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Mireia López-Bertran

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Exploring Past Ontologies: Bodies, Jugs and Figurines from the Phoenician-Punic Western Mediterranean

Mireia López-Bertran

This paper focuses on ideas of body construction in the Phoenician-Punic western Mediterranean. I concentrate on the study of 'bottle-shaped' terracottas and examine their connections with anthropomorphized and zoomorphic jugs and the bottle-shaped idol, a symbol engraved on the stelae of tophets. Exploring the Phoenician-Punic isomorphism between jugs, figurines and bodies introduces us to the study of the creation of a specific body world in terms of fluids: a world in which bodies were perceived as containers of liquids. I argue that this way of defining bodies is materialized in the figurines in two ways: first, via the transformation of the body into a bottle-shaped form, and second, via the emphasis on representing mouths, noses, breasts or genitalia, all parts of the body through which fluids circulate. I also examine the social and ritual contexts of the figurines and discuss issues of personhood and relational identities.

Introduction

This article centres on a set of objects which suggest ideas about the construction of the body in the Iron Age/Hellenistic western Mediterranean, specifically in the Phoenician-Punic world. I will study a group of terracotta figurines from Carthage (Tunisia), Sicily and Sardinia (Italy) and Eivissa (Balearic Islands, Spain) dated between the seventh and the first centuries BC (Fig. 1). These figurines are termed 'bottle-shaped' because of their appearance and because they were modelled using the standard technique to make bottles, but they were turned into anthropomorphic figurines by the addition of arms, genitalia and breasts and also by transforming the necks of the 'bottles' into faces. I will argue that this specific shape suggests issues of fluidity in the creation of Phoenician-Punic corporealities. The Phoenician-Punic coroplastic production applied a variety of techniques (hand-modelled, mould-made and wheel-made)¹ and I am interested in exploring the corporeal implications of choosing this bottle-shaped morphology in defining a particular body world.² I also intend to place the figurines inside their social and ritual context and I argue that these bottle-shaped

terracottas give material form to a specific relational identity.

My starting-point is the tenet that figurines are much more than simple representations of a given reality. To represent is to refer to something else, but the materiality of the figurines also converts them into new entities (Meskell *et al.* 2008, 141; Nanoglou 2009, 157; Weismantel & Meskell 2014). These figurines were more than mere representations, because they helped the people who created and used them to understand and negotiate their own world; they influenced people's lives and decisions and embodied social norms (Clark 2009, 232). For instance, the materiality of the anthropomorphic figurines may have affected people's experience and understanding of their own bodies (Nanoglou 2008, 316), rendering the separation between human beings and figurines artificial; both participate actively in embodying corporeal identity, since the former created living bodies and the latter created crafted bodies (Joyce 2008, 43). In addition, the objects can be apprehended at a tactile level, and making a sensory reading of them can help us to attain a more comprehensive understanding (Weismantel 2012). These approaches stress that

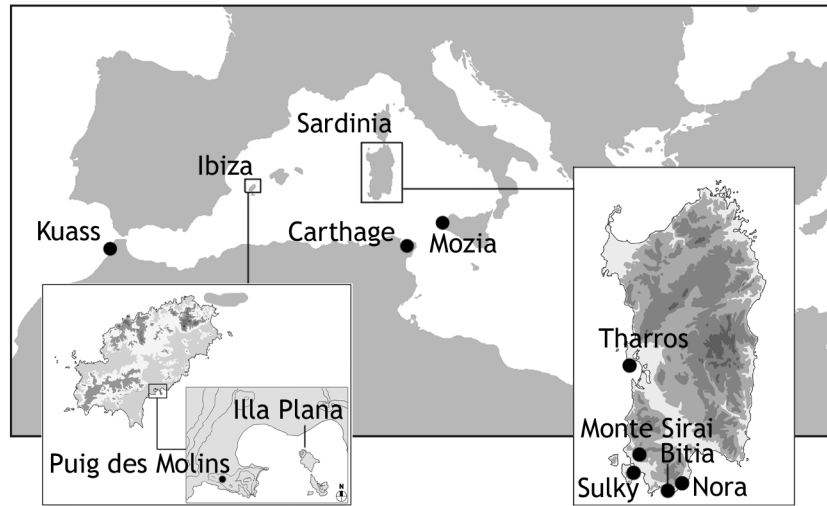


Figure 1. Map of the sites mentioned in the text.

figurines are to be seen as processes rather than static objects.

I shall apply this avenue of study to a specific case study of the Phoenician and Punic world. Phoenician communities were descendants of the ancient Canaanites and they created a web of city states (Tyre, Byblos among others) along the Levantine coast. These cities developed interregional trade with the Near East and the eastern Mediterranean. From the ninth to the seventh centuries BC some Phoenicians expanded their commercial networks to the western Mediterranean and the Atlantic and created neighbourhoods in significant indigenous centres, or a set of colonies on territories either occupied or unoccupied by local populations. The trade diaspora was driven mainly by economic considerations (see Aubet 2001 and Vives-Ferrándiz 2015 for an overview).

One of the most relevant colonies was Carthage (Tunisia). From the sixth century BC, Carthage initiated an economic expansion in the Western Mediterranean, creating a web of settlements in Sardinia, Sicily, Eivissa, north Africa and the southern Iberian peninsula. The Punic are considered descendants of the Phoenicians in cultural and social terms. This label is not exclusively related to the citizens of Carthage, but to different people like indigenous populations of the diverse areas, former Phoenician inhabitants of the Carthaginian colonies, Carthaginians themselves and also people from north Africa that lived between the sixth and the second centuries BC.

In what follows, I begin with a detailed assessment of the forms of the figurines and their contexts, and then examine the historical background. The rest of the article is a discussion encompassing issues of

ontologies from the perspectives of embodiment and materiality.

The bottle-shaped figurines

Typologies and modes of production

The vast majority of the figurines were found in early excavations for which no reliable stratigraphic information is available, or in votive deposits along with other materials of different chronologies (Ferron & Aubet 1974b, 265). The main collections, from Illa Plana, Carthage and Bitia, come from excavations carried out at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, and we know very little about their contexts of recovery (see detailed information for each site in Table 1).³

Although the terracottas feature in several publications (see references in Table 1), Ferron and Aubet's (1974a) book is the only one to offer a comprehensive study of all the samples, encompassing stylistic, chronological and interpretative issues. The authors identify four types of figurines based on the shape of their bodies and heads. This typology shows that the figurines are all wheel-made, using the techniques applied to throw bottles.

The manufacture of the figurines comprised three main stages. First, the body was modelled upside down, like a standard vessel. The head was also modelled upside down. Then, the head and the body were joined together, although there are no traces of this union. Once the core of the figurine had been modelled, other parts of the body were added using a range of techniques: perforations and incisions for the eyes, hair and mouth, and pinching for the noses. Coils of

Table 1. Detailed information on the figurines for each site.

Settlement	Location	Context	Chronology	No. of figurines	Reference
Carthage	Tunisia	Tophet Salamambo & Byrsa cemetery	Second half of seventh century–fifth century BC	42	Ferron & Aubet 1974a, 62–80
Mozaia	Sicily (Italy)	Votive deposit/Tophet temple & Byrgi cemeteries (2)	Sixth–fifth centuries BC	297	Ciasca & Toti 1994 Ferron & Aubet 1974a, 82–4
Tharros	Sardinia (Italy)	Cemetery	Sixth–fifth centuries BC	2	Ferron & Aubet 1974a, 116 Uberti 1975
Illa Plana	Eivissa (Balearic Islands, Spain)	Votive deposit/open air shrine	End of sixth–end of fifth centuries BC	31	Ferron & Aubet 1974a Hachuel & Marí 1988
Puig des Molins	Eivissa (Balearic Islands, Spain)	Cemetery	End of sixth–end of fourth centuries BC	4	Ferron & Aubet 1974a, 140–42
Kuass	Morocco	Kilns	Sixth–first centuries BC	2	Ponsich 1968, 23
Sulky	Sardinia (Italy)	Tophet	Fifth century BC	1	Ferron & Aubet 1974a Moscati 1988, 93, tavola XXVII 2a & b
Nora	Sardinia (Italy)	Tophet, although unclear	Fourth–first centuries BC	5	Ferron & Aubet 1974a, 84–5 Campanella 2009, 530–31
Monte Sirai	Sardinia (Italy)	Tophet temple	Unclear, but probably between sixth and fifth centuries BC	3	Bondí 1982 Ferron & Aubet 1974a, 115 Moscati 1981 Moscati 1996, 39–41, tavola VII
Bitia	Sardinia (Italy)	Votive deposit/Bes temple	Third–first centuries BC	c. 200	Ferron & Aubet 1974a, 88–115 Uberti 1973



Figure 2. (Colour online) (a) *Illa Plana* figurine (H 19.8 cm); (b) *Illa Plana* figurine (H 22.5 cm). (Photographs: Museu Arqueològic d'Eivissa i Formentera (MAEF).)

clay were also used to represent arms, penises, breasts or necklaces. Finally the objects were smoothed and polished, especially in the areas where the different parts had been joined together (a process which has left finger imprints on many specimens). Before firing, a clay wash was applied to the figurines, normally pinkish-beige, yellow or green, and then they were painted with red sashes of iron oxide on the body and heads (Fig. 2).

The diversity in the fabrics (ranging from brownish/orange with thin inclusions to reddish/greyish with thick inclusions) and in the modes of production and techniques highlights the existence of various workshops in Carthage, Eivissa, Mozia and several more in Sardinia (Ferron & Aubet 1974a, 58–60). However, the areas of production of the figurines have not been excavated; nor has any fabric analysis been conducted to date. A significant exception to this



Figure 3. (Colour online) (a) *Illa Plana* figurine (H 22 cm) (MAEF); (b) *Bitia* figurine (H 16.5 cm); (c) *Bitia* figurine (H 18 cm); (d) bottles from *Bitia* ((b, c, d) Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Cagliari-MANC). (Photographs: (a) MAEF; (b, c, d) author.)

scenario is the site of Kuass, Asilah (Morocco), on the Atlantic coast, where two bottle-shaped figurines were found in pottery kilns (Ponsich 1968, 23, fig. XXVI), a discovery that clearly suggests a connection between these figurines and the pottery workshops.

The connection between figurines and bottles is also clearly attested in the typologies of the Phoenician-Punic jug repertoire. Some figurines from *Bitia* recall form 23 in Bartoloni's typology (1996) and others recall form 5 in Bisi's typology (1970) (Fig. 3). These ways of modelling bottles were so much a part of the potters' technical repertoire that they applied them to the production of the figurines. Handles and arms are among the convergent features, especially in the figurines from *Bitia*, where arms are represented in unnatural poses recalling handles. The same can be said of the faces: many of them are unnatural because the potter used the neck of bottle to add eyes, mouths and noses, giving them a flat, snub appearance (Fig. 4). But the figurines cannot be considered to be bottles, because in general they are open at the base; the ones that are closed at the base are not true bottles, as they have an opening in the back due to firing.

Contextualizing the figurines: definitions, uses and locations

These figurines have been defined as representations of people praying to divinities in order to obtain offspring. The position in which they are praying is the standard one in the eastern Mediterranean, either with the palms of the hands open, or with both hands together in front of the chest. The oil-lamps held on their heads or in their hands also represent prayer (Feron & Aubet 1974a, 146–7). Other interpretations have been suggested in the collection from *Bitia*, a votive deposit associated with the Bes temple: the figurines may represent sick people pointing to the areas of the body where they feel pain (Galeazzi 1988; Pesce 1965) (Fig. 5).

The figurines were found in settings that housed ritual activities: votive deposits, cemeteries and *tophets*. The ones found in votive deposits are associated either with open-air shrines like *Illa Plana*, or with sanctuaries like *Bitia*. In the cemeteries, the terracottas were part of the grave goods in some tombs, but we lack reliable contextual information regarding the finds in each one. The pieces found in *tophets* either do not present a clear provenance or were



Figure 4. (Colour online) (a) *Bitia* figurine (H 18 cm) (MANC); (b) *Illa Plana* figurine (H 20.8 cm) (Museu Arqueològic de Catalunya-Barcelona-MAC); (c) *Bitia* figurine (H 16.2 cm) (MANC). (Photographs: author.)



Figure 5. (Colour online) (a) *Illa Plana* figurine (H 20.8 cm) (MAEF); (b) *Illa Plana* figurine (H 22 cm) (MAEF); (c) *Bitia* figurine (H 23 cm) (MANC). (Photographs: (a, b) MAEF; (c) author.)

located in votive deposits associated with the shrines there.

The definition of *tophets* raises a great deal of controversy among Phoenician and Punic scholars (see Xella *et al.* 2013). Originally the word was used to denote Phoenician and Carthaginian child cremation sanctuaries in the central Mediterranean between the eighth century BC and the second century AD (Xella 2013, 260). However, the term covers a complex variety of contexts and it is strenuously debated whether *tophets* were child cemeteries or sacred places where cremated babies were offered to the gods as main rituals, together with other practices which at present we are not able to define. The results of recent work (Bonnet 2011; Quinn 2011; Xella 2013; Xella *et al.* 2013) clearly favour the latter option. Generally speaking, then, *tophets* are sacred places located inside the cities but often in a liminal position (for instance, close to the walls) dedicated to the god Baal Hammon and the goddess Tinnit.

Recently the figurines have been approached from an embodied standpoint which stresses the importance of understanding rituals from a practice-based perspective (López-Bertran 2007; 2012). Rather than being inert objects of worship and contemplation, figurines were used in narratives, play and performance (Meskell *et al.* 2008, 151). The statuettes holding oil-lamps can be considered from this perspective. Since traces of fire have been found on an oil-lamp in one of the figurines, it is highly likely that they were used in the burning of oils or other substances during rituals. Thus, these terracotta figurines themselves participated in rituals through their use as oil-lamps, either literally or symbolically, or even as characters performing specific activities in the interactions between devotees at a ritual.

The oldest figurines are recorded at the *tophets* of Carthage and Mozia, the first to be erected, around 770–750 BC (Quinn 2013, 29). The figurines, however, appear slightly later; the Carthaginian statuettes are

dated between 650 BC and the fourth century BC (Feron & Aubet 1974a, 43). During this period the stelae, that surmounted urns, were engraved with bottle-shaped idols, an iconography interpreted as an attempt to keep alive the traditions of the Phoenician homeland (Quinn 2011; 2013). But from the fourth century onwards, the visual culture of the stelae expanded and the presence of the bottle-shaped iconography decreased, precisely during a period in which the terracottas are no longer recorded in Carthage; so there is a connection between the bottle-shaped idol iconography and the bottle-shaped figurines. During the subsequent period, the *tophet* community appears to have become more open and diverse in terms of material culture (Quinn 2011, 398–9). So it appears that the figurines were deposited in the Carthaginian *tophet* only during a specific period and that they may have been connected with particular body worlds.

The same process is attested in the *tophet* of Mozia. It was in use between the eighth and the third centuries BC (Ciasca 1992) and the figurines were deposited during the sixth and the fifth centuries BC. This period coincides with a large-scale restructuring of the *tophet*: on the western side of the area a small building (*sacello A*) was erected and the figurines and the previous shrine were destroyed after the conquest of Syracuse in 397 BC (Ciasca & Toti 1994, 9). After this, the *tophet* continued to be used, but now without the bottle-shaped figurines, as if they no longer had a place in the new body worlds. Similar changes can be seen in Nora as well, where a *tophet* was built in the sixth century BC, but the figurines are dated between the fourth and first centuries BC (Campanella 2009, 530).

This scenario suggests that the figurines appeared almost a hundred years after the creation of these settlements and their related *tophets*. Therefore, they may be related to historical changes taking place inside these Phoenician-Punic communities. The reasons why these figurines were used for only a short period of time are unclear. However, it is highly likely that they were in the hands of a restricted community which used the *tophets* of their forefathers. Enacting rituals in the same venue as their ancestors would have been a way of embodying the past, and this reinforces the idea of the figurines as materials that convey connections between the past, the present and the future. I will argue that these connections were materialized through the concept of flow.

Bottles as living beings

In this section, I turn my attention in the Phoenician-Punic tradition of anthropomorphizing and zoomor-

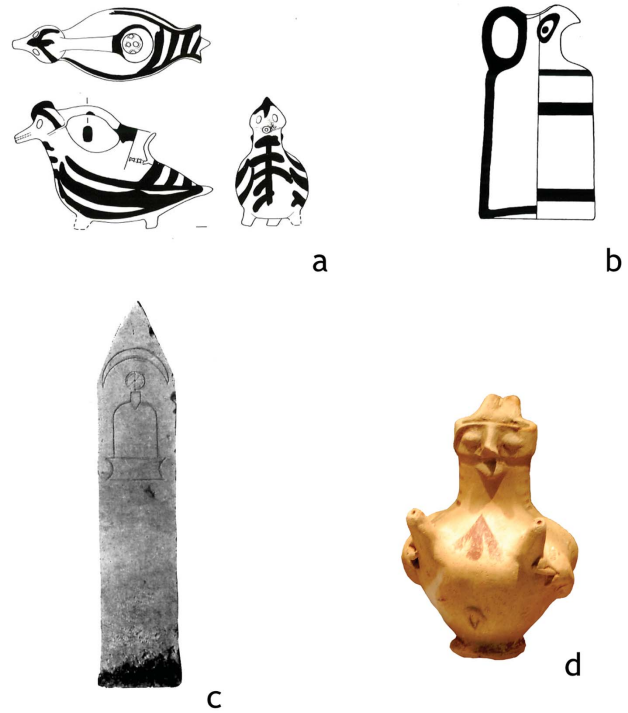


Figure 6. (Colour online) (a) Bird-askos from Tharros (adapted from Barnett & Mendleson 1987, pl. 11, 61–2, scale 1:3); (b) bird-like jug from Eivissa (adapted from Tarradell & Font de Tarradell 2000, 36; H 20 cm); (c) bottle-shaped idol from the *tophet* of Carthage (adapted from Dridi 2004, fig. 4); (d) Feeding bottle from Tharros (MANC) (Photograph: author).

phizing pottery shapes. There is a significant tradition of depicting eyes and mouths on jars, and other ceramic forms have clay additions representing faces, breasts or genitalia. On the one hand we have the pottery forms known as bird-like jugs (rim jars where the neck is formed by three lobes, with depictions of eyes), feeding bottles, and bird-shaped jugs or bird-askoi. On the other are the ‘bottle-shaped idols’ incised on the stelae of *tophets* and jewels (Fig. 6).

The bird-like jugs were widespread across the central Mediterranean between the sixth and the second centuries BC. They are mostly found in cemeteries, especially in Sardinia (Monte Sirai, Sulky) (Guirguis 2010) and in Eivissa (Puig des Molins, and in rural ones all over the island: Tarradell & Font de Tarradell 2000). The jars are three-lobed and usually present eyes depicted on both sides of the neck painted in black or white; in some cases the eyes are highly detailed and naturalistic, whereas in others they are represented merely by an elliptic or circular stroke and a point (Bartoloni 1983, 45; Costa & Fernández 1998). These jars may have been used to pour

liquids stored in amphorae, which are also deposited in tombs (Costa & Fernández 1998, 94). Due to their flat bases, it has also been suggested that they might have stored some kind of oil for cooking (Campanella 2008, 189).

Another type of jar that became anthropomorphized is the 'feeding bottle'. Most of these pieces come from cemeteries and shrines, where they are dated between the fifth and the first centuries BC; they were widespread across the western Mediterranean and the Atlantic shores (Maraoui-Telmini 2009). These jars have one or two spouts. The eyes are usually depicted on both sides of the spout in different ways: detailed and stylized with eyebrows, or with triangles and a point in the middle. In addition, some exemplars also present geometrical symbols that resemble mouths, and others present the spout as a phallus with clay lumps representing testicles on either side (Maraoui-Telmini 2009, 326). Others present two spouts held by two arms and hands, thus representing breasts. The feeding-bottles are quite often found beside a bowl inside the tombs and it has been suggested that they might have contained some liquid to be poured into these bowls. They may also have contained milk (maternal or otherwise) to feed babies or the sick. Contents of undetermined kinds of flour and perhaps milk have been identified (Chelbi 1988, 234) but more samples need to be analysed. It is worth noting that they serve as proper bottles not only because they are open at the top, but also because the breast and genitalia-spouts are perforated (Ferron & Aubet 1974a, 18); therefore, using these jars might be a way of mimicking ejaculation or breastfeeding. As regards the zoomorphic jugs, it has been suggested that the bird-shaped jugs or bird-*askoi* were used to hold liquid for libations during funerary feasts.

It is also worth noting the connection between bottles and bodies in the 'bottle-shaped idols', an iconography found in the votive stelae of several *tophets* and also represented in jewellery (Dridi 2004, 9–10). The bottle-idol is a central Mediterranean phenomenon identified in the cemeteries of Tharros, Nora, Mozia and Carthage and was in use from the seventh century onwards, reaching its peak around the fourth century BC. Several scholars have suggested that this symbol might be a representation of the urn with the ashes of the deceased or stylized depictions of children, women or even *baetyli* (sacred stones) related to fertility (Bisi 1967, 43, 208; Picard 1968). As far as the current research is concerned, it is particularly interesting that some bottle-idols are engraved with eyes, mouth, breasts and genitalia (Picard 1968, 81–2, pl. IV, figs. 1 & 2) because they show close similarities to bottle-shaped terracottas.

These connections between pottery and living creatures are quite complex. As David *et al.* (1988, 378) note, designs on pottery are more than mere decorations; pots are also frequently associated with human beings due to the processes of transformation that both pots and people undergo (Gosselain 1999; Nanoglou 2008), or because they are considered as extensions of bodies in eating, drinking, washing, urinating and defecating (Warnier 2006, 190). Another description of this association is related to clay, since its plasticity may recall human and animal flesh: the use of clay gave people a new way of representing the body which emphasized its substance and its ability to take different forms (Borić *et al.* 2013, 50; Meskell 2008, 379; Weismantel & Meskell 2014, 236).

The Phoenician-Punic isomorphism between pottery and bodies is restricted to the closed forms of the typology, as there are no pans or bowls featuring animal or human representations. Because these closed forms are liquid containers, it is likely that the Phoenician-Punic people had a specific body world in terms of fluids, a world where bodies were perceived as fluid containers. What interests me particularly here is the connection between human beings, bottles and bodily fluids. The corporeal and social implications of this phenomenon will be analysed in the next section.

The construction of fluid bodies

The choice of a bottle-like morphology to create human figurines may be related to a specific way of understanding bodies. As suggested by Joyce (2008, 42), figurines can be thought of as bodily extensions and explorations of what had to be known in order to have an adequate understanding of bodies. Assuming that figurines participated in the creation of Phoenician-Punic corporealities, in this section I shall argue that a connection between bottles and bodies existed through their contents: that is, liquids and fluids.

This way of defining bodies is materialized in the figurines in two ways: first, the transformation of the body into a bottle-like form; and second, the emphasis on representing mouths, noses, breasts or genitalia, all parts of the body through which fluids circulate. Therefore, my argument is that the figurines, together with the array of material culture mentioned above, help to construct issues of personhood in three directions. Phoenician-Punic bodies might be formed by up to three elements in specific ritual contexts: 1) relations with other people; 2) the connection with jars, which facilitated the transmission of flow and substances in ritual contexts; and 3) relationships with animals and

other beings. Needless to say, these relations may have operated at different levels and in different situations, but also simultaneously.

Birds, fluids and death

Transferable corporeality is clearly attested through the connection of bodies to birds. Bird-faced figurines, bird-shaped jugs and bird-like *askoi* give us the impression that these animals were constitutive parts of Phoenician-Punic personae in certain rituals. This scenario entails a relation between people, animals and pots based on either association or transformation (Miracle & Boric 2008). In the case study, the presence of bird-like materials can be connected to Phoenician-Punic eschatology. According to written and epigraphical sources, the Phoenician and Punic soul is dual: there is the *nefesh*, the form that lives in the tomb, and the *ruah*, the form that goes to the other world. The *ruah* travels through the air, and materials representing birds or winged beings, like sphinxes, or winged being-shaped sarcophagi symbolize the soul's journey (Fantar 1974).

Elsewhere I have interpreted the bird-faced terracottas (Fig. 7) as representations of people wearing masks during rituals (López-Bertran 2012, 97–8). Masks are powerful materials that allow corporeal transformation in order to communicate different beings (Boric 2007, 92). The creation of these new beings is embodied primarily in the head of the figure. The head is the most significant body part in this context; since most of the senses are located there, the head can represent sensory manipulation or alteration in ritual (Merrill 2004, 29; Meskell & Joyce 2003, 32). Consequently, faces transformed by masks are powerful means through which to build feelings and practices in ritual performances. The explanations for this remain quite speculative so far—manifestations of divine powers, mysterious forces or bearers of human souls and so on—but I would like to follow up the idea of flow, and stress the fact that birds may have been perceived as ideal vehicles for reinforcing the fluid features of Phoenician-Punic identities because of their ability to fly and their capacity for exchange. To put it simply, these hybrid figurines are part of a body world where the borders between human and animal may have been blurred and understood as permeable, rather than rigid (Boric & Robb 2008, 8; Boric *et al.* 2013, 40).

The link between bodies and birds is also visible in certain funerary contexts. In *hypogeum* 7 at the Sulky cemetery, remains of two birds have been identified in the niches of the walls, and the floor contained several bird's eggs (Bernardini 2005, 78–9). The presence of these two elements has been attributed to a

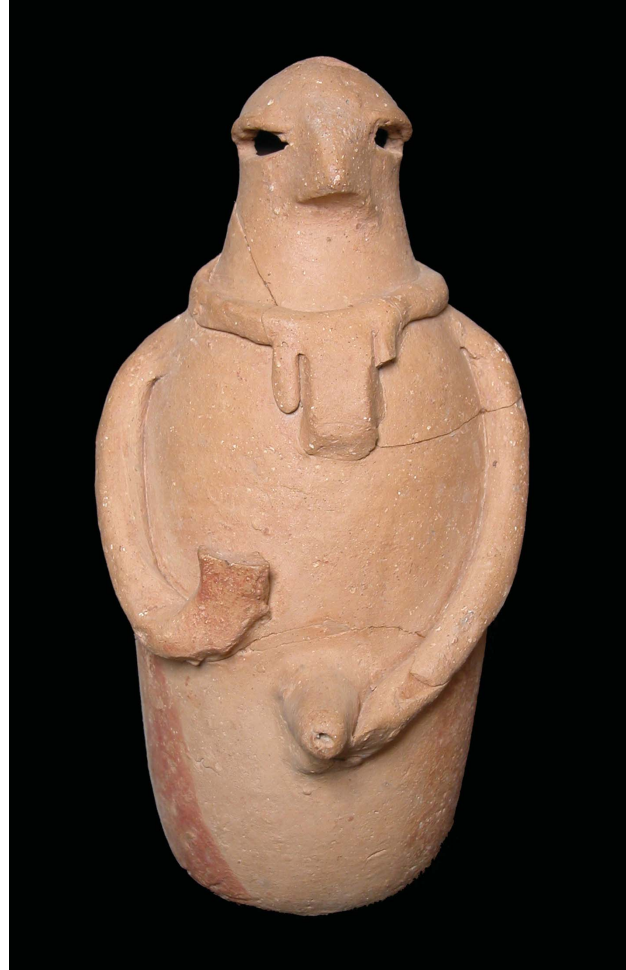


Figure 7. (Colour online) Bird-faced figurine (Illa Plana, Eivissa, H 24.2 cm). (Photograph: MAEF.)

conception of eggs and birds as symbols of regeneration and life. However, I suggest that they might be constitutive parts of certain beings, and this is why they were buried with the deceased. Therefore, it is likely that the constitution of a Phoenician-Punic person is not a fixed phenomenon; the presence of bird-faced figurines, bird's eggs and bird remains among the grave-goods constructs the relation between human and animals in terms of both transformation and association. It is also significant that in the *tophets* at Sulky and Mozia some of the urns contained remains of birds, some of them very young or even neonatal, like the newborns in the *tophet* (Melchiorri 2013, 233–8).

The decoration of pots with bird-like physiognomy strengthens this argument in that they might have been considered as containers of the same products, that is, a beverage or a liquid. Unfortunately, it is not yet entirely clear which liquids they contained,

although oil, water, wine or even milk have been suggested. People literally incorporate the flows of the contents of the jars and the flight of the birds through the consumption of the liquids stored inside the bird-like jugs, feeding bottles and bird-shaped *askoi*. So figurines and other supports are modelled with bird-like features. Interestingly, this 'bird-reality' might be constructing a specific body world linked more to cosmologies or other-worldly understandings than to mundane realities, as the ritual contexts suggest.

This brings us to the second association, the creation of bodies and people through the ingestion of certain beverages or 'social fluids' (Carsten 2011, 23). If we accept that bodies are made out of flowing substances, then we can argue that some of these flows were stored and served inside some jars, especially the bird-like jugs, bird-shaped *askoi* and feeding-bottles. These liquids would have certain bodily values and this is why they are consumed; in drinking them, one becomes a specific body. Furthermore, my point is that these social fluids might have been a way of maintaining connections between people and were useful in creating or maintaining links and genealogies, especially in funerary arenas. Indeed, drinking activities were part and parcel of ritual gestures in funerals; the living and the dead were connected through the consumption of liquids. For instance, the presence of tubes and channels in certain tombs has been interpreted as a way to feed or purify the deceased (Niveau de Villedary 2009, 240–42). The liquid that flowed through these channels might be understood as a constitutive part of the living bodies; this practice, then, brought part of the living body into the body of the ancestor. They were connected through the flow.

To sum up, in this section I have shown how bird-faced terracottas, bird-like pots and the liquids they stored embodied the idea that all things and beings can potentially be animated and share similar qualities. Bodies in specific rituals are formed by bird-features and these features were literally incorporated by drinking beverages stored in vessels that also display bird representations.

The corporeality of the flow

I will now develop the interpretation of bodies as flowing substances further, via an analysis of the different body parts that are represented in the terracottas. I will first consider how faces are represented, before moving on to the torso and genitalia.

The faces are very detailed: eyes are represented either by incisions, perforations, or clay buttons (López-Bertran 2007, 185–92). The fact that eyes are always represented suggests that sight had an essential role, at least in the ritual contexts where the

figurines were used. But what is the connection between flow and eyes? I have argued elsewhere (López-Bertran 2007; 2012) that altered states of consciousness are embodied through eyes and mouths. So the eyes may be expressing how participants felt as their body flowed and connected with divinities, ancestors, other participants, animals or other-worldly beings. In fact, people may have perceived their transformation into bird-like bodies, as suggested by the bird-faced figurines.

Mouths are also carefully represented and display a variety of gestures. The mouth is a symbolic element as a liminal point linking the outer with the inner (Hamilakis 2002, 124). In these contexts, mouths may embody invisible substances emanating from bodies, such as sounds or breathing. Equally, the corporeality of the terracottas may offer clues in relation to the fluids shared: saliva and beverages seem the most obvious.

Noses may evoke the presence of odours flowing, as well as smoke and steam emanating from oil-lamps, bowls or incense-burners. This is quite clear from the figurines holding oil-lamps which present traces of cremation. Certain kinds of wood may have been selected on account of their aromatic scent, in view of the presence of charcoal of olive trees, limes or pines in the cremations of cemeteries and *tophets* (Aubert 2004, 61; Melchiorri 2013, 241). Perfumes, either cremated or applied on the skin, may have had transformative capacities: the flow of scents and smoke connected people (both dead and living), other-worldly beings and natural elements such as plants, either through the skin or through smell.

Finally, ears are the least represented facial organs and have been interpreted in relation to hearing both physically and symbolically (López-Bertran 2007, 161–4). Hearing is important in *tophets*: the inscriptions on the stelae are vows in which the offerers ask the divinities to *listen to them*, or thank them for *having listened* (Amadasi Guzzo & Zamora 2013, 179). Remains of terracottas of instruments and musicians recovered in cemeteries, the iconography of some *tophet* stelae representing cymbal players, plus some written references, indicate the presence of music in both *tophets* and cemeteries (López-Bertran & Garcia-Ventura 2012). We may conclude that ears construct the way people communicate not only with divinities, but also with their ancestors and with other-worldly beings through sonorous phenomena that flowed through the air.

Moving on to the rest of the body, the parts represented (in descending order of frequency) are arms and hands, breasts, genitalia, navels, and a central digitation interpreted as the thoracic cavity or sternum.

The sense of touch may have had two dimensions in relation to fluidity. First, the figurines touching their genitalia may indicate possible sexual practices like intercourse or masturbation (López-Bertran 2011; 2012). Second, touching may be seen as a healing practice: the latter possibility would apply only to the Bitia sample, since the figurines there were found in a votive deposit in a sanctuary of Bes, a therapeutic god (Pesce 1965). The care in representing the hands is a strategy to materialize the importance of touch in healing rituals, especially in view of the presence of needles and jugs which may have been used to hold and mix perfumes or ointments for massages. Gestures are ways of constructing and conceiving of either disease or recovery; therefore, I argue that in the healing rituals, gestures are not symbols, but are *themselves* part of the recovery process.

It is agreed that diseases are a mix between biology and culture (Hsu 2002, 6) and that traditional medicine conceives of illnesses as a punishment imposed by other-worldly beings or ancestors, or via spells (Foster 1976; Levinson 2004). Thus, rituals, religion and magic are involved in recovery. The secretion of fluids like semen, menses, urine or saliva could be a way of expelling diseases and this is why some figurines are touching their genitalia. Perhaps diseases were conceived as fluids that had to be expelled from the body.

These figurines are a good example of what Robb and Harris (2013, 20) define as multimodality, or how contradictory ways of looking at the body can coexist. The votive deposit in Bitia also contained anatomical votives (Cecchini 1969, 29–30; Pesca 1965, 35). It may well be the case that these materials conceptualized illness as a fragmentation of the body, since it divides the body and isolates the pain; indeed, this fragmentation represented what people perceived as actually happening to the body during the disease and healing processes (Harris *et al.* 2013, 114; Hughes 2008, 224). This way of perceiving pain differs from the bottle-shaped figurines because they maintain the specifically sick part of the body inside the whole.

Breasts are well represented. Interestingly, they are a cross-gender feature, since they are associated with figurines with or without genitalia (López-Bertran 2012, 95–6). The existence of breasts can be associated with the importance of breastfeeding, especially in the samples where this is indicated by the position of the hands. But what is the cultural and social role of this fluid, and why do some figurines (either with or without masculine genitalia) have breasts? I contend that the relation between breast milk and healing rituals was especially relevant in Bitia. In ancient Egypt, for instance, it has been argued that some

flasks contained magic potions made out of breast milk, and in fact certain papyri define this fluid as a medicine (Lynn Budin 2011, 144). Regardless of their gender, figurines embody the power of breast milk as a healing fluid, and touching or enhancing breasts is a cross-gender gesture which materializes the importance of this corporal substance.

Breast milk may have been an essential fluid for creating and maintaining family bonds. Chapman suggests (2012, 7) that it was considered as more than a mere source of nutrition and was believed to transmit physical and social traits to the baby suckling at the breast. In the ancient Near East and Egypt, it is commonly assumed that kings and heirs were breastfed by divinities (either feminine, masculine or hybrid) and that this nurture made them royal, even divine (Chapman 2012; Lynn Budin 2011). Other ethnographic accounts describe how suckling inculcates culturally defined boundaries in the child and transmits traits from the mother or wet nurse. Sharing breast milk helps to build stronger kin relationships, not only between children and their mothers or wet nurses but also among ‘co-nurses’ or ‘milk-siblings’ (Chapman 2012, 8). The presence of breasts in the figurines may embody the importance of breastfeeding in the creation of social personae and might be understood in an extensive sense that challenges the nuclear family model. Thus, breasts are not gender (female) attributes, but body parts that convey issues of genealogies and membership. Through the flow of breast milk, one defines oneself in relation to a specific group.

Navels may also have been essential for creating Phoenician-Punic corporealities, for the same reasons as breasts. They recall that bodies are born and connected to others, and bodies are therefore formed by the flow of substances. Furthermore, in the Phoenician and Punic literature, navels were also associated with fertility and reproduction. But, in the terracottas once again, navels are also a cross-gender part of the body, giving the idea that birthing is a cultural concern (Nakamura & Meskell 2009, 217).

And what of the genitalia? I contend that the interest in showing the genitalia in the vast majority of the figurines reflects issues of reproduction, fertility, and possibly age. This is strongly suggested in the case of Illa Plana (Eivissa). I have suggested elsewhere (López-Bertran 2012) that the figurines represent fertile people, a feature that highlights the relevance of sexuality for the reproduction of the new settlers of the island. Indeed, survey studies have shown that, from the fifth century onwards, the island was progressively occupied by a number of small rural settlements and it may not be a

coincidence that the shrine of Illa Plana is also dated to this period.

Thus, it is first necessary to discuss notions of fecundity and reproduction in the Phoenician-Punic world. Despite the lack of information concerning Phoenician-Punic conceptions of reproductive processes, Greek, Egyptian and ancient Near Eastern documents may help us. In fact, all these documents assign men an essential role in fecundation. For instance, in Egypt women have to be sexually appealing in order to stimulate fertility in men, because the latter were responsible for creating babies; for his part, Aristotle gave more importance to the male seeds than to the female (Lynn Budin 2011; Roth 2000, 189). Therefore, male and female genitalia materialize the active role of both body parts in search of offspring. In short, both fluids were necessary to create and nurture foetuses.

At this point it is worth considering Amerindian cosmologies, which conceive of reproduction as a series of separate events through time and not necessarily connected to vaginal penetration and insemination (Weismantel 2004, 495–9). Accordingly, all the body fluids like semen, breast milk, blood and menses participated in the stages of procreation, creating ‘corporeal descent groups’ (Vilaça 2005, 446), linked by an array of body fluids. Interestingly, the interchange of these fluids is supervised by the elderly in order to control lineages. It is not completely unrealistic to assert that the Phoenician-Punic world view included some form of this fluid concept of procreation, especially bearing in mind the materiality of flow that the figurines and other materials presented.

Another explanation of genitalia in cross-gender and fluid terms which goes beyond the reductionist association of genitalia–fertility–women might involve the concept of maturity (Nakamura & Meskell 2009). The interest in showing the genitalia as well as breasts and navels might be connected to the encoding of a certain age. It is feasible that the figurines represent mature bodies which have already been constructed via the flow of different elements (breath, semen, menses, wine, water, breast milk) and are thus characteristic of a community in which flows matter; so they are responsible for establishing ties with the ancestors and the forthcoming generations.

Finally, some figurines are decorated in reddish colours. There are remains on several body parts: in the eyes, in which the iris or the eyebrows are sometimes painted, and in the hair, beard-chins, genitalia, hands and ears. The torso is also sometimes decorated in red sashes forming an X-shape on the front and back of the figurines which resembles a dress

(see Fig. 2) (Ferron & Aubet 1974a, 53). Leaving aside the point that painting embraced body decoration, I would stress that some of the painting might have had the role of enhancing certain parts of the body such as the genitalia, eyes, ears or hands. It is likely that colouring these parts was a way of reinforcing the areas through which fluids flow; perhaps the red lines represent blood, the fluid that keeps these body parts alive. The same can be said of the red sashes crossing the body. It may be difficult to understand how a figure which has prominent genitalia or is touching specific body parts can at the same time be dressed. It is also feasible that the sashes could represent body conduits through which fluids run. I am not claiming that Phoenician-Punic people were experts in the circulatory system, but they were aware of the movement of blood. Blood is visually striking; it can be seen inside and outside the body and is connected with both life and death. This may be why it has a unique range of power (Carsten 2011, 24).

Fluid bodies and relational identities

The materiality of the figurines and the jugs can be seen in terms of relational identities. In this case-study, relationships between different people, objects and beings show a concern for the creation and maintenance of specific communities in ritual contexts. The location of the figurines inside *tophets* and cemeteries highlights this point. In *tophets*, the statuettes were not associated with particular deposited urns, but with a shrine area as a whole. One statuette from Monte Sirai was found on the steps of the temple and it has been assumed that the figurine was originally located inside it (Moscati 1981, 19). Furthermore, the deposit where the Mozia figurines were found was placed at the entrance of the small shrine (Ciasca & Toti 1994, 8). Arguably, these findings reinforce the links with a particular community; the figurines are associated not with a single deposition or a private ritual, but with the area where public ceremonies were performed. Furthermore, the inscriptional formula on the *tophet*'s stelae reinforces the relational identity as they show kinship relations through lineal descent. As I have tried to show, this feature is materialized and constructed through the idea of flowing and sharing substances, corporeal or not.

The figurines found in cemeteries, inside tombs, also show a concern with connecting communities (Fig. 8). Regardless of whom they represent, ancestors, stereotyped images of the deceased or otherworldly beings, the bottle-shaped statuettes are one of the various materials in the funerary record sharing fluid body worlds together with anthropomorphized and



Figure 8. (Colour online) *Figurines from Puig des Molins cemetery (Eivissa) (MAEF). (Photographs: author.)*

zoomorphic jugs. Not by chance, the figurines and the jugs already analysed present the same chronology and give the impression of a shared and accepted body world materialized in these objects. Here again, the funerary inscriptions emphasize the dividual identity, because the personal name of the deceased, together with their titles, their patronymic and the name of the builder of the tomb are given (Ribichini 2004, 50). The name, genealogy and social role that appeared in the inscriptions are embedded and embodied in different persons, materials, animals and other-worldly beings, as the material culture presented shows. To quote Fowler (2004, 158), ‘personhood beyond individuality is not personhood without individuals’.

Thus, this study is an example of how people build dividual personhood. As stated by Fowler (2004, 26) dividual people are formed by the substance and actions of others (in a wide sense). The self-awareness of being composite and multi-authored is essential in creating dividuality. This perspective does not deny the fact that Phoenician-Punic people perceived themselves as single individuals, but stresses that they negotiated their personal bodily identity between individual and relational bodies. The isomorphism between bodies—human and birds—and bottles focuses on life-giving fluids connected with mature people. They were created through the transferability of flow and were thus responsible for maintaining a specific community, probably created in terms of kinship.

The ritual contexts where these figurines have been found are emotionally charged places where fluids might have been transferred, either literally or symbolically. The flow of substances helps in understand the workings of Phoenician-Punic relationality. Liquidity is a key property, because people construct

social relationships, mostly based on kinship, through the fluids they exchange. The bottle shape of the figurines and the different body parts remind us that the transfer of ‘social liquids’—together with bodily ones such as sexual fluids, breast milk or saliva and others—transformed the nature of beings (dead, alive, human and non-human) and their relations with others. More specifically, the materiality of the terracottas is entrapped in issues of membership, fertility and sexuality, in a wide, cross-gender sense. Body fluids might be literally life-giving, not only in a reproductive sense but also culturally, as their transferability creates specific bodies and social personae.

This research has also highlighted how bodies can be conceived from a relational and fractal point of view. Relationality entails a comprehensive approach to bodies and their relation with other human and animal beings and objects, making it possible to establish connections between bodies and their political, social and material environments; that is, people and things are formed by relationships, and on many occasions these relationships are created through the transmission of bodily substances (Robb & Harris 2013, 13–14; Shilling 2008, 146–7). The second term, fractality (Strathern 2004), fits into this discussion because it brings together the tension between individuals and their bodies and their heterogeneity. A fractal body is a body with another one inside it: a parent, an ancestor, an animal, or even an object. All are conceived and interconnected through the related ideas of fragmentation and flow (Fowler 2008, 48–51). In this case, the bottle-shaped figurines may underpin a conception of the Phoenician-Punic body as a recipient through which essences flow, reinforcing the idea that human bodies extend beyond their physical limits and act as vessels with openings conjoining an inside and an outside by means of different material culture and beings.

Conclusion

In this paper I have sought to show how certain Phoenician-Punic people understood and created issues of materiality, bodies and personhood through the use of a specific material culture. I have explored past ontologies by carefully examining the materiality of human figurines from perspectives other than those that rely solely on stylistic or chronological terms. What I have called the materiality of the flow is relevant for such an approach. The connection between bottles and people is patent in the variety of forms (bird-like jugs, bird-shaped jugs, anthropomorphic ‘feeding bottles’, bottle-shaped idols and bottle-shaped figurines) and these relations were enacted in

different ritual contexts (*tophets*, cemeteries and votive deposits of shrines). Overall they give us an idea not just of certain Phoenician-Punic corporealities and the creation of individual people, but also of specific body worlds that emerged in rituals where the limits of entities such as people, objects, animals, ancestors, divinities and other-worldly beings were blurred and worked through flows. In my view, the ‘bottle-shaped idol’ iconography entails the essence of understanding bodies as fluids. In fact, the support of these symbols, the stone stelae, conveys the simplification of the image, and simplification is a concentrated statement about what essentially makes up a person (Robb 2009, 174). In this case, what is fundamental is the understanding of bodies as bottles that contain and transmit fluids.

Notes

1. See San Nicolás (1987); Almagro Gorbea (1980); Bisi (1986; 1990); Cherif (1997), for a comprehensive view of the Phoenician and Punic terracotta figurines.
2. I borrow the concept from Robb and Harris (2013, 17) who argue that ‘(it) captures the co-constitutive nature of body and world; the two emerge through each other ontologically through practice’.
3. I have excluded from my analysis the figurines from Sardinia which are associated with *nuraghi* and the local population; they deserve special attention due to their specific social and cultural scenarios. I concentrate on the statuettes found in Phoenician and Punic colonies.

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Mireia López-Bertran
 Departament d’Humanitats
 Universitat Pompeu Fabra
 Barcelona
 Spain
 Email: mireia.lopez@upf.edu

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Author biography

Mireia López-Bertran is a Beatriu de Pinós/Marie Curie Postdoctoral fellow at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona. She specializes in Phoenician-Punic archaeology, with research interests in embodiment, rituals and gender. She has published her research in international peer-reviewed journals such as *World Archaeology* and *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology*.