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Jaimee Uhlenbrock

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Hellenistic and Roman Terracottas: Mediterranean Networks and Cyprus

Jaimee Uhlenbrock

Under the auspices of the Association for Coroplastic Studies

- 1 In all 34 papers were presented, and a field trip to the Archaeological Museum in Nicosia took place on the third day. The first session “The House of Orpheus Terracotta Figurines” had 4 papers. In the first paper by Giorgos Papantoniou and Demetrios Michaelides “Moulding Expressions of Culture: The Terracotta Figurines from the House of Orpheus in Nea Paphos” the goals of the research project on the Hellenistic and Roman terracottas from the House of Orpheus in Nea Paphos were outlined. These include the creation of a database, the use of typological, stylistic, and spatial analyses, as well as physiochemical analyses. In addition, there is on-going digital restoration of these terracottas. Even though this work is still in its early phases, it is hoped that the approaches developed for this material will serve as models for future scientific and theoretical developments in coroplastic studies.

Demetrios Michaelides addresses the participants in the conference at the opening session.

- 2 “Quantitative vs. Qualitative Data: The Application of Neutron Activation Analysis and Portable X-ray Fluorescence Spectroscopy for the Study of the Hellenistic and Roman Figurines from the House of Orpheus in Nea Paphos” was the title of the second paper by Vassilis Kilikoglou, Maria Dikomitou-Eliadou, Giorgos Papantoniou, Demetrios Michaelides. Portable X-Ray Fluorescence spectrometry (pXRF) was used to determine the most appropriate samples from among the figurines from the House of Orpheus at Nea Paphos for testing by Neutron Activation Analysis (NAA). The application of NAA resulted in a dataset that clustered specific compositional elements that could then be associated with specific geological regions or even production workshops.
- 3 In “On Technology and Fabric Composition: Putting the pXRF Dataset into Use,” by Maria Dikomitou-Eliadou, Eleni Aloupi, Giorgos Papantoniou, and Demetrios Michaelides, the advantages of using Portable X-ray Fluorescence spectroscopy (pXRF)

for assessing fabric and slip variability within the corpus of figurines from the House of Orpheus at Nea Paphos was discussed. The authors also commented on future uses of the pXRF dataset and digital documentation for terracotta figurines.

- 4 “The Use of Information Technology Applications for Supporting the Study and Interpretation of Terracotta Figurines from the House of Orpheus in Nea Paphos,” by Fernando Loizides, Andreas Lanitis, Giorgos Papantoniou, and Demetrios Michaelides, was the final paper of this session. In this paper 3D scanning methodologies and digital reconstruction techniques were illustrated by means of select figurines from the House of Orpheus at Nea Paphos. The authors surveyed various applications for which 3D models could play a major role. These included the ability to virtually restore fragmented figurines, as well as the ability to study specific figurine types in a 3D environment.

Conference participants in the intimate setting of the library of the Archaeological Research Unit.

- 5 The second session was dedicated to Cyprus and had 8 papers divided into 3 groups. The first was Gabriele Koiner and Nicole Reitingner’s “Terracotta Figurines and Limestone Votaries from Late Classical to Roman Times in Eastern Cyprus” that attempted to recontextualize coroplastic material that lacks appropriate archaeological documentation. They question the seeming lack of quantities of Hellenistic figurines in the eastern part of Cyprus, suggesting that this may be due to the lack of good recordkeeping. By exploring museum archives they thus far have recovered a considerable number of figurines from different contexts in eastern Cyprus and have applied spatial analysis to reveal possible sanctuary deposits that have escaped notice thus far.
- 6 The second paper of the Cyprus session was “The Terracottas from Larnaca’s Salt Lake: Making New Things Out of Old,” by Pauline Maillard, in which she attempted to reconstruct and recontextualize some 550 Hellenistic figurines brought to light at a hill alongside Larnaca’s Salt Lake in the 19th century. She believed the origin of the typology to be local, but one that is based on Greek models, or even *surmoulage*, and perhaps even by Greek craftsmen living in Kition.

- 7 Eustathios Raptou presented evidence for coroplastic activity at Arsinoe in the Hellenistic period that was brought to light by the Antiquities Service. In his paper “The Terracotta Figurines of Hellenistic Arsinoe and its Environs” he reviewed the coroplastic material from the chora of the city, as well as areas of the urban complex. While the quantity of this evidence still remains limited, nevertheless it does expand our view of the use and typological range of figurines from this Hellenistic city. Most interesting is the discovery of shrines with figurines *in situ* at a rural shrine at Yialia.

Eustathios Raptou of the Antiquities Service leading a guided tour of the Cyprus Museum.

- 8 The 4th paper was by Nancy Serwint and was entitled “Hellenistic Terracottas: The Evidence from Ancient Arsinoe.” This paper addressed the striking discrepancy between the prolific coroplastic output of Marion over the course of the Cypro-Archaic and the Cypro-Classical periods and the paucity of the coroplastic evidence from later Arsinoe that currently numbers around 100 figurine fragments. Serwint wisely cautioned against rushing to assumptions, since the lack of exploration of suitable votive areas might explain this. What has been brought to light at Arsinoe, however, does reveal a striking typological difference relative to that of Marion.
- 9 The focus of Isabelle Tassignon’s paper “The Terracottas of Aphrodite and Eros at Amathous: Images of a Cult Statue?” was the motif of Aphrodite and Eros as reflected in figurines from Amathous. The iconographic and stylistic relationships that the author believes are evident between terracotta figurines of Aphrodite and Eros from Amathous and the two limestone sculptures illustrate the pervasive presence of a strong local tradition, differences in medium and execution notwithstanding.
- 10 Thirteen figurines of Tanagra style from tomb 916 at Amathus were the focus of the paper by Elisavet Stephani entitled “Underneath the Veil: Terracotta Figurines from the Eastern Necropolis of Amathous.” In this she explored the evidence for social distinctions that are presented by the characteristics of the terracottas in a funerary context. Approaching this assemblage from a socio-cultural perspective, she suggested that the fine quality and large size of these figurines could indicate the presence in the tomb of a member of an elite social class, for which the Dionysian imagery could suggest a privileged initiate into Dionysian cult mysteries.

- 11 The 7th paper in the Cyprus session was “Contemplating Issues of Historical Continuity: The Case of the Erimi-Bamboula Figurines,” by Polina Christofi. This concerned a small assemblage of 15 Classical and Hellenistic figurines that was found in an otherwise exclusively Chalcolithic context. The extraordinary chronological disparity that is evident was linked to similar disparities that have been noted at certain Bronze-age tombs, where intentional depositions of Hellenistic and Roman objects can be documented. These have been interpreted in the light of the need to express or demonstrate ancestral lineage.
- 12 The final paper in the Cyprus session was that of Anja Ulbrich, “Hellenistic and Roman Terracottas in the Cypriot Collection of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford: Contexts, Iconography, Meaning and Mediterranean Connections.” She presented the Ashmolean terracottas by site and explored the various types represented in the collection, their techniques, iconographies, dates, and meanings. These issues were discussed within the specific contexts of the figurines, most of which were from controlled excavations. She also related the Ashmolean figurines to other contemporary material, particularly from the same contexts (e.g. specific tombs), in an attempt to recontextualize the unprovenanced Cypriote terracottas in the collection according to their type and iconography.

Anja Ulbrich speaking on the Hellenistic and Roman terracottas in the Cypriot collection of the Ashmolean Museum

- 13 The third session of the conference was dedicated to material from Greece and Asia Minor. In this the first paper was “Theriomorphic Figures in Hellenistic and Roman Arcadia: A Possible Cypriot Connection, by Erin Walcek Averett. She focused on the coroplastic evidence for an unusual masking tradition in Arcadia, as may be reflected by some 140 Hellenistic and Roman figurines of dancing, theriomorphic kaneforoi from the sanctuary of Despoina at Lycosura. She argued that these may represent masked initiates of the cult of Despoina carrying sacrificial material that may relate to much earlier Cypriote traditions that Arcadians could have adopted later, in the Hellenistic

period, at a time when a connection to Cyprus and its ancient traditions was intentionally emphasized.

Erin Walcek Averett and other participants in the conference view terracottas at the Cyprus Museum

- 14 “Praxiteles and the Figurines” was the title of the second paper of this session by Angele Rosenberg. She explored the motif of the standing, nude youth best known from the coroplastic repertoire of Boeotia of the Classical period. Referring to this motif from the 5th century as the “Praxitelean youth” she then referenced grave groups from Halae to provide a continuous sequence for the development of these types, which came into existence around 450 and which can be traced through the beginning of the third century B.C.
- 15 The third paper in the session Greece and Asia Minor was that of Costantina Benissi entitled “Five Terracotta Ex-Voto Figurines from Amarynthos, Euboea: A Case-Study in Sanctuary Deposit Practices.” She presented a small group of 5 figurines of children or young adults from the sanctuary of Artemis Amarysia at Amarynthos in Euboea, all of whom hold diptychs on their laps. She argued that the iconographic motif of a seated child or adolescent is representative of a predominately larger category of figurines of children from the Hellenistic phase of the deposit that are the remains of the rituals of transition from adolescence to adulthood that took place at this sanctuary.
- 16 Argyroula Doulgeri-Intzesiloglou and Polyxeni Arachoviti presented the 4th paper in the Greece and Asia Minor session. “Production of Terracotta Figurines in the Hellenistic Period at the Ancient City of Pherae, Thessaly,” presented evidence for Hellenistic terracotta production that recently was uncovered at Pherai in Thessaly. Located in what was obviously the industrial quarter of the city, this material comprises fragments of lamps, fragments of relief bowls, as well as fragments of figurines and molds, indicating that this particular artisan did not specialize in terracotta figurines. Molds with partial imprints suggest that they were trial pieces believed to have been taken from bronze or marble prototypes.

- 17 “Some New Observations on the Materials used for Decoration of Hellenistic Terracotta Figurines in the Pherai Workshops, Greece,” by Eleni Asderaki-Tzoumerkioti, Manos Dionysiou, Argyroula Doulgeri-Intzesiloglou, Polyxeni Arachoviti was the 5th paper in the Greece and Asia Minor session. The purpose of this paper was to present evidence for the surface decoration of terracottas that was revealed during non-destructive archaeometric surface analyses using X-ray fluorescence spectrometry operating in air, X-ray equipment, and UV light. More than 250 objects were analysed so far and most of the pigments have been determined. These techniques enabled us to identify important aspects of the decoration of these figurines that had not been noted before, including the use of tin foil.
- 18 In the paper “Greek Terracotta Dolls: Between the Domestic and the Religious Sphere” by Frauke Gutschke a terracotta type most often referred to as a doll because of its articulated limbs was discussed. Approaching this topic from a theoretical perspective, the author focused on the interpretation and use of such articulated figurines, maintaining that they were semiotic replacements of actual toys that then were used in a ritual communication process, when a secular object, a toy, was transformed into another medium for a religious use, such as a dedication in a tomb or a sanctuary.
- 19 Minna Lönnqvist’s paper “Tanagras in the Rituals of Death and Rebirth” was based on contextual and spatial analyses of contexts that suggest a ritual history in the life of the Athenians. The figurines that were presented were believed by the author to have been produced for socio-political purposes in support of Attic fertility cults and festivals of the 4th century B.C. She argued that this could reveal that the ideas of death and rebirth were interlinked in funerary cults though the use of fertility figurines.
- 20 The 8th paper in the Greece and Asia Minor session was by Nathalie Martin and was entitled “Terracotta Veiled Women: A Symbol of Transition from Nymphe to Gyne?” She maintained that the veil found on figurines of women is a social construction within a complex system of signs. It is the visible translation of social status or gender, but its consistent interpretation is hampered by lack of good contexts for terracottas of veiled women.
- 21 “Visiting Gods” Revisited: Aphrodite or Bride?” by Arthur Muller was the 9th paper in this session. Citing figurines from the Artemision at Thasos and the Artemision at Dirrachion that now are believed to represent mortal votaries, he made a similar case for select figurines from Cyprus that traditionally have been identified as Aphrodite, and supported this interpretation by referring to wedding scenes on *lebetes gamikoi* that reflect identical iconographic elements.
- 22 Coming from a similar frame of reference, Stéphanie Huysecom-Haxhi presented alternate interpretations for the motif of a nude woman in a shell in her paper “Aphrodite, Coming of Age and the Marriage: Contextualisation and Reconsideration of the Nude Young Women Kneeling in a Shell.” Normally seen as representing the birth of Aphrodite, this motif is believed by the author instead to reflect values that are conveyed in a given milieu by or for a given individual at a precise moment in life that comes with the transition from *gyne* to *nymphe*. That it may or may not represent Aphrodite is irrelevant.
- 23 The 11th paper in the session Greece and Asia Minor was “New Hellenistic and Roman Terracotta Figurines from Pergamon’s Residential Area: On Workshops, Types and Images Related to Other Sites, and the Impact of Religions from Other Areas” by Sven

Kielau. Roughly 5,400 terracotta fragments recovered from a residential quarter on the southern slope of the acropolis of Pergamon were viewed as clear evidence for repetitive acts of devotion at an as yet unidentified popular sanctuary. One of the important features of this corpus is the inclusion of material from the early Imperial era, perhaps even as late as the Trajanic period. Fragments of two molds found in this area suggest that coroplastic production also may have taken place in this residential quarter.

- 24 A socio-cultural approach distinguished the paper of Frances Gallart Marqués “Transformation and Appropriation in the Coroplastic Art of Sardis.” In this the coroplastic production of Sardis in the Hellenistic and Roman periods was explored in an attempt to determine to what extent the cultural identity of the city shaped the local manufacture of terracottas. The author viewed the production of terracottas at Sardis as being determined by wider social actions and notes that the use of figurines in the articulation of power in different levels of society must be readable.
- 25 The 4th session of the conference was dedicated to coroplastic research in Italy and comprised three papers. The first of these was by Rebecca Miller Ammerman “Production and Consumption of Terracottas: A Case Study at Metaponto in Southern Italy,” in which some 2,800 figurines, plaques, and molds from a kiln site in southern Italy were discussed. The site, known as Sant’Angelo Vecchio, is located in the chora of Metaponto. The material, which dates from the late 4th to the early 3rd century B.C., provides clear evidence not only for the production of a rather limited range of figurine and plaque types, but also for the diffusion of these types from these very molds that can be recognized at a variety of domestic and sanctuary sites across the chora of Metaponto and in the urban center.
- 26 The second paper in the Italy session was by Mario Grimaldi and focused on a series of terracotta architectural fragments dating to the 3rd or 2nd century B.C. in a paper entitled “Hellenistic Architectural Terracottas from the Insula Occidentalis of Pompeii.” Found in several neighboring contexts in the Insula Occidentalis of Pompeii, this material appears to belong to at least two different sacred buildings, one of which had terracotta relief sculpture in its pediment. These sculptures display obvious references to Apollo, as in the myth of Apollo and Marsyas, as well as to Artemis.
- 27 The final paper in the Italy session “Hellenistic Terracotta Votives from the Insula Occidentalis of Pompeii” was by Alessandro Russo. Of wide distribution and of essentially religious use, the material presented consisted of fragments of ex-votos of deities, dedicants, reliefs, and representations of vegetal and edible offerings that were uncovered in the garden of the House of Marcus Fabius Rufus in Pompeii. These coroplastic fragments reveal that this area was occupied in the Samnite period. This class of material is already well attested at Pompeii, with good parallels coming from the Bottaro votive deposit, the area of the Doric Temple, and sporadically from other contexts at Pompeii.
- 28 The 5th session of the conference focused on coroplastic material from North Africa. Spatial analysis was the tool used by Solenn de Larminat in her paper “Terracotta Figurines in Roman Africa,” in order to better understand the role played by figurines in children’s burials, as opposed to those in burials of adults. This analysis revealed the predominance of coroplastic material in graves, as opposed to its scarcity in sanctuaries. Moreover, figurines believed to represent Venus were the most common in funerary contexts, the majority of which were burials of children.

- 29 The second and final paper in the North Africa session was by Lara Weiss. Using the theoretical framework of Lived Ancient Religion, she investigated the motif of the doll in terracotta and other media from domestic contexts at Karanis in Egypt in her paper “Conceptualising the Consumption of the Sacred: Mass Production vs. Handmade Figurines.” This was done in order to determine to what extent individual and group behavior involving the use of dolls could reveal varieties of religious expression. By referring to doll use and/or consumption in other ancient and modern cultures and theoretical investigations of the concept of play, the author arrived at the conclusion that the doll figurines at Karanis could have different functions in different situations and served a variety of uses.
- 30 Following the final paper of the North African session there was a visit to the Cyprus Museum in Nicosia. The collection there is particularly noted for its coroplastic material, the highlight of which is half of the roughly 2,000 terracottas discovered by the Swedish-Cyprus Expedition at Ayia Irini between 1927 and 1931; the other half is in the Medelhavsmuseet in Stockholm. Eustathios Raptou of the Department of Antiquities lead a much appreciated guided tour of the collections of the museum.
- 31 The final session of the conference comprised papers dealing with coroplastic material from the Levant. Marianna Castiglione discussed the Egyptian character of the Hellenistic figurines from Karayeb, Tyre, in her paper “From Alexandria to Tyre: The Egyptian Character of the Hellenistic Figurines from Kharayeb” and explored the modes of transmission of typologies and iconography believed to have originated in Alexandria. The corpus under investigation here comprises characteristic examples of Hellenistic Greek figurines, including Tanagras, but, more importantly, a large number of Egyptianizing figurines of mixed Greek and Egyptian character, many of which were produced locally, the author believes, perhaps from imported molds or *surmoulage*.
- 32 The second paper in the Levant session was “Levantine *koine*: Ties between Hellenistic Terracottas from Israel and Cyprus” by Adi Erlich, who presented diverse figurines found in Levantine contexts that in independent ways have a relationship to certain representatives of the coroplastic typology of Cyprus. In the author’s view, the appearance of certain terracotta types reflects specific choices that one assumes mirrored specific needs.
- 33 “A Syrian Tradition in the Hellenistic Terracottas at Jebel Khalid on the Euphrates: The Case of the Persian Riders” by Heather Jackson was the third paper in this session. She presented a group of Hellenistic figurines of horsemen from a house at the Syrian site of Jebel el Khalid on the Euphrates that dated to the Seleucid period. Referencing the earlier Cypriote tradition for handmodeled figurines of horsemen with mold-made heads, perhaps best known from Kourion, the author illustrates what has changed in the Syrian version of this motif and what may have been the functions of these horsemen.

Heather Jackson winds up her talk on horseman figurines from Jebel Khalid in Syria with a wish for safety for her excavation personnel.

- 34 Roberta Menegazzi's paper "A Look from the Outside: Mediterranean Influences on the Terracotta Figurines from Seleucia on the Tigris," was based on a study of some 11,000 Hellenistic terracottas that were brought to light at Selucia on the Tigris. Many reflect models known from Greek sites on the coast of Asia Minor, and perhaps even suggest the presence of Greek craftsmen. These document a distinct process of selection, assimilation, and cultural transformation evident particularly within a class of reclining figurines, traditionally male within the Greek repertoire, but remodeled to suit local needs with the representation of reclining nude females.
- 35 In her paper "Hellenistic Terracottas from Beirut" Ghada Daher presented a growing corpus of mostly Hellenistic figurines that have been brought to light during salvage excavations within the area of the modern city of Beirut. These comprise types that reflect strong Greek modes of expression and suggest the use of *surmoulage* in a conscious attempt to mimic a distinctly Greek character.
- 36 Roughly 50 plaster figurines from the Byzantine site of Khirbet-es-Samrā in north Jordan was discussed by Abdalla Nabulsi in his paper "The Plaster Figurines from the Roman-Byzantine Khirbet es-Samrā Cemetery in Jordan. These were recovered from tombs that dated no later than the 7th century AD and appear to be unique to this site. An appeal was made for reasonable parallels.

Participants in the conference in front of the Cyprus Museum

- 37 On behalf of the Association for Coroplastic Studies I would like to express thanks to the convenors of the conference Giorgos Papantoniou, Demetrios Michaelides, and Maria Dikomitou-Eliadou for allowing this important and congenial meeting to be held under the auspices of ACoST. The cordial hospitality of the convenors and the Archaeological Research Unit of the University of Cyprus was evident not only in the welcoming and informal atmosphere of the conference, but also in the delicious lunches and mid-session coffee breaks, all of which contributed to a memorable experience. We look forward to seeing the conference papers in print.

ABSTRACTS

The Archaeological Research Unit of the University of Cyprus in Nicosia was the site of a 3-day conference dedicated to Hellenistic and Roman terracottas that was organized by Giorgos Papantoniou, Demetrios Michaelides, and Maria Dikomitou-Eliadou. I was the discussant. The conference was held within the framework of a research project funded by the Anastasios G. Leventis Foundation via the University of Cyprus. The project aimed to establish a more concrete scholarly discussion on the study of Hellenistic and Roman terracottas in relation to a large corpus of Hellenistic and Roman terracottas that was brought to light during recent excavations at the “House of Orpheus” at Nea Paphos. A particular focus was placed on the integration of different analytical approaches for the study of these figurines and the relationships that these might have had with Hellenistic and Roman terracottas from other sites around the Mediterranean. The convenors of the conference Giorgos Papantoniou, Demetrios Michaelides, and Maria Dikomitou-Eliadou hoped that the continuing and changing patterns of production, distribution and function of Cypriot terracottas would be clarified as a result of discussions that treated the interplay between local structures and incoming Ptolemaic and Roman socio-political and socio-cultural impositions.

AUTHOR

JAIMEE UHLENBROCK

Department of Art History, State University of New York, New Paltz