

Book review: Carthago. *Il mito immortale* (Colosseo, Foro Romano; 27 settembre 2019-29 marzo 2020). *La mostra / The Exhibition*, Alfonsina Russo, Francesca Guarneri, Paolo Xella e José Ángel Zamora López (a cura di), Electa : Milano, 2019; 172 p.:ill; 21x28 cm; ISBN 9788891825247

Carthago. *Il mito immortale*, Alfonsina Russo, Francesca Guarneri, Paolo Xella e José Ángel Zamora López (a cura di), Electa : Milano, 2019; 312 p.:ill; 21x28 cm; ISBN 9788891825223

Zweite Aufzug, Dreyßigster Auftritt,
Sarastro, «Die Strahlen der Sonne vertreiben die Nacht,
Zernichten der Heuchler erschlichene Macht».
J. E. Schikaneder, *Die Zauberflöte*, 1791.

Founded according to some scholars around the middle of the 9th c. BC, Carthage was one of the cities that the Phoenicians established as settlements during their westward movement. From the following century onwards, the African metropolis forged trade connections with the homeland, and with the Phoenician settlements of Sicily, Sardinia and the Iberian peninsula. Later on, the city, having founded colonies along the North African coast, allied itself with the Etruscan town of Caere, in a successful attempt to prevent the Greeks from creating colonies in Corsica and in Sardinia. Once it had gained control over Western Sicily, Sardinia and the Balearic Islands, Carthage reached the Iberian Peninsula and its silver mines. The commercial supremacy of the African metropolis very soon clashed with the growing ambitions of Rome, and after a long conflict, that lasted about 120 years, the city was forced to cede domination of the Mediterranean to the Romans.



Cover of Carthago. *La mostra / The Exhibition*, Alfonsina Russo, Francesca Guarneri, Paolo Xella e José Ángel Zamora López (a cura di), Electa : Milano, 2019

Little more than thirty years has passed since the great exhibition on “the Phoenicians” was organised in Palazzo Grassi in Venice, curated by Sabatino Moscati. This allowed the research into this ancient people to emerge from strictly academic circles, and involved the participation of numerous specialists from many different disciplines relating to the field. These specialists came from Universities, Research Institutes and Institutions dedicated to scientific research and the protection of cultural heritage in all the regions on the shores of the Mediterranean. The Venetian Exhibition attracted no fewer than 750,000 visitors, a remarkable number considering its antiquarian subject matter, one certainly not easy to match. Furthermore, no fewer than 80,000 catalogues were sold. This catalogue was composed of 764 pages, of which 580 were dedicated to various themes and the remaining 184 to the catalogue itself, which illustrated the 966 artefacts on display, all of which were photographically recorded.

Given the success of the Exhibition in Palazzo Grassi, other institutions aimed to repeat the achievement with similar Expositions on the theme of Phoenician and Punic archaeology: amongst several, we may cite the Badischen Landesmuseum in Karlsruhe with its exhibition “Hannibal ad portas. Macht und Reichtum Karthagos”, held between the 25th of September 2004 and 30th January 2005, with a 400-page catalogue, published in 2004 and l’Institut du Monde Arabe with the exhibition “La Méditerranée de Phéniciens”, held in Paris from 6th November 2007 to 20th April 2008, also accompanied by a catalogue, numbering 410 pages, published in 2007. The latter exhibition mainly concerned the Phoenician world in the East, thanks also to the materials brought to Paris by Ernest Renan during the archaeological expedition carried out in the Lebanon in 1860, artefacts that are now conserved in *Musée du Louvre*. The former exhibition mainly regarded Carthage in the Hellenistic Era, on the eve of the Punic Wars, hence the city at its peak.

It was organised on the basis of the archaeological research conducted in the ancient city, first by Friedrich Ludwig Rakob and then by Hans Georg Niemeyer with the organisation of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut.

In that splendid and unforgettable undertaking in Venice, Sabatino Moscati involved almost all the researchers of the Istituto per la Civiltà fenicia e punica of the Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, of which he was President of the Scientific Committee. He also encouraged the involvement of both Italian and foreign scholars, who were called to participate according to their respective scientific skills and their activities on the various regions of the Mediterranean that were involved in the Phoenician diaspora in antiquity. Some of the scholars that participated at that time on the Committee of the Venice Exhibition and in the editing of the relative catalogue are also present on the occasion of the new exhibition dedicated to Carthage, held in Rome within the Colosseum and the Roman Forum and inaugurated in 2019: those in question are Maria Giulia Amadasi, Maria Eugenia Aubet, Sandro Filippo Bondi, Giovanni Brizzi, Mhamed H. Fantar and Vassos Karageorghis, the latter included solely on the Scientific Committee. In fact, on this occasion they have participated, together with other scholars, in the realisation of a volume dedicated to Carthage entitled “*Carthago. Il mito immortale*” [Carthage. The immortal myth] edited by A. Russo, F. Guarnieri, P. Xella and J. Á. Zamora López, Mondadori Electa, Milano 2019, 312 p. This volume, which is clearly not a catalogue, as declared on p. 7 in the colophon, was published on the occasion of the aforementioned exhibition. At the same time as the volume containing the essays, another was published, which was entitled: “*Carthago. Il mito immortale. La mostra*” [Carthage. The immortal myth. The exhibition]. This contained selected images, provided with detailed information, of many of the artefacts on display at the Exhibition.

The graphic artists employed by Electa, which published the aforementioned volume “*Carthago. Il mito immortale*” on the occasion of the Exhibition, have done an excellent job, as for the cover of the volume they have chosen a photo that reproduces the group of heads in polychrome glass paste conserved at the *Musée National de Carthage*¹, also on display in the Exhibition and illustrated in the relative catalogue (76-77). The technicians have worked in such a way that on the spine of the volume there peeps a small head in white and blue glass paste, which is also very similar to that used for the cover of the volume relating to the Exhibition “The Phoenicians” in Palazzo Grassi, creating as sort of combination that perhaps intends to suggest continuity.

As mentioned above, precisely in the wake of the great success enjoyed by the Exhibition in Venice on “The Phoenicians” and its relative catalogue, the discipline left the strictly academic circle to address a wider audience, thanks also to the exceptional capacity for scientific dissemination possessed by Sabatino Moscati. Even the volume published on this last occasion², is in fact composed of a collection of contributions whose main aim is by and large dissemination. The collection has the objective, according to the organisers, of representing the current and most up-to-date knowledge concerning the Phoenicians and the Carthaginians.

As regards the material on display, the artefacts are well known to the majority of the experts in the sector; in the lack of a complete catalogue of the works exhibited, the visitor is guided through the Exhibition by way of panels placed next to the displayed objects, as well as by the small volume referred to above, which, as we have already noted, does not contain all the artefacts in display. It is

clear that the curators have made choices and have decided to highlight some of the most famous of the objects produced by the Phoenician-Punic culture, all of which have already been exhibited in the similar events that preceded it. On the other hand, they have not taken into account the most recent archaeological discoveries, not only those of the Pan-Mediterranean Phoenician world, but even those made in the very same North African capital. For example, there is no sign of finds uncovered in Sulky, a Phoenician town in Sardinia, the modern-day Sant’Antioco, a settlement that, on the basis of the most recent archaeological research³, appears to have been the earliest Phoenician settlement in Sardinia. It is surprising that this exhibition does not display a single object from this ancient town, that had a primary role in the commercial exchanges of the central Mediterranean from the end of the 9th c. BC onwards, throughout the whole of the Roman Era.

Numerous authors have contributed to the volume, including experts from many disciplines, however, not all are specialists in the sector of Phoenician-Punic archaeology, at least not on the basis of their published works. Alfonsina Russo, is an expert on Etruscan studies - she is the Director of MiBACT and conducts research on southern Etruria, and in particular, the area of Vulci; Francesca Guarnieri graduated in Phoenician-Punic archaeology at the University of Viterbo with a thesis on the onomastics written on Punic stelae, hence not only archaeological but also epigraphic – she is currently an official at the Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio per l’area Metropolitana di Roma, la Provincia di Viterbo e l’Etruria meridionale [Department for Archaeological, Fine Arts and Landscape Heritage for the Metropolitan Area of Rome, the Province of Viterbo and Southern Etruria]; Paolo Xella,

¹ *Carthago Catalogo* (2019), 76-77; Haevernick (1977), nn. 1, 4, 77, 81, 93, fundort b, 153, 157, 159, 162; Seefried (1982), 3-186, figs. 1, tables II, CIII, III, DI.

² *Carthago Presentazione* (2019).

³ Guirguis (2005), 13-29; Del Vais (2010), 188-259.

is a historian of religions in the area of the Near East and gained professional experience with the Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche [National Research Board]; while José Ángel Zamora López is an expert on the epigraphy of the Phoenician-Punic area who works at Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas.

On the other hand, several scholars who have worked on Phoenician-Punic archaeology for many years in Sardinia and Sicily are not present. A theme that is notably absent, or at the very least treated in cursory fashion, is that of the relations between the Carthaginians (and broadly speaking, the Phoenicians) and the local populations. This topic is today one of the most widely debated amongst scholars for the potential of reconstructing the settlement patterns and autonomous cultural developments of the West, overcoming old ideas connected with elusive processes of “acculturation”. These ideas instead seem to re-surface in the presentation of Carthage as emerges from the contents conveyed by the exhibition, or more precisely by the way in which they have been selected. Research that I have conducted for many years into the relations between the Phoenicians and the local populations displays that the contribution of the local cultures constituted a fundamental enrichment for the Phoenician civilisation.

Dissemination is an excellent and indispensable activity, but it is a difficult practice, as one is always at risk of banalisation. The volume in question, which was realised to accompany the Exhibition at the Colosseum comes close to reaching its declared aims, but the archaeology section in reality fails to provide adequate coverage of the state-of-the-art of the studies, and hence the bibliography is necessarily incomplete. On the other hand, it is understandable that limitations in terms of space may have led to a particularly cursory treatment of some of the various subjects. As is well-known, archaeology is not science fiction: it must avail of a critical analysis of the

data so as to contribute to a reconstruction of the history of the ancient world.

The exhibition also partially conforms to the recent pop tendencies in exhibitions: the presumed god Moloch, which never existed in the Phoenician and Punic contexts⁴, for example, is portrayed at the entrance to the Exhibition in the section hosted in the Colosseum in the version presented in the 1914 film *Cabiria*. While on one hand it has the purpose of involving the general public emotionally, on the other hand, one risks conveying messages that are scientifically unproven, if not downright incorrect.

Returning to the volume: the topics treated are many and unfortunately, amongst these there are several oversights, perhaps mere typos, which, probably in the case of the authors for whom Italian is not their mother tongue, may be justified as translation errors. *Inter alia* we may cite the type of Carthaginian amphora T-5.2.3 ½, which is inexistent (Bechtold 2019, 158-60), indicated in the caption on p. 159.

Unfortunately one also may observe the re-emergence and perpetuation of common misconceptions, long since debunked by a comparison between geographical data and an accurate interpretation of the ancient written sources. Stefano Medas, who is in possession of notable experience in the field of ancient seafaring, sustains that one of the favoured routes of the Phoenician sailors was that to the south, skirting the African coast from Lebanon to Tangier. In reality, the Gulf of Sidra, which is devoid of shelter, is characterised by long periods of windlessness, alternating with moments of stormy weather. The Mistral, the prevailing wind that rises in the Gulf of Lion, blows without meeting obstacles towards the south-east, hitting the Gulf of Sidra and the Cyrenaica area, where it also generates storm surges, heightened by the

⁴ Moscati (1989), 99-100; Moscati (1991), 11-24; Moscati, Ribichini (1991), 1-44; D’Andrea (2014), 31-32.

notable “fetch” that gives rise to great wave movement.

Furthermore, the ancient sources, although they treat the subject fleetingly, all agree on denying the possibility of sailing along the Gulf of Sidra. On the subject, Sallust expresses the following: “Id oppidum ab Sidoniis conditum est, quos accepimus profugos ob discordias civilis nauibus in eos locos venisse, ceterum situm inter duas Syrtis, quibus nomen ex re inditum. Nam duo sunt sinus prope in extrema Africa, impares magnitudine, pari natura; quorum proxima terrae praealta sunt, cetera uti fors tulit alta alia, alia in tempestate uadosa. Nam ubi mare magnum esse et saevire ventis coepit. limum harenamque et saxa ingentia fluctus trahunt: ita facies locorum cum ventis simul mutatur”⁵. Furthermore, that the waters of the Sidra were not very transitable is also suggested by the statement that to reach the coast of the Cyrenaica it was necessary to skirt the southern coast of the island of Crete. The legend of the Philaeni brothers, which arose due to this situation, is not to be forgotten. The same Sallust adds as follows: “Qua tempestate Carthaginienses pleraque Africa imperitabant, Cyrenenses quoque magni atque opulenti fuere. Ager in medio harenosus, una specie; neque flumen neque mons erat, qui finis eorum discerneret...Ceterum solet in illis locis tempestas haud secus atque in mari retinere. Nam ubi per loca aequalia et nuda gignentium ventus coortus harenam humo excitavit, ea magna vi agitata ora oculosque implere solet: ita prospectu impedito morari iter”⁶.

Amongst other things, the correct route is suggested to us, at least from the MMIA onwards on the basis of finds recovered from the Aegean⁷, that was crossed also according to what is suggested by a 3rd c. AD mosaic found in the middle of the 90’s at Ammae-

dara, where a fair number of the temples dedicated to Astarte are portrayed. These were notorious for being places of worship in which trading activities⁸ took place under the protection of the gods⁹, along with the provision of the indispensable naval supplies. This was a well-known route, dominated by the islands¹⁰, which touched on the land masses generally located to the south of the three large peninsulas of the Mediterranean, but nevertheless still markedly far from the African coast. Amongst other things, the finding of this mosaic resolved a query posed by Vasos Karageorghis concerning the presence of a sanctuary dedicated to Astarte on Naxos. This was posed cautiously on the basis of the discovery of some gold plaques with portrayals of the goddess¹¹. The places of worship indicated in the mosaic are twelve in number, as this was a “magic” number, but they were more numerous. Amongst the various other localities, we may note the island of Malta, with the Temple of *Ashtart* at Tas-Silġ, close to the modern-day port of Marsaxlokk, at the southern tip of the island, and the temple of *Ashtart um* (Mother Astarte)¹² at Capo Sant’Elia, at the heart of the Gulf of Cagliari. Furthermore, ever along the continuation of the same route westwards, one may note the sanctuary of Cova des Culleram at Eivissa¹³ and that found in Gorham Cave¹⁴ that opens to the east of the Rock of Gibraltar¹⁵. It is no mere coincidence that the earliest place of worship dedicated to a great Phoenician divinity, Melqart, was situated at Cadiz, in the extreme west, beyond the Columns of Hercules, opposite Tyre the motherland. In conclusion, as can be noted, none of the places

⁸ Aubet (2006), 35-47.

⁹ Bejaoui (1997), 825-858; Bejaoui (1998), 87-94; Bejaoui (2002), 503-508.

¹⁰ Moscati (1993), 87-90.

¹¹ Karageorghis (1998), 121-126.

¹² Bartoloni (2009), 47.

¹³ Marín Ceballos *et al.* (2014), 85-114.

¹⁴ Gutiérrez López *et al.* (2019), 1783-1816.

¹⁵ Bravo Jiménez (2011), 73-95.

⁵ *Bell. Iug.*, 78.

⁶ *Bell. Iug.*, 79.

⁷ Niemeier (1998), 37, fig. 13.

of worship dedicated to Astarte are located on the southern coast of the Mediterranean.

The *tessera hospitalis*, which appeared as an *incipit* also in the illustrated article on the very same Exhibition that recently appeared in the magazine *Archeo*¹⁶, found in Rome in the area of Sant’Omobono, bears on its posterior an Etruscan inscription “*Araz Silqetenas Spurianas*”, probably a name, a family name and a second family name¹⁷. In particular, *Silqetenas* has been interpreted as “from Sulcis”¹⁸, i.e. a citizen of the town of Sulky, on the island of Sant’Antioco in Sardinia, referred to above. This is an archaeological find of notable importance if it could be demonstrated that there was a link between the Phoenician town in Sardinia and the city of Rome at the eve of the Republic, as is suggested by the discovery of the *tessera*. The two *tesserae hospitales* found in Rome and Carthage, both of Etruscan manufacture, suggest that pacts of alliance were made in preparation for the battle of Alalia, confirmed by the Pyrgi Tables; likewise, they would appear to testify to a pro-Carthage party in Rome getting stronger with time, and probably still active at the dawn of the Punic Wars. Given the importance of this documentation, it is important to repeat that in the Exhibition in question there is not a single object from the Phoenician town of Sulky on display, a settlement that, as already mentioned, is the object of numerous archaeological investigations still underway, amongst the latest of which are those carried out under the auspices of the University of Tübingen.

José Ángel Zamora López also deals with Carthaginian *cretulae*¹⁹, which, as is well-known, are pieces of clay upon which were impressed a seal, which closed documents written on parchment or on papyrus²⁰, documents that were later archived in sacred

places, with the guarantee and protection of the divinities. Concerning this, the scholar claims that only one *cretula*, which he cites, comes from Sardinia. In reality, numerous examples have been found in archaeological excavations and they all appear in the literature²¹.

Concerning the small heads in glass paste, including those portrayed on the cover of the volume, perhaps due to a translation error, the author of Chapter IV.2.5 The Glass, Hélène Le Meaux states that “The female heads can be recognised by way of the earrings...”²², while, in reality also the heads that are clearly male, sporting flowing beards, at the base of the ears, display not earlobes, but small yellow spheres, undoubtedly highly reminiscent of gold earrings²³, and they are interpreted as being so by Monique Seefried²⁴. Furthermore, even if they do not reproduce gold earrings, and the small spheres below the ears appear to be of other colours, they probably represent earrings made from other materials. Of great interest in relation to this topic is the information offered by finds made in Cyprus, where Antoine Hermary and Évangéline Markou have studied the earrings as male jewellery in Cyprus and in the Eastern Mediterranean from the 7th to the 4th c. BC.²⁵ For that matter, the close-to-lifesize male masks, together with the female masks, often feature suspension holes and oc-

²¹ Marras (1990), 52, 58; Olianias (2014), 119-120, 233, 263, table VI, 1-5.

²² Le Meaux (2019), 142.

²³ Haevernick (1977), 152-231, tables 1, 46, 93, 480, 2, 2, 5, 8, 14; Barreca (1986), 238-239, figs. 217a-218; Uberti (1988), 480-481; Uberti (1993), nn. 62-63, 65, 136; Spanò (2008), n. 67, 119-120, 157, tav. IX; Muscuso (2017), n. 325, 445.

²⁴ Seefried (1982), Type BII, nn. 11, 13-14, 16, 91-92, Type BIII, nn. 13, 32, 96, 99, Type CI, nn. 3, 7, 12, 16-17, 21, 100-102, Type CII, nn. 2, 4, 6, 103-104, Type CIII, nn. 1, 7, 14, 16, 23, 25, 27, 35-36, 38-39, 41, 46, 51-53, 105-107, 109-113, Type CIV, nn. 3-5, 116-117, Type CV, n. 2, 117, Type DI, n. 2, 119, Type FI, nn. 4, 10, 34, 145-146, 149, figs. 1, 3, 5-6, 8, 11-12, 15, 19, 47/2, 47/4, 47/6.

²⁵ Hermary, Markou (2003), 211-236.

¹⁶ Almonte *et al.* (2019), 50-69.

¹⁷ Zucca (2004), 50.

¹⁸ Adornato 2003, 809-835.

¹⁹ Zamora López (2019), 124.

²⁰ Brandl (1993), 129-142.

asionally conserve so-called “leech” earrings in bronze, silver or gold.

As regards the pottery, which, whether we like it or not, is the only reliable benchmark for archaeology, unfortunately we have missed out on the chance to interpret the changes in diet that can be traced from the pottery shapes; in fact, on the basis of the title of the chapter on the kitchenware (162-63), Lorenza Campanella was supposed to deal with this subject; instead there is a mere illustration of some recipes with no reference to the pottery used for the preparation of food. In reality the chapter builds on what has already been dealt with in the preceding chapter of the same volume by Carlos Gómez Bellard. In the whole volume, the only pottery types that are examined are those of the transport amphorae, in sections written by Joan Ramon²⁶ and Babette Bechtold²⁷.

In Chapter IV.6.5 on the osteological analyses, Valentina Melchiorri writes: “In Sulci the first archaeo-osteological analyses, started by V. Melchiorri in collaboration with L. Usai and B. Wilkens in 2008, are still ongoing”²⁸. Although this may not be particularly relevant to the aims of the research, the authors of this project do not appear to see things in the same light. In fact, Barbara Wilkens, palaeozoologist and researcher at the University of Sassari, in 2012 states the following: “The material examined comes from the excavations of the tophet of Sulky, which were carried out from 1998 onwards by Paolo Bernardini. The pottery containers that were used as cinerary urns have been studied by Valentina Melchiorri [2] for her PhD thesis, while the anthropological remains have been studied by Licia Usai, and in part cited in the thesis. All the urns date to the archaic phase, from the mid 8th c. to

the mid 6th c. BC. On the same occasion the author conducted an archaeo-zoological analysis, but the results were only partially inserted in the thesis, and in some cases in a misleading way. For this reason it is deemed necessary to return to the work; one which has shown itself to be of particular importance in light of the scarcity of studies on fauna present in these contexts”²⁹. Furthermore, it is appropriate to mention that I, way back in 1988, conducted an autoptic analysis of the bone remains contained in several urns of the tophet in Sulky³⁰, highlighting the urns without contents (8 vessels), those with the bones of children (2 vessels) and those that instead contained animal bones, mostly of lamb (6 vessels).

The bibliography, which is organised in alphabetical order, can not be described as insufficient, as the aim of the volume is primarily that of dissemination. However, there are some misprints that are hard to comprehend. Amongst these, for example, are those relating to the author Cintas, who is placed between the authors Ilari and Jahn: his work, *Manuel d'Archéologie Punique I*, published in 1970, is dated to 1907.

This is all for the collective volume. What follows concerns the exhibition and its catalogue. The former consists of a series of display cases placed within the second ring

²⁹ Wilkens (2012), 45-59: “Il materiale in studio proviene dagli scavi del tofet di Sulky, effettuati a partire dal 1998 da Paolo Bernardini. I contenitori ceramici che fungevano da urne cinerarie sono stati studiati da Valentina Melchiorri [2] in occasione della tesi di dottorato, mentre i resti antropologici sono stati studiati da Licia Usai e in parte citati nella tesi. Tutte le urne appartengono alla fase arcaica, dalla metà del secolo VIII alla metà del VI a.C. Nella stessa occasione è stato intrapreso anche lo studio archeozoologico da parte della scrivente, ma i risultati sono stati inseriti nella tesi solo parzialmente e in qualche caso in modo fuorviante. Per questo motivo si ritiene opportuno riprendere il lavoro che si è mostrato di particolare importanza per la scarsità degli studi sulla fauna presente in questo tipo di contesti”.

³⁰ Bartoloni (1988), 171.

²⁶ Ramon (2019), 156-158.

²⁷ Bechtold (2019), 158-160.

²⁸ Melchiorri (2019), 184: “A Sulci le prime ricerche archeo-osteologiche, avviate da V. Melchiorri in collaborazione con L. Usai e B. Wilkens nel 2008, sono tuttora in corso”.

of the Flavian Amphitheatre, containing artefacts that are more than well-known, as they are always used for exhibitions. They are aligned in a way that I would define excessively sterile and anonymous, as I find they have not been properly contextualised from a historical point of view. By this I mean that they have not been inserted in the cultural dynamics of the peoples that contributed to the formation of the civilisations that animated the Mediterranean in the first millennium BC. It is immediately clear that not all the objects on display appear in the bilingual catalogue (Italian and English) with colour images, and the reason for these absences is not clear. In connection with this I would like to highlight a pottery fragment displayed next to other similar potsherds also from the Maltese sanctuary dedicated to Astarte, in the locality of Tas Silġ. The fragment is exposed but not in the catalogue. This find is presented with the following caption: 1. Base-wall of a cup with a Punic inscription (dedication to Astarte) from Tas Silġ. Clay. 2nd-1st c. BC³¹ La Valletta, National Museum of Archaeology. Yet the potsherd is not in the Catalogue, to the contrary of the others in the same display case. Furthermore, it is necessary to highlight that the dedication to the aforementioned divinity is to say the least dubious, as one of the letters is highly compromised by the presence of a fracture that crosses the fragment obliquely. Furthermore, the caption appears to be erroneous on two counts: firstly, the fragment does not belong to a cup, but to a *lopas*³² with its characteristic internal lip, hence it is not a drinking cup, but a cooking vessel, and secondly it is not part of the bottom of the vessel, but the lip.

Further indications both on the captions of the exhibition and in those of the catalogue, regard other types of pottery incor-

rectly called “Domestic amphorae”, as they are clearly kraters³³. It is well-known that the shape of the amphora and the shape of the krater are characteristic and quite distinct: the amphora has a neck, which is absent in the krater. The latter instead is characterised by a high rim and hands that starting from the shoulder, reach the rim. Furthermore, while the amphora, whose handles were never placed on the rim, but on the neck, had the function of containing generic liquids, the krater, as is well-known, was used specifically for mixing water and wine, for use above all during banquets, also in honour of the dead. The difference between the amphora and the krater is not only formal, but above all fundamental, as the krater, precisely due to its specific function, was considered to relate to the ritual sphere and for this reason it was used as a cinerary urn that usually contained the burnt bones of the dead person³⁴. It is no coincidence that in a recent review of Phoenician pottery by Dalit Regev, it was included amongst the *ritual vessels*³⁵. Furthermore, it is appropriate to mention that the function of the krater was common to the cosmopolitan archaic environment of the central Mediterranean, as is attested to by the material record not only of the Phoenician world, but also by that of the Etruscans³⁶. Other vessels that have nothing to do with amphorae or kraters are also called “table amphorae”. These are pottery containers that are bundled together with these vessels merely on the basis of there being two handles. In reality they are vases that do not have a neck and are decorated with geometric patterns and figures that suggest links with the sacred sphere, having nothing to do with the consumption of wine or other liquids. I refer to the two vessels reproduced on pages 116 and 117, respectively, the captions for which are as follows: Domestic Amphora, used as an urn. From Tharros,

³¹ “Coppa (frammento del fondo parete) con iscrizione punica (dedica ad Astarte) da Tas Silġ Argilla. II-I sec a.C.”.

³² Rotroff (2006), 179-186, figs. 82-83; Peignard-Giros (2009), 252-253, fig. 8.

³³ *Carthago Catalogo* (2019), 34-35, 43-44.

³⁴ Bartoloni (2017), 326-333.

³⁵ Regev (2020), 149-152.

³⁶ Iaia (2016), 31-54.

Tophet Clay; 17,1x21,6x15,5 cm, 7th-6th c. BC Cagliari, Museo Archeologico Nazionale; inv. 92008³⁷. The second caption differs only with regards to the measurements of the vessel, which are: 26,9x24x20. In reality, these are not vessels that can be dated to the 7th-6th c. BC, as indicated in the caption, but rather, they are later examples that can by no means be dated to any time before the first years of the 4th c. BC; hence vases that were realised at least 200 years later than the proposed chronology.

One of the lexical issues relating to the geographical spread of the Phoenician and Punic settlements and the timescale, in conjunction with historical events, was resolved thanks to Sabatino Moscati, who more than thirty years ago examined and resolved the problem³⁸ arising from the simultaneous use of the terms “Phoenician”, “Punic” and “Carthaginian”. In fact, “Carthaginian” is usually used to indicate that pertaining to the African metropolis, while the term “Punic” indicates all that which regards the settlements belonging to that civilisation from the end of the 6th c. BC onwards, i.e. those cities that were by now under the dominion of Carthage. The term “Phoenician” is instead usually used to indicate the settlements in the western Mediterranean belonging to this civilisation from the origins to the whole of the 6th c. BC. For the eastern area, the term “Phoenician” is accompanied by a geographical and chronological indication.

But precisely for this reason: what Carthage are we talking about? The questions begs itself in relation to the stele displayed and reproduced in the catalogue (p. 46). In fact the caption, entitled “Stele puniche in Fenicia” [Punic Stele in Phoenicia] reads: [In the region of Tyre there have been found three stele referring to defunct individuals who descended from Carthaginian high

magistrates or from individuals qualified as “sons of Carthage”. The language and writing of these stele are also Punic, and this reveals that there was a community at Tyre that kept close relations with Carthage, maintaining the awareness of their own Carthaginian origins, and even flaunting them.] At least judging by this caption, the Curators seem to be convinced that not only were there close connections between Tyre and its ancient North African colony, but that these were continued in time, at least until the 4th-3rd c. BC. Instead, given that the Mediterranean was dotted with cities called Qarthadasht or Neapolis, meaning “new city”, why opt for the North African Carthage, in the interpretation of the last two lines of writing on this stele that mention the sons of Carthage? Why not opt for the Qarthadasht of Cyprus³⁹, which is far more probable and nearer to the homeland. The island, where the Phoenicians of Tyre had founded colonies, such as Kition, is not far from the coast of Phoenicia. Hence, it does not appear to be correct to use the term “Punic”, as this specifically regards the cities included in the *chora* of Carthage after the end of the 4th c. BC.

Regarding the chronology, it is opportune to comment on the choice made by the Curators, that is indicated in the margin on p. 14, which in Italian and English goes: In compiling the captions for the illustrations, any indications of chronology, materials, size, technique and provenance for the finds are based on information supplied by the curators of the lending Museums and Organizations. The editorial team has made this information systematic, as far as was possible, and completed any that was missing or was not given. In the chronology, except for specific cases, broader indications have been provided⁴⁰. While I cannot but agree with

³⁷ “Anfora da mensa, usata come urna. Da Tharros, *tofet* Argilla; 17,1x21,6x15,5 cm VII-VI sec. a.C. Cagliari, Museo Archeologico Nazionale; inv. 92008”.

³⁸ Moscati (1988), 3-13.

³⁹ Soyez (1987), 369-375.

⁴⁰ “Nella compilazione delle didascalie delle illustrazioni, per quanto riguarda cronologia, materiali, dimensioni, tecnica e provenienza dei reperti, ci si è basati sulle indicazioni fornite dai responsabili dei

the prudence applied, I ask myself, on the other hand, what the scholarly work undertaken by the experts who collaborated with the exhibition consisted of. This public event could have aimed at an appropriate homogenisation of the data and at several indispensable clarifications in the scientific field. For the purposes of exemplification I refer to the chronology of the grave goods from the necropolis of Al-Bass, that is indicated as: Iron Age II (c. 950-600 BC). In fact, since one may avail of detailed treatment in the literature⁴¹, which by the way is never mentioned in the two volumes dedicated to the exhibition, it appears to me little more than meaningless to cite a date ranging over no fewer than 350 years. In fact, as is indicated in the bibliography, the burials for the necropolis regard above all the period between the second half of the 9th to the second half of the 8th centuries BC.

Furthermore, it appears clear that the choice regarding the chronologies adopted by the Curators does not coincide with the state of the art in the field, that in many cases does not seem to be adequately registered by museum staff. I make specific reference to the monumental statue of the god Bes, displayed within a meagre glass case, without the feather headdress normally present in the Museo Nazionale di Cagliari, and not visible on this premises. The lifesize statue comes from the homonymous temple found at Bitia by Antonio Taramelli in 1932⁴². In actual fact, the statue is implicitly indicated as being Punic of the Hellenistic Age, as in the context of the exhibition, it is dated to between the 4th and the 2nd centuries BC, however, studies that are not even that recent classify it as be-

ing from the late Republican Roman Era⁴³, similar to other representations of the god found at Cagliari and at Maracalagonis and relating to two temples of Isis, one in the area of the modern day botanical gardens, the other in an imprecise location in the town to the east of Cagliari⁴⁴. Coincidentally, the same incongruous and excessively wide chronology (from the 4th to the 2nd centuries BC) has been attributed to another polychrome statue portraying the same divinity. In fact, the statue, known generically to be from Cagliari, was found just after the middle of the last century in a hypogeum tomb close to the necropolis of Tuvixeddu, but in a different sector, which is near Via Is Maglias and characterised by burials, all of which contain pottery that can be dated to periods no earlier than the 2nd c. BC⁴⁵. The renewed popularity of this exotic divinity was due to the Roman conquest of Egypt, which took place in 30 BC⁴⁶.

Another caption that would appear to be incongruous is that indicating a so-called 'Pilgrim Flask' in the Punic tradition, with sigla in Latin letters (an S and a V with a broken vertical stroke) scratched on the upper front section. From the Nuragic village of Ruinas - Oliena (NU) Clay; 38 x 26.50 x 17 cm. It is impossible to tell whether the letters were incised later or whether the flask actually comes from the period of Roman occupation (3rd-2nd) when Punic types began to reappear. Nuoro, National Archaeological Museum "G. Asproni", inv. 25099/15043. The inconsistency derives from the statement that it is not a Punic vessel, a definition that would indicate a period between the end of the 6th c. and the middle of the 2nd c. BC, while the vessel imitates a Phoenician and Cypriot pottery shape, imitated later on in the successive Punic Era. In particular, the vessel has been cited on another occasion and attributed to

Musei e degli Enti prestatori. L'intervento redazionale ha provveduto alla sistemazione dei dati e, nella misura del possibile, all'integrazione di quelli mancanti o non pervenuti. Circa le datazioni, salvo casi specifici, si è optato per l'indicazione ampia per secoli pieni".

⁴¹ Núñez (2004), 63-203; Núñez (2014), 261-371.

⁴² Taramelli (1933-1934), 288-291.

⁴³ Agus (1983), 41-47.

⁴⁴ Gavini (2014), 21-37.

⁴⁵ Pesce (1961), 262, 264, fig. 109.

⁴⁶ Faoro (2016).

a period preceding that indicated in the caption⁴⁷.

Finally, arriving at the conclusion of this overview, one may note the presence of a small pottery plate, indicated by the curators as being a mask (p. 147). To be precise, this is not a mask, as it does not have eyeholes, instead it is an *oscillum* that may portray a human face.

Hence, the intent announced by the curator Alfonsina Russo, excellent investigator and good administrator: "...to provide a wide general historical picture, sustained by a rigorous and up-to-date scientific foundation"⁴⁸, is praiseworthy, even though this intent is not always sustained by a scientific foundation that is rigorous and up-to-date.

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⁴⁷ Bartoloni (2005), 35, 37, fig. 2.7.

⁴⁸ *Carthago Presentazione* (2019), 10.

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