PLAY AND RITUAL AT CARTHAGE. SOME REMARKS ON A TERRACOTTA DOLL

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Abstract: Far from being two distinct and distant spheres, play and ritual had blurred boundaries in antiquity, when they may have sometimes overlapped. In light of recent attention to toys in the ancient Mediterranean, this article reconsiders a remarkable yet fragmentary nude standing female figure with articulated arms from the excavations by the German Archaeological Institute in the so-called Magon Quarter at Carthage. It provides a detailed analysis of this terracotta figurine and its find-context, but it also assesses various hypotheses on its original use by considering similar artefacts in ancient and contemporary societies. Through this investigation, dolls emerge as objects whose use was not merely limited to children and play, but it could have been extended to adults and ritual, especially in those cases when a possible divine iconography was portrayed.

Keywords: Phoenicians; Terracottas; Iron Age; Carthage; Dolls.

1. Introduction

Play,[1] whether individual or collective, driven by sensory delight and need for movement or by imagination and fantasy, engaging with improvised objects or with artefacts deliberately produced for play – such as toys – was as normal in antiquity as it is nowadays.[2] Although children may have been the main protagonists of games and the most common users of toys, play was present in all stages of the life cycle, from childhood to adulthood, similarly to what still happens presently.[3] Accordingly, one would expect that the functions and meanings of the game and of the objects used to play would have varied based on the age, gender roles and social status of the individuals, but also according to the circumstances and space – public or private – where this activity would have taken place. Another important aspect of play to be considered is that it was not limited to the playful dimension, but had an important educational, sociocultural, political and religious role in ancient daily life. In this way, the toys were not simple secular artefacts to play with, but they were objects combining playful, magical and religious properties.[4]

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1 We wish to thank Christof Flügel and Karin Schmidt for their help in better defining the archaeological context of this remarkable find and providing us with the access to Mercedes Vegas' archive. We are also grateful to Ralf Bockmann, director of the photo library of the German Archaeological Institute (DAI) in Rome, for giving us the permission to reproduce the photos in figures 1-3, and Daria Lanzuolo, the photo library assistant, for her generous help. We extend our gratitude to the following institutions and individuals for kindly providing us with photos: the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museu Arqueològic d'Eivissa i Formentera (MAEF), the Museu Nacional Arqueològic de Tarragona (MNAT), the Museo Etnográfico de Castilla y León (Zamora), and Ana María Soffia (Prorestauro, Chile). Our thanks also go to the two anonymous peer reviewers for providing very helpful comments on the manuscript. A. Orsingher contributed paragraphs 2-3, A. Rivera-Hernández paragraph 4. The introduction and conclusions have been jointly written.

2 Sommer – Sommer 2016, p. 345.

3 Harlow 2013, p. 322.

4 Dasen 2019a, p. 14; Dasen 2019b, p. 11.

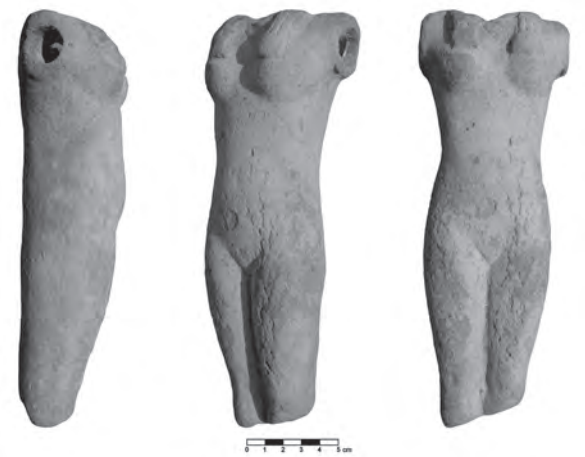

Fig. 1. Carthage, Magon Quarter: fragmentary terracotta of nude standing female figure with articulated arms, *c.* 5th-4th century BCE (Neg. nn. D-DAI-ROM-RAK-07018, D-DAI-ROM-RAK-07014, D-DAI-ROM-RAK-07009; courtesy of the German Archaeological Institute in Rome).

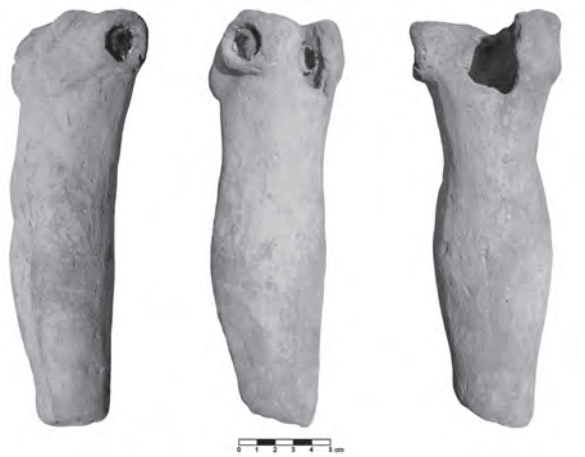

Fig. 2. Carthage, Magon Quarter: fragmentary terracotta of nude standing female figure with articulated arms, *c.* 5th-4th century BCE (Neg. nn. D-DAI-ROM-RAK-07011, D-DAI-ROM-RAK-07015, D-DAI-ROM-RAK-07017; courtesy of the German Archaeological Institute in Rome).

In various past societies, there were collective games involving both adults and children that did not require the use of material objects.[5] At the same time, children were able to play with objects that they had at hand in their houses or in other everyday spaces,[6] which – through their use and imagination – they could turn into toys: this could have been, for instance, the case of a tree branch becoming a child's sword or swift horse.[7] However, there are few iconographic sources about collective games not requiring the use of specialised artefacts,[8] while nothing is known about the objects that children converted into their games, both in the past and today.[9] Consequently, the best way of approaching the study of play in the archaeological record is through its material remains, namely the toys.

A fragmentary terracotta of a nude standing female figure with articulated arms from Carthage (Figs. 1-2) provides a good example of the ambiguity behind the interpretation of dolls and their users in antiquity, as well as of the spaces and circumstances when play activities would have occurred. This paper analyses the materiality and find-context of this specific figurine and tries to overcome the scanty corpus of dolls currently known from Phoenician/Punic-speaking areas by adopting a comparative and fresh theoretical perspective. The extension of this investigation to other ancient and contemporary societies has made it possible to argue that this terracotta may perhaps be identified as a doll representing a divine image, whose use may have implied the combination of ritual and play.

5 See below, note 8.

6 Orsingher 2018a, p. 199; Rivera-Hernández 2020, p. 398.

7 Dasen 2019b, p. 13; Parker 2019.

8 For iconographic examples of games that were played without toys in Greek and Roman societies, see Ventrelli 2019, p. 69, fig. 1. Additional imagery testifies to the existence of stunt games (e.g., Attia 2019, pp. 70-71, figs. 1-4) and others that were played with the hands, such as the "morra", which involves flashing fingers between at least two people (e.g., Dasen – Ventrelli 2019, pp. 72-73).

9 Dasen 2012, p. 9.

2. The Articulated Figurine from Carthage

2.1. *The Catalogue*

The figurine under examination, currently on display in the small museum of the so-called Quartier Magon, is fragmentary (preserved height *c.* 22.3 cm).[10] It is missing the head, the arms and the lower part of the legs, roughly below the knees. The round hole (diam. *c.* 2.0 cm) through the shoulders indicates the original presence of movable arms, which would have been modelled separately and attached at the shoulders that are rounded and nicely finished. There is no way to establish whether the arms were originally flexible or fixed, although the parallels that are currently known from the Iron Age Mediterranean and earlier periods would most likely support the latter hypothesis, with the arms being bent at the elbow or held straight down on either side.[11] Similarly, one cannot determine whether the arms were fixed by using a string, wire or something else. However, a blackish cylindrical element visible in the left through-hole (Fig. 3) could perhaps shed some light on this issue if it were to be analysed in the future.[12] The joined legs exclude the possibility that they were moveable below the knees.

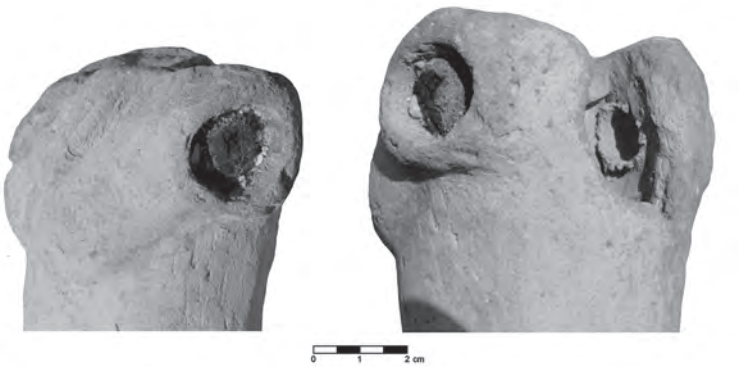

Fig. 3. Carthage, Magon Quarter: fragmentary terracotta of nude standing female figure with articulated arms, *c.* 5th-4th century BCE (Neg. nn. D-DAI-ROM-RAK-07012, D D-DAI-ROM-RAK-07016; courtesy of the German Archaeological Institute in Rome).

This figurine was made of brownish-yellow clay, originally covered by a slip, which remains visible on the chest, stomach and between the thighs. The slip may have served as a ground for further painted decoration although this is now not visible. From a technological viewpoint, the entire front of this hollow figurine was probably obtained from a single mould, while the back was closed and smoothed with a flat tool, as indicated by the vertical traces that are especially visible on the hips.

Overall, it represents a nude standing female figure with articulated arms. It has long hair, braided in the Egyptian manner, falling over the shoulders down to the breasts and ending with hair clips for plaits. The figure stands with her legs together, with breasts and genital area summarily defined, small chest and waist, breasts placed high, narrow hips and thighs.

2.2. *The Find-context*

This terracotta was found at a depth of about 6.50 m in a sounding excavated in 1978 below the Roman *cardo* XVIII, during the excavations by the German Archaeological Institute in Rome in the so-called Magon Quarter,[13] where the inhabited city extended during the second half of the 5th century BCE and an orthogonally planned quarter bordering the eastern seafront of Carthage was built overlying an area previously used for metallurgical activities.[14] More specifically, it comes from a filling of sea-sand, which is named layer

10 Kraus 1991, p. 256, n. Tk 1.

11 E.g., Elderkin 1930, pp. 456-457, fig. 1; Reeves 2015.

12 As it looks like an axle, it recalls a mechanical figure from ancient Egypt in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Reeves 2015).

13 For a recent overview of this area, see: Fumadò Ortega 2013, pp. 158-159, 190-200, with references.

14 Docter – Becthold 2021, p. 164, with references.

"p 2". By combining the few data provided by Theodor Kraus[15] with Friedrich Rakob's excavation report[16] and the unpublished documentation by Mercedes Vegas, its find-context can probably be identified with K78/8, which is the only layer of the sounding that reaches such a depth, up to a maximum of *c.* 7.00 m.[17] Although this layer has remained unpublished, the handwritten notes by Vegas inform us that it contained Punic pottery (especially of the Late Punic type)[18] and few Roman finds.

According to Vegas and Rakob, this layer of sea-sand could have served as a substructure for *cardo* XVIII.[19] Alternatively, Karin Schmidt suggests that K78/8 and the above layer K78/7 could have been part of street layers dating to the Middle to Late Punic periods (*c.* 480-146 BCE), which may have been disturbed in Roman times by the construction of *insulae* and *cardine*s.[20] On top of them lay the first Roman street layers of *cardo* XVIII, with some traces of early imperial levelling activities (which are usually indicated as RBPS, namely "Römisch bewegter Punischer Schutt").

In any case, one can confidently sustain that the find-context provides no useful evidence for establishing either the terracotta's context of use or its dating.[21] It is only through combining a stylistic and typological approach with a comparative analysis that conclusions can be drawn about the latter.

3. Faraway, so Close: Typology, Iconography and not Only

As Kraus already pointed out thirty years ago,[22] this jointed figurine remains a remarkable but rather isolated find, especially if one accepts its interpretation as a doll. However, it can be compared to a variety of artefacts, which make it possible to better define its chronology and biography.

First of all, the same iconography, with the Egyptian hairstyle rendered with a checkerboard pattern, can be recognised in another fragmentary nude female figurine (h. *c.* 13.2 cm) from a tomb in the necropolis extending between the hill of Sainte Monique and the plateau of Bordj Djedid at Carthage (Fig. 4.3).[23] Despite its archaic style, Zhora Chérif assigned it to the 4th-3rd centuries BCE.[24] As the find-context and associated artefacts remain unknown, one can assume that this dating depends on when this burial ground to the north of ancient Carthage was used.[25] At the same time, it can be observed that the iconography of this figurine recalls that of the bronze statuette known as the Astarte of El Carambolo (Fig. 4.1), which – however – has a much earlier chronology (*c.* mid-8th-early 7th century BCE).[26] Accordingly, two possible inferences can be drawn: 1) interpreting the terracotta from the Magon Quarter as an heirloom and assigning a dating close to that of the bronze statuette in the Archaeological Museum of Seville, or 2) considering

15 Kraus 1991, p. 256, n. Tk 1.

16 Rakob 1991, pp. 77-80.

17 Rakob 1991, Beilage 21, Profil 12: Kardo XVIII Ost: p 1, upper layer of the Punic north-south road (Period 2); p 2, sea-sand fillings (Period 2). P 2 is unfortunately drawn only until *c.* -4.90 m, but after *c.* -5.00 m (K78/5, 6, 7, 8) it was groundwater.

18 For a snapshot of the Carthaginian ceramic repertoire of this period, see Bechtold 2010.

19 Vegas' handwritten notes, K78/8: «Das ganze wohl zusammen aufgetragen für die Kardo-Konstruktion».

20 *Pers. comm.*, 15/07/2021.

21 Although Kraus (1991, p. 256, n. Tk 1) assigned this find to the second half of the 6th century BCE, he did not explain on what criteria this dating was based.

22 Kraus 1991, p. 256, n. Tk 1.

23 Delattre 1906, p. 32, fig. 70.

24 Chérif 1997, pp. 84-85, n. 279, pl. XXXII. According to the Tunisian scholar, this figurine was made of a coarse, yellowish, poorly purified clay. As its back is flat and pierced by a circular vent-hole, the use of a single mould can be suggested.

25 Bénichou-Safar 1982, pp. 312-313, fig. 139.

26 Orsingher 2021, p. 87, fig. 3.3, with references.

this figurine as evidence of archaising tendencies, which have already been identified at Carthage and in other regions during the Hellenistic period.[27] The latter hypothesis fits better with the burial context of the fragmentary terracotta torso and also finds some ground in the manufacturing technique, namely the use of the single mould, which appears to have been more widely adopted from the Persian period onwards in the coastal central Levant, a region conventionally known as Phoenicia during the Iron Age.[28]

Notwithstanding the fragmentary nature of the two Carthaginian terracottas, in particular their missing heads, the rendering of the hair may provide some additional insight for a more precise definition of their dating. In the Iron Age Levant and in the Phoenician western Mediterranean, the Egyptian hairstyle was initially portrayed with a sort of checkerboard pattern, namely by crossing vertical and horizontal incised lines, such as in the bronze figurine from El Carambolo.[29] In a later stage, locks of hair are only indicated by a series of vertical lines, such as in the Carthaginian terracotta from the Magon Quarter, while the incised decoration is no longer used to distinguish the hair in a more advanced phase. This use of vertical lines to render the hairstyle is documented in a small group of standing female figurines with outstretched arms and a *kalathos* or *polos* headdress from Phoenicia during the Persian period,[30] but is also known from a group of protomes from the central Mediterranean.[31] In particular, a close parallel can be identified in a fragmentary figurine from a domestic quarter (i.e., Bey 010: *c.* 5th-4th centuries BCE)[32] in the lower town of Beirut (Fig. 4.2).[33] If this comparison is correct, the original presence of a similar headdress should also be proposed for the two Carthaginian terracot-

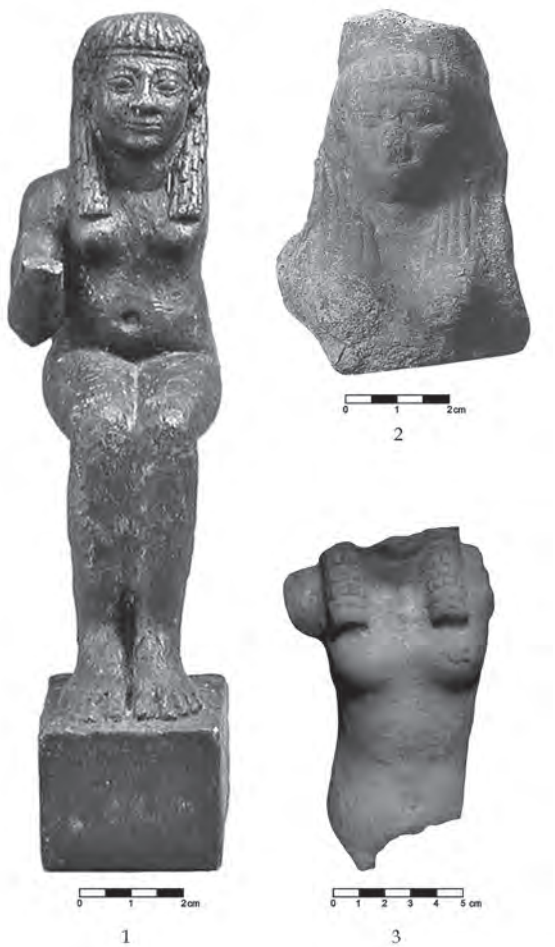

Fig. 4.1. El Carambolo: bronze statuette of Astarte, *c.* mid-8th-early 7th century BCE. Museo Arqueológico de Sevilla, inv. n. 11.136 (adapted from Navarro Ortega 2016, fig. 1); 2. Beirut, domestic quarter Bey 010: female terracotta figurine, *c.* 5th-4th centuries BCE (after Sayegh – Tal – Elayi 1998, pl. XIX, 52); 3. Carthage, necropolis: fragmentary nude female figurine, *c.* 4th-3rd century BCE. Musée Nationale de Carthage, inv. n. 900.13 (adapted from Chérif 1997, pl. XXXII, 279).

27 E.g., Orsingher 2014, pp. 152-153; Chiarenza 2016.

28 Bolognani 2020, p. 42, with reference to the work by Ephraim Stern.

29 Orsingher 2016, pp. 172-174.

30 The bibliography on this group is extensive. Useful considerations in Gubel 1982, pp. 228-230, fig. 2, while – among the most recent works – see Bolognani 2020, pp. 45-46, fig. 7; Oggiano 2020, p. 273. The number of figurines with hair not rendered with incised lines is much larger (e.g., Lehmann Jericke 1997, p. 147, fig. 11.d-f; Picaud 2015, p. 291, fig. 4).

31 Orsingher 2021, p. 89, fig. 9.

32 Curvers 2001-2002, pp. 52, 61-63, with references.

33 E.g., Sayegh – Tal – Elayi 1998, pp. 202, n. 52, 218-219, pl. XIX.

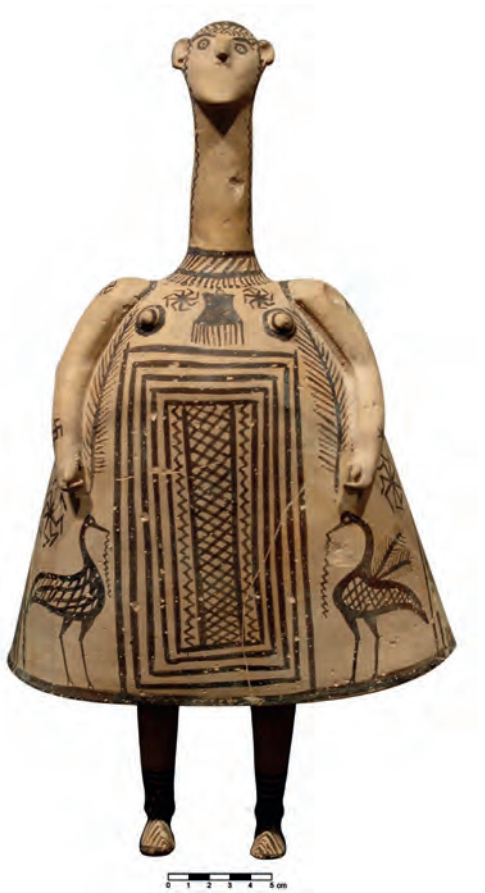

Fig. 5. Boeotia, Thebes: painted bell-shaped figurine with attached legs, *c.* end of 8th century BCE. Musée du Louvre, inv. n. CA 573 (Creative Commons Zero).

tas, while a dating around the 5th/4th century BCE should be suggested for the articulated figurine from the Magon Quarter. Accepting this chronology would imply that it may have been originally used in the same domestic area where it was retrieved.

In any case, numerous finds from various cities in Phoenicia show the survival – or, less likely, the resumption – of the iconography of a nude female figure during the Persian period. A variety of nude standing or seated female figures are attested in Phoenicia[34] – and, more generally, in the Levant – during this and earlier periods. Without the risk of oversimplifying, one can say that nude female figurines were documented in almost all regions and periods of antiquity.[35]

The identification of the specific iconographic type represented in this figurine remains pending, as one cannot establish whether or not a headdress was attested or the position of the arms. If the latter were hanging at the sides, the iconographic scheme would correspond to one that is widely known in Phoenicia, from where it was probably transmitted to Cyprus[36] and the western Mediterranean. However, this scheme is usually reproduced in terracotta plaques, which were probably only meant to be deposited in a place. On the contrary, the figurine in the round from the Magon Quarter implied a different and less static way of being used and handled from that of the plaques, hinting at some sort of interaction with its user, as its technology, the hollow base of the arms and the original presence of movable arms would further emphasise. These insights enable its identification as an articulated doll.

Dolls in the Phoenician/Punic tradition are still an under-explored field of research.[37] This probably depends on several reasons, but most importantly on the limited number of examples currently known. It is likely that dolls were mainly manufactured in perishable materials (e.g., wood, straw and/or wax, unfired clay, fabrics, rags and papyrus),[38] sometimes even combining them.[39] There are also some examples of dolls made of more precious materials (e.g., ivory, bone and even amber), which may have belonged to children from wealthy families.[40] At the same time, they are not always recognisable when they were made of terracotta. Indeed, they cannot be easily distinguished from other types of clay figurines when they are fragmentary and lack their most recognisable features, namely the movable arms and/or legs.

34 For a fresh approach and a recent account of this issue, see Oggiano 2020, with extensive bibliography.

35 See the various contributions in Donnat – Hunziker-Rodewald – Weygand 2020.

36 E.g., Caubet 2015, pp. 230, 246, fig. 11, 2-101, with references.

37 For a recent overview, see: Rivera-Hernández 2021, pp. 356-358, fig. 9.10.

38 Hurschmann 2001; Harlow 2013, p. 332; Dasen 2012, p. 9; 2019b, p. 13; Gutschke 2019, p. 218.

39 For a 6th/7th-century-CE example from the southern Levant, see Rahmani 1981, p. 79, pl. 14E. Dolls made of different fabrics and filled with rags and papyrus are known from Egypt (Janssen 1996), whose dry climate has favoured their preservation.

40 For some Roman examples, see Dasen 2011, p. 56, note 33.

Without intending to carry out an exhaustive survey of the literature, as it is not the purpose of this paper, one can observe the occasional presence of terracotta legs pierced by a hole on the upper part, in the Iron Age Levant. They may have belonged to figurines with movable limbs, although some scholars prefer interpreting them as amulets,[41] especially when found in isolation.[42] The many examples of pierced legs – such as those from Chatal Höyük,[43] Tarsus,[44] Tell Afis,[45] Tyre,[46] Megiddo[47] and Beth Shean[48] – show the wide distribution of this kind of artefact. As complete articulated figurines are currently not known in the Iron Age Levant, one may suggest that during this period dolls only presented movable legs, possibly being attached to bell-shaped figurines similar to those attested in Cyprus[49] and Boeotia[50] (Fig. 5) around the 8th century BCE. This type of articulated figurine survived – although of smaller size – until later periods, as shown by an example (*c.* 4th-2nd century BCE) from Tharros[51] (Fig. 6.5) and two from hypogeum 11 of the campaign in 1925 (*c.* 2nd-1st century BCE) in the necropolis of Puig des

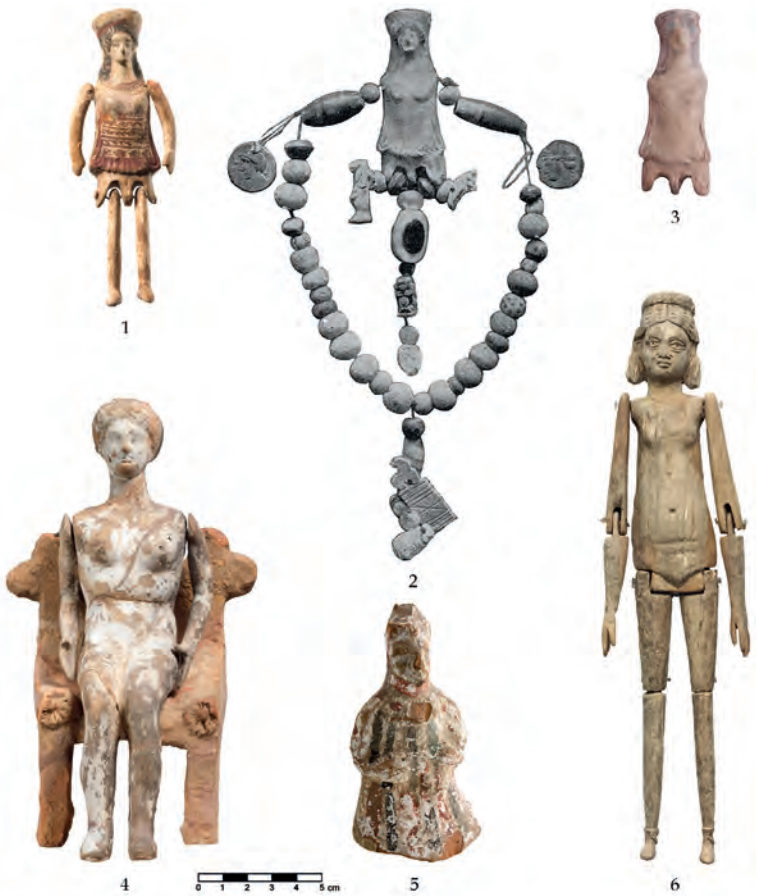

Fig. 6.1. Unknown provenance: Corinthian-type terracotta jointed doll, *c.* early 5th century BCE. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. n. 44.11.8 (courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art under Creative Commons Zero); 2-3. Puig des Molins, necropolis: Corinthian-type terracotta jointed doll, *c.* 5th century BCE. Museu Arqueològic d'Eivissa i Formentera, inv. n. 8010 (after Román y Ferrer 1913, pl. XCVII; courtesy of the Museu Arqueològic d'Eivissa i Formentera); 4. Unknown provenance: Terracotta doll with articulated arms seated on a chair, *c.* 4th century BCE. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. n. 18.96 (courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art under Creative Commons Zero); 5. Tharros: terracotta doll with missing articulated legs, *c.* 4th-2nd century BCE. Museo Nazionale "Giovanni Antonio Sanna", Sassari, inv. n. 2501. (after Pla Orquín 2017, fig. 408); 6. Tarragona, necropolis, tomb of a five/six-year-old girl: ivory doll with articulated arms and legs with fragments of a gold string, *c.* 3rd-4th century CE. Museu Nacional Arqueològic de Tarragona, inv. n. P-12906 (courtesy of the Museu Nacional Arqueològic de Tarragona).

41 Mazzoni 2016, p. 297, figs. 15-16.
42 May 1935, p. 25, pl. XXI.
43 Pucci 2019, pp. 235, 244, pl. 174f.
44 Hanfmann 1963, p. 339, n. 14.
45 D'Amore 2015, pp. 276-277, fig. 15.a; Mazzoni 2016, p. 297, figs. 15-16.
46 Bikai 1978, pl. XXIV, 12.
47 May 1935, p. 25, pl. XXI.
48 Mazar 2009, pp. 539-540, fig. 9.6 and photo 9.6.
49 Vandenabeele 1973.
50 Dörig 1958, p. 41, pl. 22, 1; see also below, paragraph 4.
51 Pla Orquín 2017, p. 319, fig. 408.

Molins in Ibiza.[52] Furthermore, this cemetery has also yielded one Corinthian-type terracotta jointed doll[53] (Fig. 6.2-3) and possibly other pierced legs.[54] At the same time, one arm pierced for articulation from Qatna[55] supports the occasional existence of alternative types of dolls in the Iron Age Levant, which may have combined movable limbs or only had articulated arms.

However, almost all of these examples from Phoenician/Punic-speaking areas were found in unknown contexts, which makes it very difficult to provide a coherent interpretation of them and their uses. Inevitably, one is obliged to extend the investigation to similar artefacts from other ancient and contemporaneous societies.

4. More than Toys: Identification, Use and Meaning of Dolls in Antiquity

Identifying toys in the archaeological record can be problematic. Ethnographic parallels and iconographic sources are useful to achieve this purpose, but some of the toys' intrinsic features and/or their find-contexts should also be considered.[56] Among the parameters frequently associated with children's toys, one can examine their ergonomics, size, weight, material, sound properties and bold colours, which should be appropriate to the cognitive and physical abilities of the intended age group of users.[57] In some cases, even their manufacture could be indicative, as crudely fashioned toys (e.g., made of unbaked clay) can often imply they were made by toddlers.[58] Finally, they can be recognised based on their similarity with toys that are still used nowadays, such as rattles, chariot models, and dolls.[59]

Although dolls are probably the best-documented type of ancient toys, their identification, use and meaning cannot always be easily and unequivocally established.[60] They could be defined as any human figurine having an adequate size and weight for a child to use it.[61] Dolls belong to the category of the so-called "simulation toys", namely those allowing the children to imitate the activities anticipating their social destiny as adult men or women.[62]

Ancient dolls most frequently represented adult women, showing usually well-defined breasts, hips and/or genitalia, while toddlers and children were not apparently portrayed as dolls.[63] Based on their female iconography and sacred, funerary or domestic find-context, a great variety of interpretations have been presented on the uses and meanings of dolls. Thus, some scholars argue that they could only have served for ritual purposes, others support their playful dimension, while still others propose their educational function.[64]

52 Fernández 1992, I: pp. 293-294; II: p. 101; III: pl. CXLIV, 894-897.

53 Román y Ferrer 1913, pl. XCVII; Almagro Gorbea 1980, p. 266, pl. LXXIX, 4.

54 Almagro Gorbea 1980, p. 149, pl. CXCVII, 8. However, given the similar dimension, it is uncertain if one of them corresponds to those from the aforementioned hypogeum 11.

55 Al-Maqdissi – Ishaq 2016, p. 353, fig. 15.

56 Sommer – Sommer 2016, pp. 342-343.

57 Rivera-Hernández 2021, pp. 84-85.

58 Kamp 2001, pp. 430-434; Harlow 2013, p. 322; Rivera-Hernández 2020, p. 388.

59 Dasen 2011, p. 53; 2012, p. 11.

60 E.g., Thompson 1963, pp. 87-95; Manson 1987; Janssen 1996; Dasen 2003; 2011, pp. 56-57; 2012, pp. 17-20; Dolansky 2012; Harlow 2013, pp. 329-334; Langin-Hooper 2020, pp. 70-81.

61 Manson 1987, p. 15.

62 Dasen 2012, p. 9.

63 Dolls consistently portrayed women from antiquity to the 19th century CE, when those representing babies and young children started to be manufactured (Girveau – Charles 2011, pp. 164-193). To a lesser extent, dolls identifiable as male imagery are known from some Greek sites, such as the Sanctuary of Artemis at Brauron (Dasen 2011, p. 57, note 46; 2012, p. 19).

64 See below, notes 70-71, 86.

As tempting as it may be to associate dolls with children's play and specifically with that of young girls, these objects could have been used in multiple ways by people of different sexes and ages, as is the case nowadays. Moreover, dolls did not have to be solely intended for active play. They could also have been votive objects within religious rituals,[65] but one cannot exclude that there may even have been collectable toys for display in antiquity,[66] which, for instance, would have been used to keep the children company or to tell them oral stories from religious myths, poems and legends.[67] Therefore, far from having a single function, dolls in antiquity were multifunctional artefacts. Their ludic, educational or ritual character could vary according to the context in which they were used and the age and social identity of their users.[68] In this way, by paying attention to the intrinsic features of dolls, their find-contexts and assessing who could have been their potential users it is possible to determine whether or not a doll was a toy, or when it could have been much more than that.

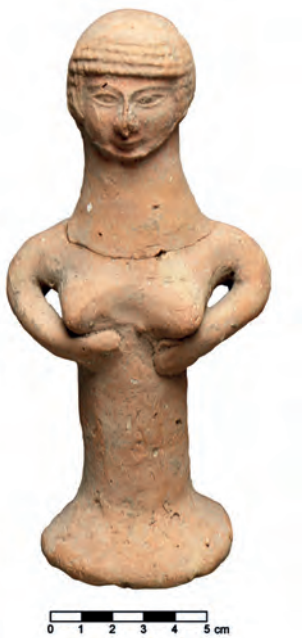

Fig. 7. Tell ed-Duweir/Lachish: Judean pillar figurine, *c.* 8th-7th century BCE. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. n. 34.126.53 (courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art under Creative Commons Zero).

The so-called "Judean Pillar Figurines" (hereafter JPFs) provide a good example of the difficulty in identifying and defining dolls, as well as of their different uses and meanings.[69] These small clay figurines from Iron Age II Judah, with a height of *c.* 15/20 cm, are characterised by the presence of a handmade or moulded head, arms either supporting or holding the large breasts and pillar bases (Fig. 7). Various theories on the JPFs' function have been offered, explaining them as images of a fertility goddess (e.g., Astarte, Asherah), mediatrixes of YHWH[70] or even as dolls.[71] However, the latest research seems to agree that these figurines were instruments used for magical, healing and apotropaic purposes, which had great importance in family and domestic cults, with women playing a fundamental role.[72] The JPFs have often been discovered in residential areas, which would suggest their frequent use in the houses, where children – being regularly, but passively, enculturated to the family's religious practices – would have been able to observe how they were employed in domestic rituals.[73] At the same time, children may not have been merely spectators, but users of these figurines: some poorly made examples have been connected to their involvement in the production of JPFs.[74] Con-

65 Sommer – Sommer 2016, pp. 353-354; Gutschke 2019, p. 215.

66 Parker 2019.

67 Dolansky 2012, pp. 278-281; Sommer – Sommer 2016, p. 351.

68 E.g., Dasen 2003; 2011; 2012; Dolansky 2012; Harlow 2013; Sommer – Sommer 2016.

69 Nakhai 2014.

70 A detailed summary of JPFs' interpretations is in Darby 2014, pp. 34-59.

71 For a recent discussion of the JPFs as dolls, see Parker 2019, *contra* Kletter 1996, pp. 73-81; van der Toorn 2002; Johnston 2003, p. 99.

72 Darby 2014, p. 367; Garroway 2017, pp. 129-130. On the central role of women in domestic religiosity, see Meyers 2002.

73 Garroway 2017, pp. 129-130; 2018, p. 164.

74 Kristine Garroway (2017, pp. 130-131; 2018, p. 165) has recently proposed the hypothesis of children's involvement in the making of JPFs' imitations based on examples with manufacturing defects. To support this hypothesis, she has also drawn on some ethnographic parallels from Iran, where young girls made their own dolls out of clay and sticks. Apart from making imitations of these figurines, children may have participated in the manufacture of the actual JPFs. Eryn Darby (2014, pp. 190-195, 210) has sustained that they were manufactured in domestic workshops run by men who were helped by women and children.

sequently, following gender roles and imitating their mothers, young girls probably had an active role in the socialisation process and began to "play religion" in the same way they "played house".[75] Therefore, the case of the JPFs illustrates how some artefacts that were probably not conceived as dolls could be used by children, especially young girls, for this purpose.[76]

In contrast to the debated case of the JPFs, the existence of dolls in the Graeco-Roman world is widely accepted. They usually represent adult women, who may be either dressed or nude[77] and can be distinguished from other figurines through the presence of articulated limbs.[78] As aforementioned, the earliest examples, having bell-shaped bodies and movable legs, come from Boeotia (Fig. 5).[79] More naturalistic dolls (Fig. 6.1-3) appeared in the Archaic period (*c.* 700-480 BCE) and continued to be used during Classical[80] (*c.* 480-323 BCE), Hellenistic[81] (*c.* 323-30 BCE) and Roman times[82] (*c.* 30 BCE-5th century CE). They frequently portray standing figures with articulated arms and legs, while seated figurines, sitting on a throne with movable arms and rigid flexed legs, were less frequently represented (Fig. 6.4).[83]

In any case, the element that makes them attractive objects for playing are their movable limbs, which allowed the dolls to change – thanks to the imagination of their users – from inanimate objects to animated entities.[84] When they also had a pierced head, where a single string could pass through it, one can imagine they could have been hung, shaken or played with like puppets.[85] Despite the formal and size similarities with modern dolls, the Graeco-Roman articulated figurines were not just toys,[86] but they combine playful, educational and ritual elements.[87] They are frequently found in children's graves, accompanying girls who died at a young age, between two and three years old.[88] Some iconographic sources depicting young girls holding a doll in their hands strengthen the association between this type of toy and little girls.[89] This evidence would suggest that these dolls were given to their users at an early age, also showing that the socialisation of girls in gender roles began at an early stage.[90] Nevertheless, the well-preserved state of the dolls shows that they were handled with care and, probably, under the control of adults,[91] who could also guide the type of games that were played with them.

The fact that the dolls represented adult women – often naked and with well-defined breasts and pubes – and not babies or children suggest that they could have been used to familiarise young girls with their

75 Garroway 2018, p. 164.

76 Parker 2019.

77 Gutschke 2019, p. 217; Massar 2019, p. 40.

78 Among others, see Dasen 2011, p. 56; Gutsche 2019, p. 217.

79 Neils – Oakley 2003, p. 267; Massar 2019, p. 40.

80 Sommer – Sommer 2016, p. 351.

81 Thompson 1963, p. 88; Neils – Oakley 2003, p. 267.

82 On dolls during the Roman period, see Bianchi 2019.

83 Dasen 2011, p. 56; Gutschke 2019, p. 217.

84 Dolansky 2012, p. 276; Harlow 2013, p. 332; Langin-Hooper 2020, p. 52.

85 Neils – Oakley 2003, p. 267; Lambrugo 2019, p. 48; Langin-Hooper 2020, pp. 82-89.

86 The uses and meanings of articulated dolls in the Graeco-Roman world have been widely debated (e.g., Dolansky 2012, pp. 267-268; Bianchi 2019, pp. 46-47; Gutschke 2019, pp. 215-218).

87 Neils – Oakley 2003, p. 267; Dasen 2011, p. 56.

88 These figurines have been often discovered in ritual contexts, while they are scarcely documented in houses, see Gutschke 2019, p. 215.

89 Neils – Oakley 2003, p. 307, cat. n. 124.

90 Papaikonomou 2008; Dasen 2011, p. 56.

91 Dasen 2012, p. 19.

body transformations[92] and to instil in them ideas and/or concepts about sexuality, eroticism,[93] and gender identities, thus preparing them for their future role as wives and not exclusively as mothers.[94] Accordingly, the adult women of the house would have been able to play an active role in this process of socialisation. They may even have been involved in playing with the dolls, perhaps using them for some sort of theatrical representations to the female children. However, the young girls were those who most frequently used the dolls, identified themselves with them and mimed through these games the various daily activities of adult women.

Occasional evidence suggests that (many/some of?) the nude dolls could have originally been dressed. In this regard, the discovery of fragments of a gold string in the tomb of a five/six-year-old girl (*c.* 3rd-4th century CE) in the necropolis of Tarragona is noteworthy (Fig. 6.6). As they were associated with an ivory doll with articulated arms and legs, it has been argued that they would have originally been part of its dress.[95] Consequently, it does not seem far-fetched to assume that young girls could have played dress-up and decorated their dolls with miniature clothes and ornaments, thus learning activities related to making and sewing.[96]

In Greece, during the Classical period, some articulated figurines hold musical instruments in their hands (e.g., tambourines, castanets),[97] which could refer to activities related to religious rituals or dance festivals. As it was customary for women to dance regularly in groups, such dolls could have favoured collective games among young girls using their dancing dolls.[98]

Graeco-Roman articulated dolls were also found in large quantities in sanctuaries, where – according to textual sources (e.g., *AP* 6.276, 6.309) – they were dedicated to female deities by young women before their wedding day[99] or during rites marking the passage from childhood to adulthood.[100] This votive use of dolls during female adolescence can be seen on an interesting gravestone representing a young woman of marriageable age with a doll in her hands.[101] The archaeological record from both funerary and ritual contexts shows that dolls accompanied the girls from a very young age until they became women, but also that their uses, meanings and functions changed according to the stage of their user's life cycle.[102]

It is not surprising that dolls in antiquity were multifunctional, as some articulated figurines still nowadays combine educational, playful and ritual elements. This is the case of the so-called *imagenes vestideras*, a type of wooden figure very common since the 17th century in the popular religiosity of Spain and some Latin American countries.[103] They are articulated figurines, mainly made of polychrome wood, which generally

92 Dasen 2011, p. 56.

93 On the possible use of these "interactive figurines" to stimulate, regulate and control sexuality in Hellenistic Babylon, see Langin-Hooper 2018, pp. 132-135; 2020, pp. 76-81.

94 Wiedemann 1989, p. 149; Harlow 2013, p. 331. One type of doll that could be related to the preparation of young girls to be future mothers is that of the pregnant woman. Terracotta figures portraying a young woman with a large pelvis were common in eastern Greece from the 4th century BCE. Their peculiarity was the presence of a cavity in their belly where a removable figurine of a foetus was placed (Griesbach 2019, p. 42, fig. 1).

95 Balil 1962.

96 Thompson 1963, pp. 88-89; Manson 1987, p. 15; Sommer – Sommer 2016, pp. 351-352.

97 Dasen 2011, p. 55; 2012, p. 18; 2019a, p. 17; Massar 2019, p. 40.

98 Sommer – Sommer 2016, pp. 351-352.

99 Gutschke 2019, p. 218.

100 Dasen 2011, p. 57; Massar 2019, p. 40.

101 Neils – Oakley 2003, p. 265, cat. n. 68.

102 Sommer – Sommer 2016, p. 343.

103 Cea Gutiérrez 1992, pp. 18-33.

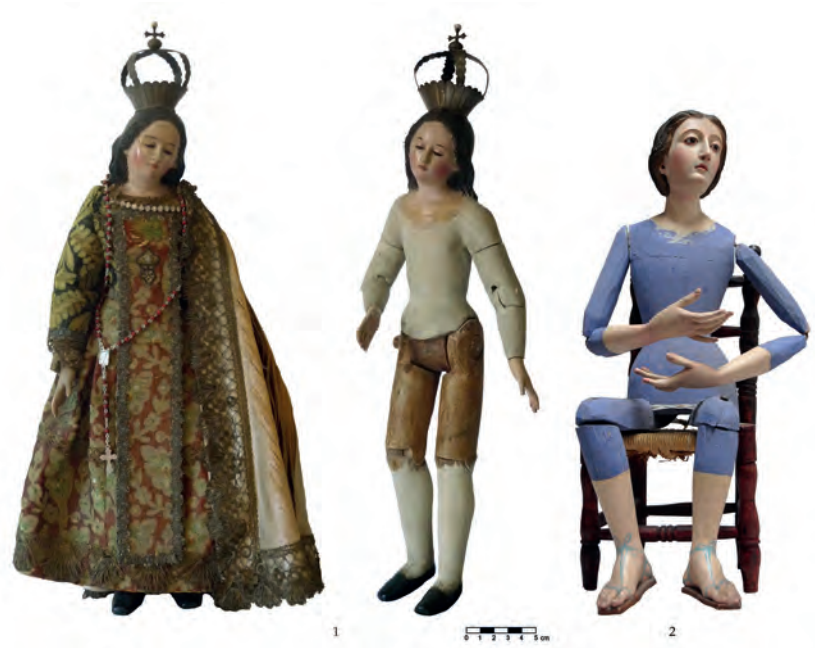

Fig. 8.1. Chile: polychrome wooden articulated sculpture of the Virgin of the Rosary, *c.* 18th-19th century CE. Private Collection (courtesy of Ana María Soffia); 2. Spain, Zamora: polychrome wooden articulated sculpture of sitting Virgin, *c.* 19th century CE. Museo Etnográfico de Castilla y León, inv. n. 1991/001/024 (photo by A. Rivera-Hernández; courtesy of the Museo Etnográfico de Castilla y León).

represent virgins[104] (Fig. 8). These statuettes, displayed in churches and houses, were – and still are – objects of worship by people of all ages. As being socialising and educational objects, they played an important role in the transmission of daily religious customs. However, the feature that allows them to be compared with ancient dolls, and particularly with the one under examination, is that they are articulated and their body lacks physical details, which probably depend on them being dressed and adorned. Therefore, these cult figurines required someone who could dress, adorn, comb and look after them.[105]

5. Conclusions

The analysis of the parallels showing a similar iconography led to a proposed dating of around the 5th-4th century BCE for the articulated terracotta from Carthage and the suggestion of a connection to the Levant. As scholars have already noted,[106] tight links between the North African metropolis and the eastern Mediterranean were renewed during the Persian period, when it is likely that there was increased mobility and westward circulation of artefacts, ideas and beliefs, as a consequence of the unstable and changing political landscape in the Levant. Within this framework, it is not surprising that the best parallel for the Carthaginian doll currently comes from Egypt[107] (Fig. 9), as a close and direct connection between the Mediterranean capital and this region (and Nubia) is documented from the time of its foundation.[108] This would imply that

104 Although less common, there were also *imagenes vestideras* of baby Jesus, saints and Christ (Cea Gutiérrez 1992, pp. 42-46, 63-65).

105 Cea Gutiérrez 1992, pp. 37-58.

106 For a thorough analysis of this problem and its data on a Mediterranean scale, see Oggiano – Pedrazzi 2013; Oggiano 2016, with references. A remarkable mid-6th-century-BCE case study is investigated in Orsingher 2019.

107 Reeves 2015.

108 Currently, there is no systematic and updated account of this topic. However, for various case studies, see: Orsingher 2018b, p. 118; 2020, with references.

this terracotta embodied the combination of a Levantine-type iconography with an Egyptian way of making dolls in the form of standing nude figures with articulated arms.

Notwithstanding some uncertainties due to its fragmentary status, the iconography portrayed in this doll has been seen as possibly a divine image. The parallels cannot be identified as a specific goddess, but one cannot exclude that such distinction would have been possible based on attributes that are now lost, such as gestures, headgear, objects held in their hands and clothes. Regarding this last aspect, the whitish slip covering the torso and thigh, and the summary definition of bodily features such as the breast, genital area and shoulders are noteworthy. The same elements have been observed in the *imagenes vestideras*, where they are explained by the fact that these figurines were meant to be seen dressed and not nude. Is it possible to assume a similar interpretation for the articulated figurine from Carthage? Certainly, the presence of movable arms would allow it.

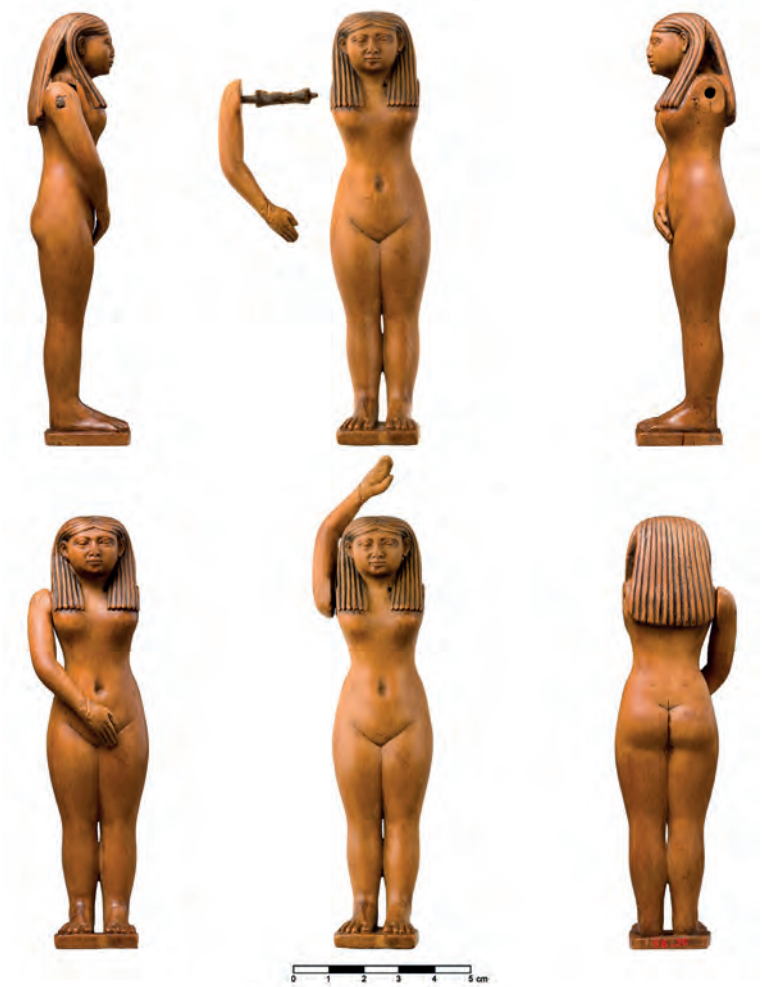

Fig. 9. Egypt, provenance unknown: wooden statuette of a nude woman with articulated arms, *c.* 945-664 BCE. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. n. 58.36a-c (courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art under Creative Commons Zero).

The tentative provenance of this terracotta from a domestic area, and hence its possible original use inside a house, would suggest that it could have played a dual role, being both a divine image for a family cult, similarly to what is observed around the same time in the so-called "House of the domestic shrine" in Motya (*c.* late 5th-early 4th century BCE),[109] and a doll to be used by children and adults. Dressing-up the doll would have been one of the many play activities for which this articulated figurine could have been used and certainly the house would have been the most appropriate environment for transmitting and learning social and religious values and traditional gender roles, while opening a world of imaginative play.

Although it is impossible to know all the emotions and actions that the articulated figurines inspired in those who played with them and/or who observed the games in which they were protagonists, the ambiguity of the interpretation of this figurine can be only partly related to its fragmented state and uncertainty

109 The fragmentary arms of a (possible divine?) terracotta figure, around one-third of normal size, were found in the collapse layer in the south-western corner of room L.1060 (Nigro 2011, p. 48, pl. XV, MD.03.338a-b).

in establishing its context of use. However, it also reflects its multiple possible uses, which – poised between ritual and play – could have been performed according to the context and the age and social identity of its users: the same artefact could have been a toy for some, an object of religious importance for others, and even a collectable object, which could have had the power of evoking family and childhood memories.

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