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Graeco-Phoenician Figurines in Phoenicia. A Medley of Imports, Derivatives, Imitations, and Hybrids

1 Introduction

The Mapping Ancient Polytheisms project (ERC Advanced Grant 741182) aims at understanding the ways people addressed their religious feelings, both in the community and as individuals through the analysis of divine epithets in the Greek and Western Semitic world.[1] However, in ancient times, sometimes devotees used other means to express emotional needs, especially when the average writing skills were not as advanced. As a result, the visual communication was often preferred to words and clay figurines, due to their widespread use, play a crucial role in defining the religious complexity of ancient societies. Simultaneously, the study of coroplastic subjects tells us something about the worshippers behind them. The figurine is, in fact, an object that is commissioned or chosen; it is never an innocent object and responds to specific needs. Thus, figurines are purchased since they are first and foremost a materialization of a precise unexpressed idea and only play a minor role as an object of artistic value. Interest in certain types of figurines increases as a person understands a particular value or use of the object. As already Poma has argued,[2] if the attestation of imported terracottas can generally be explained as the commercialization of goods appreciated for their aesthetic value, the practice of recasting figurines from original moulds or reworking certain types presuppose a step forward. In other words, these actions imply the acceptance and assimilation of a figurative language distinct and somehow alien to their own culture. In this way, figurines become temporary personal possessions and thereafter they fulfil commercial purposes – like those fostering the circulation of pottery – which does not apply entirely to these objects.[3]

This relevant premise informs the central argument of this paper, which proposes some initial input for a methodological approach to the so-called Graeco-Phoenician production. Indeed, a certain cultic liveliness has been noted on the coastal Levant during the Persian period with the appearance of clay figurines

1 This paper has been profoundly inspired by some exchange of ideas with the MAP project team. The author would also like to warmly thank Jaimee Uhlenbrock and Adriano Orsingher for their fruitful insights. The research has been supported by a post-doctoral fund from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, under supervision of Tallay Ornan.

2 Poma 2013, 87.

3 Uhlenbrock 1985, 299; 1988, 150.

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belonging to distant geographic centres. As already stated in a previous contribution,[4] the great variety in subjects and manufacturing techniques during this period resulted from the coexistence of autochthonous and allochthonous coroplastic specimens. The phenomenon of imported Greek figurines in the Levant can be first detected towards the mid-6th century BCE where one sees the appearance of new coroplastic subjects distinctly different from the local production, i.e., the so-called Phoenician II group. The rise of the Graeco-Phoenician production seems to have been contemporary with another Phoenician-related production, namely the Cypro-Phoenician group. While this last group can be easily defined through certain parallels with the nearby island and other artefacts in stone, more careful attention should be directed to the presumed Greek imports. Part of this last group and its local development is introduced in this paper.

2 The 'Greek' Component

The problem of a Greek component in the Phoenician coroplastic during the Persian period was first approached in detail during the 1980s by E. Stern when the so-called "western-style" figurines were distinguished at Tel Dor. According to Stern, these figurines were Greek in origin due to their physical features resembling the archaic Greek sculpture.[5] Nevertheless, Stern's first attempt in defining this Greek element was never developed by the author himself, who focused more strictly on theological aspects related to Israelite religion.[6] Furthermore, the "western-style" figurines collected from the two *bothoroi* at Tel Dor were reconducted by him to a local Greek temple, which was never found. In the rest of the literature, a general sense of confusion surrounds references to this topic. This is hardly ever explored beyond the evidence of a Greek stylistic influence on the Persian period production in the Levant, for instance.[7] The result to date is that a complete study of the finds in Phoenicia has never been carried out,[8] apart from a partial catalogue by A. Nunn.[9] Only in recent times, the works by R. Martin[10] and I. Cornelius[11] have shed light on this topic on a contextual and material level. Cornelius also transposed the issue to the Edom, Yehud, and Idumea regions, where a distinction among the local production and

4 Bolognani 2020.
5 Stern 1982, 165, 172; 1995, 436; 2001, 492, 500. See also Bisi 1990 for the importations and Negbi 1966 for materials from Tel Sippor.
6 See Stern 1989; *contra* Cornelius 2014.
7 Moorey 2005, 219–220.
8 Bisi 1989; Poma 2013, 47.
9 Nunn 2000.
10 Martin 2014.
11 Cornelius 2014.

other circulating Levantine types can be observed. However, none of these studies inform us about the level of foreignness, the relative dating of these figurines and their impact on the local production.[12]

Graeco-Phoenician figurines are certain Greek imported figurines reaching the Levantine coast through different routes, both from a chronological and geographical point of view. These figurines were diffused only in a few sites and their attestation constitutes less than 10% – increased to 25% considering local productions – of the coroplastic assemblage during the Persian period.[13] A first import phase can be traced back to the mid-6th century BCE where occasional coroplastic specimens from Eastern Greece can be observed,[14] presumably from the Anatolian coast or Rhodes. During the first phase, the Greek imported figurines are rather limited to some centres in the region of Sidon. Instead, according to a few petrographic analyses,[15] imported figurines are rarer in southern Phoenicia and more derivative figurines can be noticed. Later, towards the end of the 6th century BCE, the first import wave suffered a setback for historical reasons not yet explainable.[16] Therefore, between the beginning of the 5th until the 4th century BCE, new coroplastic subjects begin to arrive, albeit in a smaller number. This time, their typological origin can be traced back to mainland Greece. Indeed, as Poma has observed, terracottas reflect an Ionianizing taste during the first phase, while from the 5th century BCE onwards, this was replaced by the Attic one.[17] This trend seems to align with that of ceramic imports shifting from East Greek types to purely Attic wares.[18] At the same time, this second wave had a stronger impact on southern Phoenician productions, where Greek-style terracottas were more frequent compared to the North.[19]

12 An attempt in defining the "Greek" element has been instead deeply discussed for the Hellenistic period. Cf. Nitschke 2011; 2013; Martin 2017.

13 Nearly 1000 figurines fragments were analysed from 60 sites along the Levantine coast, about half of them can be dated to the Persian period. Cf. Bolognani 2020. Uhlenbrock (1985) observed a similar trend (low frequency) in all attested locations in the Mediterranean and she interpreted it as an indirect/bazaar trade.

14 Poma 2013, 87.

15 Cf. Negbi 1964; 1966, 5–9, tables 1–2; Stern 1982, 182.

16 According to Uhlenbrock, 6th century BCE eastern Greek figurines stopped to be diffused within the Mediterranean due to the Persian advance. Uhlenbrock 1992, 19.

17 Poma 2013, 88.

18 Perreault 1986; Élayi 1988; Lehmann 2005, 24; 2008, 144–145; Fantalkin 2006, 204.

19 Nunn 2000, 72–73.

3 First phase: East Greek Types (Mid-End 6th Century BCE)

During the first phase, typical coroplastic subjects are the Archaic period *korai* and *kouroi* figurines,[20] enthroned female figures with high or low polos, enthroned couples, reclining bearded men, crouching dwarfs, and a few female *protomai* (Fig. 1). Considering Levantine retrieval contexts, the enthroned ladies were presumably recovered within the necropolis of Amrit[21] and one tentatively from Tyre.[22] More complete figurines of this type from unknown locations along the Levantine Coast are displayed in some museums today.[23] Regarding the *korai* and *kouroi* types, only two male specimens are attested in Amrit,[24] two specimens were retrieved in Tartus,[25] three others in Sidon (Fig. 2, "import"),[26] while five more originate from unknown locations along the Syrian/Lebanese coast.[27] One complete figurine of a reclining bearded man was found within a disturbed grave in the South-Eastern cemetery of Atlit.[28] The *protomai* are notably attested in Al Mina,[29] Sarepta,[30] within the *favissae* of Tel es-Safi[31], and Tel Sippor.[32] A complete example was also collected from the Israeli coast.[33] No original dwarf figurines have been excavated yet; these are indirectly attested through the presence of derivatives.

20 Already known in literature as the "Aphrodite Group" or "Rhodian/Samian *Korai*". Cf. Higgins 1954, 20–21, pls.10, 12–13.

21 The numbers of figurines recovered in Amrit should be greater according to Heuzey's catalogue, but it seems that some of them are now lost. Cf. Heuzey 1891, 86–90, nos.202–213; 1923, 75–8, pl. XI.1,3–6; Bossert 1951, 44, 200, no.659; Nunn 2000, 70, type 38. Louvre Museum AO 22939, AO 25989.

22 Gubel 1986, 94, no.11; Yon, Caubet 1993, 63, no.26.

23 Haifa Maritime Museum, 3369, Zemer 2009, 88, fig.53; Louvre Museum, AO 25988, AO 25990, Perrot, Chipiez 1885, fig.20; Heuzey 1891, 86–87; 1923, 76–77, pl.XI.5, Nunn 2000, 70, type 38.

24 Acquaro 1988, 592, no.48. Louvre Museum AO 25994, AO 25996.

25 Rey 1867, 373, no.15, Perrot Chipiez 1885, fig.142; Poulsen 1949, 8–9, pl.II. Louvre Museum AO 25993.

26 Heuzey 1891, 95–97, nos.222,227; 1923, 75–78, pl.XII.1,3; Culican 1975-1976, fig.4b; Gubel 1986, 119, no.48; Ganzmann *et al.* 1987, 98, fig.2; Nunn 2000, pl.33, no.106. Louvre Museum AO 1581, AO 26001.

27 Nunn 2000, 70, type 39; Poulsen 1949, 7–8, pl.I. Louvre Museum AO 25992, AO 25998, AO 25997.

28 Johns 1933, 78, pl.XXVI, no.624.

29 Woolley 1938, 165, 168, pl.XI, MNN97,107.

30 Pritchard 1988, 47, fig.13, no.61.

31 Bliss 1899, 328; Bliss, Macalister 1902, 39, fig.13, pl.70.13; Avissar 2004, 72, figs.38–39; Avissar *et al.* 2007, 85, table 1.

32 Negbi 1966, 14–15, nos.43–44, 47–49.

33 Eretz Israel Museum MHP18862.

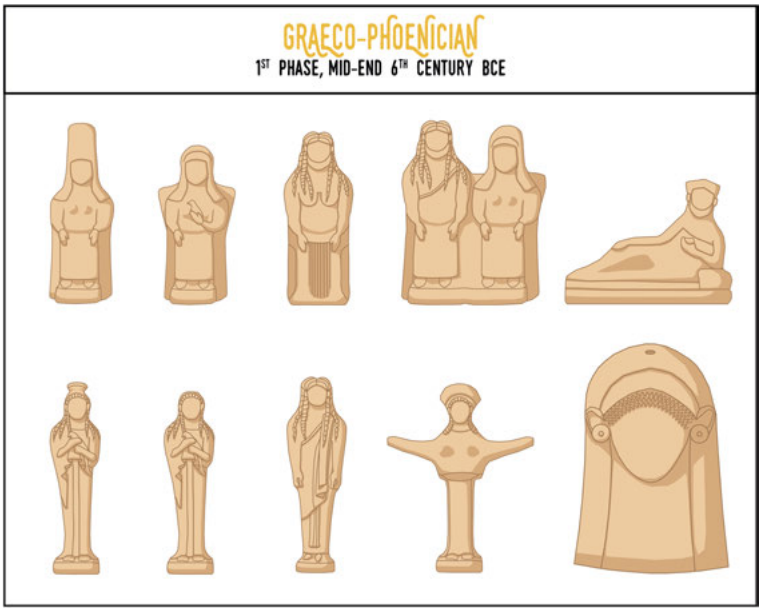

Fig. 1: Eastern Greek figurines imported in Phoenicia during the first phase.

The non-local origin of these figurines in Phoenicia can be easily detected by certain technical features. This includes the adoption of a double mould (except for the *protomai*), for instance, which was still unknown in contemporary Levantine productions. Other non-native characteristics are the particularly refined trait of the mould and the reduced thickness of the figurine's section. Figurines are also often covered with a whitish chalky slip and then accurately painted with polychrome patterns. Red, white, black, light blue, and green paint is applied to the surface, in order to reproduce geometric motives of the attires or to enhance physical features. Despite the limited number of attested specimens, Poma has attempted a typology based on a few examples conserved at the Louvre Museum.[34] From her accurate analysis, one can ascertain that the stylistic variety of the subjects indicates the presence of several workshops and perhaps slightly different chronologies. The *protomai*, for instance, appear in the coroplastic repertoire towards the end of this production. They are all part of the Klazomenian type (Group G) already identified by Croissant[35] as the most characteristic group of the Rhodian production. In particular, the Levantine specimens pertain to variant G3.[36] They can be described as female oval faces framed by a veil and *stephane*. Their facial features are characterized by thick eyelids, long noses,

34 Cf. Poma 2013, 105–112, types GO A-B.
35 Croissant 1986, 155–180.
36 Cf. Croissant 1986, pls.54–61, nos.95–100.

and full lips with corners curved upwards towards the cheeks. The forehead is surrounded by three bands of wavy hair. Group G was initially dated to the early 5th century BCE based on contextual data from the cemeteries of Kamiros.[37] More recently, however, Croissant has proposed a higher dating (540–520 BCE) based on an alleged Attic stylistic influence.[38] Croissant's dating at the last quarter of the 6th century BCE finds confirmation in Sicilian contexts, especially from the excavations of Gela.[39] Therefore, contextual data proved his hypothesis. The remainder of the figurines belongs to what Higgins renamed "Aphrodite Group"[40] to be dated no later than the end of the 6th century BCE. Although to date broad-spectrum petrographic analyses lack both for the Levantine and other Mediterranean specimens, the few studies on the subject have recently downsized Rhodes' role as a place of major production in favour of Miletus.[41]

In terms of parallels abroad, this production was particularly prolific in Eastern Greece and on the Western Anatolian Coast. In Rhodes, several specimens were excavated in the necropolis of Kamiros,[42] Lindos,[43] and Ialysos.[44] More figurines were recovered in other East Greek islands, such as Delos,[45] Kos,[46] Samos,[47] Thasos,[48] and Thera.[49] As for the Anatolian Coast, terracottas are known in Klazomenai,[50] Erythrae,[51] and Ephesos,[52] in particular. The great propagation of these types in the Mediterranean is also attested in Thrace,[53] Cyprus (Amathus),[54] Etruria (Gravisca),[55] and several sites in Magna Graecia, specifically in Sicily (Catania, Gela, Megara

37 Higgins 1954, 25–31.
38 Croissant 1986, 164.
39 Cf. Uhlenbrock 1988, 105.
40 Higgins 1954, 2021, pls.10,12–13.
41 Cf. Jones 1986, 667–673; Boldrini 1994, 25–26; Uhlenbrock 1986, 104, 109, 147; 1992, 19; 2007, 724, n.18; Pautasso 2010, 248; Poma 2013, 87, 96–97, n.287, 353.
42 Jacopi 1931, figs.80, 108, 181, 221, 305, 319, 327–328, 349, 446–450; 1932–33, figs.181–182; Higgins 1954, nos. 47–49, 57–58, 62, 65, 67–68, 71–72, 74–75, 77–78, 81, 83–84, 86, 88, 139–145; Mollard–Besques 1954, no.B200, 202, 215–216.
43 Mendel 1908, pl.II.4–5; Blinkenberg 1931, pls.95–96, 108, 110, 116–117, nos.2103, 2106, 2108, 2114, 2115B, 2117–2120, 2123, 2125–2126, 2313–2318, 2344, 2463, 2487, 2489.
44 Jacopi 1929, figs.66, 118–119, 135–136, 194, 227; Laurenzi 1936, figs.81–82, 142, 179–183.
45 Laumonier 1956, nos.51–52, 55–57, 59–60, 63–64, 69–77, 82, 98–99, 193–195, 129–131, 161–162, 169–172.
46 Mendel 1908, pl.III.8–14; Mollard–Besques 1954, nos.B187, 190.
47 Karydi 1995.
48 Aubry *et al.* 2014; Huysecom–Haxhi 2016a, 2016b.
49 Uhlenbrock 1985, 302.
50 Mollard–Besques 1954, B331.
51 Bayburtluoğlu 1977, 80–81, pls.9, 11, 16, nos.17, 19, 27.
52 Higgins 1954, nos.64, 87.
53 Mollard–Besques 1954, pls.XXX–XXXIII.
54 Hermary 2000, pl.46, nos.695–700.
55 Boldrini 1994, nos.24–125.

Hyblaia, Morgantina, Mozia, Naxos, Selinunte, Syracuse), Apulia (Taranto), and Campania (Cumae).[56] Finally, in North Africa, they are known in Cyrenaica (Cyrene, Tocra),[57] Egypt (Naukratis, Memphis),[58] and Tunisia (Carthage).[59]

Returning to the Levant, how does one explain the mild popularity of these figurines here? The understanding of their original contexts can perhaps offer an interpretive lens for Levantine contexts too. According to the latest research horizons, the absence of permanent attributes does not allow us to associate the terracottas with prefixed deities. Most likely, in cultic contexts, each figurine was a standardized and idealized image of the person making the offering represented at different stages of their life and social status. This was, for instance, the interpretation of the many Archaic period figurines found in Thasos.[60] Thus, any attempt in connecting them with the worship of a specific deity shall be refused since these figurines appear in temples dedicated to multiple deities.[61] As a result, identical figurines were offered at the sanctuaries of Artemis, Athena, Aphrodite, Apollo, Hera, Demeter and Persephone.[62] This evidence suggests a manifold use of these coroplastic subjects as they were well-suited to ritualistic needs in different contexts. Their 'universal' cultic use would therefore explain their widespread diffusion. Furthermore, the spread of the *alabastron* types was likely connected to the circulation of perfumed oils as luxury goods within the Mediterranean area.[63] Yet, as suggested by Uhlenbrock, no historical conclusions can be drawn regarding these imports, i.e., in terms of commercial routes, religious tourism, migratory phenomena.[64] The dating, as well as the manipulation of these figurines in the Levant, can be only ascertained through the parallels with the Greek world. That is the case as most of the specimens in the Levant have been illicitly purchased or stolen from presumed funerary contexts. The fact that the figurines are almost entirely complete confirms that they must have come from local graves. No certain facts can be contributed to the abrupt interruption of these imports, which perhaps coincided with the interruption of the

56 Alexander 1934, n.3; Higgins 1954, no.90, Uhlenbrock 1985, 302; 1988, 105–107, nos.53–53a; 2004, 20, see all references in n.12; Poma 2013, pl.XI.6–7.

57 Boardman, Hayes 1966, 152–155, pls.96–100, Uhlenbrock 1985, 302; 2004; 2010.

58 Gutch 1898–1899,76–78, pl.10.2; Higgins 1954, nos.60–61, 63, 85, 92; Ducat 1966, 73–74; Fourrier 1999, 171; 2001, 49; Ashton, 2003, 77, UC47941; Poma 2013, 94, n.334.

59 Poma 2013, pls.XI.9–10, XII.1–2.

60 Huysecom–Haxhi, Muller 2007, 237, 243–245; 2015, 429, 432; 2017, 59–60, fig. 3; Muller 2009; *contra* Hermary 2015.

61 On recent criticism in identifying terracottas as figural images of peculiar deities see, Uhlenbrock 2019.

62 Uhlenbrock 1992; 2004, 24–26; 1985, 303; 1988, 141; 2019; Huysecom–Haxhi, Muller 2007, 237, 242; 2015, 423–424.

63 Higgins 1954, 20.

64 Uhlenbrock 1988, 147–148; 2007, 725–728.

Milesian trade around 540 BCE due to the Persian presence.[65] Nonetheless, something can be said about their local development and how they were perceived in an aesthetic sense.

3.1 Derivatives, Imitations, Hybrids

According to Uhlenbrock,[66] one can explain the spread of Greek figurines in the Mediterranean through four means: the circulation of original moulds; the presence of itinerant coroplasts; the diffusion of pattern books; and the *surmoulage* technique. The Graeco-Phoenician production was likely diffused in the Levant thanks to this last technique. Figurines produced through *surmoulage* are derivative figurines manufactured from casts taken by Greek prototypes. They are well distinguished from the originals by some technical features, such as their smaller dimensions, the massive shape, and the less marked traits of the cast. Furthermore, these figurines are often plain, and the painting is not as accurate as Greek models. Several examples of *korai* and *kouroi* figurines of this type have been collected from the Ayaa Necropolis in Sidon[67] and from the nearby temple of Eshmun in Bostan Esh-Sheikh,[68] from the sanctuary in Kharayeb[69] (Fig. 2, "derivative"), and the *favissa* of Tel Sippor.[70] Within this category, one can also find derivative female *protomai* with hand-modelled details (ears and hair locks) from the area of the Obelisk temple in Byblos,[71] from the North-East sanctuary of Tel Sukas,[72] in a domestic context in Beirut,[73] and in Sidon likely from funerary context.[74] In the absence of any imported prototypes, one dwarf figurine from Kharayeb is tentatively included within the derivative types in this context.[75]

Contemporarily, but especially during the 5th century BCE, the prior diffusion of East Greek types in the Levantine market would have inspired the creation of both local imitations and hybrid figurines halfway between the Greek and Phoenician tradition. Imitations are figurines created through new local moulds shaped in "Greek-style" forms with some variations dictated by local taste, i.e., hairstyle fashion. These are distinguished by derivative types, by the fact that some typical Greek features are

65 Uhlenbrock 1988, 109.
66 Uhlenbrock 2016.
67 Contenau 1920, 310–311, fig.106h; Nunn 2000, pl.32, nos.104–105.
68 Macridy 1903, pl.XI.15–16,18; Ganzmann *et al.* 1987, pl.31, nos.58–59.
69 Oggiano 2015, 259, figs.4b–d.
70 Negbi 1966, 10, 15, nos.5, 6, 45–46, 51–52.
71 Dunand 1954, 333, no.10008.
72 Riis 1961–1962, 138, fig.9, right; Plough 1973, 88, 90, 109, pl.XIX.420.
73 Élayi 2010, fig.17b.
74 Louvre Museum AO 25664, AO 25673.
75 Kaoukabani 1973, 48, pl.X.3.

missing or simply replaced with other elements. The *stephane* in the *psi korai*, for instance, is substituted with a simple veil or the hairstyle with multiple braids is simplified into two loose locks with bulging bangs. Furthermore, imitations are frequently made with single moulds and the backs are left convex or flattened, which makes the profiles unnaturalistic. As pertains to the derivatives, even the imitations have very thick sections, if these are not completely fused at times so that the resulting figurine is solid in the end. The painted decorations, when present, are limited to the colour red. The best examples once again can be found from the necropolises (Ain Hilwe, Ayaa, Hlaliyeh) and one *favissa* in Sidon (Fig. 2, "imitation"),[76] and the temple of Eshmun in Bostan Esh-Sheikh.[77] More are known from the *favissa* at Tel Sippor,[78] within a 5th century BCE context in Area C at Tel Dor,[79] from the sanctuary in Kharayeb,[80] and undetermined context in Tyre.[81] One complete *psi kore* from unknown locations in Lebanon and three *kouroi* from Syria are also conserved at the Louvre Museum.[82]

Instead, hybrid figurines are rare eclectic specimens made from the merging of a Phoenician mould with the addition of a feature encountered only in Greek prototypes. They differ from imitations by the clear desire to overcome the Greek model and absorb it into the local culture. This is the case with four fragmentary female *protomai* from a waste dump context in a domestic unit in Porphyreon.[83] In fact, they present both Greek features, such as the circular earrings, the *stephane*, the curled smile, and the wavy hair. At the same time, the abundant use of red decorations, the raised facial lineaments, and the addition of Egyptian-like symbols are typical of Phoenicians. Other examples are the hybrids of the *psi korai*, made from some popular moulds of the local production (Phoenician II) depicting a nude female subject cupping her breasts, to which outstretched arms were later added. Thus, the typical Greek sacral dancing gesture with the outstretched arms was literally merged to the Levantine breast cupping one. The outcome was a figurine performing two gestures at the same time, even if the hands cupping the breasts were often erased during the manufacturing of the object. This was probably done to avoid unrealistic images. Several hundreds of these figurines have been excavated in different spots in Beirut, specifically in the courtyard of a temple tentatively

76 Heuzey 1891, 95–97, nos.222, 227; 1923, 84–85, pl.XII.1–2; Contenau 1920, 310, figs.105a,c; Culican 1975–1976, figs.4a,c; Ganzmann *et al.* 1987, 98, fig.1; Nunn 2000, pls.30, 33–34, nos.101–102, 111–113. Louvre Museum AO 1370, 1377, 1379–82, 1386, 1388, 1390–92, 1835, 7491A, 25777, 25991.

77 Macridy 1903, pls.XI.20–21, XIII.1; Ganzmann *et al.* 1987, pl.31, nos.52–55, 57, 61–62; Nunn 2000, pl.31, nos.103, 108.

78 Negbi 1966, 10, nos.3–4, 7.

79 Wenning, Stern 1985, pl.F, fig.4, no.43050.

80 Oggiano 2015, 259, fig.4a.

81 Louvre Museum MNB 1656.

82 Louvre Museum AO 2214, 25754, 25761, 25766.

83 Gwiazda 2016.

dedicated to Astarte in BEY 010, within a *favissa* in BEY 004, in the domestic quarters near the port in BEY 019–020, and out of context in BEY 008.[84] Thus far, only one single example has been published from Sidon from an unknown context,[85] while in Southern Phoenicia, a very eccentric figurine is known from Tel Megadim (Fig. 2, "hybrid").[86] Additionally, the original local mould of this last figurine has been found at Tel Dor.[87] In hybrid figurines, we can also observe that Greek costumes that are kept in the derivative and imitation prototypes are now replaced with nudity, except for the *stephane* that appears in a few specimens.

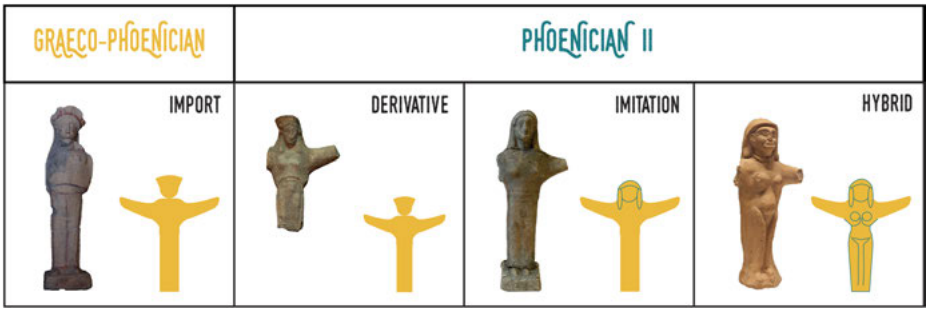

Fig. 2: Development of *psi kore* types in Phoenicia. Import from Sidon (AO 260001 © *Musée du Louvre*, photo by the Author). Derivative from Kharayeb (after Oggiano 2015, Fig. 3, right). Imitation from Sidon (AO 1835 © *Musée du Louvre / Antiquités orientales*). Hybrid from Tel Megadim (1967–2091 © Israel Museum, photo by the Author).

The nakedness of the figurine does not have to be perceived in a hedonic sense, but as an attempt to perform youthful aesthetic standards in the Levant. Young maidens are then presented with a marked Levantine taste. Thus, we can observe an abandonment of foreign customs not suited for local receptacles. The theme of nudity is by no means new to Phoenician coroplastic. As Gubel already mentioned, this female iconography goes back to the Syrian Middle and Late Bronze Ages traditions.[88] The theme was then abandoned for the greatest part of the Iron Age, being preserved only in the Akkar Plain, where a micro-regional tradition developed between the late 9th -end 7th centuries BCE.[89] In Gubel's opinion, this iconography would be attribut-

84 To date, only a few of these figurines have been published. Cf. Gubel 1982, fig.2; Curvers, Stuart 1996, figs.1c–d; Lehmann-Jeriche 1997, figs.11d–f; Élayi 2010, figs.17a,d.
85 Culican 1975-76, fig.4d; Nunn 2000, pl.23, no.68.
86 Broshi 1969, 126, upper left. Israel Antiquities Authority 1967–2091.
87 Cf. Stern 1989, 23.
88 Gubel 1982, 228–229.
89 Bolognani 2020, 41–42.

able to the Syrian fertility goddess.[90] Élayi also adds that the figurines should have represented Astarte and were *ex-votos* deposited in a temple (presumably) dedicated to her in Beirut.[91] However, these claims have limitations in contextual data. In fact, if the *psi korai* represented goddesses, it is not clear why their local imitations were found together with male specimens in the temple of Eshmun in Bostan Esh-Sheikh or that of Kharayeb. Furthermore, this raises the question as to which deity those in a funerary context must have been dedicated. It, therefore, seems more logical to assume that they should rather represent a segment of the population, perhaps young dancing maidens at marrying age showing their natural splendours.[92] The fact that they evoked mortal icons and not goddesses would also explain their cultic versatility, which is quite analogous to the Greek models in a way. As proof that derivative, imitations, and hybrid figurines were used by devotees of various kinds, it is necessary to get a glimpse at what happens in the following centuries.

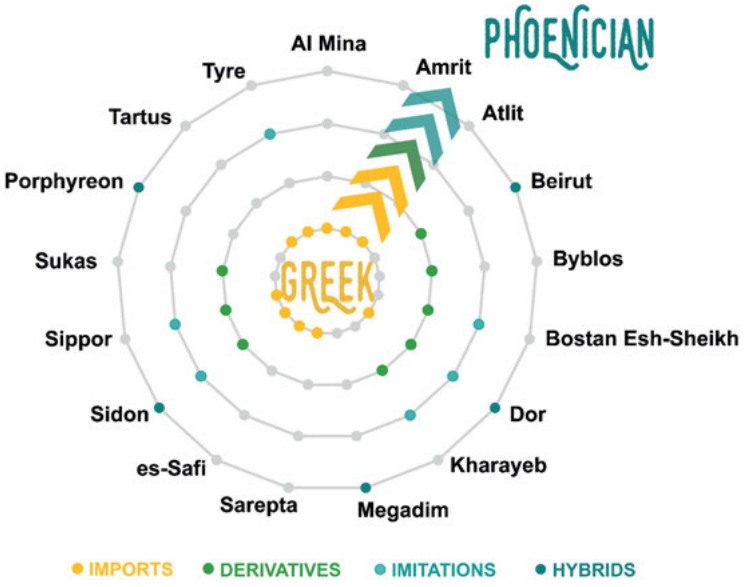

Fig. 3: Degree of assimilation of Greek prototypes of the first phase.

90 Gubel 1982, 231.
91 Élayi 2010, 165–166.
92 Cultic dancing was a religious performance attested both in the cult of Astarte and Eshmun. Ganzmann *et al.* 1987, 101.

4 Second Phase: Attic Types (5th-4th Centuries BCE)

The second phase of imported Greek figurines is more problematic due to the heterogeneity of coroplastic subjects and their fragmentation. To date, contrary to the first import phase (Fig. 3), piecing together the steps of their local development is particularly challenging, especially regarding the distinction between imports and derivatives. As we will see once again, the most interesting aspect related to this production is the influence on the local *repertoire*.

On the one hand, at the beginning of the 5th century BCE, one still detects a faint continuation of the tradition of the enthroned female figurines. Some important innovations are introduced, such as the importation of Attic enthroned figures with their typical winged back throne in Arsuf[93] and unknown locations in Southern Phoenicia;[94] or the "Aegine" type with a low seat from Sidon.[95] A base fragment with feet tentatively attributed to these late enthroned figures came from Tell Sukas.[96] Meanwhile, some further derivatives are known from Kharayeb[97] and Tel Sippor.[98] On the other hand, the importation of *korai* and *kouroi* figurines – except for one late *psi kore* from Sidon[99] – seems to fade. This production is now replaced until the 4th century BCE with some rare Attic Sever Style *peplophoros* terracottas. One must, however, say that a major part of the finds are heads, while the bodies of these *peplophoroi* are frequently missing. This fact may suggest that the objects were ritually offered.[100] Considering the interchangeability of the heads, it seems difficult to know whether they belonged to standing or seated figurines (Fig. 4, left). As for the attested specimens, two tentatively imported heads and one body fragment are known from Al Mina[101] and two heads from the *favissa* of Tel es-Safi, [102] while three derivatives heads and two seated bodies came from the *favissa* of Tel Sippor.[103] Although these are only a selection of a larger coroplastic group characterizing the second import phase, the geographical origin of the imports in Phoenicia cannot be ascertained with certainty. In fact, the 5th century BCE enthroned

93 Roll, Tall 1999, fig.4.52.1.

94 Israel Museum IAA 1940–322; Haifa Maritime Museum, 3363, 3775, Zemer 2009, 88, figs.54–55; Eretz Israel Museum, MHP 18462.

95 Nunn 2000, pl.33, no.107. Louvre Museum AO 1583.

96 Plough 1973, pl.XIX.422, no.TS4364.

97 Kaoukabani 1973, 45, pl. III.1.

98 Negbi 1966, 12, no.35.

99 Nunn 2000, pl.42, no.147. Louvre Museum AO 21071.

100 The attestation of Archaic period beheaded figurines has been also noticed in the 85% of terracotta finds from the sanctuary of Demeter and Persephone at Cyrene. The ritual breakage was ascertained for specimens dating from the 5th century BCE onward. Uhlenbrock 1992, 17.

101 Woolley 1938, 164, pl.X, MN29, MN87, MN108.

102 Bliss, Macalister 1902, 104, 141, fig.14.3, Rockefeller Museum 694.

103 Negbi 1966, 12–14, pls.VI–VII, nos.25–26, 30–32.

ladies are attested both in Eastern and Western Greece.[104] The same can be affirmed for the Athenian *peplophoroi*, which are also sporadically spread in the Western Mediterranean.[105] Despite the limited numbers of the finds, the mild diffusion of *peplophoroi* played a pivotal role in shaping the aesthetic of the local coroplastic. As has been stated, during the Persian period, we see the rise of the Phoenician II production. Among the many coroplastic subjects widely diffused along the coastal Levant, the most innovative class is composed of some pillar-shaped hollow figurines standing on pedestals.[106] In this class, one can see some first attempts in moving towards a local mass production. Again, despite the evident Levantine style of the specimens, fully expressed in the rendering of some anatomical details and local symbols. A reworking of Greek models – the *peplophoroi* – can be observed in the adoption of some features connected to the ritualistic use of these objects and in some aesthetic details probably dictated by the taste of the worshippers. These include, for instance, the systematic use of high pedestals, the occasional presence of a libation bowl (the Greek *phiale*), and the characterization of the garments (Fig. 4, right).

Fig. 4: *Peplophoros* figurines in Phoenicia with tentative reconstructions and their assimilation in the local *repertoire*. To the right, Al Mina (after Woolley 1938, pl.X), Tel es-Safi (after Bliss, Macalister 1902, fig.14.3), Tel Sippor (after Negbi 1966, pl.VII, nos.30–33). To the left, pillar-shaped figurines from the Phoenician coast (H3308, H3303, H3332, H3304, H3301, H3460 © Hecht Museum, photos by the Author).

104 Cf. for Rhodes, Jacopi 1931, fig.89; Blinkenberg 1931, pls.96–97, nos.2129, 2133, 2137–2142 ; Higgins 1954, nos.121–126, 243, 658–659; for Delos, Laumonier 1956, no.79–83; for Attica, Higgins 1954, no.657.

105 Cf. eastern Greece, Mendel 1908, pl.II.12, Blinkenberg 1931, pls.105–107, nos. 2274, 2283, 2283, 2292, 2300, Jacopi 1931, figs.85–86, 181, Higgins 1954, nos.204–213, 220–224, 673; Laumonier 1956, nos.240–242; for western Greece, Higgins 1954, nos.669, 671, 678–670, 682, for Carthage and Tharros, Higgins 1954, nos.675, 677.

106 Nunn 2000, 68–69, type 35; Bolognani 2020, 43, fig.5j.

What ultimately suggests this permeation of styles at the local level? Hybridization is an important phenomenon in understanding the religious and social context in which these figurines were manipulated. Indeed, we cannot ignore the fact that in some sites, especially in the south,[107] Graeco-Phoenician figurines have been found together with both the Phoenician and other Levantine productions. Contrary to some statements from the past,[108] this data does not tell us that there was a one-to-one relationship between local deities and other allochthonous with similar features. Nor does it tell us that these were locally worshipped due to an active syncretism. These figurines only reproduce a varied set of devotees, probably from different geographic origins and social backgrounds,[109] whose cultic practises are largely unknown to us. However, it is in this period that we observe the adoption of common religious codes in the material evidence, stimulating a homologation of cultic expressions between the Greek and Phoenician worlds. From a historical perspective, it could perhaps be said that religious syncretism was stimulated in the first instance by material needs and only later by ideological ones. Thus, figurines produced in different locations might have been used within the same temple regardless of the venerated divinities since the worshippers shared similar cultic wills (fertility, good luck, protection, healing, etc.).

5 Conclusions

This paper has highlighted the importance of considering material evidence of any kind in its complexity. As already stressed by Pedrazzi, "it is necessary to investigate the material culture more thoroughly, in order to recognize in a given local repertoire precisely what kind and degree of 'foreignness' is detected in an apparently "non-local" artefact (imitation, import, hybrid production, autonomous reworking of foreign models, and so on)". Regarding the Graeco-Phoenician figurines, this preliminary analysis shows that there was not a sharp division between the so-called Eastern and Western coroplastic production in Phoenicia during the Persian period, because on a closer look a more nuanced situation is revealed. Many figurines that may look essentially "Greek" at first glance, are for the major part derivative figurines, if not local imitations or a blending between Greek and Levantine iconographic subjects. In light of the proposed analysis, the phenomenon of Greek imported figurines shall be considerably resized, but much more attention should be put on their long-lasting assimilation in local contexts. Thus, future research will certainly have to trace the circulation

107 Cf. Cornelius 2014, 81, map.1.

108 Stern 1989, 29.

109 Lipiński 2003, 301–304. Cornelius adopts the term "otherness" when referring to Yehud society through the coroplastic eye. Cf. Cornelius 2014, 81.

routes of these figurines through the analysis of their fabrics. Once the original locations are identified, it is essential to reconstruct the social value attributed to these cult objects in Phoenicia. This value can only be reconstructed if enough importance to local retrieval contexts is given and, possibly, when the specimens of specific types are enough to determine a statistical weight.[110] In this regard, renewed analyses shall be conducted for the *corpora* from Sidon and Beirut (first phase), and those from Tel es-Safi, Tel Dor, and Tel Sippor (second phase). Finally, in the author's view, although the reasons behind the circulation of clay figurines at an international level can be sometimes elusive, Phoenician commercial trades can only explain the phenomenon partially. While considering the local impact of the Graeco-Phoenician production, the possibility of a mixed audience attending some cosmopolitan cultic centres along the Coastal Levant shall still be kept open.

Abbreviations

AASyr.	Les Annales Archéologiques de Syrie
ABSA	The Annual of the British School at Athens
ANES	Ancient Near Eastern Studies
BAAL	Bulletin d'archéologie et d'architecture libanaises
BAR	British Archaeological Reports
BARev.	Biblical Archaeology Review
BCH	Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique
BMB	Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth
BMMA	Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art
Collection ISTA	Collection de l'Institut des Sciences et Techniques de l'Antiquité
IES	Israel Exploration Journal
IstM	Istanbuler Mitteilungen
JHS	The Journal of Hellenic Studies
NEA	Near Eastern Archaeology
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
PEQ	Palestine Exploration Quarterly
RSF	Rivista di Studi Fenici
QDAP	The Quartely of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine
ZOrA	Zeitschrift für Orient-Archäologie

110 Uhlenbrock 2007, 741.

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