

In Egypt

'Gravidenflaschen' is the term given by Brunner-Traut¹¹⁸⁵ for a specific group of anthropomorphic vessels in the form of a female figure having a swollen abdomen, most often of travertine but sometimes of clay or ivory. The woman either kneels or stands with knees bent, facing forward with arms resting on her abdomen, which is swollen as if in pregnancy. Her long hair often falls at the back, and either supports or actually is the vessel handle, but sometimes it is arranged in 'Hathor-locks' at the front. She often wears a headdress, which usually flares at the top and also acts as the vessel rim. Some are grotesque figures, incorporating features of the hippopotamus deity,¹¹⁸⁶ with whom the vessel-type rightly has been connected. There is a surprising variety to the type. No two examples are alike, and no chronological distinction between standing and kneeling figures probably existed. The vessels generally are about 9–20 cm. in height. Brunner-Traut suggests they were used as containers for a medicinal ingredient, to be mixed with oil from a horned vessel-type as a salve to aid

women in their final months of pregnancy or during childbirth, an interpretation that generally has been accepted. Few have any datable provenance, but the type seems confined to mid-Dynasty XVIII. The earliest example datable in context is from an intact Abydos tomb in the reign of Thutmose III, and it is unlikely to have appeared earlier.¹¹⁸⁷ The latest in context is at Tombois in the Third Cataract region, in a tomb whose latest ceramics date to the reign of Amenhotep III, probably after his first two decades.¹¹⁸⁸

The *Gravidenflasche* vessel type should not be confused with *Muttermilchkrüglein*, a vessel type also defined by Brunner-Traut, who distinguished between the two.¹¹⁸⁹ The woman usually kneels, is not pregnant, and often holds a small child. The overall date range of this type, from the end of the reign of Thutmose III through to the beginning of the reign of Amenhotep III (a period of perhaps 35 years), is similar to that of *Gravidenflaschen*, but is better determined by ceramic details. It is likely that, despite the more loosely dated parameters of known evidence, manufacture of the *Gravidenflaschen* probably was contemporary with the *Mut-*

¹¹⁸⁵ BRUNNER-TRAUT 1970. See also BRUNNER-TRAUT 1970–1971; BROVARSKI *et al.* 1982:291, 293 #404. Early references may be found in MURRAY 1911:44; EVANS *PM* II.1:256–259.

¹¹⁸⁶ See Chapter 12; also see BRUNNER-TRAUT 1970:40 n. 18; JANSSEN and JANSSEN 1990:3–10. Egyptian women usually gave birth whilst squatting on 'confinement bricks,' in a position similar to many *Gravidenflaschen*. This scene is never depicted in Egyptian art, the nearest being a few Dynasty XIX sketches on limestone flakes (*ostraka*) of a woman nursing a child whilst seated on an incurved stool, with the sole exception of a Late Period amulet, *NFA* 1991:#294 (if authentic). The most descriptive textual reference is found on the *Papyrus Westcar* (10,9–28), the SIP copy of a Middle Kingdom original text; see LICHTHEIM 1975–1980:I:215–222 (esp. 220–221), and above, n. 809.

¹¹⁸⁷ BROVARSKI *et al.* 1982:293 #404. They are not discussed as a vessel type by B.G. ASTON 1994.

¹¹⁸⁸ EDWARDS and ALI OSMAN 2001:19. The *Gravidenflasche* is described only as a "vessel in the form of a kneeling figure" (p. 18), but a drawing kindly sent to me by David Edwards has confirmed its identification. I am grateful to him for permitting me to mention its identity here, and providing the date of its associated ceramics.

¹¹⁸⁹ BRUNNER-TRAUT 1969–1970; 1970–1971. Basically, *Muttermilchkrüglein* are mould-made of clay, the women are not

nude, pregnant or steatopygous, and they often hold a child, although exceptions do exist and probably represent different functions. See also HAYES 1953–1959:II:195; BROVARSKI *et al.* 1982:293–294 #405; and especially BOURRIAU 1987:92–96, who distinguishes variant types of femiform vessels, functions and workshop groups.

The Dynasty XI clay wheel-made statuette of a female mourner from Denderah (not Rifeh, as stated by EVANS *PM* II.1:257 fig. 152) and others of its type are entirely unrelated to these vessels and to the Minoan figures discussed below; see PETRIE 1900b:pl. XXI:bottom middle; MURRAY 1911:42, 43 #18, pl. XXII:19; BOURRIAU 1988:94–95#76; D'AURIA, LACOVARA and ROEHRIG 1988:108–109 #42. Essentially, they are wheel-made rather than moulded, with hand-modeled arms and other plastic attachments, and represent mourning women; they are *not* vessels, nor are they steatopygous, nude or parturient, their breasts are not pendant, their hair is not indicated or only roughly so, and their arms and hands are raised to their head to tear at their 'hair' in standard mourning pose.

Two other femiform types are unrelated. The first is a late First Intermediate Period/Middle Kingdom statuette type depicting a woman holding a child (e.g., SCHOSKE 1990:131 #114). The other, dating to the Ramesside period, is wheel-formed and not mould-made.

termilchkrüglein. It likely did not long survive that of its cousin, and probably did not long precede it, if at all. Both are unlikely to have been heralded by the zoomorphic stone vessels in the form of an ape, sometimes holding its young, that appear in earlier periods.¹¹⁹⁰ Zoomorphic vessels in the form of a squatting ape, although similar in pose, are not *Gravidenflaschen* as defined by Brunner-Traut and are, in any case, quite unrelated and often far earlier in date.¹¹⁹¹

The *Gravidenflaschen* image is quite varied, but is confined in presentation as an anthropomorphic vessel. The image is unknown either as an amulet or figurine in Egypt, nor can any two dimensional illustrations of the type be cited.

On Crete

Unlike in Egypt, the crouching or squatting woman with rounded body having pendant breasts and hands resting on the abdomen is found in other media, and indigenous examples are not found as stone vessels.¹¹⁹²

Pre-Palatial

There are no images of this type, although the squatting human figure is well known as a seal image in this period and later, and the squatting ape is a popular seal form at this time.¹¹⁹³

Proto-Palatial

The apparently earliest images are presented as a figurine and vessel protome from Phaestos {451–452}, a vessel appliqué from Malia {378}, all of MM II date, and a small rock crystal pendant from Knossos {312}, either of this date or slightly later. They are limited to the Proto-Palatial period or (in the case of the last), possibly early Neo-Palatial. The pose and general features are similar, with long hair down the back, flattened breasts, spindly legs in a squatting or kneeling position and similarly spindly arms with hands on a 'pregnant' abdomen, and probably represent parturient figures. Their scale is quite small, only 2–5 cm. in height, but the clay pieces were painted to highlight various features. The silver pendant {271} from an MM III tomb at Knossos also may represent

this same figural type, although no breasts or swollen abdomen are indicated and the figure most likely is male.

Their probable relationship to the ape-shaped seals is suggested by their three-dimensional format rather than engraved images, and underlined by the presence of an ape figure of similar MM (II?) date from Kommos {344}, of remarkably similar pose even given its poor state of preservation, and also similar in its small scale and surface colouring. Its tail is its only identifiable ape-like feature, and it may have been a humorous exercise on the part of the artisan.¹¹⁹⁴

Neo-Palatial

No *Gravidenflasche* or related image can be dated to this period, unless the stone vessel {119} was imported and converted into a rhyton at the very end of the period. It is discussed below.

No Minoan figures in this pose are known during this period, except possibly the silver {271} and rock crystal {312} pendants from Knossos already discussed above. Both pendants fit within the Proto-Palatial tradition, and are earlier in date than the Katsamba vessel discussed below.

Final Palatial

The imported *Gravidenflasche* {119} from Katsamba is discussed elsewhere¹¹⁹⁵ for more pertinent reasons, but is mentioned here as an imported example of its type. The vessel itself likely does not date earlier than the reign of Amenhotep II and, if so, would have been imported to Crete in LM IIIA1 where it was then converted. It seems, therefore, that it should be associated with the Final Palatial period, despite its lack of good context, due to its limited date range in Egypt and the extreme likelihood of conversion into a rhyton not earlier than LM IIIA1.¹¹⁹⁶ It probably was converted into a rhyton shortly after its arrival, and is a unique import to the island.

End Palatial and Post-Palatial

Two End Palatial and one Post-Palatial clay anthropomorphic parturient vessels are known, from Aghia Triadha {35}, Gournia {78} and Kephala Khondrou

¹¹⁹⁰ See Chapter 13.

¹¹⁹¹ See, amongst others, FISCHER 1993; FAY 1998.

¹¹⁹² See Distribution Map 37.

¹¹⁹³ E.g., YULE 1981:pl. 1:26–27, 2:37. Note, however, that none are demonstrably female figures. The squatting ape also was a common Pre-Palatial motif; see Chapter 13.

¹¹⁹⁴ See Chapter 13.

¹¹⁹⁵ See Chapter 4, Appendix B.

¹¹⁹⁶ See also comments to the amphora/rhyton {144} from Knossos.

{123}. One {78} is dated LM IIIA2–B, another {123} to LM IIIB and the third {35} to LM IIIC or Sub-Minoan.¹¹⁹⁷ The arm position has changed, so that one arm is raised to the head and the other to the breast,¹¹⁹⁸ but all are both nude and pregnant or at least inadequately clothed and steatopygous. Inspiration might have derived from the *Gravidenflasche* type that are of generally similar scale, if one assumes that the Gournia rhyton was inspired by an antique or heirloom Egyptian example that was (hypothetically, mentally or visually) available to the artisan who created it. The obvious candidate would be the *Gravidenflasche*/rhyton from Katsamba or a still-unexcavated similar vessel, especially since two of the later clay vessels are rhyta. The third and chronologically last vessel, however, is not.

This possibility might be reinforced by the presence of the small vessel atop the head of the Aghia Triadha vessel {35}, perhaps a developed misrepresentation of the headdress seen on the Katsamba rhyton or the more usual flaring rim of other *Gravidenflaschen*, except this is the latest of the three vessels and is no earlier than contemporary with Dynasty XX in Egypt. The vessel is not a Minoan form, but strongly resembles an Egyptian amphora type that does survive into Dynasty XX, of which no example is found on Crete.¹¹⁹⁹ These Minoan vessels are considered to have a religious function, due to their elaboration into anthropomorphic form, the elaborate arm gestures are suggestive of ritual¹²⁰⁰ and at least one {123} was recovered in a domestic shrine. Yet it is difficult to forge a link, with so few examples and no chronological overlap, when the clay vessels are no earlier than the End Palatial period. Egyptian and indeed most foreign (i.e., non-Aegean) influence clearly wanes rather dramatically throughout Crete beginning in the Final Palatial period and through into End and Post-Palatial. Why would this image be adopted at this time? The only other new image to appear is the crocodile, one that is adopted by the Mycenaeans to similar extent and

at the same time as a limited but clearly élite manifestation.¹²⁰¹ These are not.

Commentary

Essentially, three different figural types are brought together in this chapter, all of which share some of the general presentation of the Egyptian *Gravidenflasche* type. These are the Proto-Palatial miniature figures, the End Palatial/Post-Palatial parturient vessels, and the imported Egyptian *Gravidenflasche*/rhyton vessel without context.

It is difficult to concur with the excavators at Malia¹²⁰² that the Egyptian *Gravidenflasche* vessel type was instrumental in the iconography of the Minoan figurines of similar physical appearance, when the use of such appliqués and protomes is characteristic of the MM II period.¹²⁰³ The problem is chronological, for the MM II context date is more than two centuries or so earlier than the appearance of *Gravidenflaschen* in Egypt, and no related amulets, figurines and appliqués are known in Egypt. Any earlier images, which would be related to the standing hippopotamus deity, always are zoomorphic and *not* anthropomorphic, in the Middle Kingdom.¹²⁰⁴ The imported *Gravidenflasche* {119} should not be earlier than the reign of Amenhotep II in date, and no earlier Egyptian parallels exist that can be cited as the inspiration for the crouching woman protome {452}, figurine {451}, pendant {312} and appliqué {378}. Nonetheless, it must also be said that they are quite un-Minoan in themselves. They bear no relationship with earlier or contemporary Minoan female figurines, that do not squat, are not pregnant or steatopygous, and also exhibit different hand and arm positions than these four pieces. Figurine {451} is from a probable shrine context and the image most likely is amuletic in character. Although its meaning remains obscure, it has no known relationship to any medicinal ointments or salves.¹²⁰⁵ Neither, so far as we can tell, do the others.

Their relationship to the ape seals of Proto-Pala-

¹¹⁹⁷ An additional figurine is noted at Pakhlizani Agriada near Kavousi, from a bench sanctuary with objects dated from Post-Palatial to Archaic periods. Its date, apparently later than the Post-Palatial period, lies beyond the chronological limits of the present study, and it is not a vessel. Gesell calls it a “crude survival of the Post-palatial rhyton figurines;” see GESELL 1985:57, 59, 187 fig. 69.

¹¹⁹⁸ Left and right respectively for {35}, right and left for {78}. Both elbows are preserved on {123}, suggesting both hands are near or at the breasts. Both hands and arms of the Pakhlizani Agriada figurine (see n. 1197, above) are in

this same position, suggesting post-Minoan religious continuity.

¹¹⁹⁹ Note, however, the vertical handle upper neck to shoulder is not found on these Egyptian amphorae; see above, n. 195 for discussion of this vessel.

¹²⁰⁰ See BETANCOURT 1985:175.

¹²⁰¹ See Chapter 16.

¹²⁰² DETOURNEY, POURSAT and VANDENABEELE 1980:118–119.

¹²⁰³ See FOSTER 1982:passim.

¹²⁰⁴ See Chapter 12.

¹²⁰⁵ Nor with the clay *Muttermilchkrüglein* vessels.

tial date is probable, especially as many of these seals are found in the areas around Phaestos and Malia although their arms are in front of their body between the legs.¹²⁰⁶ The differences apparent in material, function and treatment are fundamental, however, and a direct link should not be considered, especially between the stone seals and clay figurine, protome and appliqué. The relationship between the ape pendant from Knossos {240} and the crouching woman pendant also from there {312} is more likely, as is the relationship of the figurines from Phaestos {451–452} and Kommos {482}.

Nonetheless, Carinci recently has argued for an Egyptian origin of these Proto-Palatial figures, on the basis of the connection between the standing hippopotamus deity and the tradition of pregnant female figures, the former of which was adopted on Crete in the Proto-Palatial period.¹²⁰⁷ This seems, on the surface, to be a credible argument, but the Egyptian image of the pregnant woman throughout the dynastic period is quite different in presentation than the Minoan figures. Exemplified by the hieroglyph signs B 2 (*bk3*, 'be pregnant') and B 3 (*msi*, 'give birth'), she kneels with arms and hands at her sides in both signs, B 2 with a swollen belly and B 3 with a child's head and arms protruding upside-down from underneath her. This image is never presented 'in the round' in Egypt, where only two-dimensional illustrations are known. Nor is the standing hippopotamus deity ever shown in a seated position, so the connection could not have been made in this manner. If a connection must be made between the Egyptian and Minoan images, it is entirely ideological, without accompanying visual association, and therefore without any evidence for its existence. The image itself either may be derived from elsewhere than Egypt, although no prototype for it can be cited or, less likely, it is an entirely Minoan creation.

A relationship between the four Proto-Palatial figures and End/Post-Palatial vessels from Kephala Khondrou {123}, Gournia {78} and Aghia Triadha {35} also is difficult to forge, but their ritual associations do suggest some form of indigenous ideological development that is not exemplified by material remains in the intervening periods. The rhyton hole at the vagina of two figures coincidentally(?) or perhaps ideologically may be related to the converted rhyton hole of the Katsamba import {119}, but with this one not terribly convincing exception the chronological leap spans some three and a half centuries and both the Neo-Palatial and Final Palatial periods. By the End-Palatial period, in fact by the Final Palatial period, the only rhyton forms produced are in clay, and consist solely of the bull's head, cup and conical forms. Even these forms do not continue beyond the End-Palatial period.¹²⁰⁸

Nonetheless, it must be pointed out that the Katsamba rhyton {119} would have been an extremely useful chronological marker, had we more precise information regarding its type both in Egypt and on Crete. A relatively small chronological overlap is likely, as it should not be earlier than sometime in the reign of Amenhotep II in date (on the little dating evidence for the type that does exist) and it could only have been converted into a rhyton not later than LM IB (*if* one assumes that imported stone vessels were not directly converted by Minoan artisans after the end of the Neo-Palatial period), or at least early in the Final Palatial period at Knossos when, undoubtedly, amphora {144} would have been converted. This is not a strong anchor to use, admittedly, and it would need to be combined with the better markers, but at least a very limited window of opportunity for its importation onto Crete can be provided.

¹²⁰⁶ See Chapter 13.

¹²⁰⁷ CARINCI 2000:33–35. On the standing hippopotamus deity, see Chapter 12.

¹²⁰⁸ On stone rhyta, see WARREN 1969:84 Type 34; on clay rhyta, see BETANCOURT 1985:154, 164, 170, 173, 175;