

## DEA TYRIA GRAVIDA

By

WILLIAM CULICAN

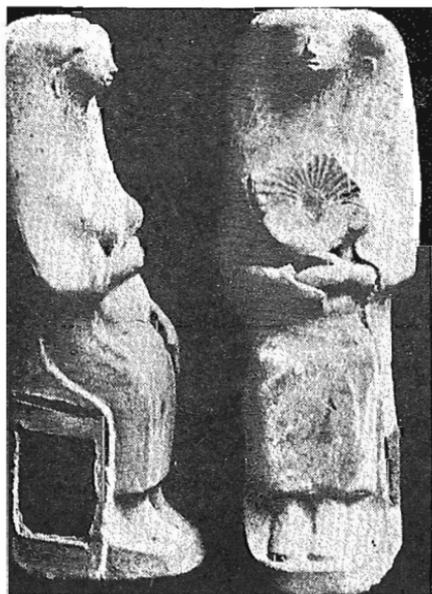
The motif commonly used in Palestine and Syria to represent female fecundity in Late Bronze Age times was the naked female figure holding her breasts. Indeed the 'Breast Astarte' survived into the Persian period both in the Near East and in the Phoenician cities of the West Mediterranean, whither colonists had taken it.<sup>1</sup> Pregnancy as a fertility expression was almost entirely unused in the Late Bronze Age period and first comes into use in the Iron Age I levels at Tell Beit Mirsim and elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> Even so, pregnant figures remain a rarity in Near Eastern Art during the first millennium B.C.—except, that is, for a consistent tradition of terracotta representations of seated pregnant women, which appears centred on Phoenicia. The finest examples come from the Phoenician tombs of Akhziv on the coast south of Tyre; and these are fairly typical of the group as a whole.<sup>3</sup> The figure sits on a narrow, high-backed chair, her body inclined slightly forward and her face downcast. She draws her right hand above her prominent abdomen and rests the left hand along her knee. She wears a long dress, without folds, and a veil over her head. This

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1. G. Patroni, 'Nora, colonia fenicia in Sardegna', *Monumenti Antichi*, XIV, pl. XIII, fig. 1; A. Cara, *Monumenti di antichità di recente trovati a Tharros e Cornus*, p. 66; Perrot and Chipiez, *Hist. de l'art*, III, fig. 291 (Tharros); J. Colominas, 'Sepultura de un Alferaro-Vaciador en la necropoli di Piug d'es Molins', *Primo Congreso arqueológico del Marruecos Espanol*, p. 197 (Ibiza); and *JDAI*, 1914, p. 336, fig. 21 (Ibiza) (Plate VII, B). See also for the Phoenician Iron Age, Perrot and Chipiez, *History of Art in Phoenicia and its Dependencies*, II, figs. 104, 106.
  2. These are discussed by W. F. Albright, 'Astarte Plaques and Figurines from Tell Beit Mirsim', *Mélanges Dussaud*, p. 119 ff, pl. A, 6-10; J. B. Pritchard, *Palestinian Figurines in Relation to Certain Goddesses known through Literature*, pp. 21-23.
  3. Excavated examples are in the Bonfmann Museum, Jerusalem and described by M. Prausnitz *Archaeology*, 5, 1969; see also *Art International*, ix, 6, 1965. Some fine examples from private collections of Akhziv material are in the Haaretz Ceramic Museum, Tell Aviv. For the side coils of hair see A. Garcia y Bellido; *loc. cit.* in note 25, fig. 430.

PLATE I

A. Pregnant goddess figurine, Akhziv. Ht. ca. 22 cm.

B. Two figurines from Tomb 310, Dermech necropolis, Carthage, after P. Gauckler. Ht. 25 cm.



covers two projections on the side of the head, most probably the side-coils of hair (which Ibizan terracottas show was a fashion among Punic women), thus giving her a distinctive hooded appearance which has sometimes gained her a convenient, but rather misleading description as the goddess with the 'cobra-hood' or 'horns' (Plate I, A).

The Akhziv figures, about 17 cm. tall, are of a reddish fawn clay and are beautifully finished with a parchment-coloured slip. Their date cannot be accurately given, for none has been published in context; but a date before 600 B.C. is imperative for the contents of the Akhziv tombs in general. The Palestine Museum preserves a single figurine from the Akhziv tomb; not similar but of related type (Plate V, C).<sup>4</sup> In this case the chair is scarcely indicated; indeed the figure appears almost to stand. But the position of her hands strongly indicates that the sitting posture is intended. Her pregnancy is certainly not marked. Her broad facial features relate her clearly to Phoenician style.

Before the discovery of the Akhziv examples, figurines of this type had been known mainly from Cyprus; but they have not been found in large numbers there. The *Atlas of the Cesnola Collection*, II, pl. IV, Nos. 23, 25 and 26 shows typical examples said to have been found in the Salt Lake at Larnaca. Two of these are listed by J. L. Myres, *Handbook of the Cesnola Collection*, Nos. 2150-51, and another is illustrated by Max Ohnefalsch Richter, *Kypros die Bibel und Homer*, p. 383, pl. XXXVII. Another Cesnola Collection figurine is published by J. Rogers Davies and T. B. L. Webster, *Terracottas in the Stanford University Museum*, No. 221. None of these has a dating context, but two important pieces with painted details (including necklaces) were found in a tomb of the late 6th or early 5th century B.C. at Amanthus: A. S. Murray, *Excavations in Cyprus*, fig. 165, Nos. 8 and 9 (H. B. Walters, *Catalogue of Terracottas in the Brit. Mus.*, A154 and A155). A date about 600 B.C. would be suitable for two very fine examples from Carthage (Plate I, B), one of which carries a fan in the shape of a Phoenician palmette. These come from tomb 310 of the Dermech cemetery at Carthage and belong to a tomb-group published in P. Gauckler's *Nécropoles puniques de Carthage*, pl. CLXIII (the figurines pl. CLXV, *ibid.*). The Punic pottery appears to be of early to middle 6th century date and the inventory of the tomb lists 'Corinthian' and 'Protocorinthian'

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4. I am grateful to Mr. Lankester Harding for the photograph and for permission to publish it.

PLATE II



'Pregnant goddess of Tyre'. terracotta statue. Ht. 37.5 cs.,  
Henri Pharaon Collection, Beirut—front and oblique views.

vessels.<sup>5</sup> Unless the Akhziv examples, which have a more Egyptian headdress than the 'hooded' examples from Cyprus and Carthage here listed, are earlier, the series of seated pregnant figures appears to begin about 600 B.C.

Additional examples from Cyprus are numbers 42 and 43 of Niels Breitenstein, *Catalogue of Terracottas* (Danish National Museum): 42 is of reddish brown clay and has 'pronounced horns on the side of the veil'; whereas 43 is of yellowish clay, has a flat abdomen and possibly held a child in her left arm. Several more examples of this 'oriental goddess' were found by Myres in a favissa outside the ancient walls of Larnaca, *JHS*, XVII, 1897, p. 168, fig. 15, 6. Most of the figurines in this dump were 'snowmen' type of the 8th-7th centuries B.C., but there are certainly some later elements.

Apart from the Akhziv pieces, figurines of this type from the Palestinian region appear to be of 5th-4th century date. Two broken pieces from a pit in Level II at Tell Abu Hawam, R. W. Hamilton *QDAP*, IV, p. 17, Nos. 25, 26, can be assigned to the group from the position of their hands. It is in favissae that other examples occur. A fine head of a veiled example from a favissa at Tell Sippor, inland from Ashdod, O. Negbi, *IEJ*, XIV, 1964, pp. 187-189, and *'Atiqot* VI, 1966, No. 19, wears a nose-ring, a fashion seen in Carthaginian terracottas. Negbi has most ably analysed the figurines from this dump and divided the Aegean from the 'Oriental' types on grounds of style and composition of fabric. Several pregnant figures feature in the Oriental group—*ibid.*, Nos. 20-24. Amongst earlier finds is a lady with a large hood from Tell es-Safi in the north-east of the Philistine Plain (Plate V, A: Pal. Mus. 713). Obviously a Phoenician favissa was established there in the late Persian period. Bliss' report of 1899<sup>6</sup> describes a rubbish heap with terracotta figures, 'masks of Rhodian type' and a number of soft limestone heads, torsos and 'plank figures' related to the Cypro-Greek types found at Amrit and Tell

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5. The Carthage pieces are now shown in colour in *Archaeologia Viva*, I, 2, Nos. 57 and 58, but note the suggested date before 720 is untenable for their context. Gauckler's 'carnet des fouilles' *op. cit.*, pl. XC shows these imported vessels in rough sketches and shows a 'grande coupe noire' which in outline appears to be a 6th century Etruscan bucchero kylix, or is possibly the East Greek kylix figures on pl. CLXXXVI, 2, far left. For the figurines see also *Catal. Mus. Alaoui*, pl. LXXVI, 1 and 4.

6. 'First Report on the Excavations at Tell es-Safi'. *PEQ*, 1899, p. 317 ff.

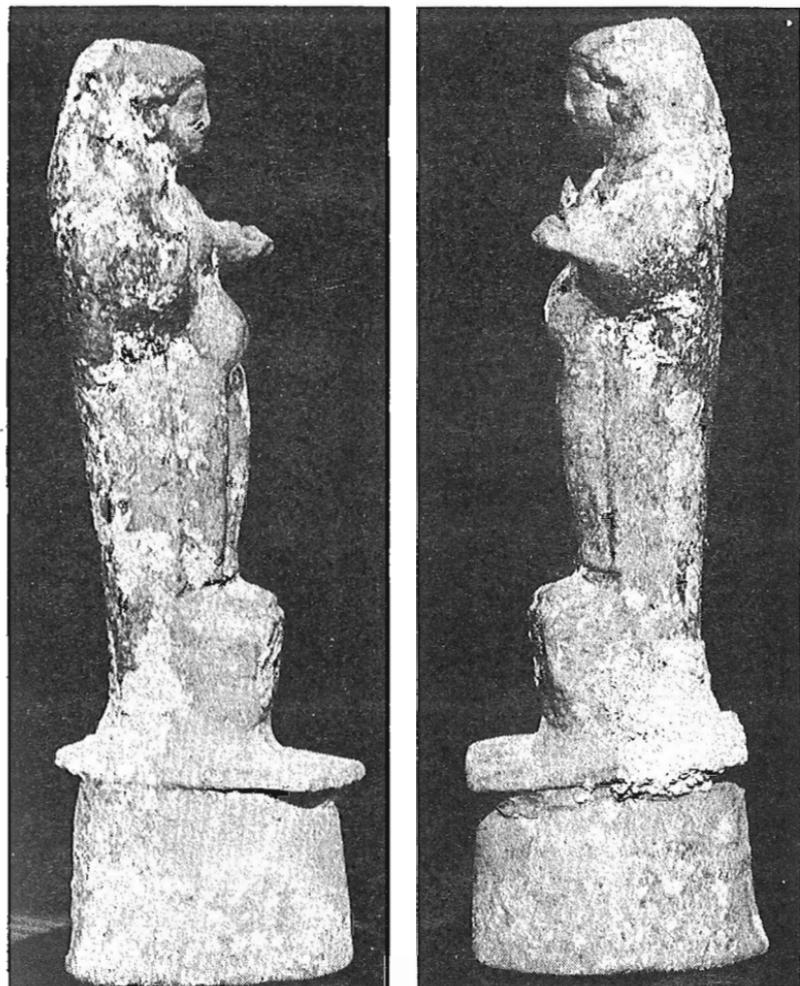
Sippor. Slightly later is the group of terracotta figurines about 15 cm. high of women in advanced pregnancy from a small temple of the Persian period at Makmish in the Plain of Sharon.<sup>8</sup> Here the 'Egyptian' type is represented (i.e., with a folded cloth over the head resembling the Egyptian wig). There is a good example from Tell Gath, A. Ciasca, *Oriens Antiquus*, 2, 1963, pl. 43B. But by far the most interesting is the figurine from Beth-Shan (Plate V, B: Pal. Mus. 714), which still has a lot of bright red paint surviving on the dress. This hollow-modelled figure is more shapely than the rest and the modelling more careful. It is clear that the hair is worked into two prominent 'buns' over the temples, from which tresses run down behind the ears. Over the hair and behind the ears she wears the Egyptian *klaft* head-dress. She is set on quite a respectable pedestal. This figurine was found together with a hooded type in the vicinity of a Hellenistic temple, but no precise details are recorded.<sup>9</sup> For Phoenicia, a rich favissa at Kharayeb between Tyre and Sidon has given two examples of the variety with large hoods; M. Chéhab, 'Les terres cuites de Kharayeb', *Bull. Mus. Beyrouth*, XI, 1953-4, pl. I, 3; pl. II, 4. The few examples from Syria come almost all from Amrit and Tortosa, some apparently from tombs: L. Henzey, *Les figurines de terre cuite du Louvre*, pl. VI and Longpérier, *Musée Napoléon III*, pl. XXV, one of which appears to carry a fan like the figurine from Carthage. E. Renan, *Mission de Phénicie*, p. 55 (pl. XXIV) includes a 'déesse de Syrie' pregnant figurine among objects coming from the plain between Amrit and Tortosa. Some of these are reproduced in Perrot and Chipiez, *History of Art in Phoenicia and its Dependencies*, I, fig. 143, p. 206 ff. A single example from Byblos, M. Dunand, *Fouilles de Byblos*, II, pl. CLXVIII, No. 9047 appears to carry a spherical object. Another variant is illustrated by R. Dussaud, *L'Aphrodité cyprïote*, p. 12, fig. 2. She bears a child in her arms. Provenance is not given, but it is probably from Amrit. Dussaud says, "Ce dernier type est très commun dans la Phénicie du nord aux VI et V siècles." The modelling is poor except for the face. This is almost certainly the same example as Perrot and Chipiez, *op. cit.*, I, fig. 144. Another variant known only from Tripoli is that in which the pregnant goddess holds a cake of offering, *ibid.*, II, fig. 67.<sup>10</sup>

7. *Ibid.*, opp. p. 328. Note also the Cypro-Greek statues at Makmish, Avigad, *loc. cit.*

8. N. Avigad, 'Excavations at Makmish 1958', *IEJ*, 10, 1960, p. 93, pl. 11, A, B.

9. G. M. Fitzgerald, *Beth Shan Excavations, 1921-23*, pl. XXIV, 3.

10. Also, Pietschmann, *Geschichte der Phönizier*, p. 235.



'Pregnant goddess of Tyre'—side views.  
Ht. 37.5 cm.

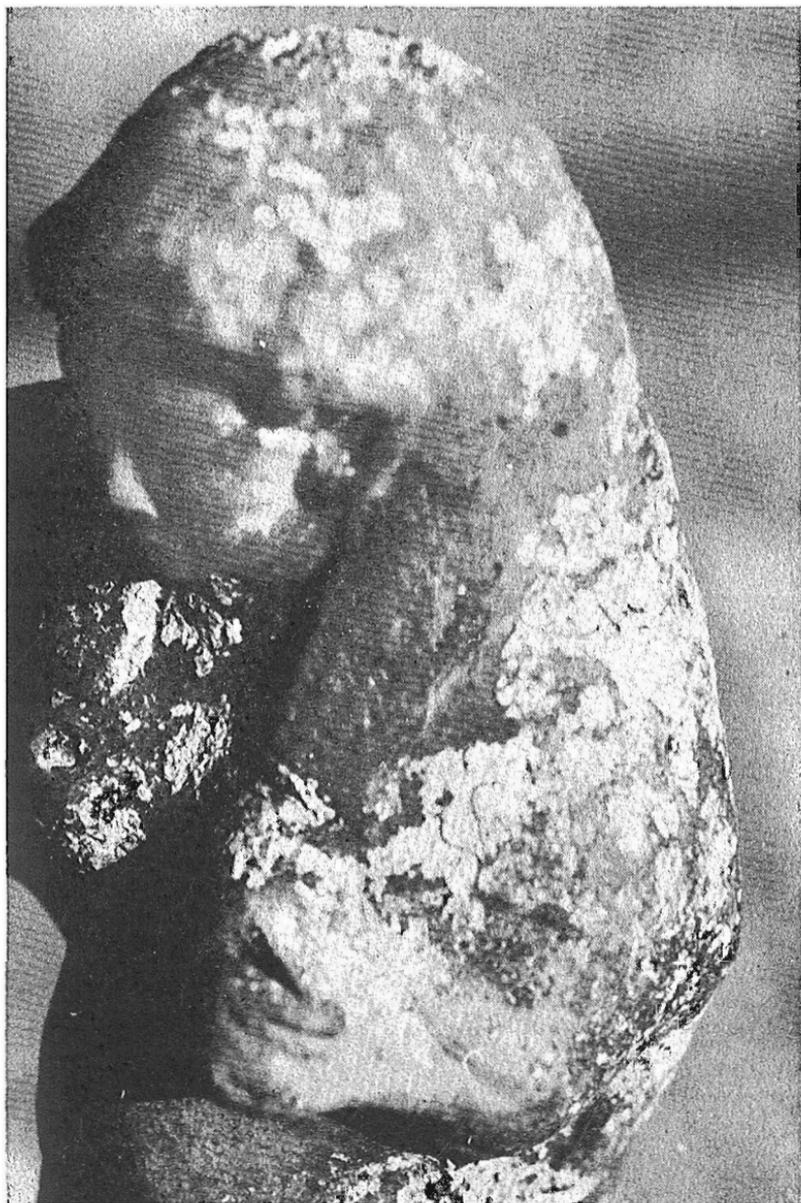
A storm off the coast of Lebanon in the winter of 1966 cast into the nets of fishermen in the region of Tyre three damaged statuettes. These subsequently passed into commerce. The largest and most important, the figure of a standing pregnant woman, passed into the Collection of M. Henri Pharaon of Beirut, who kindly allowed me to examine and publish it (Plates II, III).

The rarity of terracottas that we can ascribe to Phoenician workshops invests this 'Lady of Tyre' and her companions with a singular interest. The fabric is a rusty brown clay, fairly well purified and with small yellowish grits. The white incrustations are barnacle-like shells. The back of the figure is flat and suggests that it was made in a mould with the back half slightly enveloping the front. Together with the stand the figure is 37.5 cms. high and is therefore a major work of terra cotta. The oval-sectioned base-stand, or pedestal, is 13.5 cm. in maximum diameter, 10.25 cm. in minimum diameter, and 10 cm. high. The longer side of the rectangular base is 10.4 cm. This rectangular base and the pedestal below it appear to be separately made. The pedestal is open underneath and a hole in the centre of the rectangular stand renders the statue completely open to the top of the head.

The pregnant lady stands solid and square upon a rough plinth which is built up towards the back to give additional strength to the figure. She is covered by a thin ankle-length dress which, whilst loose-fitting, does not hide her body. This is a feature found frequently in late Phoenician Art. Over this is a heavy cloak which falls vertically over her elbows and curves over the back of the plinth. Her right hand is held up in the typical Phoenician gesture of adoration; her left hand is held to her breast, the nipple of which she clasps between her thumb and forefinger. The face is severe and tight lipped; the ears large and unnaturally prominent. The hairline is shown by a rough double row of curls terminating in two larger curls on the temples; over which is placed the Egyptian *klaft* head-dress or wig, slightly rusticated in surface and with its ends sitting neatly above her breasts.

Standing figures of naked goddesses on pedestals are to be found among the Kharayeb terracottas, M. Chéhab, *loc. cit.*, pl. II, 4.5. It is difficult to make out whether or not they are intended to be pregnant, but 5 holds up her hand in greeting in the same manner as the 'Pregnant Goddess of Tyre'. Who is she? One can only speculate whether she and the pregnant figurines we have listed represent a goddess, sacred prostitute, or a well-to-do townswoman seeking a fruitful delivery by offering a pregnancy charm. Certainly the nakedness, the wearing of the *klaft* and the holding of the nipple suggests that a goddess of fertility is represented, perhaps Koshart, the Canaanite goddess of childbirth, the Chusarthis of Philo Byblius, Eusebius, *Prep. Ev.*, I, 10, 43.<sup>11</sup>

11. Cf. W. F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, p. 120, who reads *ourombelos* for Eusebius' *sourmoubelos* and *Chusarthis* for *Eusarthis*, the latter a false reading, cf. K. Mras, *Eusebius Werke*, VIII, 1956, p. 482 and *ad loc.*



'Pregnant goddess of Tyre'—view of left shoulder.

It is natural to present the goddess of childbirth as pregnant and Philo *ibid.*, expressly identifies Chusarthis with Thuro (Thoeris) the Egyptian goddess of childbirth, usually represented as a pregnant hippopotamus. At Makmish the pregnant women occurred together with figurines of women nursing and suckling children.<sup>12</sup> But there is indeed another factor which suggests that the seated pregnant figurines represent goddesses. At Makmish,<sup>13</sup> Beth-Shan<sup>14</sup> and the favissa of Tell es-Safi the figurines of pregnant women are associated with another terracotta type represented as a seated, bearded male figure holding his hand to his beard, either holding it or eating a fruit. The figure from Tell es-Safi (Plate VII, A)<sup>15</sup> wears a tall knobbed mitre flanked by two *atef* feathers. This is worn over a *klaft* headdress, which hangs over the shoulders. The Makmish figurines also wear this version of the *atef* crown (but without *klaft*) or else a low cylindrical headdress of the type worn by Phoenician clergy and deities in the Persian or early Hellenistic Period. The figurine from Beth Shan also wears this low cylindrical headgear. Tell Sippor, significantly, contributes examples<sup>16</sup> of both types (one with an identical headdress to that of the Tell es-Safi piece) and among the Kharayeb terracottas three seated old men wear tall hats with side flaps<sup>17</sup> and two wear a low cylindrical drum-like headdress.<sup>18</sup>

The plumed 'Osiris' headdress was commonly worn by figurines of Canaanite deities, and its use here is probably a revival or an archaism. This association suggests a divine pair and the obvious companion for Koshart is Horon, possibly a god of healing,<sup>19</sup> whose shrine is referred to in the Beth Horon of the O.T. and the well-known ostraca inscription from Tell Qasile. A significant cult of Horon had existed in Egypt in Ramesside times, and Philo Byblius names Thoeris (Chusarthis) as the consort of *Hourounbelos*, undoubtedly Horon (Phoenician Hauron-baal).<sup>20</sup>

12. Avigad, *loc. cit.*, pl. 11 C.

13. *Ibid.* p. 93, pl. 9, B; pl. 10 A, B.

14. Fitzgerald, *op. cit.*, pl. XXIV, 2.

15. J. Bliss, *loc. cit.*, opp. p. 328.

16. O. Negbi, 'Atiqot, VI, Nos. 67-74. For the cylindrical 'pileus' see M. Dunand, *Oumm el-'Amed*, passim.

17. Chéhab, *loc. cit.*, pl. VII, 4-6.

18. *Ibid.*, pl. VIII, 2-4.

19. J. Gray, 'The Canaanite God Horon', *JNES*, VIII, 1949, p. 27 ff.

20. See note 11.

PLATE V

- A. 'Hooded' pregnant figure from Tell es-Safi, Palestine, Pal. Mus. P. 94, Ht. 14.4 cm.
- B. Pregnant figure from Beth-Shan, Pal. Mus. P. 1392, Ht. 21 cm.
- C. Seated figure from Akhziv, Pal. Mus. P. 44. 263, Ht. 19 cm.



A



B



C

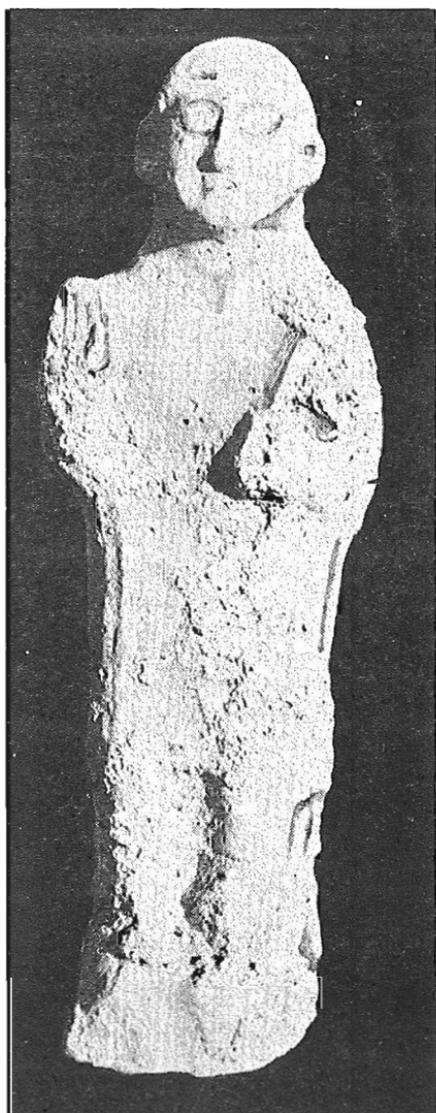
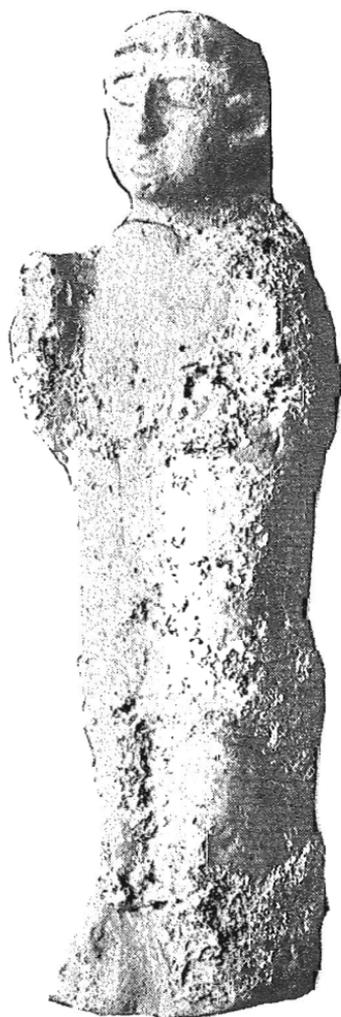
This identification is merely a suggestion: some other explanation of these figurine types might be forthcoming, but that both represent specifically Phoenician deities seems likely on grounds of style and provenance.<sup>21</sup> Terracottas from the Phoenician colonies show clearly the continued use until a late date of Egyptian headdresses on figures of divinities (Plate VII, B).<sup>22</sup> The existing indications point to the establishment of Phoenician country shrines in Philistia. As Avigad has suggested in relation to the establishment of the Makmish Temple, the statement of King Eshmunazer of Sidon (late 5th century B.C.)<sup>23</sup> that the Lord of Kings gave him dominion over Jaffa, Dor and the Plain of Sharon provides a useful point of reference, consistent with the existence of Greek 5th century terracotta types there and in the favissa of Tell es-Safi, though clearly the Tell Sippor terracottas begin a century or so earlier.<sup>24</sup>

The other two figures netted by the fishermen of Tyre represented male votaries. Of one, which was quite headless and otherwise in poor condition, I have seen only a photograph. The second (Plate VI) I was able to locate in commerce in Beirut and to obtain a photograph, which, whilst not good, shows almost as much detail as is discernible on the poorly preserved original. He is a boy or youth dressed in a short tunic to the knee, smooth in front but pleated at the sides. He holds up his right hand in the gesture of adoration and holds in his left hand a narrowly folded cloth which is draped over his left shoulder to about his waist. His head is covered with close-set curls and his feet are bare. The fabric is practically the same orange-brown clay as that of the pregnant goddess figure. He appears to be a young votary, holding his 'stole' of office.

This 'stole' is a detail of Phoenician priestly dress occasionally represented in sculpture: two relief figures, one from the Ste. Monique necropolis at Carthage (R.P.) A Delattre, *Nécropole punique voisine de Sainte Monique, deuxième semestre des fouilles, 1898*, fig. 6, together with a carved figure from the Tophet at Sulcis,

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21. On the Phoenician origin of this terracotta type see E. Gjerstad, *SCE*, IV, 2, p. 337.
  22. See note 1. This figurine was associated with black-glazed Campanian pottery, Colominas, *loc. cit.* Little from the Puig d'es Molins cemetery at Ibiza is earlier than 400 B.C.
  23. G. A. Cooke, *A Textbook of North Semitic Inscriptions*, p. 30.
  24. O. Negbi, *'Atiqot*, VI, p. 8.

PLATE VI



Terracotta of a male votary found in the sea near Tyre, Commerce in Beirut. Ht. ca. 26 cm. Two views.

R. Barecca *Arte e civiltà punica: Mostra 1959*, p. 18, show this stole clearly and indicate that it was of a fleecy wool-like texture. But in two closely comparable sarcophagus reliefs it appears to be a folded stole of thin cloth with a fringe on the end: one from the

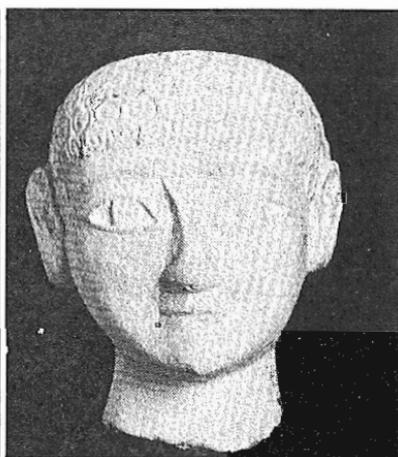
graveyard at Rabs at Carthage (Ste. Monique) and the other from Tarquinia *Archaeologia Viva*, I, 2, Nos. 18, 19. It was short at the back also, as can be seen from the profile engraving on a 4th century B.C. gravestone from Salamambo at Carthage illustrated by M. Hours-Meidan, 'Les représentations figurées sur les stèles de Carthage', *Cahiers de Byrsa*, 1951, p. 62, pl. XXXIV.

A terracotta figure which in many ways compares with that from Tyre is illustrated by Delattre *Nécropole punique voisine de Ste. Monique, troisième mois des fouilles*, 1898, p. 12, fig. 21, evidently a piece dating from 3rd-2nd centuries B.C. to judge from the combination of coins and gable-top sarcophagus in the tomb. This figure like the Ste Monique relief wears a garment of thin material which shows the contours of the body perfectly. The head and base are missing. The right hand is raised and the clearly modelled stole is held in position over the left shoulder in the left hand. A comparison to this is to be found among the terracottas of Ibiza published by J. Román y Calvet, *Los nombres é importancia arqueológica de las islas pithiusas* (Barcelona 1906) plate VI; a long-robed standing young male with a clearly defined stole over the left shoulder, which he grasps at breast level. Better in modelling is the statuette illustrated by A. Garcia y Bellido in R. Menéndez Pidal, *Historia de Espana* (Espasa-Calpe, Madrid, 1960), I, pt. 2, fig. 343. He holds the stole at thigh level. It comes from the Puig d'es Molins cemetery on Ibiza and is probably of the 4th century B.C.

A more or less contemporary stela from the region of Tyre, M. Dunand, *Oumm el-'Amed*, p. 165, pl. LXXXVIII, inscribed as belonging to 'Baalshamar, chief of the temple porters' shows us that this stole was used in homeland Phoenicia. It is very possibly the item of priestly apparel, the 'latus clavus', mentioned by Silius Italicus in his description of the robes of the priests in the temple of Hercules at Cadiz, *Punica* III, 1, 26ff: '*Discinctis mos tura dare atque e lege parentum sacrificam lato vestem distinguere clavo*'. Indeed certain other details of Silius' description fit the representations of Carthaginian priests, especially the loose ungirded garments (*velantur corpora lino*) and the turban-like covering of the head on the Sulcis and Rabs sculptures mentioned above (*et Pelusiaco praefulget stamine vertex*).

The boy votary from the sea at Tyre, with his thick-set curls, wide nose, thick lips and slightly upward inclination of the face has the absolutely typical Phoenician physiognomy. Amongst terracotta figurines from the Phoenician Western colonies, may be

PLATE VII



A. Figurine from Tell es-Safi, Pal. Mus. P. 93, Ht. 17 cm.

B. Breast Ashtarte from Ibiza, terracotta mould, after Colominas.

C. Head (two views) from Sulcis, Cagliari Mus., 14942, grey clay with reddish patches, Ht. 8 cm.

illustrated in comparison an unpublished terracotta head (Plate VII, C) found at Sulcis in western Sardinia. This has characteristics typical of heads of youths from other western sites<sup>25</sup> which establish the significance of the figure of the young Tyrian votary for the comparative study of eastern and western Phoenician terracottas.

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25. Cagliari Mus. 32146: Cf. A. Taramelli, *Not. d. Scavi*, 1908, p. 161 (Sulcis); the head from Ibiza in the Museum Cau Ferrat, Sitges, (J. Colominas, *Les terrescrites cartagineses d'Eivissa*, plate XLI); Romàn y Calvet, *op. cit.*, p. 27, plate VIII, 2 (Ibiza) and A. Garcia y Bellido, in *Historia de Espana*, I, 2, fig. 298 (which may be *JDAI*, XXIX, p. 338, fig. 22).