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THE BRONZE AGE ANTHROPOMORPHIC FIGURINES FROM CYPRUS: WOMEN'S CHILD CARING ROLE

The purpose of this article is to utilise the dominant category of Bronze Age terracotta anthropomorphic figurines that represent women holding infants (*κουργοτόφος*) to make inferences about sexual division of labour in Bronze Age Cyprus. This will be done within the framework of a general interpretation of the Bronze Age terracotta anthropomorphic figurines from Cyprus (Orphanides 1983, 45-48; 1986; 1988, 187-99; 1990a, 45-50).

I begin with a basic theoretical principle concerning symbols, that form is conceived as both the part and the means of the communicative act (Pader 1982; Giddens 1984; Orphanides 1986, 40-57; 1990b, 11-19). Variations and details of the form of the figurines, in addition their context, provide the major evidence for figuring out their symbolic content and meaning. This is the reason why the form of the figurines is being utilized as the basic attribute for their classification.

THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE FIGURINES

The figurines in question are classified in four major types (Orphanides 1986, 98-134; 1988, 187-99):

1. **Inactive figurines** (figs. 1-13), which includes all those figurines of which the posture is stereotyped with non-specific functional connotations. This type contrasts to the other three types, the posture and arrangement of which have functional connotations.
2. **Figurines holding infants** (figs. 14-18), which includes a large number of figurines representing individuals, mainly women, holding infants.
3. **Figurines of individuals in beds or cradles** (figs. 19-22), which includes figurines representing individuals lying in beds, and, more often, infants in cradles.
4. **Active figurines** (figs. 23-28), which includes figurines that represent individuals participating in various scenes of daily life, such as ploughing, baking, riding horses, transport, etc.

THE FORM OF THE FIGURINES

Anthropomorphic Form

The human appearance of the figurines is a distinctive and important characteristic of their form. It is obvious that this kind of appearance was carefully and intentionally rendered by the makers of the figurines. The detailed attribution of human characteristics (body, eyes, nose, ears, mouth, arms, hands, legs, feet, etc.) that is observed in almost all the types indicates that this task was taken very seriously by their makers. There are types, however, in which the figurines have general human characteristics, but their faces are bird-like with a large beak-like nose. This is recognized as the basic feature of figurines found in the Near East that represent the goddess Astarte (Barrelet 1968; Pritchard 1975, 39; Badre 1980; Orphanides 1983, 47, n. 65). It is significant to mention that there are cases where figurines of the human-

faced type and the bird-like faced type are found together in the same burial, e.g. Maroni, T.14 (Johnson 1980). It seems likely that the former represent humans, whereas the latter represent the goddess Astarte.

Age Indication

A significant distinction is observed between figurines that represent adults and those that represent infants (children) respectively. Though most of the figurines are representations of adults, a good number of them represents infants, which indicates the intention and the serious purpose of the makers of such figurines. Infant figurines are usually in cradles. They are found in two main forms, either being held by adult figures, or on their own.

Sex Indication

Gender is also carefully indicated on several figurines. Gender indications, however, are usually not observed on the Red Polished plank-shaped figurines. This is in agreement with the abstract character of decoration and indication of anatomical features that characterises this particular type. On the other hand, this can be explained by the fact that these figures are probably dressed rather than are naked.

Comparing the male and female figurines in terms of gender indications, we observe that the female anatomical characteristics are more carefully rendered than those of the male. In most cases the breasts are prominent and usually pointed, and the pubic areas are clearly indicated. There are cases, however, in which the male anatomical characteristics are also distinctly rendered.

Representations of Daily Activities

One of the types represents a theme very usual in every human society: individuals (mainly women) holding infants (κοιτοτσόφος). This is the most common and distinctive theme that is represented by figurines in the Cypriot Bronze Age.

Though this is executed in a schematic and/or abstract manner, it is evident that this theme was quite popular among the Bronze Age figurines makers. The individuals who hold infants are represented either standing or sitting. Scenes of individuals in beds, and, more often, infants in cradles, which are very common in daily life, are represented by the figurines as well.

Finally, complexes of figurines depict a rich variety of scenes from daily life which is related to either domestic or agricultural activities. These scenes depict:

- (i) individuals engaged in making bread (including a woman holding an infant and an additional child),
- (ii) individuals ploughing fields using pairs of oxen and the plough of those times,
- (iii) people transporting various items using either animals or boats,
- (iv) individuals, mainly men, riding horses or attending animals, and
- (v) crowds of people gathered for reasons obviously related to societal affairs. In all these scenes there are figures of men, women, and children (infants).

Figures 1-10
Bronze Age Terracotta Anthropomorphic Figurines from Cyprus



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 9

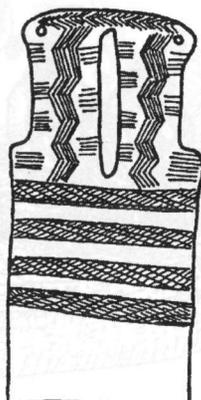


Fig. 10



Fig. 10

Figures 11-23
Bronze Age Terracotta Anthropomorphic Figurines from Cyprus



Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 13



Fig. 14

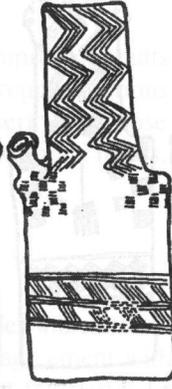


Fig. 15



Fig. 16



Fig. 17



Fig. 18



Fig. 19



Fig. 20

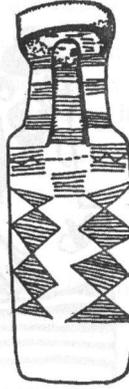


Fig. 21



Fig. 22

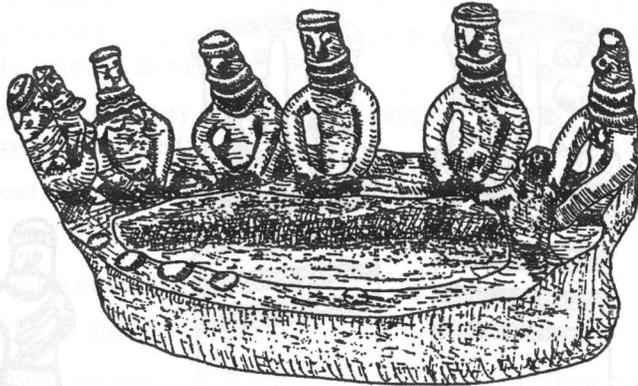


Fig. 23

Figures 24-28
Bronze Age Terracotta Anthropomorphic Figurines from Cyprus



Fig. 24

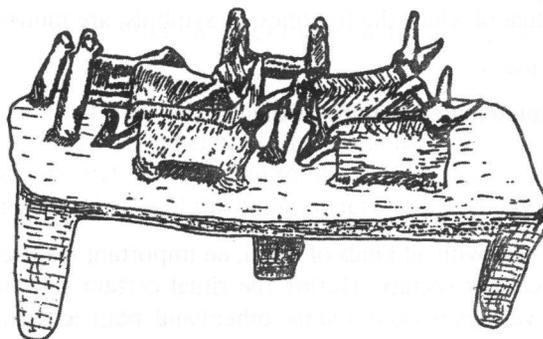


Fig. 25



Fig. 26



Fig. 27

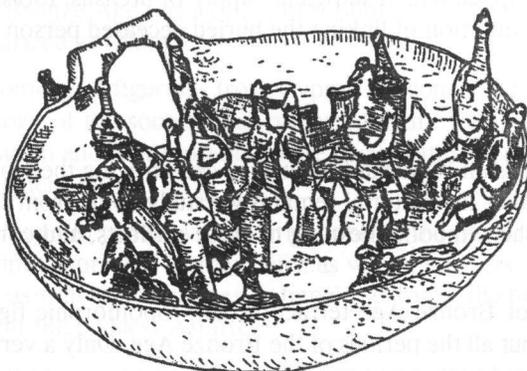


Fig. 28

THE CONTEXT OF THE FIGURINES

The examination, analysis, and evaluation of the context of the figurines involve three main areas of inquiry:

1. The ritual of which the figurines, as symbols, are fundamental components and means of practice.
2. Space-use
3. Associated material items (artifacts)

Funerary Ritual

As is the case with all kinds of ritual, an important feature of funerary ritual is its relationship with the secular aspect of a society. During the ritual certain activities are suspended, while certain people are excluded for various reasons. On the other hand, both activities and people are replaced by obligatory substitutes (Pader 1982).

Material objects found by archaeologists — such as figurines from tombs, which were used as means of practice in a ritual — are not mere cultural residues; they are integral parts of the total symbolic system which is in effect. Their basic role is to make present what is not physically or temporally there or something that is on another level or reality. Since the use of symbols is not arbitrary, the content of a ritual (material remains) is not arbitrary either, nor can it be interpreted outside the total societal context (Pader 1982). The same material items might vary in terms of symbolic meaning depending on whether they are in a ritual or non-ritual context.

Funerary rituals are an important means of organizing, producing, and reproducing the society of the living. This can be conceived as one of the reasons for the predominance of symbolism related to sexuality and fertility within a funerary ritual (Pader 1982). The immediate implication of this is that funerary rituals are related to the reproduction both of individuals and of the entire society.

Like other cultural groups in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Bronze Age Cypriots believed in an Afterlife. The corpses were equipped with a sufficient supply of utensils, tools, weapons, food, and usually figurines. This indicated the intention of linking the buried deceased person to the living society.

Space-Use

Space-use is also conceived as an important means for categorizing the world and for conveying symbolic meanings and ideas. Whether the material remains we study come from settlements, tombs, or sanctuaries, this is going to affect the symbolic meaning of these artifacts, and consequently their interpretation.

The majority of the Cypriot Bronze Age terracotta anthropomorphic figurines have been found in tombs; this is the case throughout all the periods of the Bronze Age. Only a very small number of figurines has been found in settlements or in other architectural structures.

Associated Material

Material items found in tombs, which obviously are associated with the skeleton and the figurines, form an important category of the context of the figurines. The nature and use of such items, as well as their arrangement within the tomb, can provide significant information pertaining to the interpretation of the figurines in question. A rich variety of objects made of different types of raw materials is found in tombs (Karageorghis 1982; Orphanides 1990a, 50).

An examination and evaluation of these objects strongly suggest that they cannot be classified only as funerary items. In fact, they seem to represent the major categories of objects used in everyday life. In addition, the figurines complemented the necessary material that had to be placed in tombs for an accurate correspondence between a tomb and the physical space of the living society, that is the symbolic representations of humans.

A small number of figurines, which are of the same types as those found in tombs, have been found in settlements or other architectural structures. Some of these figurines are surface or unstratified items. Those found in specific rooms do not seem to be associated with any particular items that might indicate any particular symbolic meaning or function. On the other hand, it is reasonable to assume that figurines were manufactured and kept in settlements until they were used as funerary objects. It is natural, therefore, to find figurines in houses or other architectural structures where they were kept temporarily, and not necessarily because they had a particular symbolic meaning or use within that space.

Figurines could be used by just repeating funerary rituals that were performed in the past, whereas some individuals could neglect to use such figurines at all. The issue of replacement of symbolic meaning is evidenced in the case of the figurines with bird-like faces which, instead of representing humans, represent the goddess Astarte. These types, in addition to their religious connotations, were introduced to Cyprus together with other cultural elements from the Near East at the end of the MC period/beginning of the LC period (Karageorghis: 1965; 1982; Georghiou 1979; Merrillies 1974).

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE FIGURINES

The interpretation of the Bronze Age terracotta anthropomorphic figurines from Cyprus (Orphanides 1986; 1990a) could be summarized as follows:

1. The Bronze Age anthropomorphic figurines from Cyprus are conceived as symbols which are inextricably related to the ideology of the society that produced them. Being basic components of a ritual, their use, reuse, interpretation and reinterpretation are basic features of the interpretation, production and reproduction of the society itself.
2. The figurines are mainly found in tombs which correspond to the physical space of the living society. Within this context, figurines represent women, such as wives, mothers, sisters or other female members of a family (or clan), as well as concubines or female servants; the bird-like faced female figurines (Base-Ring ware) represent the goddess Astarte.
3. The mortal individuals that are represented by the figurines perform activities in the Afterlife similar to those of daily life, thus contributing towards the maintenance, survival, production and reproduction of the society in general, and of the individuals in particular. In other words, the symbolic meaning and function of the figurines are similar to those performed by the living members of the society.

- (i) Female figurines which represent wives, concubines or female servants have those chores which are essential for the reproduction of the members of the society and the society itself. They may also perform other daily activities.
 - (ii) Figurines with theme of an individual holding an infant (κουροτόφος) perform another vital task for the maintenance of the society.
 - (iii) Figurines representing babies or children can also be essential, since they represent the newly emerging forces within the society.
 - (iv) Finally, other figurines that represent males (fathers, husbands, sons, etc) can also be conceived within the same explanation, especially those which perform activities of daily life, such as ploughing of fields.
4. The overwhelming majority of female figurines may suggest the nature of the role of women in the Bronze Age society of Cyprus. Fertility may be one — but not the only one — of the main features of womankind in that period. Fertility, which is essential for the individual's reproduction, is reinforced by the presence of Astarte during the Late Bronze Age period. In this way Astarte comes to support women in perpetuating life after death in a symbolic way.
 5. Because the basic features of a ritual are its conservatism and repetition, we may observe cases in which figurines are used merely as components of a funerary ritual, whereas in other cases individuals may neglect to use such symbols (figurines) at all. A replacement of meaning can also be observed through time, with some figurines changing their symbolic meaning from human to a goddess' representation. This is the case with the bird-like faced Base-Ring figurines, the form of which, beginning in the Middle Bronze Age period, represent Astarte. This may be a result of an introduction of new religious ideas in Cyprus from the Near East. However, this new symbolic meaning of the figurines does not actually replace their original meaning as symbolic representations of humans, but in fact complements it, since the figurines maintained their original meaning and role.

SEXUAL DIVISION OF LABOUR

Cross-cultural research on sexual division of labour (Burton and White 1984) started with Murdock (1937). Murdock and Provost (1973) further elaborated on Murdock's original work by providing codes on sexual division of labour for 50 tasks performed by the Standard Cross-Cultural Sample that was earlier established by Murdock and White (1969). Murdock and Provost (1973, 211) explain sexual division of labor with a masculine advantage for tasks that require greater physical strength or "brief bursts of excessive energy", and with a feminine advantage for tasks not requiring long absences from the household. They take into consideration Brown (1970), who proposes that women tend to do tasks that are compatible with child-care; such tasks are not dangerous, do not require distant travel, and are interruptible. They argue that there is a tendency for the sex that uses a product to also be the one that produces it. In addition, they find correlations between female subsistence contributions and fixity of residence, occupational specialization, agricultural intensification, and the processing of animal products.

Considering the four major types of the female Bronze Age terracotta figurines, it is obvious that the type of female figurines holding infants (κουροτόφος) — either they are involved with breastfeeding or simply with child nursing — is the dominant one. This observation, evaluated within the framework of my

theoretical approach concerning the symbolic meaning of archaeological material, my interpretation of the figurines, and also according to research done so far on sexual division of labour, could be the starting point for revealing the symbolic meaning of these female figurines concerning sex roles, and more precisely division of labour, in Bronze Age Cyprus. More precisely, the meaning of the figurines in this category could be satisfactorily explained and further described by the compatibility-with-child-care theory.

The basic argument in the compatibility-with-child-care theory (Brown 1970) is that women's tasks tend to be those that are more compatible with child care. It is a theory that developed out of a

TABLE I
WORLDWIDE PATTERNS IN THE DIVISION OF LABOUR BY SEX

	FEMALES USUALLY	EITHER SEX OR BOTH	MALES USUALLY
BASIC SUBSISTENCE ACTIVITIES	Gather wild plants	Collect shellfish Care for small animals Plant crops Tend crops Harvest crops Milk animals	Fish Herd large animals Collect wild honey Clear land Prepare soil for planting
FOOD PREPARATION AND HOUSEHOLD ACTIVITIES	Care for children Cook Prepare <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Vegetable food ● Drinks Dairy products Launder Fetch water Collect fuel	Preserve meat or fish	Butcher animals
OTHER	Spin yarn Sew Weave	Prepare skins Make leatherproducts baskets mats clothing pottery	Build houses Make nets Make rope

Source: Murdock and Provost 1973, 203-225; Weisner and Gammore 1977, 169-80; Whyte 1978, 217; Ember and Ember 1985.

diachronic and synchronic cross-cultural analysis of the sexual division of labour worldwide, which revealed that certain gender-related activities were common in all cultures. It was noticed, for example, that in several cultures, especially in those that their subsistence and technology was similar to those of Bronze Age Cyprus, women breast-fed their children for two years on the average. This in fact was the case in rural Cyprus until recently. We should also keep in mind that in Bronze Age Cyprus the child-birth cycle for a woman after puberty was probably continuous, due to both lack of means of contraception and high infant mortality. According to the compatibility-with-child-care theory, women are involved with those activities that keep them close to their homes, that do not take them far away for long periods of time, that can be stopped and resumed if child-care duties require their interruption, and that under no circumstances might place children in potential danger in case they are taken along by their mothers. Such activities are gathering wild plants, a wide range of food preparation and household activities, such as caring for children, cooking, preparing drinks and dairy products, laundering, fetching water, collecting fuel, spinning yarn, sewing and weaving (Table 1).

On the other hand, this theory leaves those activities that do not satisfy the above conditions to men. Such activities are hunting, trapping, fishing, collecting honey, lumbering, and mining. These tasks are dangerous, and not easily interrupted. Crafts, such as making baskets, mats, and pottery are women's activities in non-commercial societies, but tend to be men's activities in societies with full-time craft specialists. This is the case because producing large quantities for sale probably demands an absence of interruptions.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the dominant theme of terracotta figurines representing women holding children, together with the activities represented by various clay models, substantiate to a satisfactory degree the application of the compatibility-with-child-care theory in Bronze Age Cyprus. However, there is no doubt that much more research is needed to further clarify and further elaborate several aspects and other implications of sexual division of labour in general, and of women's social, economic and political role in particular, in Cyprus during the Bronze Age.

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Το κύριο θέμα των πήλινων ειδωλίων είναι η παράσταση γυναικών να κρατούν παιδιά καθώς και εργασίες της καθημερινότητας. Αυτά τα θέματα παριστάνονται σε διάφορες πήλινες συνθέσεις και τεκμηριώνουν σε ικανοποιητικό βαθμό την εφαρμογή της θεωρίας που αναφέρεται στη φροντίδα του παιδιού την εποχή του χαλκού στην Κύπρο. Εν πάση περιπτώσει, δεν υπάρχει αμφιβολία ότι χρειάζεται πολύ περισσότερη έρευνα, για να διαφωτίσει και να διευκρινίσει ακόμη πιο πολύ αρκετές πτυχές καθώς και τις προεκτάσεις που είχε η κατανομή εργασίας ανάλογα με το φύλο καθώς και με τον κοινωνικό, οικονομικό και ιδιαίτερα τον πολιτικό ρόλο της γυναίκας στην Κύπρο κατά τη διάρκεια της εποχής του χαλκού.

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