

## ARCHAEOLOGY IN GREECE 2017–2018

# Coroplastic studies: what's new?

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*This overview discusses the recent scholarly literature on Greek terracottas of the first millennium BC. Figurative terracottas, once seen as meaningless trinkets, are now given their full meaning through rigorous study and anthropological approaches. Perhaps the most explicit and universal source on the piety of a great number of people, they now contribute decisively to the archaeology of religion, particularly in the field of votive and funerary practices. At the same time, research on figurative terracottas, renewed by a technological approach, reveals a craft that is surprisingly modern in its manufacturing and distribution processes.*

*In memory of Enzo Lippolis*

'Coroplastic studies' has emerged as an ever-expanding field of study. It is impossible to offer here an exhaustive account of the current bibliography or to deal with all the major achievements of the last 30 years. It has been necessary, therefore, to make selections, and these inevitably depend on my own interests. It goes without saying that for each new development, other examples could, with equal justification, have been selected. This overview discusses the scholarly production on terracottas of the last three decades and is limited for the most part to Greek coroplastic art of the first millennium BC. Publications about Neolithic, Mycenaean and Roman figurines are excluded, except for a few that contain interesting new information also relevant to the Greek sphere.

### **A new status for coroplastic studies**

The change in the status of terracotta figurines as objects of study is the most important development insofar as it has not only affected all other developments, but has also arisen from them. Unlike sculpture and vase painting, from the Renaissance onwards terracotta figurines only occasionally attracted the interest of scholars and dealers of antiquities (Uhlenbrock forthcoming). In the second half of the 19th century, the extraordinary finds at Tanagra, unearthed during clandestine excavations throughout the 1870s, followed by those at Myrina in Asia Minor, revealed in the context of legal excavations in 1880–1882, provoked a 'craze' for figurines, in art and bourgeois society at first (Lindemann 1994; Jeammet 2007b; Mathieux 2007) and later in scholarly circles. The end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries saw the first studies of figurines, as well as the first museum catalogues, in particular those of the Louvre and the British Museum, the first iconographic repertoire of terracottas based on museum collections (Winter 1903), as well as the first syntheses and questions about the use of statuettes (Pottier 1883; 1890). Even so, the small quantity of extant archaeological data at the time and the predominantly funerary provenance of the objects – the masses of fragments that were found in sanctuaries could not compete with the fine complete objects coming from graves – limited enquiries and, more importantly, confined figurines to the status of antique trinkets, an image which they had just recently acquired in the modern world, or of 'small objects' pertaining to at best a 'minor art form'. As a result, with the exception of a few pioneering studies, for most of the 20th century this field of research remained in the shade of a backward-looking history of art, even as finds and catalogues multiplied at sites and museums (see Besques *et al.* 1985 for an excellent review of the literature in the period 1935–1985).

The last 30 years, however, have seen a radical change; from constituting an object of study with an outdated charm, terracotta figurines now offer a primary route to knowledge of classical Antiquity. Terracotta figurines have been the focus of methodologically rigorous investigations, which take into account all their features, both those pertaining to manufacturing and distribution processes, which reveal terra-

cottas as a surprisingly modern craft, and those that concern their use in different contexts; study of the latter has resulted in a reassessment of the archaeology of votive and funerary practices. This change of status resulted in the emergence, in the 1990s, of figurine studies as a new field of research in its own right, which expanded rapidly from the 2000s onwards; it has become customary to refer to this field as ‘coroplastic studies’.

The last two decades saw the proliferation of scientific conferences and workshops either entirely dedicated to terracotta figurines or in which they played a major role. Some of these events were dedicated to specific areas of interest, such as technique, such as moulds in Lille in 1995 (Muller 1997a) or modelling at Aix-en-Provence in 2019; animal figurines in Lille in 2002 (Gratien *et al.* 2003); votive offerings in Lille in 2007 (Prêtre and Huyssecom-Haxhi 2009); centres of production, for example Tanagra, in Paris in 2007 (Jeammet 2007a), Sicily in a collective volume (Albertocchi and Pautasso 2012), Crete in Catania in 2013 (Pautasso and Pilz 2016), Cyprus in Nicosia in 2013 (Papantoniou *et al.* forthcoming), Macedonia in Thessaloniki in 2018; a specific divinity, for example Artemis in Athens in 2010 (Muller-Dufeu *et al.* 2010); funeral practices of children in Aix-en-Provence in 2011 (Hermay and Dubois 2012); and the meaning of figurines in relation to their find context in Lille in 2011 (Huyssecom-Haxhi and Muller 2015a). Other conferences had no thematic or geographical limitations, like the very important Izmir congress in 2007 (Muller and Laflı 2015; 2016), the symposium in honour of Eos Zervoudaki in Rhodes in 2009 (Giannikouri 2014) and, finally, those in Haifa in 2013 and 2018 (the proceedings of which are unpublished).

A second sign of the recent momentum in coroplastic studies is the organization of museum exhibitions and the publication of their catalogues, the latter often including contributions of prime significance. *The coroplast's art*, exhibited in Princeton, New York and Cambridge, opened this series in 1990–1991 (Uhlenbrock 1990). Then followed the exhibitions *Bürgerwelten* in Berlin in 1994, devoted to the reception of Hellenistic figurines in the 19th century (Kriseleit and Zimmer 1994); *Hauch des Prometheus: Meisterwerke in Ton* in Munich in 1996 (Hamdorf 1996); *Tanagra: mythe et archéologie* in Paris and Montreal in 2003–2004 (Jeammet 2003; most of the material subsequently appeared in the exhibition *Tanagras: figurines for life and eternity* in Valencia in 2010; Jeammet 2010); and the small educational exhibition *Les figurines de terre cuite: pour qui? pourquoi? comment?* in Lille in 2016. Finally, in 2017, the exhibitions *Kataniè* in Catania and *Figurines: a microcosmos of clay* in Thessaloniki (Adam-Veleni *et al.* 2017) highlighted the rich coroplastic discoveries of Catania and northern Greece respectively.

At the same time, scholarly monographs have multiplied. Some focus on museum collections (Burn and Higgins 2001; Bailey 2008; Peppas-Papaioannou 2010; Hamdorf 2014), others, more interestingly, on assemblages discovered in sanctuaries (Muller 1996; Merker 2000; Huyssecom-Haxhi 2009; Mitsopoulos-Leon 2009; Lilibaki-Akamati 2000) and cemeteries (see Rumscheid 1999 for a bibliographical review; key publications include Graepler 1997; Tsakalou-Tzanavari 2002; Kassab-Tezgör 2007; Schwarzmaier 2011; Pisani 2013) or on the figurine production of a particular site, sometimes one investigated many years earlier (Mekacher 2003; Acheilara 2006; Rumscheid 2006; Hornung Bertemes 2007; Barra Bagnasco 2009; Bencze 2013). On the other hand, publication of certain finds, eagerly anticipated by the scholarly community, is pending. The figurines of the Corycian Cave near Delphi (Amandry 1991: 251–56) and those of the Sanctuary of Artemis Amarysia near Eretria (Sapouna-Sakellaraki 1992) have so far been the subject of preliminary reports only. Similarly, a corpus of the Archaic figurines of Ionia is much needed; study of the finds from the Sanctuary of Aphrodite and Sanctuary of Artemis Chitone at Miletus (von Graeve 2013), essential for an understanding of the beginnings of Ionian coroplasty, is nearing completion. Special types of figurative terracottas have been the focus of specific studies, such as the so-called ‘Melian’ reliefs (Stilp 2006) and, especially, the *pinakes* of Locri, the latter collected in a monumental 15-volume publication (Cardosa *et al.* 1999–2007).

Finally, the emergence of coroplastic studies as an independent field of research is reflected in the creation of a network of researchers and an association, similar to those that have long existed for the study of other categories of artefacts (wall paintings, mosaics, etc.). Through the *Coroplastic Studies Interest Group* that preceded it, the *Association for Coroplastic Studies* is one of the outcomes of the 2007 Izmir congress, which brought together a very large community of researchers from 18 different

countries (Muller and Laflı 2015: 17–18). This association produces a biannual online newsletter, *Les Carnets de l'ACoSt* (<https://journals.openedition.org/acost/190>) that offers brief updates on current research issues as well as more substantial papers. As with associations in other research fields, the *Association for Coroplastic Studies* promotes the implementation of joint international projects (Muller and Uhlenbrock 2018).

This extraordinary recent profusion of scholarly production in all its forms – monographs, collective volumes, exhibition catalogues and now a dedicated journal – should not, however, mask the very limited presence of coroplasty in the major journals covering Greek archaeology. To take just one example, in the 20 years since 1997 the *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* has published only ten papers devoted specifically to coroplasty, only a little more than the eight numismatic papers; coroplasty therefore lags far behind its related fields of ceramic studies (35 papers) and sculpture (24 papers), not to mention epigraphy, which has enjoyed the lion's share of coverage over this period (88 papers). The picture is broadly similar in other major Greek archaeological journals; during the same period the *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts*, for example, did not publish a single paper devoted specifically to coroplasty and gave pride of place to sculpture. Similarly, it should be pointed out that since the syntheses of the 1960s (Besques 1963; Higgins 1967), whose approach is now outdated, no overall synthesis has been published on Greek terracottas. A collective work on coroplastic research is, however, in preparation, and will be more methodological in scope (Muller and Uhlenbrock 2018). Finally, recent collective works on Greek religion, although generally open to archaeological evidence (for example Raja and Rüpke 2015), remain unaware of the recent contribution of figurative terracottas to the understanding of votive and funerary practices.

Beyond these gaps, a number of new achievements, not to say 'revolutions', have emerged that can be grouped under two major themes: advances in the understanding of the production and diffusion of figurative terracottas and, secondly, investigation into their 'consumption', in other words their use in Antiquity.

## Production and diffusion

### *Shaping techniques*

Concerning shaping on the potter's wheel, a technique used in the Early Archaic period, there have been no major new developments, except for publication of the figurines themselves, such as those of Samos, which include bold animal and draped female figurines (Jarosch 1994: 55–57). There are now, however, precise descriptions of hand-modelling, the primary technique used in coroplasty for the manufacture of unique objects and for the prototypes intended to be reproduced by moulding; these include studies on Archaic Boeotia (Szabo 1994) and Classical Thasos, where the modelled statuettes are clearly the work of skilled craftspeople (Muller 1996: 66–80). The forthcoming symposium to be held in Aix-en-Provence in 2019 will perhaps offer new insights into this technique.

On the other hand, enormous progress has been made on understanding moulding, the technique employed for the vast majority of known figurines. Let us start with the question of origins. This technique was used from the third millennium BC in the Middle East, with simple moulds from which 'plaque-figurines' were drawn; its arrival in Greece in the seventh century BC through Cyprus, Crete and Ionia is now better understood (Muller 2000a: 92–96; Pilz 2011). Bi-valve moulding, which makes it possible to obtain true free-standing figurines, possibly appeared first in Phoenicia and then on Cyprus; it is, in any case, attested on Samos as early as the last quarter of the seventh century BC (Jarosch 1994: 59). A recent publication on Late Bronze Age coroplasty of the Near East includes a small series of figurines whose front and back are taken from the same mould ('twice moulded') (Kletter *et al.* 2010); it seems to me, however, that we cannot exclude that they are in fact figurines taken from bi-valve or two-piece moulds ('double-moulded'). If this is indeed the case, the appearance of this technique could be pushed back a few centuries.

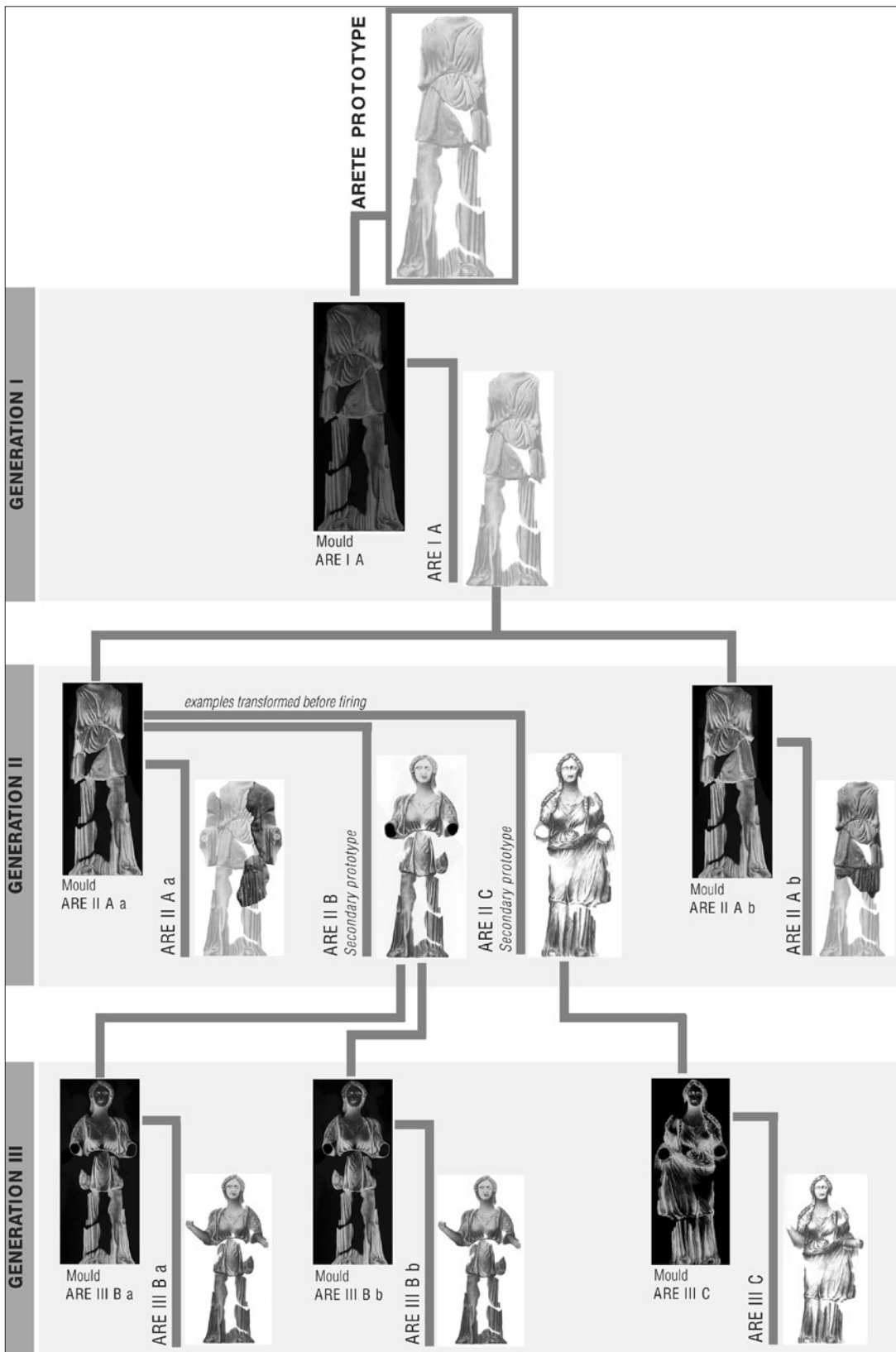
The main developments, however, concern understanding of the methods of mass production of moulded terracottas. The technique has frequently been described and the concepts of series, of *surmoulage* or overmoulding with its consequences – loss of size and sharpness of detail with each generation – have been known for a long time (Jastrow 1941) and are the subject of a key paper in coroplastic research

(Nicholls 1952). But these achievements remained at a theoretical level, without being applied in practice to the study of figurines, with the exception of some Italian publications. In recent years, important sets of terracottas from Thasos – those of the Classical and Hellenistic periods from the Thesmophorion (Muller 1996) and those of the Archaic period from the Artemision (Huysecom-Haxhi 2009) – have been analysed according to the manner of their production (Fig. 148). In addition, an agreed vocabulary has been proposed for the main languages used in classical archaeology (Muller 1997b). This vocabulary clarifies complex concepts such as archetype, prototype, secondary prototype, series, generation, derived production, production characteristics and manufacture characteristics. Use of these terms is becoming increasingly widespread, and this, in turn, is gradually contributing to a harmonization of approaches that is essential for coroplastic research. Above all, this vocabulary applies a methodology of study and a way of approaching sets of figurines, at least when they are sufficiently numerous and repetitive. One should begin with examination of the objects from a technical point of view, an approach that serves as a safeguard to the stylistic approach, which must follow. Some scholars, however, continue to favour the stylistic approach, in the tradition of Francis Croissant's work (Bencze 2013). Thanks to hard work in museums and storerooms, it must be recognized that coroplastic research is now achieving a level of maturity comparable to that of numismatics, which witnessed a revolution with the establishment of monetary series.

The fact that we are dealing with a mass-produced product profoundly changes the form of publication of figurative terracottas, in particular in the case of large sets of fragments discovered in excavations, especially in sanctuaries. Instead of selecting 'beautiful' but incomplete objects, which can give only a random and misleading image of the sets to which they belong (for examples of this practice, see Muller 1994: 178), scholars now tend to consider the totality of the fragments unearthed. A number of methods have been proposed in order to arrive at reliable estimations of quantities. The first is weighing, since weight is the only consistent value that makes it possible to compare the overall importance of sets, whatever their degree of fragmentation (Muller and Tartari 2006: 66, n. 4). In some cases, and more easily than for vases, it is possible to arrive at precise minimum numbers of individuals (MNI) type by type, and even, by adapting osteologists' calculation methods, at estimations of the initial population of figurines (Muller 1996: 56–58; Huysecom-Haxhi 2009: 39). Nevertheless, the example of the Panathenaic amphorae, of which we know precisely how many were produced and how many have reached us (Bentz 1998), gives an idea of the vertiginous multiplication factor necessary to estimate such numbers. Other scholars have proposed quantitative and statistical approaches (Graepler 1997). After a long process of sorting and joining pieces (without a pattern/template!), one can reconstruct complete types on the basis of *a priori* insignificant fragments that were produced from the same mould. New technologies are driving the development of these procedures rapidly, such as the superposition of partial drawings (Muller 1996: pls 28–29 and *passim*), plaster casts and assembling digital photographs; 3D imagery and printing will soon offer new possibilities. Finally, whenever the nature of the set of fragments is appropriate, catalogues are organized by technical types, generations and versions, in accordance with the manufacturing processes. It goes without saying that in this way publications of terracottas now offer a much more accurate picture of the composition and repertoire of important sets of figurative terracottas, revealing the respective importance of each iconographic type, which undeniably contributes significantly to their interpretation (e.g. Muller and Tartari 2006).

### *Shaping tools*

The figurine maker shared most of his tools with the potter; a beautiful set from Figaretto's workshop on Corfu has been published (Kourkoumelis and Demesticha 1997). But the main tool, specific to figurine production, is the mould, which served to shape its products. Despite their significant numbers at some sites, they are still rarely studied and catalogued as such – that is, as production tools that have their place in a series and not only as mere indicators of one single image that alone is discussed. However, several papers have recently focused on the study of moulds, in particular those of Taras, where more than 1,200 have been recorded (Muller 2000b; Ferrandini-Troisi *et al.* 2012; Muller and Aubry 2016). We are still waiting for the systematic publication of the moulds collected in large numbers from the workshops of Pella, Argos



148. Production of a Thasian type of the Classical period: the Arete series, with three documented generations (I, II, III), three different versions (A, B, C) and use of two parallel moulds (a, b) in the second and third generations (after Guide de Thasos, Athens 2000: fig. 225).

and Corfu in particular; these are currently known only from preliminary reports or unpublished studies (Banaka 2014). A few exceptional objects deserve to be mentioned, such as a mould taken from a hand-modelled ‘plank-figurine in Argos’, with which this traditional type was mass produced (Banaka 1997: 321–22, 329 fig. 4); in Volos a figurine-patrice was made in such a way that it could be used to take new derivative moulds (Hornung-Bertemes *et al.* 1998). Similarly I should mention the moulds of exceptional dimensions (up to 1m high) from Corfu, which give an impression of how the first generation of certain Archaic productions would have looked (Preka-Alexandri 2016); the Museum of Reggio Calabria displays moulds of closely comparable dimensions.

Some specific technical points, minor it is true, are not unanimously agreed; many researchers still attribute to the wear of the moulds the loss of quality inherent to *surmoulage* (for example Ferruzza 2016: 87), while others remain convinced that the casts were allowed to dry into the moulds for a few hours or even days, in order to facilitate their extraction. The latter is obviously inconsistent with the productivity sought through the use of the moulding technique or with what we observe in contemporary workshops still practising traditional moulding (Muller 2014: 67, fig. 6).

#### *The contribution of the laboratory: clays and polychromy*

Unlike pottery studies, the study of figurative terracottas does not yet regularly involve work in the laboratory. The regular application of non-destructive techniques should change this situation in the future. In most cases, the banal question asked concerns the characterization and provenance of the clay. Other analyses have focused on firing temperatures, with interesting results on the organization of ceramic crafts; on Thasos, figurines were apparently manufactured in the same workshops as those that produced cooking wares and coarse-ware ceramics, but not black-glazed pottery (Muller 2000a: 98)

On the other hand, there is one area where the laboratory has advanced inestimably our knowledge of coroplastics: that of polychromy. This is now regularly the subject of impressive pages in exhibition catalogues (Pagès-Camagna 2010; Tzanavari 2017). We owe much of this progress to the Louvre; it has both rich collections of fine terracottas found in graves, with significant remains of polychromy preserved, and a specialized laboratory within the museum itself with high-performance equipment such as the AGLAE particle accelerator (Bourgeois and Jeammet 2014; Jeammet and Bourgeois forthcoming). It had long been known that terracotta figurines were painted, as reflected in 19th-century watercolours; this feature, however, was somewhat forgotten because of the predominance of catalogues illustrated with only black and white photographs. The development during the Archaic period from ceramic products with a reduced palette of clay-based colours applied before firing to a true pictorial technique involving the cold application, on a uniform preparation based on kaolinite, of colours fixed with an organic binder, was reported a long time ago (Besques 1963: 27, 40; Higgins 1967: 3–5). New photographic techniques (multispectral imaging) and new observation techniques (video-microscopy and digital microscopy, which allows examination in 2D and 3D modes) allow us today to restore the complete polychromy of figurines and, especially, to describe in a precise way the techniques and complex effects which are fully comparable to those of large-scale painting: for example, juxtaposed surfaces or the superposition or mixture of pictorial layers, colour gradients, the contrast of light and shadow, and repainting. In addition, it is known that the colour palette was extended from the first half of the fourth century BC onwards. The colours used, now systematically analysed (using micro-Raman spectroscopy and X-ray fluorescence), are the same as those used in large-scale painting and sculpture (Brecoulaki 2006; Kakoulli 2009; Jeammet and Bourgeois forthcoming): mineral pigments of natural or manufactured origin and organic substances of vegetal or animal origin. Amazing discoveries have been made with regards to the practice of gilding, essential in order to imitate small bronzes, as at Smyrna or Taranto, or for partial highlights (Bourgeois *et al.* 2013), and the use of tin, more recently revealed, which was employed in order to enhance elements of jewellery by imitating silver (Asderaki-Tzoumerkioti and Doulgeri-Intzesiloglou 2010; Tzanavari 2017: 55). However, this remarkable *techné* of the statuette painters was employed only in the production of very high-quality artefacts, found mostly in graves, whereas the polychromy of figurines dedicated in sanctuaries is more often like a clumsy daubing.

### *Workshops and craftsmen*

Despite the ubiquity of figurine production, excavations of coroplast workshops are still rare and publications remain preliminary (Lilibaki-Akamati 1993; Banaka 1997; Doulgeri-Intzesiloglou 1997). On the other hand, recent consideration of the locations of workshops, both in town and on the periphery, and on their internal organization, with or without the presence of all parts of the *chaîne opératoire*, has made it possible to characterize in broad terms the place of this craft industry, both in terms of space and in economic life in general. It is most often closely dependent on potters' workshops, located in the city or on its outskirts; this is where the essential technical infrastructures (clay levigation basins, kilns) and the skills for their use are located. Evidence for the shaping of figurines with moulds is most often found within a pottery workshop, but it can also be displaced to a house (cottage industry) or a shop in town (Muller 2014: 76–79; Sanidas 2016). Synthetic studies on the archaeology of crafts in several sites or regions allow us to take account of the diversity of situations (Brunet 1998, for Delos; Monaco 2000, for Athens; Pisani 2012, for Sicily; Sanidas 2013, for Attica and the Peloponnese). On the other hand, we still do not know for certain of a workshop that specialized in the production of figurative terracottas only, a situation which we happily imagine for the workshop of a Diphilos in Myrina, for example.

The craftsmen who made these figurines are at the heart of several recent studies. Their social status is obviously the most difficult aspect to define. The workshops would most often belong to small enterprises (Muller 2014: 75–76), metics rather than slaves; this is what the study of the corpus of signatures suggests for Taras (Rosamilia 2017a: 328–29). The limited skills required to shape the figurines with moulds suggest that this particular activity was in the hands of unskilled workers, apprentices, perhaps even the family – wife and children – of the master potter (Muller 2011). This could explain the frequent displacement of the casting alone to a townhouse or shop, linked to a suburban pottery workshop (Muller 2014: 78). The study of fingerprints is a very promising method by which to characterize this workforce (Jägerbrand 2007). They do not always answer precise questions of hand identity (Muller 2000b: 41) but have given the most interesting overall results for Late Roman moulded lamps. They confirm the presence of children and women among the moulders (Dzierzykraj-Rogalski and Grzeszyk 1991) and make it possible to reproduce precise forming gestures (Lichtenberger and Moran 2018). Finally, epigraphy, with the study of signatures, opens up extremely interesting perspectives. If the rich corpus of Myrina was hardly exploited in this respect at the time of its study (Kassab 1988), on the other hand, the recent onomastic study of the corpus of Taranto has confirmed the local origin of the craftsmen, with only two foreigners coming from Attica; the latter certainly contributed to the diffusion of the style of Tanagra.

Moreover the study of the Taranto material has revealed the connection between the importance of the workshop and the number of moulds, and thus the repertoire attributed to it; it has also challenged the hypothesis of collaborations between coroplasts and clarified the chronology of the workshops (Rosamilia 2017a; 2017b). Finally, female names on moulds confirm the presence of women in workshops, and not only in subordinate roles, in Taras in the fourth century BC (Ferrandini-Troisi *et al.* 2012: 49–50) and also in Parion, for example, in the first century BC (Kozanli 2015: 394). It is probable that the same is true for other sites, where people were not in the habit of putting their name on the production tool.

The links between the figurine maker, the sculptor (for modelling prototypes) and the potter (for preparing clay and firing) have long been well known. Yet, the recent discoveries concerning polychromy now establish links with other specialists, namely painters and gilders. Whereas the mass production of terracottas intended for sanctuaries originated from small workshops which probably concentrated the entire *chaîne opératoire* in a few hands, it is now clear that terracottas of high quality involved several *technitai*, perhaps independent specialists (Tzanavari 2017: 54–55), who also intervened in the production of other categories of objects. Indeed, even if they sometimes seem very abundant to us, the production of high-quality figurines obviously cannot compete, from a quantitative point of view, with that of vases and justify completely autonomous manufacturing processes.

*Distribution*

Beyond simple copies or imitations, it has been possible in recent years to distinguish the different forms of distribution specific to coroplasty (Muller 2000a; Uhlenbrock 2016b). These are: direct distribution of the figurines themselves, as is common for all manufactured products; dissemination of production tools and moulds, whether by trade or by migration of the craftspeople themselves; and, especially, indirect dissemination via overmoulding and derivative production.

The swift emergence of a language of forms shared by practically the entire Greek world – the Archaic Ionian *koine* initially, later the Hellenistic *koine* of the Tanagra style – finds its explanation in these technical modalities of dissemination. Several case studies have demonstrated this, both for the Archaic (Huysecom 2000; Albertocchi 2016; Bertesago 2016; Gasparri 2016) and for the Hellenistic period (Muller 1993; Kassab Tezgör 1995; 2007; Kassab Tezgör and Abd el-Fattah 1997; Hornung-Bertemes *et al.* 1998).

These technical modalities of distribution also suggest that, despite their number and geographical extent, the figurines represented only a very small part of commercial exchange; indeed, their production is very easily distributed everywhere thanks to overmoulding. For example, in the second half of the sixth century BC the same dressed kouros originating from southern Ionia was manufactured practically contemporaneously at several sites in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (Huysecom 2000).

**Consumption and identification**

The wide distribution invites us to wonder about the reasons for the adoption of the same types of figurines by the whole Greek world, and thus about their use.

*Contexts, assemblages, repertoires and iconography*

Currently, the focus of our attention is on the context of figurines, a term to be taken in its narrowly technical archaeological sense but also more widely as an assemblage of objects (vases, figurines, ornaments, etc.) which make sense together. Figurative terracottas are no longer a category of objects that we isolate, but are considered more and more often as one element in a signifying system, votive in a sanctuary and funerary in graves. These assemblages are meticulously described, for example within specific sanctuaries, where they enable us to define the sphere of activity of the divinities (Muller-Dufeu *et al.* 2010: 398–400; Maffre and Tichit 2011; Stamatopoulou 2014: 212–19; Marchetti and Parisi 2016), across an entire region (Parisi 2017) and, of course, within graves (many examples in Hermary and Dubois 2012; Muller and Laflı 2015; Nikolaou 2012). Sometimes such contexts are reconstructed from archived documents from old excavations, such as that of the necropolis of Myrina (Duchêne and Mathieux 2007). Finally, domestic and secular contexts, which are less common, have also received significant attention (Chryssanthaki-Nagle 2006; Rumscheid 2006).

It is now increasingly clear that figurative terracottas were placed predominantly in sanctuaries of female deities who were in charge of key moments of a woman's life, namely Artemis, Demeter, the Nymphs and, to a lesser extent, Hera, Aphrodite and Athena (see Huysecom-Haxhi and Muller 2015b: 433–34 for a summary of the main arguments of this discussion; *contra* Croissant 2017, who, however, does not offer any new arguments in support of his views). Similarly, thanks to the study of funerary assemblages and also physical anthropology, it has recently become clear that it was mainly the *aôroi* or immature – young men and women who died before reaching adulthood – who received terracottas as offerings in their graves (Huysecom-Haxhi 2008: 57–58; Huysecom-Haxhi *et al.* 2012: 243; Tzanavari 2014: 341, n. 84).

Finally, another form of contextualization of figurative terracottas must be mentioned. The iconographic similarities with other forms of representation, in particular the often more explicit paintings on vases and large-scale sculpture, are no longer considered from an art-historical perspective but from an interpretative one (Schwarzmaier 2006; Muller 2009; forthcoming). The language of coroplasty is no longer considered as a separate one, but is well integrated into the codes and conventions of other media of Greek iconography.



*Identification: deities or mortals?*

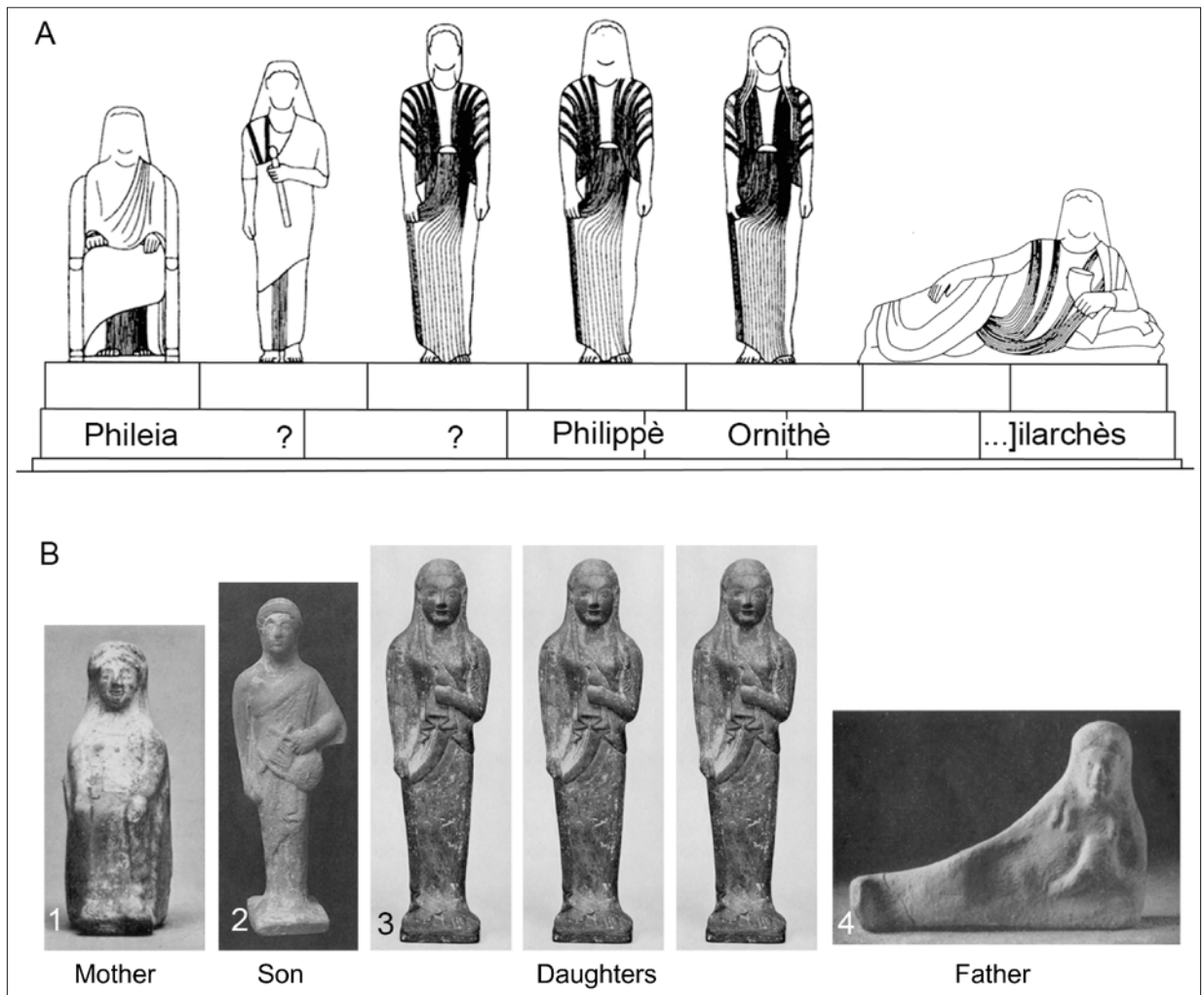
For a long time it was recognized that the main types of terracottas, in particular those of the Archaic period that do not display any distinctive attribute and were thus considered polysemic, represented deities, to whom they were dedicated in sanctuaries or who accompanied the deceased into the underworld. The protomes, mostly female, were most often identified as representing chthonic divinities (e.g. Tzanavari 2014). This traditional reading acknowledges the polysemy of the images, namely that the same type can represent various divinities (Croissant 2009: 186–87; Huysecom-Haxhi and Muller 2015b: 424–25). This reading has the advantage of compensating for the modesty of the object with the prestige of the identification. It also makes it possible to explain the extraordinary diffusion of these types, because Greeks everywhere worshipped the same principal deities. Many researchers still follow this divine identification (see, e.g., many contributions in Adam-Veleni *et al* 2017: especially 238–41).

But just as has been the case in the study of large-scale sculpture, where many statues once considered divine have now been reinterpreted as representations of mortals (Brommer 1986), so too is a ‘revisionist’ trend (Marchetti and Parisi 2016: 494 n. 61) with distant origins (Blinkenberg 1931: 28–36, 509–10) becoming increasingly prevalent in the field of coroplastic research. With the exception of terracottas identified as deities by an unambiguous attribute (such as the helmet or the aegis of Athena), the great majority of both female and male figurines are now interpreted as representations of mortals (Lippolis 2001; 2005; Huysecom-Haxhi and Muller 2007; 2015b; Schipporeit 2014; Uhlenbrock 2016a). Similarly, female protomes are now understood as ‘abbreviated’ statuettes (Muller 2009; Portale 2012). This reading is based on the systematic examination of those features that are considered significant: – that is, posture, gesture, clothing and headdresses, ornaments, attributes (Huysecom-Haxhi and Muller 2007: 238–43) – and on the particularly suggestive parallel of the group representing an aristocratic family carved by Geneleos and set in the Heraion of Samos (**Fig. 149A**). Each statue, grouped in a paratactic way, corresponds to one of the most frequent iconographic types of Archaic coroplasty (**Fig. 149B**): the banqueter represents, in a generic and conventional way, the citizen head of the family, the enthroned woman the wife and mother of legitimate children, the *kore* the nubile daughter and the *kouros*, dressed or nude, the citizen-in-the-making (Huysecom-Haxhi 2009: 584–85; Muller 2009: 92–93). The absence or presence of headdresses – *polos*, *stephane*, veil – in the female representations, figurines and protomes, distinguishes between different familial statuses: *parthenos* (nubile girl), *nymphe* (bride) and *gyne* (adult woman after the birth of her first child). This interpretative thread, extended to numerous representations beyond the Archaic period (Muller 1996; forthcoming; Huysecom-Haxhi 2015), explains the ubiquity of coroplastic types; everywhere, they represent, in a conventional (of course they are not portraits!) and clearly identifiable way, mortal dedicators, or their representatives, in a precise familial status.

The debate between supporters of the traditional ‘divine’ identification and those of the new interpretation of figurative terracottas as representing mortals is still very animated (see Huysecom-Haxhi and Muller 2015b: 423–33, for a summary of the main arguments on each side; see also Croissant 2017 for a particularly virulent attack, but without any new argument, against these new proposals). It seems to me that it is the function of terracottas in the sanctuary or the grave that arises from each of these identifications that tilts the balance in favour of the new “revisionist” reading.

*The function of figurative terracottas: towards an anthropological approach*

It is impossible to see the function of divine representations as offerings; these terracottas are far too modest to delight the dedicatee as an *agalma* worthy of the name. On the other hand, to place figurines representing mortals in their social and familial status in a sanctuary or grave makes sense. In the sanctuary, the dedicators placed these objects near the divinity so as to obtain its protection within in the new statuses to which they had gained access; like an avatar, the terracotta replaces the dedicator in a perpetual presence and prayer near the god (Huysecom-Haxhi and Muller 2015b: 433–35). This hints at the circumstances of these consecrations: namely, at the moment of changes of status, the festivals and rituals that marked the familial and civic integration for boys (*pais*, *ephebe*, citizen) and sexual maturity, marriage and childbirth for girls (*parthenos*, *nymphe*, *gyne*). In other words, the votive terracottas offered in sanctuaries of deities



149. Standard types of (A) large Archaic sculpture (reconstruction of the group carved by Geneleos on Samos; after Walter-Karydi 1985: fig. 4) and (B) Archaic coroplasty (after Muller 2009: 89 fig. 2).

who were in charge of young people of both sexes are the archaeological manifestation of rites of passage (Derks 2012) whose fundamental character was recognized already more than a century ago (Van Gennepe 1909). Also, this explanation based on rituals of maturation and socialization is becoming increasingly accepted (Jeamment 2010: 160–61). It remains to be explained why the corpus of figurative terracottas offered in this context is so predominantly female; perhaps boys would make the same types of offerings (figurines of ephebes, banqueters) in the presence of Artemis, who was also in charge of their socialization (Aït Salah 2017), but would mostly dedicate other categories of offerings, such as drinking vessels, symbols of their entry into adulthood and accession to the ‘right to banquet’ (Muller-Dufeu *et al.* 2010: 399–400; Maffre and Tichit 2011: 160).

To place these same figurative terracottas in the tombs of the *aôroi*, the immature, often in association with other objects such as bridal ornaments, was to grant them, in a projection of what should have been, fulfilment in life by symbolically achieving the stages which remained to be passed and of which death had deprived them (Huysecom-Haxhi 2008; Schwarzmaier 2015): for girls, these stages were marriage and childbirth; for boys, integration as a citizen and acquisition of a family (Huysecom-Haxhi and Muller 2015b: 434–36). This is driven by the same wish for ‘compensation’ that in Athens caused Phrasikleia, an eternal *kore*, to be crowned with a wedding crown or a loutrophoros to be placed on the grave of an unmarried individual; even today in Greek villages young unmarried people are buried in a wedding dress

or suit with bridal crowns (Danforth and Tsiaras 1982; Lohmann 1992). Indeed, traditional societies are fundamentally concerned about their reproduction and their descendants; in ancient Greece, the survival of the city was also at stake.

Beyond the most frequent types that clearly participate in this interpretative scheme, there still remain many objects – anthropomorphic and animal representations, and various other objects – to be commented on. I am convinced that the symbolic function of other objects related to rites of passage, fertility and the fulfilment of life will be ascertained in the future as a result of a series of studies already published or underway (Huysecom 2003; Huysecom-Haxhi 2007; 2009: 587–99; Papaikononou and Huysecom-Haxhi 2009; Huysecom-Haxhi *et al.* 2012; Pautasso 2015; Muller forthcoming).

Figurative terracottas, once seen as meaningless trinkets, are now given their full meaning through anthropological approaches. Perhaps the most explicit and universal source on the piety of a great number of people, they now contribute decisively to the archaeology of religion, particularly in the field of votive and funerary practices. This is probably the most interesting new achievement of coroplastic studies in recent decades. At the same time, research on figurative terracottas, renewed by a more technical approach, reveals a craft that is surprisingly modern in terms of its manufacturing and distribution processes.

### Acknowledgements

My warmest thanks go to Maria Stamatopoulou who trusted me to present this study. The thoughts outlined here owe much to long and friendly discussions with Jaimee Uhlenbrock.

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