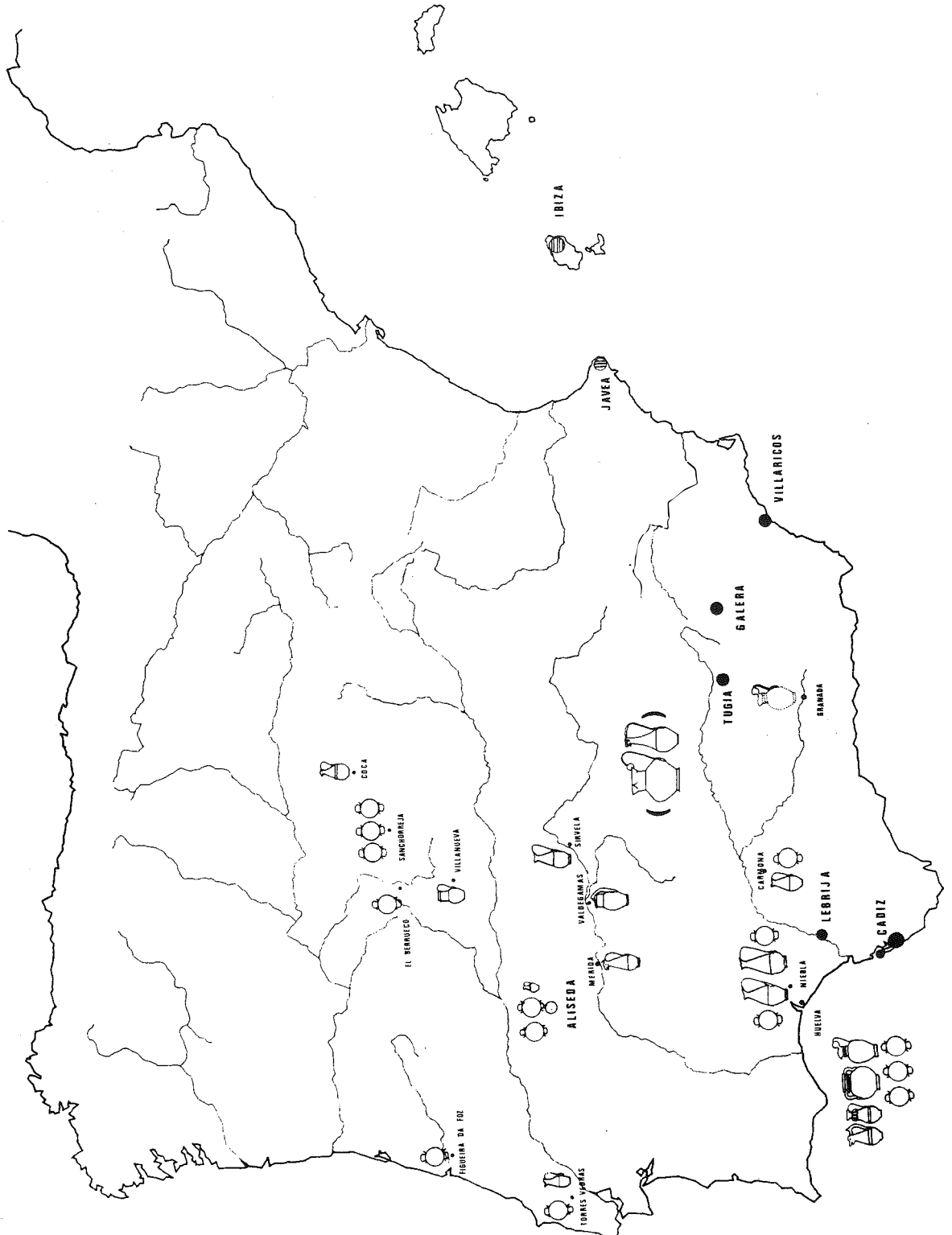
The archaeological evidence also suggests that the access to the rich mineral areas of the hinterland was under the total control of Tartessos, whose main settlement was probably Huelva. Exchange networks between the peripheral, not so rich areas and the coastal ones must have been well established by 800-700 B.C., and the wealth of Tartessos well known all over the classic world. Long distant traders (Eastern Greeks, Phoenicians, and perhaps others) would demand its port to load their ships with the precious metals, as the old historians' reports state. As exchange products they certainly brought exotic items, which started, in a short time, to be copied by the skillful Iberian craftsmen: this is the case of orientalizing jewellery, bronzes, ivory plaques, pottery (García y Bellido 1956; Bisi 1960; Blázquez, *Diccionario*; Almagro Gorbea 1977; Schubart 1982; Aubet 1982; Mathäus 1983).

A rough picture of those inter-regional trade networks will be obtained when considering the distribution map (Map 4) of these vessels. In fact they are spread along the lines where Late Bronze Age routes seem to have been, reaching, along the Guadalquivir basin the region of Cástulo (Jaén, Spain), rich in silver; up to the north the middle Tagus and Guadiana basins, rich in gold and tin, where Medellín, Mérida, Aliseda, Segovia and Vaiamonte are located; to the northwest the inland areas of Alentejo, rich in silver, gold, tin copper and iron, where Azougada and Safara settlement sites are located.

The area of SW-Iberian necropoleis seemed to have been more easily reached through the Algarve, in the southern coast of Portugal, where its access route can be detected following the spreading areas of these necropoleis. However, this aspect seems to be contradicted by recent shift in the linguistic research (Maluquer de Motes 1975; Correa 1985, this conference) which considers that the inscriptions from the inland areas of Alentejo might have been chronologically the earliest ones.

In archaic times trade activity seemed to have been restricted to the ruling élites, according with the model suggested by Polanyi (1975, pp. 137-138), which although having been highly criticised for its empiricist approach, is generally accepted for classic Greece. The Homeric poems and Herodotus' historical narratives also stress the role of the «king» dealing with the visiting traders. In SW-Iberia both the archaeological evidence and the ancient authors' reports suggest a similar situation, being Huelva its main centre.

There seems to have been a different situation concerning the Greek activity and the Phoenician one. While there is the indication of an actual settlement of an Eastern Greek group, accepted and assimilated within the autoctonous social system (the evidence of the bronze *obeloi*, the SW-Iberian script), as well as sporadic trading voyages, such as that of Colaeus of Samos, reported by Herodotus, the Phoenicians choose their own, isolated settlements, which functioned as trading ports, directly connected with Tyre (Schubart 1977, 1978, and clearer 1982; Niemeyer 1974, 1982, and more precisely 1985; Tarradell 1969; Picard 1982), and exchanging their products with Tartessos. Colette Picard (1982, pp. 189-170) calls the attention for the long distance trip and the Mediterranean coastal currents and conditions. A crossing trip would take three months (Whittaker 1974, pp. 77-78; Coffyn 1985, p. 159; Braudel 1973) and numerous delays could make it even longer.



MAP 4. *Distribution map of Tartessian bronze bowls and ewers (after Garrido Roiz and Orta García, 1978)*

The conical organization of this social system seems to have grown in complexity since Bronze Age. The long distance exchange networks came under the direct control of the political —and possibly also religious— élite, as well as the craft production and the circulation of prestige items, centred in its principal settlement, which was also its main port, i.e., Huelva. A fact which its main necropoleis (La Joya) clearly suggests. This might very well correspond to what the ancient authors named *Tartessos* in the 7th century B.C.

A third moment might have developed there, either due to the pressure or increasing complexity of the high demanding trade with the eastern Mediterranean, with which Tartessos alone might no longer be able to cope with, or the intentional, and perhaps not easy, involvement of other more distant, peripheral areas, also rich in mineral ores and willing to enjoy the commodities that such a commerce brought, or both reasons seem to explain the occurrence of rich burials or hoards in those areas. Such is the case of Aliseda and Sines burials, and Carambolo hoard. This suggests that Tartessos intra-regional network would cover a much larger surrounding area, probably reaching the Atlantic southwestern façade of Iberia, which would imply a different policy towards the peoples inhabiting those areas. That might well have been established through «symbolic ritual-political associations» mentioned by Friedman and Rowlands (1977, p. 242), which would have produced, as archaeological remains, the occurrence of high-status items found in burials.

This is exactly the immediate situation found in this area of SW Iberia with the, so to say, proliferation of high status burials in the 6th century B.C., either along the Guadalquivir valley in the necropoleis of Cerro Macareno, Cruz del Negro, Setefilla, Cástulo, Pozo Moro; in the area of Cáceres the necropoleis of Cancho Roano and Medellín; in the Algarve and Alentejo the numerous SW-Iberian necropoleis (Bensafrim, Figueira, S. Bartolomeu de Messines, Ameixial, Mealha, Pego, Fonte Santa, Fernão Vaz, to mention only a few), and the rich burials at Sines and at the earliest Alcácer do Sal tombs, witnessing the existence of an élite, certainly competitive in acquiring luxurious items and prestige.

In my view the Phoenician trade was not the impulse for the rise of Tartessos, as it has been traditionally suggested, but for its fall and collapse.

TERESA JÚDICE GAMITO

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