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METAPHYSIS

RITUAL, MYTH AND SYMBOLISM IN THE AEGEAN BRONZE AGE

**Proceedings of the 15th International Aegean Conference, Vienna,
Institute for Oriental and European Archaeology,
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Robert LAFFINEUR and Jörg WEILHARTNER

PEETERS
LEUVEN - LIEGE
2016

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A NEW MYCENAEAN FEMALE FIGURE FROM KYNOS, LOCRIIS*

The settlement of Kynos in Eastern Lokris, excavated by Phanouria Dakoronia from 1985 till 1995 is situated on the Gulf of Euboea (Pl. CXLI).¹ During the Mycenaean period it was one of the most important harbours of the region, well-known for its LH IIIC pictorial pottery with representations of ships and ship models.² The excavations of Kynos produced about 160 hand-made human and animal figurines, fragments of wheel-made animal figures as well as parts of larger female figurines or figures dating from LH IIIA2 till LH IIIC.

Outstanding among these, is the body of a wheel-made female figure which was found fragmented among the pottery of the lowermost layer in an alleyway, probably dating to LH IIIB2.³ The figure has been reconstructed from units scattered over 6 m² and at depths varying at least 30 cm. Therefore the figure was probably broken in this area, making it possible for the missing head and arms to be detected in adjacent, unexcavated units. However, we cannot be sure if this figure was still intact when smashed in the alley or if it was deposited after the figure had been ruined and no longer of use.

The figure with a height of 16.2 cm from the base to the neck, a diameter of 8.6 cm at the base and a maximum diameter of 9.5 cm belongs to figures of medium size (Pl. CXLIIa-e and CXLIIIa-e). The body with a cylindrical lower and a globular upper part is wheel-made. Its bottom was untreated and cut off. According to the coil still visible, the head was set separately on the neck; the uplifted arms which must have been coil-shaped, as well as the breasts were attached on the already smoothed surface. This very simple modeling is comparable to two monochrome painted anthropomorphic figures of type B from the Cult Center of Mycenae⁴ as well as to the Lady of Phylakopi.⁵

The figure was produced of reddish yellow clay and painted with red luster. The body was painted with horizontal bands of equal width. The upper body shows chevrons, a motive well known from pottery of LH IIIA to IIIC.⁶ The lower part of the stem is decorated with vertical lines probably indicating the pleats of the dress. The back shows two vertical straps. The decoration with motives common in pottery is also indicated on other figures.⁷ The paint on the figure's lower part with horizontal parallel lines is also well-known from figures from Midea⁸ and Mycenae.⁹

* Correction of the English text by Marco Pietrovito.

¹ F. DAKORONIA, "The Transition from Late Helladic III C to the Early Iron Age at Kynos," in S. DEGER-JALKOTZY & M. ZAVADIL (eds.), *LH III C Chronology and Synchronisms. Proceedings of the International Workshop held at the Austrian Academy of Sciences at Vienna. May 7th and 8th, 2001* (2003) 37-51; F. DAKORONIA, "Ανατολική Λοκρίδα. Η ιστορία της μέσα από τα μνημεία και τις αρχαιολογικές έρευνες," in F. DAKORONIA et al. (eds.), *Λοκρίδα. Ιστορία & πολιτισμός* (nd) 40-48.

² F. DAKORONIA, "Representations of sea-battles on Mycenaean sherds from Kynos," in H. TZALAS (ed.), *5th International Symposium on Ship Construction in Antiquity, Nauplia, 26, 27, 28 August 1993. Proceedings, Tropis 5* (1999) 119-128.

³ I owe the invaluable information on the find spot of the figure to Petros Kounouklas.

⁴ A.D. MOORE & W.D. TAYLOUR, *The Temple Complex. Well Built Mycenae Fasc. 10* (1999) 49 (group 1).

⁵ E. FRENCH, "The Figures and Figurines," in C. RENFREW (ed.), *The Archaeology of Cult. The Sanctuary at Phylakopi* (1985) 209-235, 214-216, fig. 6.4.

⁶ P. A. MOUNTJOY, *Mycenaean Decorated Pottery. A Guide to Identification* (1986) 68 fig. 77, 25; 94 fig. 114, 29; 122 fig. 148, 18; 136 fig. 166, 18 (Furumark Motive 58).

⁷ Mycenae: MOORE & TAYLOUR (*supra* n. 4) 52 pl. 12a-b; 214; Phylakopi: FRENCH (*supra* n. 5) fig. 6.4.

⁸ K. DEMAKOPOULOU & N. DIVARI-VALAKOU, "Mycenaean figures and figurines from Midea," in A.-L. SCHALLIN (ed.), *Encounters with Mycenaean figures and figurines. Papers presented at a seminar at the Swedish Institute at Athens, 27-29 April 2001* (2009) 28-29, 30 fig. 41-43.

⁹ Chamber tomb 40: A. XENAKI-SAKELLARIOU, *Οι θαλαμωτοί τάφοι των Μυκηνών. Ανασκαφής Χρ. Τσούντα (1887-1898)* (1985) 113-114; pl. 28 no. 2494. Chamber tomb 101: E. FRENCH, "The Development of Mycenaean Terracotta Figurines," *BSA* 66 (1971) 101-187: 116, pl. 15d; House M quarter: V.

Figures, dating from LH IIIA1¹⁰ till LH IIIC are most numerous in the Argolid, found in Mycenae, Tiryns and Midea as well as the Saronic Gulf, but they also have a wide distribution all over the Peloponnese and Attica. Several were found in Central Greece. To our knowledge the northernmost wheel-made human figures come from Kozani. Furthermore, wheel-made figures are attested in the Cyclades and in the Eastern Aegean (Pl. CXLI).¹¹ Therefore, the figure from Kynos has to be seen within the contexts of Northern and Central Greek specimens, as well as those from the Aegean islands.

The common wheel-made mainland type has to be interpreted as one of the very characteristic Mycenaean cult objects whereas some pieces of Minoan type point to the connection of these sites to Crete.¹² According to the finds from Mycenae, Tiryns and Phylakopi, wheel-made figures have been seen as indication of a sanctuary¹³ of official character,¹⁴ and interpreted as either cult figures¹⁵ or adorants possibly publicly displayed during processions.¹⁶

But wheel-made human figures were frequently also found in settlement contexts without any indication of an official sanctuary¹⁷ as well as in tombs.¹⁸ Otherwise, there also exist sanctuaries without figures.¹⁹ Therefore we have to be cautious concerning the character of the location where the figure of Kynos would have had its place. In any case, the figure demonstrates the connection of Kynos to the religious system of the Mycenaean palaces, the cult activity probably taking place in a space or building especially intended for ritual use within the settlement.

Eva ALRAM-STERN

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- PLIATSIKA, "Simply Divine: the Jewellery, Dress and Body Adornment of the Mycenaean Clay Female Figures in Light of New Evidence from Mycenae," in *KOSMOS*, 609-626, pl. CLa-c.
- ¹⁰ J.C. WRIGHT & J.F. CHERRY *et al.*, "The Nemea Valley Archaeological Project: A Preliminary Report," *Hesperia* 59 (1990) 579-659: 636-637.
- ¹¹ For an almost complete collection of Mycenaean figures see PLIATSIKA (*supra* n. 9) 619-625.
- ¹² Floka near Olympia: N. YALOURIS, "Ἀρχαία Ολυμπία," *ADelt* 18 (1963) Χρονικά 1, 203, pl. 135 α; Elis, area of Olympia: P.G. THEMELIS, "Μινωϊκά ἐξ Ολυμπίας," *AAA* 2 (1969) 248-256; Nichoria, eyes with inlay: H. HUGHES-BROCK, "Terracotta and Miscellaneous Small Finds," in W.A. MCDONALD & N.C. WILKIE *et al.*, *Excavations at Nichoria in Southwest Greece, vol. II. The Bronze Age Occupation* (1992) 631, 655, no. 2064, fig. 10-8.
- ¹³ C. RENFREW, "The Phylakopi Sanctuary and Cult Practice in the Aegean," in RENFREW ed. (*supra* n. 5) 393-444; R. HÄGG, "Mykenische Kultstätten im archäologischen Material," *OpAth* 8 (1968) 57; G. ALBERS, *Spätmykenische Stadtheiligtümer: Systematische Analyse und vergleichende Auswertung der archäologischen Befunde* (1994) 1, 8-10.
- ¹⁴ R. HÄGG, "State and Religion in Mycenaean Greece," in *POLITEIA*, 389.
- ¹⁵ K. KILIAN, "Mykenische Heiligtümer der Peloponnes," in H. FRONING, T. HÖLSCHER & H. MIELSCH (eds.), *Kotinos. Festschrift für Erika Simon* (1992) 21; K. KILIAN, "Zeugnisse mykenischer Kultausbübung in Tiryns," in R. HÄGG & N. MARINATOS (eds.), *Sanctuaries and Cults in the Aegean Bronze Age. Proceedings of the First International Symposium at the Swedish Institute in Athens, 12-13 May 1980* (1981) 54-56; H. WHITTAKER, "The cultic function of Mycenaean anthropomorphic terracotta figures," in SCHALLIN ed. (*supra* n. 8) 99-111.
- ¹⁶ ALBERS (*supra* n. 13) 136.
- ¹⁷ WRIGHT & CHERRY *et al.* (*supra* n. 10) 636-637 n. 380. M. VETTERS, "Thou Shalt Make Many Images of Thy Gods': A Chaîne Opératoire Approach to Mycenaean Religious Rituals Based on Iconographic and Contextual Analyses of Plaster and Terracotta Figures," in A. BRYSAERT (ed.), *Tracing Prehistoric Social Networks through Technology. A Diachronic Perspective on the Aegean* (2011) 39-42.
- ¹⁸ Tanagra tomb A/A866: V.L. ARAVANTINOS, "Les nécropoles mycéniennes de Tanagra," in V. JEAMMET (ed.), *Tanagra. Mythe et archéologie, Musée du Louvre, Paris, 15 septembre 2003 - 5 janvier 2004* (2003) 75 fig. 29. For Mycenae chamber tombs 40 and 101 *supra* n. 9.
- ¹⁹ E.g. E. KONSOLAKI, "A Mycenaean sanctuary on Methana," in R. HÄGG (ed.), *Peloponnesian Sanctuaries and Cults: Proceedings of the Ninth International Symposium at the Swedish Institute at Athens, 11-13 June 1994* (2002) 25-36.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Pl. CXLI Distribution of wheel-made figures of Mycenaean type in Greece and the Aegean (after
PLIATSIKA *supra* n. 9, 619-625; map: M. Börner).
- Pl. CXLIIa-e The wheel-made figure inventory number 880 from Kynos; drawings: E. Alram-Stern – M.
Frauenglas.
- Pl. CXLIIIa-e The wheel-made figure inventory number 880 from Kynos; photos: E. Alram-Stern





a



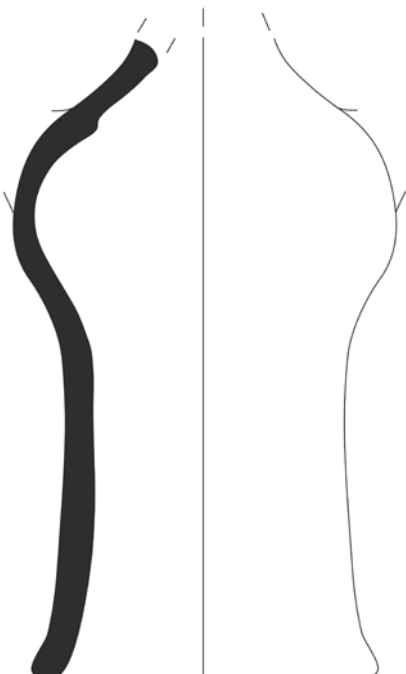
b



c



d



e

CXLIII



a



b



c



d



e