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THE SACRED REPRESENTATION OF A MINIATURE WORLD: RITUALS WITH FIGURINES AND SMALL AND MINIATURIZED POTTERY AT THE PHOENICIAN CULT PLACE OF KHARAYEB

Summary. *The rituals performed in the Phoenician cult places have traditionally been reconstructed primarily on the basis of architectural remains and sculptural finds. However, even if the exact role ceramics or other objects played in the rituals is unknown, it was certainly not secondary. New work carried out at the cult place of Kharayeb by an Italian-Lebanese mission has produced unusually detailed documentation of such finds, and provides a richer context for the consideration the little data about pottery already published by M. Chéhab and I. Kaoukabani. In particular attention has focused on the use of small and miniaturized pottery (from figurines to miniature vessels) in rituals at the site. With reference to recent research on these issues and comparison with similar practices in the Near East, Greek, and western Phoenician worlds this article proposes new hypotheses on the meaning of ritual practices involving small objects.*

THE ELUSIVE RITUALS OF THE PHOENICIAN CULT PLACE OF THE FIRST MILLENNIUM BC

Reconstructing rituals practised in the Phoenician area in religious cultural contexts, whether public or domestic, is a rather complicated challenge (Fig. 1). Indeed, the few excavated Phoenician sanctuaries, temples and shrines are known only for their architectural and sculptural remains. Archaeologically documented activities related to the cult itself are very few in number, especially for the phases between the beginning of the first millennium and the Persian era (end of sixth century to 333 BC). Moreover, the possibility of reconstructing the rituals practised using pottery has been lost forever because of the methods of excavation adopted until very recently.

In the publication of a cult place such as Amrit (Dunand and Saliby 1985), for example, the data relating to pottery were summarized in just a few pages and pictures (Fig. 2), leaving them at a distinct disadvantage compared to the documentation of the statuary (Lembke 2004). Some interesting elements can, even so, be deduced from the presence both of oil lamps (found in the *favissa*; Dunand and Saliby 1985, table 55) and of characteristic jugs whose mouths are closed by a perforated filter (Fig. 2b). This type of jug was found in large quantities, especially 'dans la quai nord du bassin, surtout en face du naos' (Dunand and Saliby 1985, 51) and must have been used in

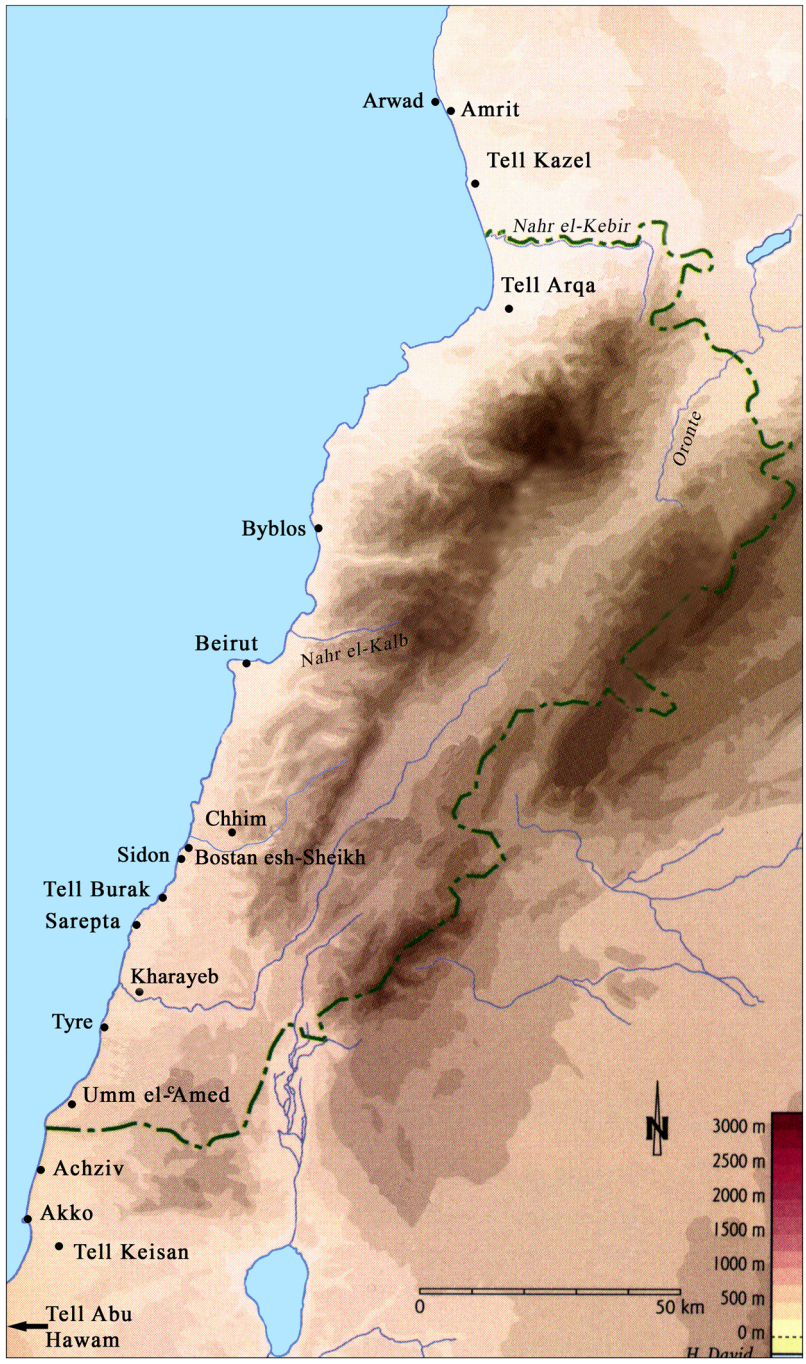

FIGURE 1
Map of Lebanon with location of sites mentioned (after *Liban l'autre rive. Exposition présentée à l'Institut du monde arabe du 27 octobre 1998 au 2 mai 1999*, Paris 1998, 100, as reworked by Laura Attisani).

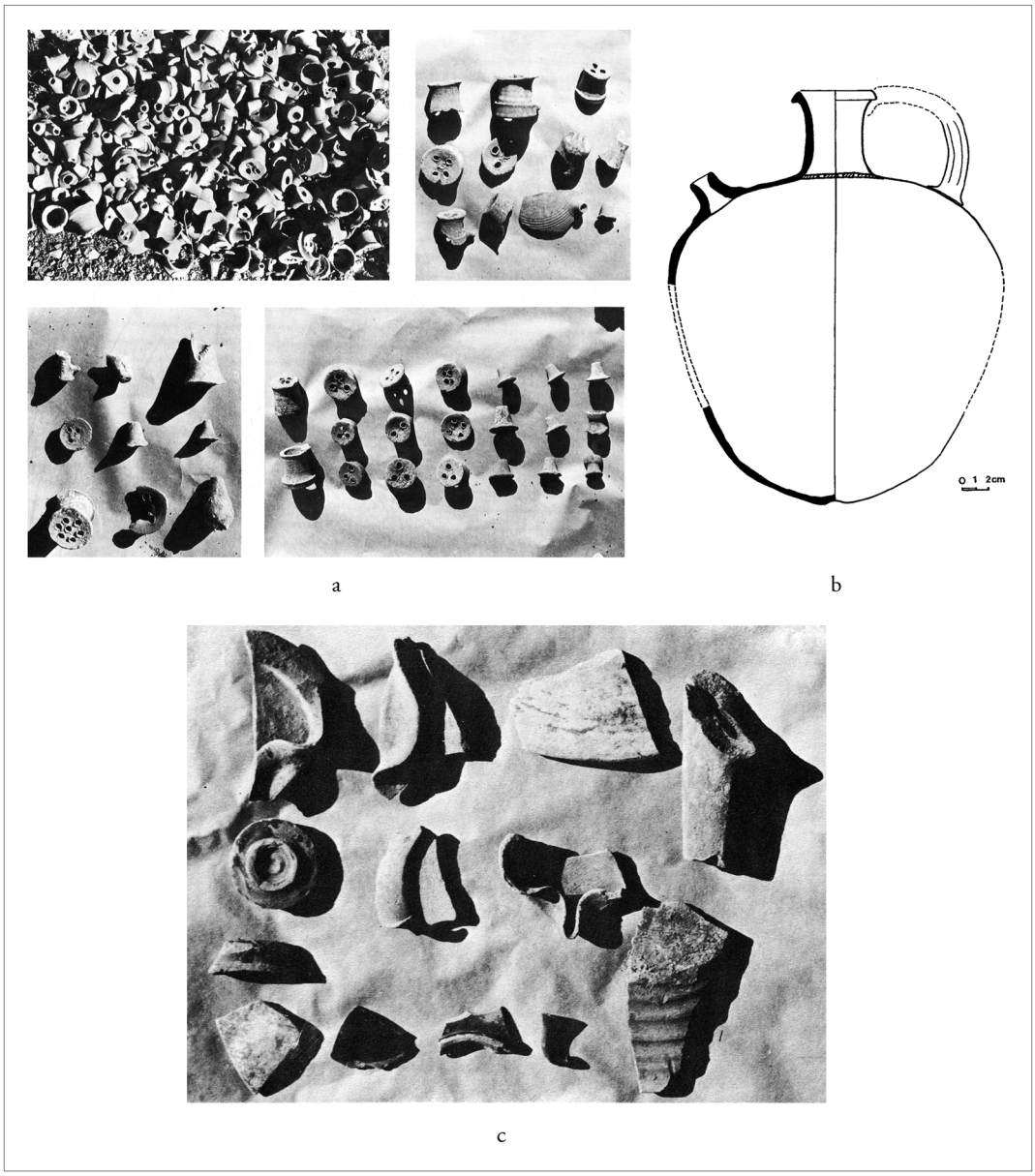

FIGURE 2
a-b: Amrit. Jugs from the north dock of the basin (Dunand and Saliby 1985, a: pl. LVI; b: 51, fig. 23); c: Material from the *favissa* (Dunand and Saliby 1985, pl. LV).

libations in which liquids containing a substance that had to be filtered were poured, perhaps into the pool. This practice must have been one of the complex aspects of the rituals carried out by the worshippers under the porch surrounding the pool (Oggiano 2014).

Even starker is the situation at Bostan esh-Sheikh, where the ceramic fragments preserved from the different phases of life of the sanctuary excavated by M. Dunand amount to just five fragments of Panathenaic amphorae.[1] Rituals from the Neo-Babylonian to the Hellenistic period, therefore, can only be deduced from the architectural typologies (for example, the use of water for the so-called Astarte pool) and from the dedication of statues.

The situation at Umm el 'Amed is slightly better, with remains of ceramics and coroplastics reported in a few tables. As always, the published pottery consists of the easily identified and widely known forms (from common pottery to *unguentaria* and oil lamps; Dunand and Duru 1962, 197–225, figs. 78–85) (Fig. 3).

The cult place of Sarepta is better known because it was better excavated (Pritchard 1975). Rituals inside the temple, at least in its first phase of use, were practised using objects of various kinds including terracotta figurines, carved ivories, amulets, beads and cult masks (Pritchard 1975, 13–40). J.B. Pritchard underlines how 'Within this assorted collection there is a noticeable lack of the most common of artefacts found elsewhere in the excavated area' (1975, 22). The only exceptions are oil lamps, which were certainly used in the performance of rituals in the temple (Fig. 4.1).

Of great interest is the documentation of the site of Chhim[2] where, in the foundation layers of the Roman temple (second century AD), a bronze figurine was found that has been dated to the Late Bronze/Iron Age, together with an *unguentarium* of the Hellenistic period (Périssé-Valéro 2009). These objects were probably placed in the foundations as a votive offering when the sanctuary was built (Fig. 4.2). The set of ritual vessels, studied by Urszula Wicenciak, is represented by three complete items (A, D) and numerous fragments (Wicenciak 2020). The set consists of one miniature dish from the Phoenician White Ware group (A), drinking vessels, such as bowls (B) and saucers (C), perfume bottles or *unguentaria* (D) and amphorae (E) made in Phoenician Semi-Fine. There are also other vessels for liquids, such as table amphorae (F) and jugs, which were produced during the Hellenistic period at nearby Porphyreon (Wicenciak 2016), and fragments of 'Phoenician jars' (G). The character of the ceramic vessels leads one to conclude that this place, in the Hellenistic period, was not permanently inhabited but only visited by the surrounding people, who went to this sacred place to sacrifice to deities and to ask for blessings. They brought amphorae with wine that could be offered in saucers and bowls, and valuable oils in *unguentaria* and *amphoriskoi* (Wicenciak 2020).

THE RITUALS OF KHARAYEB – FROM PUBLISHED TO UNPUBLISHED

The cult place of Kharayeb is located few kilometres north of Tyre at the entrance of the homonymous modern village, in an area named Juret el-Khawatem ('the pit of the rings'), because the inhabitants used to go there to collect beads appearing on the ground surface to make jewels; in fact, these were tiny terracotta faces and small planoconvex *pasta vitrea* objects (the famous little beads). After the discovery of several figurines in this area, the director of Lebanon's antiquities, Emir M. Chéhab, started to excavate there in 1946, and unearthed the ruins of a rectangular building

[1] I would like to thank R. Stucky, who provided me with the information about Bostan esh-Sheik. Concerning the site: Stucky, Mathys 2000 and Stucky 2005.

[2] I wish to thank Urszula Wicenciak for providing me with the information about the pottery from the Hellenistic layers of the temple of Chhim.

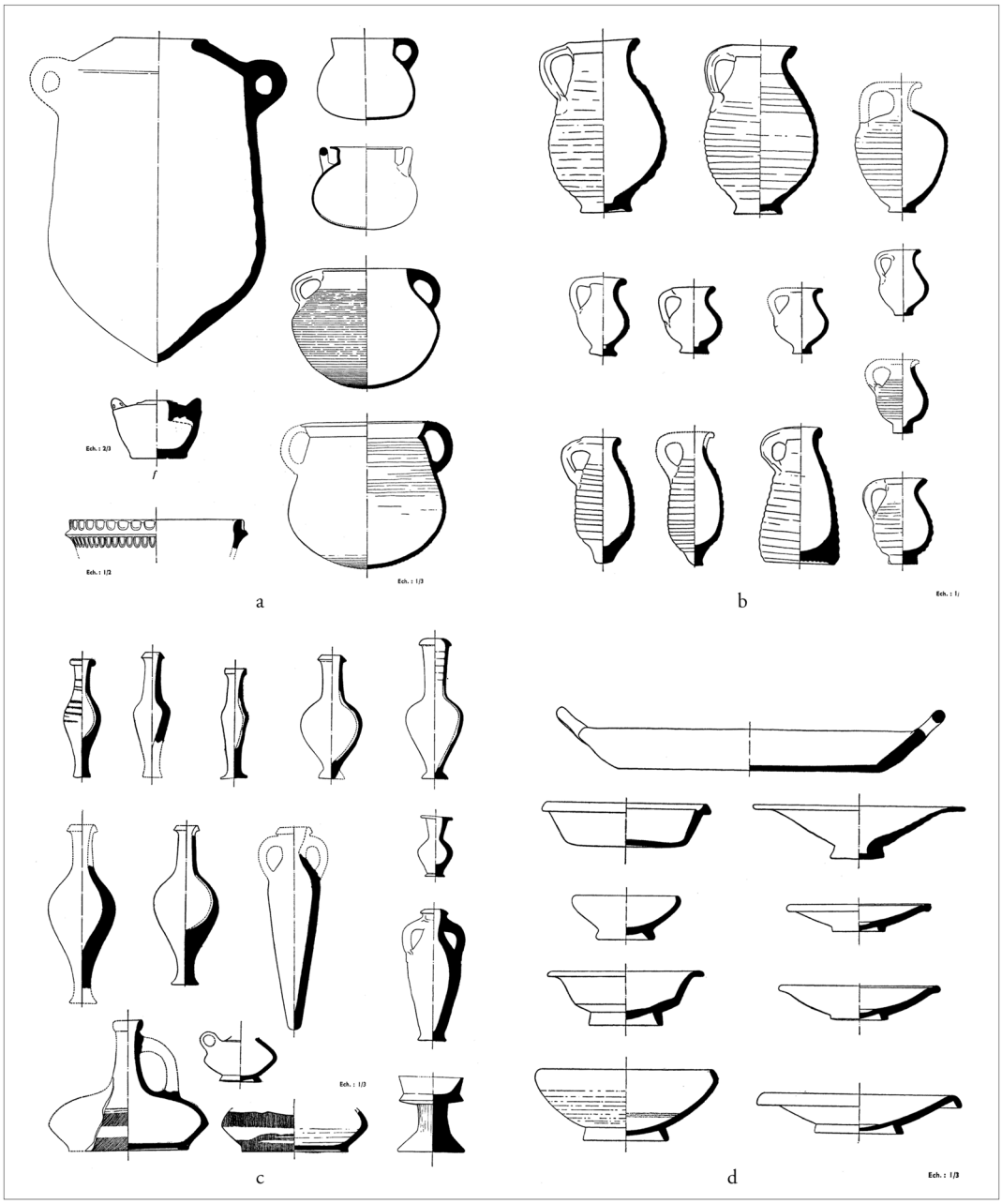

FIGURE 3
Umm el ‘Amed. Pottery from the site (Dunand and Duru 1962, figs. 78, 79, 80, 81).

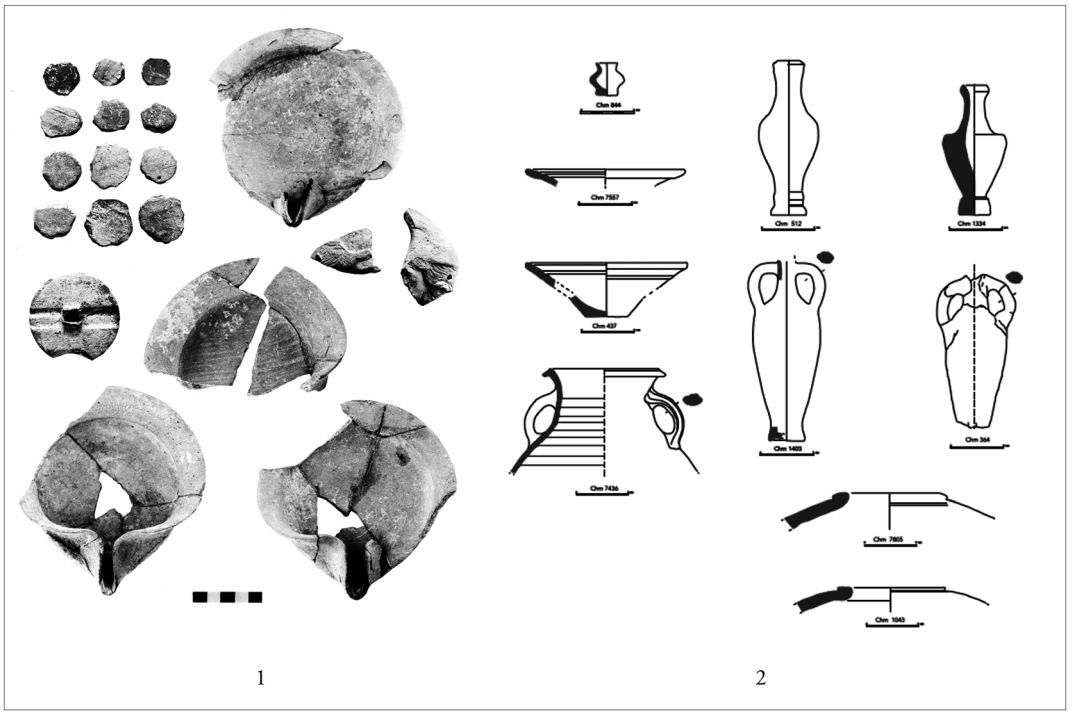

FIGURE 4
1: Sarepta. Lamps (Pritchard 1975, fig. 45). 2: Chhim. Pottery from the Hellenistic layers of the temple (Wicenciak 2020, fig. 4).

dating from the Hellenistic period. Near this building, a *favissa* rich in clay figurines (around 9000 items) dating from between the sixth and first centuries BC was found (Chéhab 1951–52; 1953–54). In 1969, the excavation was reopened: I. Kaoukabani unearthed, together with several figurines that were dated to the same period, significant architectonic elements that included a lintel with *uraeus* and two Egyptianising statues wearing the *shendit*, a well-known type in this region (Kaoukabani 1973). The activities in the area have resumed with a collaboration between the Italian CNR, the Lebanese University and the Direction Générale des Antiquités du Liban. The Kharayeb Archaeological Project, co-directed by Ida Oggiano and Wissam Khalil, started in 2009, with the new study of the coroplastic material from the *favissa* of Kharayeb; it has continued with the resumption, in 2013, of works in the area of the ancient cult.[3] The new archaeological excavation and the examination of the old documentation have made possible the precise reconstruction of the different phases of the sanctuary. Today this constitutes one of the best known cult places in the Phoenician region.

[3] The Kharayeb Archaeological Project operates – thanks to the financial support from the Italian CNR, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affair and the Honor Frost Foundation of London – in the area of the municipality of Kharayeb, north of the final part of the Litani river. See Oggiano and Khalil in press. See also Oggiano *et al.* 2016; Oggiano 2018.

While the rituals performed with terracotta figurines (collected in extraordinary numbers in the *favissa* excavated by M. Chéhab and in the excavations of I. Kaoukabani) have been the focus of various studies, little attention has been devoted to the rituals in which the common pottery, mostly small and miniaturized ceramics, was used.

Miniature vessels and those of small dimensions are used in rituals in all the various phases of the cult place's use. Combining published material with data from the new excavations by the Italian-Lebanese mission (Oggiano *et al*. 2016), the rituals performed in the cult place will be analysed in this section, reviewing every kind of artefact, from the figurines to the common ware. Accepting that it is difficult to draw a line between a miniature and a small object, especially when we are speaking of pottery, at Kharayeb it is yet possible to distinguish between very small vessels – which still retained the function of containers (for example, the little plate published by M. Chéhab still containing remains of crushed lamb bones and of an *astragalus*; Chéhab 1951–52, 13) – and miniaturized vessels made on such a small scale that their original function as containers is no longer feasible (Bailey 2005, 28–32; Mack 2007, 49; Knappett 2012, 99–100).

First phase: from the Late Iron Age to the Persian period

The form and extent of the structures connected to the first phase of the cult place are unknown. The recent investigations have demonstrated that the main building was built entirely in the Hellenistic period (Oggiano *et al*. 2016; Oggiano 2018). Structures of the first phase were probably made of perishable materials, perhaps wood (Table 1). Rituals of this phase consisted of the dedication of terracotta male figurines (the seated male figurine, with Osiriac crown or flat hat, hand touching beard, probably a god), female figurines (the pregnant woman and the naked woman with her hands under her breasts, the god Bes, images of horses and riders and worshippers with *stola*, and cocks (Fig. 5; Kaoukabani 1973, pl. 8). Together with the figurines, small plates and bowls were dedicated. These were serially produced and primarily of five types (Fig. 6; Nervi in

TABLE 1
Reconstruction of the archaeological phases of the cult place (author's elaboration; Oggiano 2018)

PHASE	MATERIAL EVIDENCE
Iron Age II/Persian phase.	No structures; statues, figurines, small vases and miniature pottery.
Hellenistic phase I (construction and first phase of use). Chronology: end of the fourth-third centuries BC (based on the oldest coin – a bronze one of Alexander the Great, minted at Acco around 320 BC – and on the inscription found at the bottom of the *favissa*).	Square building; statues, terracotta figurines, coins.
Hellenistic phase II (second phase of use).	The material from the first phase was put into the *favissa* (figurines, inscribed fragment of a statue) or covered by new structures (the statues in front of the building's entrance were covered with new paving). The building was decorated with stucco, ovuli and mosaic. In rituals, terracotta figurines, small vases and miniature pottery, a terracotta food warmer (?) and a basin were used.

FIGURE 5
Kharayeb. Figurines from the Persian period layers (photo Ida Oggiano).

Oggiano *et al*. 2016, 204; Fig. 7). They were wheel-made, and the presence of little crossed marks on the exterior of a large number of items provides some details about the production technique (after being modelled, they were placed on straw to dry) (cf. Ekroth 2003, 36).

As for the function of these little plates and some of the miniature vases, they could have been used as containers for very small amounts of grain or other food, wool or a lock of hair, or, in some cases, a liquid offering, for instance, wine, oil or water.

The small plates can be linked, from the morphological point of view, to types known in Iron Age Phoenicia, but continuing until the Hellenistic period (Nuñez in Oggiano *et al*. 2016, 199–203, nos. KH14 70/1 and 70/2). Therefore, for their dating, it is important to pay careful attention to the stratigraphy.

The layers from which the small plates come were excavated during the 2013–14 missions. They all belong to a phase that, in relative chronological terms, can be considered to precede the construction of the great Hellenistic building. They were found in a large fill used to raise the topography to the level of the flooring throughout the area occupied by the Hellenistic building, as there was a strong gradient to the bedrock at the point where the cult place was erected. In the absence of diagnostic material with which to date this fill, only a *terminus ante quem* can be provided. The fill might, therefore, contain material of the Iron Age/Persian period or of an early phase of the Hellenistic period not archaeologically documented. The first hypothesis seems to be the more convincing. Indeed, when we compare this stratigraphy with the results published by M. Chéhab and I. Kaoukabani,[4] some confirmation can be found. M. Chéhab, in his publication, presents finds datable to various chronological phases as coming from the ‘avant-cour’ and ‘sur le

[4] The fill dep. 52; 58 and layer 70 (Oggiano *et al*. 2016) could correspond to I. Kaoukabani’s ‘couche deux’.

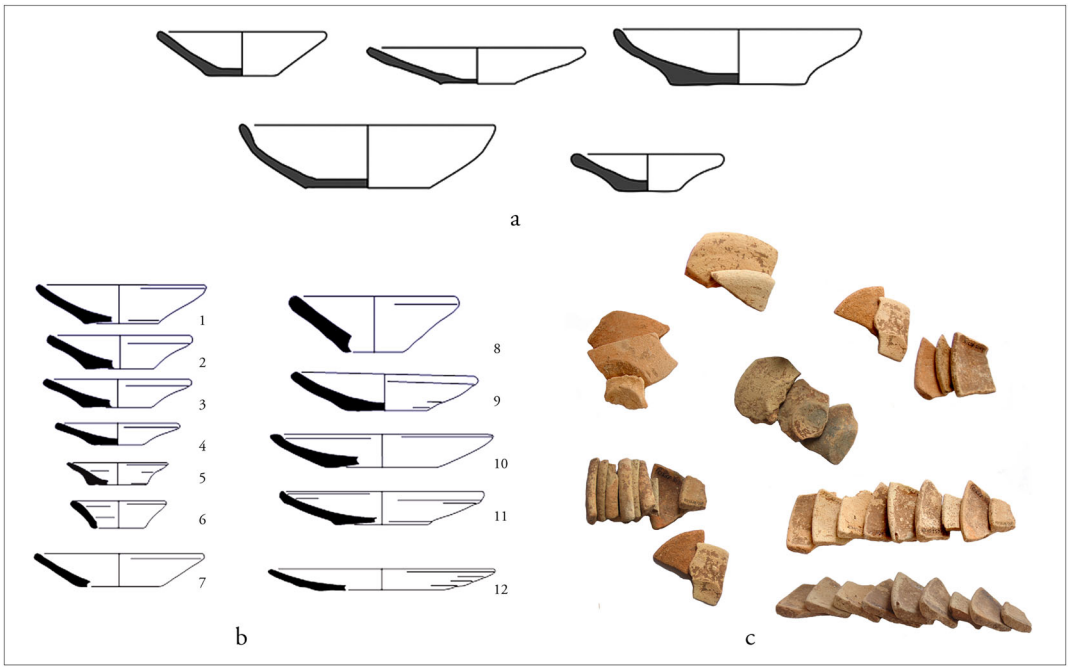

FIGURE 6
Kharayeb. Pottery of the first phase of the cult place: a: typology of forms (drawings Cristina Nervi); b: 1: KH14 52/53; 2: KH14 52/52; 3: KH14 78/12; 4: KH14 78/116; 5: KH14 HM/19; 6: KH14 68/1; 7: KH14 52/1; 8: KH14 70/15; 9: KH14 70/1; 10: KH14 59/13; 11: KH14 59/13; 12: KH14 51/11 (drawings Rami Yassine); c: example of plates series (photo Alessandra La Fragola).

dallage' (Persian and Hellenistic; Chéhab 1951–52, 13–19). By analysing the distribution of objects in the map published by M. Chéhab, and by matching it with the stratigraphic documentation of the most recent excavations, it is possible to find confirmation of the chronological framework here proposed (Fig. 8). The small plates and bowls were indeed all located in a portion of the excavation that seems to be 'under' the paving, and therefore in the Iron Age/Persian period phase.

Second Phase: the Hellenistic period

At a time that can perhaps be dated to the beginning of the Hellenistic period, the structures of the Iron Age II/Persian period were obliterated by a larger and completely different building. Square in plan, with its southern side opening on to a paved courtyard, this was built for the most part on the bedrock and partly on the foundation-packing described above. A rectangular room formed the west-north-west part of the edifice (Fig. 9; Oggiano *et al*. 2016; Oggiano 2018). The floor of the big square room was covered with flat slabs, still visible in Chéhab's time in the southern corner and along the southern wall (Chéhab 1951–52, 9). In the 2013 excavations, a group of tesserae of various colours was found, originally employed in a simple *opus tessellatum* limited to the central area of the chamber, like a carpet, and bearing a geometric motif, although there are not enough elements to enable us to reconstruct the original appearance. One can date the building's

FIGURE 7
Kharayeb. A small plate (KH14 70/1) (photo Silvia Festuccia).

interior decoration to this phase and also – hypothetically – relate to it the famous glass-paste gems, scattered in the form of little beads, around the site (Table 1).

In this period, the pottery dedicated is of a type similar to that found in Umm el 'Amed (*unguentaria* and jugs) and Chhim (*unguentaria* and miniaturistic plates, dated here to the Hellenistic period; Wicenciak 2018). The ritual seems oriented, together with the dedication of figurines (Fig. 10), to the action of pouring oils (*unguentaria*) and libations from jugs of small and medium sizes.[5] In Fig. 8, one can clearly see the distinction between the published material belonging to the first phase (on the left and centre of the image) and that datable to the Hellenistic phase (on the right). From the distribution of the objects it is also evident that in the first phase rituals were performed using open forms, while in the Hellenistic they were performed using *unguentaria* (perhaps for perfumed oils) and jugs for water, wine and oil.

[5] The two jugs published by Kaoukabani (1973, pl. 6.1) seem to be of medium size. The author states (p. 45): 'La première couche de Kharayeb s'est avéré très pauvre en poterie. Nous avons récolté deux vases à rainures' (pl. 6.1).

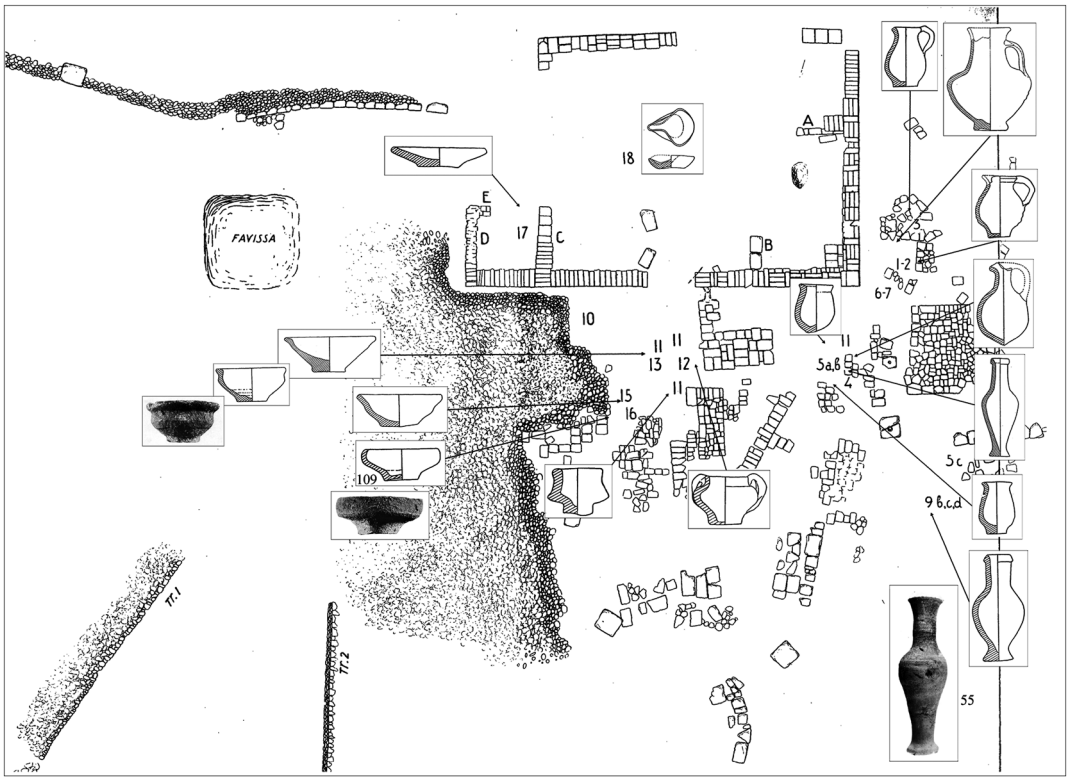

FIGURE 8
Kharayeb. Chéhab's plan of the site with the position of the pottery according to his indications in the text (Chéhab 1951–52, pl. B reworked by I. Oggiano).

THE MEANING OF THE MINIATURIZED OFFERINGS

Rituals are complex phenomena that are difficult to reduce to simplistic formulas and strict categories (Bell 2009, xii). The reconstruction of ancient rituals is even more difficult in contexts where, in the absence of textual evidence, ancient 'religion' can be perceived only when expressed through an act with material dimensions and consequences (Aldenderfer 2012, 23).[6] The material consequences of religions (sacred buildings, objects and different types of iconography) can either be studied with a somewhat negative and doubtful approach that deems it impossible for archaeologists to reconstruct the mental dimensions behind the ancient rituals[7] or with a more positive set of attitudes that some new approaches claim by the use as research tools of historical, religious and anthropological comparanda to identify the emotional and even sensual aspects of

[6] The literature on archaeology of religion and rituals is very rich. Just to quote some important works: Renfrew 1985; 1994; Biehl and Bertemes 2001; Barrowclough and Malone 2007; Fogelin 2007; Insoll 2011; Droogan 2012. See also Laneri 2015, 1–10 with bibliography.

[7] Among others, the famous study of Hawkes 1954.

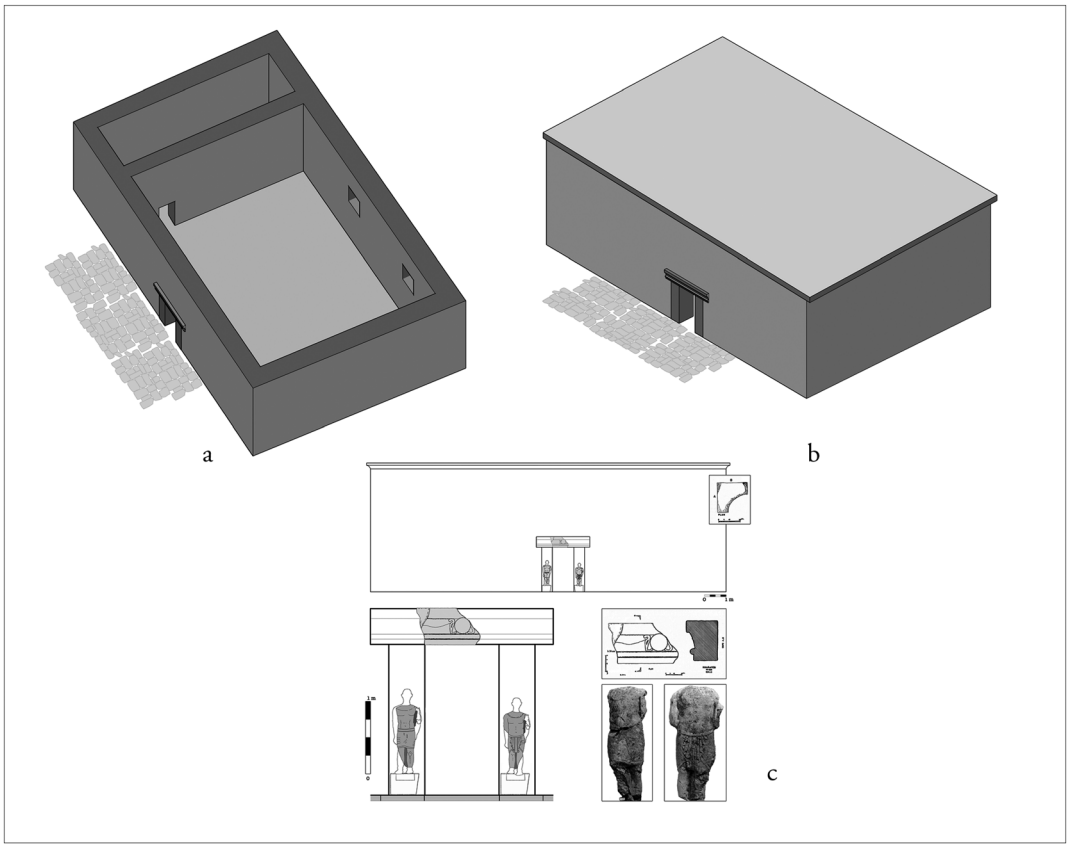

FIGURE 9
Kharayeb. 3D reconstruction of the site (Marco Arizza; Oggiano 2018, figs. 4–5).

the rituals.[8] The study of the pottery and figurines of the cult place of Kharayeb represents a good opportunity to test the applicability of these 'holistic' approaches, based on viewing the sacred domain as a combination of ritual practices and religious beliefs, in the analysis of these 'elusive' Phoenician rituals. We have noticed, for example and in particular, that many objects used in local rituals were miniaturistic or small in size and that the dimension of the objects must have played a role in the performance of the rituals, one both visual and tactile.

In recent years, the topic of miniaturization has been the focus of renewed interest. Between 2015 and 2018, two publications were devoted to this theme: the first issue of Volume 47 (2015) of *World Archaeology* was titled 'Miniaturization', and the very recent book *The Tiny and the Fragmented: Miniature, Broken, or Otherwise Incomplete Objects in the Ancient World*, edited by Rebecca Martin and Stephanie Langin-Hooper. These volumes bring together research that tries to interpret the phenomenon of the miniaturization of objects according to different approaches, attempting to go beyond simply functionalist (e.g. small object, lower cost) or generically symbolist

[8] Bell 2009, 72–3 with reference to the theories of ritual performance; see also Laneri 2015, 1–10.

FIGURE 10
Kharayeb. Hellenistic figurines from the *favissa* (*Liban l'autre rive. Exposition présentée à l'Institut du monde arabe du 27 octobre 1998 au 2 mai 1999*, Paris 1998, 163).

readings (symbols of something – but what?). I have quarried these volumes for many of the theoretical discussions that have inspired interesting ideas on the interpretation of the pottery used in the rituals of the cult place of Kharayeb.

As M. López-Bertran and J. Vives-Ferrándiz have observed 'Miniatures are not isolated objective entities, but are connected to an array of artefacts, locations, social institutions, values and even humans' (López Bertran and Vives-Ferrándiz 2005, 82). The Kharayeb documentation has to be considered, therefore, not only in its cultic context but also in its social setting. Small vessels are, in fact, a valuable additional means of shedding light on the economic and social context of the rural hinterland of Tyre in the transition between the florid Persian period and the 'innovative Hellenistic' phase of the Levantine world (Bonnet 2015).

THE ROLE OF DIMENSION AND THE RIGHT DISTANCE

Dimension plays a fundamental role in the production of any object and in the relationship that people establish – on both a visual and a tactile level – with it. 'Miniatures have certain physical and semiotic properties (or in other words, affordances and associations) that enable them to bear meaning in an intensified fashion, while paradoxically being physically remote from those forms of which they are iconic or indexical' (Knappett 2012, 103). With reference to the world of images, one should also consider the words of I.J. Winter: '[…] one cannot ignore typology, or scale, reducing all instances of a common motif to a single meaning independent of medium […] The

particular vehicle of conveyance, its function and its nature, must then be considered when seeking 'meaning' in the visual sphere' (2000, 82).

These considerations are also valid when considering the material used in the rituals, which took place in a cult place where the dimensions of the objects were closely linked to the character of the 'offering', with all that this word signifies in the context of religious historical studies. Diana Segarra Crespo asserts: 'in a cultic context, it is easily recognised as a diverse object (precisely due to the inclusion of a dimension that differs from the everyday one and that immediately exempts it from its earthly function) and, therefore, suitable for integration in the extra-human sphere, as property of the gods and, therefore, sacred' (1997, 297).[9] In a cult place, an offering of small dimensions, like one of excessively large dimensions, constitutes a manifestation of the 'correct distance' that is placed between what in Italian is called the 'misura d'uomo' (on a human scale) and that of the world beyond the human. It is a 'ritualized alterity' ('alteridad ritualizada', Segarra Crespo 1997; see also Bailey 2005, 34), which, through the objects, conveys to us the ideas that underlie the rituals practised.

How are we to interpret this deliberate choice to perform rituals with these tiny objects? It is difficult for us to access the Kharayeb community's way of thinking about scale and miniaturization. Some comparisons with the documentation of the Near East and the Punic Mediterranean may be useful, even if that documentation is very limited and not much studied.

During the Iron Age, miniaturistic pottery was used in the funerary context in Tyre (Aubet 2004, 61), Sarepta (Culican 1970, 15, fig. 3.6) and Akhziv (Culican 1982, 61, fig. 9; Dayagi-Mendels 2002, 133, figs. 4.10, 4.20 and 4.27); in the Phoenician-speaking western Mediterranean, there is a very significant presence of miniature pottery in the tophets of Mozia, Tharros Nora, Sulki, Monte Sirai, Cartagine and Sousse (Bartoloni 1992). However, I am not here discussing the possible meaning to be attributed to dimensional alterity in these contexts, that of course depends on different elements, in particular the relationship with other material within the archaeological context and with the social framework that gives rise to these forms of ritual.

If the case of the tophet represents an example that is very distant – from the point of view of the rituals practiced there – from the cult place of Kharayeb, some other cases, from Greece to Hellenistic Babylon, can provide interesting points of reflection.

The first case concerns the involvement of children in the ritual practices of classical Athens. M. Golden hypothesizes that miniature objects as dedications or votives might be understood as offerings by children or on behalf of children (Golden 1990, 43). The connection in the Hellenistic age between the large number of figurines of children, represented in the act of playing or dancing, and of female figures led to the hypothesis that the cult place was dedicated, from as far back as the Persian age (see the figurines of naked and pregnant women), to one or more deities linked to the world of motherhood and childhood (Lancellotti 2003; Oggiano 2015a; 2015b; Castiglione 2020). The (small) dimension of the object could, therefore, at least in part, be connected to the involvement of (small) children in the ritual activities, as other comparative studies demonstrate (cf. Sillar 1994, 54–5 for the Andes; see also Knappett 2012, 93).

The second case is represented by the study of the miniature objects in Hellenistic Babylonia (Langin-Hooper 2015). In this case, it is the cultural and social environments (the

[9] 'en un contexto cultual puede ser fácilmente reconocido come objecto diverso (precisamente por la incorporación de una dimensión diversa de la cotidiana que le exime inmediatamente de su función terrena) y, por tanto, adecuado a su integración en la esfera extrahumana, come propiedad de los dioses y, entonces, sagrada'.

cross-cultural interaction between the Greek and Oriental worlds in the Hellenistic period) that provide points of comparison with the material of Kharayeb. S. Langin-Hooper has proposed that we should read the tremendous diversity and variety of miniature objects in Hellenistic Babylonia as a reflection of the important social changes of this period. According to the scholar, tiny things operated in this social transformation because, through their appealing and non-threatening materiality, miniatures enjoy an intimate connection with their users, one that encouraged identity-sharing and illusions of control over the outside world. For example, miniature representations of performers – such as musicians and theatrical masks (present also in the Kharayeb repertoire) – encourage users to react positively to the new Greek cultural trends appearing in the Phoenician coastal cities.

Finally, we should not underestimate the aspect of the transportability of small objects. This factor becomes all the more salient if we consider that the figurines of Kharayeb may have been produced in centres such as Tyre. Indeed, ion-beam analysis has shown that the fabric of the group of figurines from the Hellenistic period is closely connected with the samples from Tyre (Roumie *et al*. 2019). The similarity of the clay from Tyre with that of the Hellenistic production of the figurines from Kharayeb suggests that they were produced in workshops in Tyre and then sold in shops near the cult place. Moreover, it is known that the moulding techniques used to produce the figurines were originally introduced into the area from the large established centres of production, such as Alexandria in Egypt. It is probable that artisans working with or for religious structures dedicated to the cult of Egyptian gods were present in Tyre, where the existence of a cult of Serapis (inscription dated to the third century BC) is known (Rey-Coquais 2006, 18–20, no. 5; Aliqot 2009, 175; Castiglione 2019).

CONCLUSIONS

As we noticed in the introduction to this paper, reconstructing rituals performed in the Phoenician area at religious cultural contexts is a rather complicated challenge. So few are the Phoenician sanctuaries, temples and shrines that are well excavated. Sometimes it is also difficult to work out the original layout of the temple, as is the case in Kharayeb where we are only able to propose a reconstruction thanks to a very precise analysis of old and new information.

It is also difficult to place the documentation of any cult place within the broader cultural-historical framework of the South Lebanon region. The chapter on the organization of the sacred urban and suburban landscape of the centres of Tyre and Sidon has yet to be written, It is, moreover, almost impossible, at this stage of the research into the Phoenician temple and cult place (both in the Iron Age and in the Hellenistic age) to speak about matters such as the ‘dependence’ of one cult place on the other. Literary sources are also insufficient in this regard. With the Kharayeb cult place, some preliminary indications derived from the examination of the clay of the figurines may indicate that the terracottas were produced in a workshop in Tyre. As we are taking only the first steps in research that looks to connect the area to major cities, it is premature to make unproven claims, and indeed dangerous.

In spite of all the difficulties deriving from the level of information available, a few conclusions provide some reliable indications on the rituals practised. At Kharayeb, in a context on the border between rural and urban communities, those who went to the cult place created, through the use of figurines (anthropomorphic and zoomorphic) and vessels, a kind of sacred representation of a miniature world that is somewhat reminiscent of a ‘presepe napoletano’

(Neapolitan crib): figurines of male deities (the bearded god seated on the throne) and of nude or pregnant female figures, and plates and bowls in the Persian period; and then thousands of figurines, mainly of women and children (Fig. 10), and closed forms of vessels in the Hellenistic period. The great majority of the material used in the rituals, from ceramics to figurines, is small in size, such that it can be held in the palm of the hand. The scale adopted therefore appears to be a fundamental part of the practice, and the tactile element must have played a role, perhaps together with specific bodily movements (Kohring 2011, 36), and with visual and even olfactory inputs too.

The 'real world' is scaled down here to be easily transported from the place where the object is produced. Indeed it is significantly diminished (when it retains the original function of the object that inspired it) if not reduced to a level of purely symbolic appeal (in the case of a specially created object in miniature format). It becomes something else so that it can be 'offered' to the deity. At the same time in Kharayeb, in the Hellenistic period, when moulds of figurines imported from the Greek world are being employed in the production, we find the interesting phenomenon of 'stereotypes' (Bailey 2008, 10–11) from other cultures being used to represent the local mental panorama. In this case, we must consider the aesthetic value that these small objects might have had for the people who handled them and the undoubted fascination of the new variegated images of the Greek-style figurines, evoking a world that was distant and yet palpable.

Fitting these remarks into a chronological, cultural, and particularly religious, framework is a way to at least formulate a purpose for the use of tiny objects while the sanctuary was active.

Archaeological documentation of cult practices in Persian and Hellenistic Phoenicia gives clear indications of a more direct relationship between god and worshipper. Evidence for the greater involvement of the individual in devotional practices is provided by the amount, location and typology of the objects used and/or donated in the temples. This is also apparent from the kinds of image used, often serially, on 'cultic' craftwork. From the many votive offerings placed in the temples one can deduce that the cult-places were chiefly visited by the faithful, even from the lower classes of the population, to ask for divine protection for themselves and their loved ones (Xella 2019, 286). The deities to whom these invocations were addressed seem to be those traditionally specialising in healing and prophylaxis (Xella 1993). They were now particularly entrusted with children, as indicated by the dedication of the statuette of a boy, the so-called *Temple Boy*, as seen in various sanctuaries in Phoenicia and, to a lesser extent, in Palestine (Oggiano 2005, 190–8).

As in Kharayeb the range of subjects represented by the figurines provides a miniature panorama of the local Phoenician society spanning several hundreds of years,[10] it seems evident that motherhood and childhood were continuously of great concern to people who went to the cult place. The impression that women and children were an essential part of the rituals is derived primarily from the iconographies of the votive terracottas, both from the Persian period (the pregnant woman) and Hellenistic period (the large number of children depicted playing with animals or dancing and playing musical instruments). The size of the objects used in rituals may constitute a further element pointing towards forms of ritual in which children were involved either directly (holding small objects in their small hands) and/or indirectly, through the allusion to closure, interiority, the domestic and the private expressed by miniature objects.[11] In the Kharayeb cult place, the realism of the images and symbolism of the dimensions generates an intriguing mirroring effect, enhanced

[10] For similar consideration referring to the Japanese *netsuke*, see Mack 2007, 192.

[11] Stewart (1984, 50) states: 'Whereas the miniature represents closure, interiority, the domestic, and the overly culture, the gigantic represents infinity, exteriority, the public, and the overly natural'.

by rituals performed according to ancient local practices but renewed as a result of intensive cross-cultural interaction, in particular with the Greek world, in the new Levantine social environment.

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