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Palatial meanings and Post-Palatial evolution of Terracotta Figurines in Mainland Greece

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Abstract

Terracotta figurines, occasionally offered within the Greek funerary contexts of the LBA and the EIA (1200-900 BC), are certainly a material class worth investigating in order to reveal cogent information about particular religious beliefs to which Greek societal rules might have been interconnected. The unclear meaning of terracotta figurines makes any question about their significance even harder to answer. In order to formulate possible interpretations this paper will present a quick summary on what past and present research has revealed about the examples found in mainland Greece. Their Mycenaean and Post-Mycenaean use in the BA will soon be confronted with the mysterious appearance of new bell-shaped types during the EIA. Possible interpretations will therefore be produced in accordance with the latest discoveries and religious comparisons. The emerging picture will show a more internationalised circulation of ideas which found in Greece a fertile area to start novel interpretations of life and afterlife.

1. On Terracotta Figurines

By figurines I mean miniature terracotta representations of humans, animals and objects. The most intriguing class of these terracottas throughout the whole BA is undoubtedly represented by the female-shaped figurines, since their human postures communicate further meanings which certainly deepen their cognitive significance. Tsountas, during his filing of the goods contained in the cult centre of Mycenae, had classified three different types of female terracotta figures: with both arms raised, with folded arms, with only one arm raised.¹ Of these, only the one with both raised arms was found in its smaller version outside the cult centre. After Tsountas, Blegen found six disc-bodied female figurines in early contexts of LH IIIA Zygouries, showing an evident rarity of the crescent-bodies in the same period. He was persuaded that the round type could be denoting an earlier stage in a plausible chronological typology.² He observed that the position of the arms was not the main characteristic to take into account when building up a chronology. In fact, a more important feature was the precision in rendering the details of the bodies.³ He concluded by assigning the more naturalistic figurines (type 'a') to the earliest periods and the others (according to their increasing degree of stylisation) to later periods (types 'b' to 'd'), emphasizing the research for stylisation that the Greek culture was experiencing at the time.⁴ He also noted in the same publication that different types of figurines could co-exist in the same archaeological context.

¹ Tsountas 1888: 168.

² Blegen 1928: 205.

³ Blegen 1928: 206.

⁴ Blegen 1937: 355-367.



Figure 1: Some Mycenaean terracotta figurines from the citadel of Mycenae (Archaeological Museum of Mycenae), Mureddu 2014.

To the list presented by Tsountas and the additions included by Blegen, we need to add the types classified by Wace: figurines with arms folded across the chest, and figurines with oval bodies.⁵ Observing these clay figurines in the stratigraphic contexts of Dendra, Zygouries and Mycenae, Furumark associated them with the same context of the other grave goods and pointed out recurring features, so that a relative chronology for the types was created, each type classified under a Greek letter, as still in use today.⁶

In 1971 French produced new evidence, including subtypes and proposing a complete evolutionary outline of the female figurines.⁷ Criticism was addressed to this chronological sequence by Weber-Hiden, who pointed out that the connection between their style and stratigraphic chronology was not obvious, since instances existed in which two different styles were found in the same context, generating a series of chronologically overlapping types.⁸ Nevertheless this objection did not consider the dynamics presented by French, who had proposed and focused on a cyclic consecution made of sporadic appearance, peak of popularity and final abandonment of a given figurine type in each of the contexts observed. They were also compared to contemporary pottery samples to imply at last that

⁵ Wace 1932: 215-217.

⁶ Furumark 1941: 86, 88, 89, 130.

⁷ French 1971: 102-187.

⁸ Weber-Hiden 1985: 307-312.

a co-occurrence of different styles depended on the survival and re-use of earlier types.⁹ French's chronological reconstruction is still credited today as the most plausible.

According to her chart, Bronze Age female- and bull-shaped figurines stemmed from naturalistic prototypes introduced during LH IIIA1. As regards female types, the naturalistic ones were produced with the typical circular and oval shapes of Furumark's '*Phi* Types' during the transition between LH IIIA and IIIB, within which also a rarer '*Tau* Type' made its appearance. By LH IIIB figurines abandoned the *phi* shapes and acquired the winged aspect typical of Furumark's '*Psi* Types', continuing into LH IIIC and becoming rather cruciform at the end of the period. During LH IIIC these figurines evolved into the so-called mourning types, with both arms raised and touching the head of the figurine. This attitude effectively recalls an emotional state suitable for mourners, suggesting that their practical use could have been intended for funerary rites.¹⁰

⁹ French 1971: 173.

¹⁰ Iakovidis 1966: 43-50.

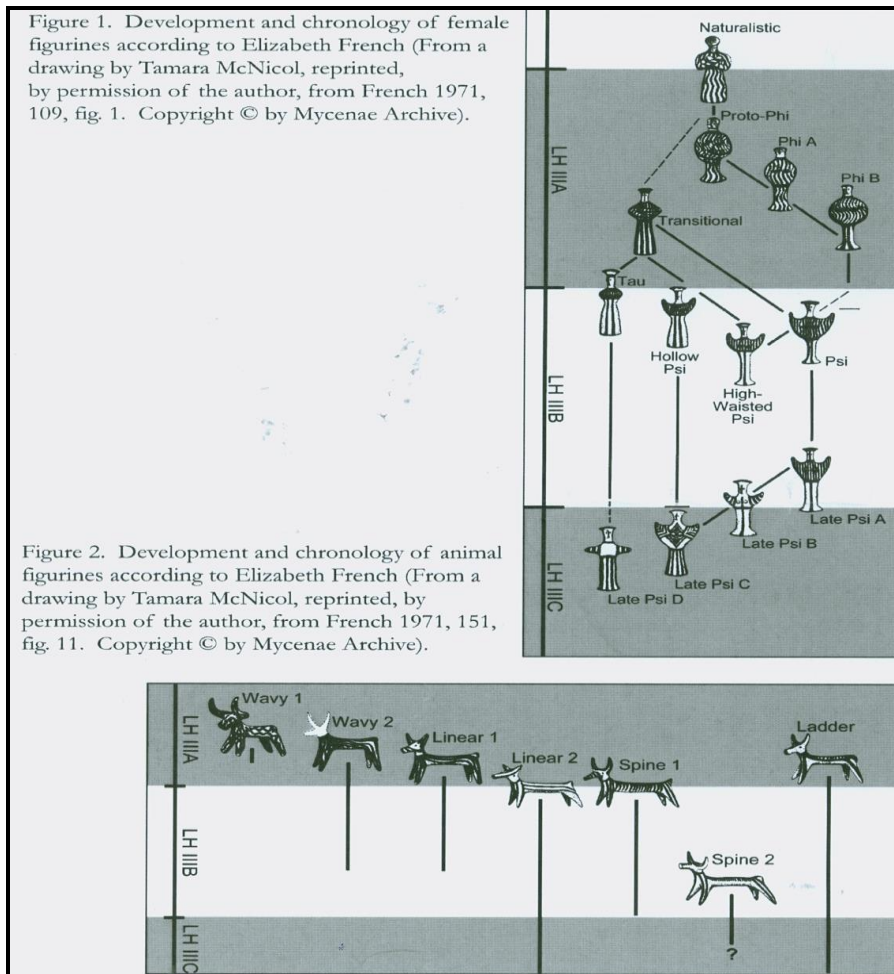


Figure 2: French's evolutionary chart of female and animal terracotta figurines, from Tzonou-Herbst 2002.

By LH IIIA2 figurines increased in variety, possibly influenced by Neopalatial Cretan models: fantastic creatures, domestic animals: oxen, bulls, cats, dogs, sheep, birds and beetles, but also *kourotrophoi* and dancers, while a clay diorama from Kamilari shows a series of individuals intent in some actions which could be interpreted as bringing offerings to honour the dead.¹¹ In the long tradition of figurine-making (from the EBA on) it is not surprising that the materials with which they were produced often differ; clay seems to be the preferred one during the Bronze Age, with a rare presence of marble, metal, ivory and faience examples.¹² Size also varied; during the late Mycenaean Age we find them ranging in size from 0.05 to 0.20 cm, and they could be either handmade or wheel-made.¹³ At first sight they seem to be reproducing an everyday life set of images, maybe linked to specific social needs, as suggested for the Prehistoric representations of animals since the

¹¹ Tzonou-Herbst 2010: 216.

¹² Tzonou-Herbst 2010: 211.

¹³ Tzonou-Herbst 2010: 216.

Paleolithic.¹⁴ Such an interpretation has been provided, for instance, with regard to the bovid figurines of Lithares, which, according to Tzavella-Evjen, were the favourite representations there because of their important role in the local diet.¹⁵ Moreover their use as animal-traction for ploughing the fields could have made them eligible for a propitiatory ritual, as in the case of the yoked oxen from Tzagiza.¹⁶

In several mainland settlements, such as Mycenae and Prosymna, archaeological groupings of objects including figurines give us a glimpse of how people used them. It would seem that throughout the Bronze Age people buried them together with their dead, but as soon as we infer a possible funerary meaning we notice their presence also within domestic contexts.¹⁷ Nonetheless it has been hypothesised that some of the apparently domestic building excavated, containing figurines, were actually small shrines.¹⁸ It is archaeologically evident that the practice of inserting figurines into the graves was gradually introduced in different phases with different connotations: for instance, in LH IIIA1 the inhabitants of Mycenae used them mostly within the domestic sphere, although for unclear purposes; at that time their abundant production did not involve their use as grave goods, but they were rather discarded among common debris.¹⁹ On the contrary, during LH IIIA2 they started showing a specific connection with graves, changing therefore their social significance and leaning towards the sphere of the sacred.²⁰

The Hittite documents mention that images of *Ahhijawan* gods were sent as gifts to other kings when they were sick.²¹ Nothing is explained in detail, but it is tempting to imagine that these images were terracotta figurines and that some thaumaturgic powers (perhaps deriving from the deity they represented) were assigned to them.²² With regard to this possible cultic meaning, several scholars have proposed different interpretations. Schliemann, still basing his inference on Homer's epic, had thought to identify female figurines with the goddess Hera, linking the position of the arms deployed by both *phi* and

¹⁴ Sandars 1968: 128.

¹⁵ Tzavella-Evjen 1985.

¹⁶ Pullen 1992: 45-54.

¹⁷ Pullen 1992: 45-54.

¹⁸ Gesell 1985.

¹⁹ Tzonou-Herbst 2009: 216.

²⁰ Tzonou-Herbst 2009: 216.

²¹ KUB XIV. 3.

²² Dickinson 2009: 280.

psi figurines to different moon phases.²³ At the same time, the upraised arms of the *psi* types, resembling horns, together with the first bull-shaped examples found at Mycenae, seemed to him sacred representations of the cow-eyed goddess described in the Iliad.²⁴ Though initially agreeing with Schliemann, Tsountas later opposed this point of view, rejecting the Iliad as a reliable source and seeing in the figurines simply goddesses of generation.²⁵ Nilsson very soon objected that there were too many variants of female figurines to be all representations of a single goddess, and even their attribution to the sphere of the divine was to be deemed as arbitrary.²⁶ Picard, responding to Nilsson, stated that in ancient Greece gods could be represented in several ways according to specific functions and all the different figurines could well have been the same goddess, and to him she was likely to be just a divine guardian of the chthonian world.²⁷

Concerning the fact that a good amount of figurines was found outside the funerary context, Picard replied that these deities of the underground were worshiped even from private habitations and the figurines were in fact a link between the two dimensions.²⁸ New evidence from Mycenae, in form of a later figurine of a breadmaker, generated new oppositions; Blegen admitted the possibility that they were realistic representations of common people not connected with the sacred.²⁹ He strengthened the possibility that they could have been related more with childhood, either as toys for dead infants or symbolic representations of divine caretakers, in which case cow-shaped figurines would be representing symbolic suppliers of milk.³⁰ Tsountas interpreted the bull-shaped ones simply as cheaper alternatives to real sacrificial victims.³¹ Wace pointed out that whether they were divinities, toys or sacrificial surrogates, their connotation as objects was likely to be enclosed into the class of the votives.³² French followed these theories admitting a cultic meaning whenever the context allowed it.³³ Recent finds at Methana (Argolid) have shown the presence of a large number of bull-shaped figurines connected with a clear

²³ Schliemann 1880: 10-22.

²⁴ Schliemann 1880: 10-22.

²⁵ Tsountas, Manatt 1897: 297.

²⁶ Nilsson 1950.

²⁷ Picard 1948: 247.

²⁸ Picard 1948: 247.

²⁹ Blegen 1946: 13-16.

³⁰ Blegen 1937: 255, 256.

³¹ Tsountas 1897: 169.

³² Wace 1949: 115.

³³ French 1971: 173.

cultic area, reinforcing this inference.³⁴ Renfrew had already admitted that they were votives also when found within dwelling places identifiable as shrines.³⁵ Hägg had soon endorsed Renfrew's view and introduced the possibility that common people, marginally involved with the official cults of the palaces (managed by the elites) might have worshiped their own class of deities in their own simple way, using terracotta idols in small shrine-like buildings integrated in their dwellings.³⁶ This theory was welcomed also by Kilian, who pointed out that figurines were indeed rare in the palatial areas, while they were abundant in the popular districts.³⁷

Tzonou-Herbst's research concluded by accepting the fact that the final meaning of these objects is likely not to be dependent on the figurines themselves, but rather strictly related to the places they were assigned to. From what can be seen in tombs, in all the instances available, whether male, female or infant individuals, they could all be buried with figurines, and seemingly own them in life. It also seems that when wealthier tombs in LH IIIB/IIIC appeared to contain figurines, they looked to be the same types as those contained in poor tombs. The fact that there are cemeteries where the majority of graves do not contain any figurines, regardless of the status of the buried people inside, makes it possible to infer that the presence of these objects was not a fundamental requisite of the popular funerary rites.³⁸ They can be recognised as part of funerary ceremonies when they are found together with remains of libations and ritual feasting in front of the *stomion* of monumental tombs, as well as close to walls erected around familial mortuary areas like the Poros Wall at Mycenae or the Kyklos at Peristeria.³⁹

Their significance in the social sphere is also highlighted by the fact that they are not the result of personal creativity, but are specially manufactured by craftsmen, given the high level of elaboration even with the aid of a wheel.⁴⁰ The schematic decoration seems to follow the same fashion of the contemporary ceramic vessels. While in the Early Bronze they were painted with realistic details,⁴¹ during LH IIIC they already have sketchier and

³⁴ Konsolaki 2002: 30, 31.

³⁵ Renfrew 1981: 27-33.

³⁶ Hägg 1981: 35-40.

³⁷ Kilian 1990: 185-197.

³⁸ Tzonou-Herbst 2010: 217.

³⁹ Tzonou-Herbst 2010: 219.

⁴⁰ Tzonou-Herbst 2010: 211.

⁴¹ Hendrix 2003: 404-446.

less detailed decorations,⁴² but their ambiguity of use persists; they appear both inside and outside the graves, showing continuity of use and scope with their predecessors. Apparently, if they were deemed to be appropriate grave offerings, the living could also use them for funerary or memorial ceremonies,⁴³ but also to communicate somehow the underworld and their beloved ones.

To understand the meaning of figurines in graves we must therefore analyse an important non-funerary (or meta-funerary) context like the shrine of the idols, in the north-eastern corner of the cult centre of Mycenae. This is our best witness for the use of Mycenaean clay figures in their original context during LH IIIB. Figures and figurines there are associated with several elements likely to have constituted the official cult of the palace. Such an assemblage is expressed in a unique manner and is integrated in a system of symbols inherent to life and birth, reflecting at the same time into others inherent to the mortuary sphere, as if the environment inside the sanctuary were a medium between the two realities and at the same time their synthesis.⁴⁴ In the amassed quantity of clay figurines in this room there were also 28 larger figures which can help to shed some light on the main purpose of these artefacts. The figures are not identical to one another, each one has distinctive traits. Those with raised arms have been associated by Wilkinson with the gesture of adoration expressed by the Egyptian art,⁴⁵ and that in the Aegean has been generally associated with a divine epiphany.⁴⁶ Some of them have arms across the chest or one raised and one across the chest. These groups appear to have held shafts of some kind, perhaps axes or hammers.⁴⁷ Some have hair-locks which imply a young age, making them identifiable as representatives of youth.⁴⁸

As Morgan points out, it should be taken into consideration that these figures were found in association with a number of other elements. The shrine presents both immovable and movable features which must have carried a precise meaning: platforms, columns, stairs leading to an upper room, a rock alcove and the figures of snakes and anthropomorphic

⁴² Iakovidis 1980: 77.

⁴³ Tzonou-Herbst 2010: 216.

⁴⁴ Morgan 2005: 171.

⁴⁵ Wilkinson 1992: 28-9

⁴⁶ Rutkowski 1986.

⁴⁷ Moore 1988: 219.

⁴⁸ Morgan 2005: 167.

beings.⁴⁹ Taylour had already suggested that the whole room of the idols was representing the chthonic aspect of the cult;⁵⁰ whereas the snakes were the natural inhabitants of the underworld (due to their mortal bite, but also to their pharmaceutical employment which allowed to defeat death), the figures represented divinities of the underworld.

Nevertheless what S. Morris implies by comparing the human figures with funerary contexts in Egypt, the Near East and later Punic West, is that they can be both votive and funerary, representing either mourners or ancestors.⁵¹ The fact that a group of figures had both arms raised recalls the 'Psi' types seldom found in LH IIIC graves, establishing a direct link with them.

Although we cannot know the measure in which sanctuaries acted as mediums between the human world and the gods, they probably were the most appropriate place to offer votive figures instead of graves. If the latter had the advantage of associating the deceased directly (through valuable offerings?), with the icon of the deity represented by the figurine entrusted to lead and protect the soul, a sanctuary could associate the same figurine not with the deceased, but with the deity it represented. It is not surprising that a sanctuary was a privileged place to communicate with the gods. Perhaps figurines used in funerary contexts were more common in those places where sanctuaries did not exist. In a post-palatial world where the Mycenaean culture becomes more and more fragmented, each area started to deal with its own funerary activities without relying on the former central sites.

Thus, in absence of elaborated cult centres, the worshipers might have gathered in open air spaces and ultimately entrust terracotta figurines directly to the deceased. The small size of the figurines found outside the cult centre (of which there is almost no trace after the collapse) could indicate instead portable versions of the ones existing at the sanctuary. Reproductions of sacred icons able to diffuse some divine protection in both domestic and funerary contexts.

⁴⁹ Morgan 2005: 166 ff.

⁵⁰ Taylour 1970: 264 ff.

⁵¹ Morris 1992: 209, 210.

2. Proto-Geometric Bell-Shaped Dolls

The PG period shows a significant change in funerary coroplastic, producing the so-called bell-shaped figurines, associated exclusively with mortuary contexts. Though rare, these figurines were found in both Lefkandi (2 examples)⁵² and Athens (6 examples),⁵³ and are totally different from the Mycenaean figurines so far discussed. They are characterised by a bell- or rather vase-shaped body, decorated with clay bumps and incised spirals or concentric circles, with a schematic face whose physical traits are rendered by incisions and impressions. The main feature of these new figurines is a pair of mobile legs hanging from a metal pivot inserted horizontally into their hollow bodies. Karageorghis identifies Cyprus as a possible direction of influence.⁵⁴

All of them (and with them the unique centaur from Lefkandi) appear in female- and child-cremation burials.⁵⁵ It might be imagined that male adulthood was in itself sufficient to reach the ultimate 'resting place' without any divine assistance, while females and children were somehow weaker or socially incomplete, necessitating more protection during their journey in the underworld. Babbi has recently underlined the similar use of terracotta figurines between some central Italian regions (Alban Hills and Etruria) and Greece. In both areas figurines are in fact offered in child- and female-burials. Babbi's theory is that they could have been ensuring the dead the necessary link between the otherworld and the dimension of the living, despite the body's destruction after the crematory rites.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the Italian figurines, as Babbi himself suggests,⁵⁷ are more reminiscent of Anatolian and Near-Eastern types; perhaps the same which had influenced Crete, but not the Greek mainland, where we find essentially bell-shaped versions, like those in the Balkans.⁵⁸ And if Anatolia had reached Italy through Aegean contacts, why is there no trace of them in Greece? If Crete was responsible, why is the Italian use the same as mainland Greece, instead?

⁵² Desborough and Coldstream 1979: 137, 251, 269.

⁵³ Babbi 2012; Viermeisel-Schlörb 1997.

⁵⁴ Karageorghis 1992: 171-183; 2001: 77-83.

⁵⁵ Viermeisel-Schlörb 1997: 5.

⁵⁶ Babbi 2008: 137 – 143; 2011: 289 – 290.

⁵⁷ Babbi 2011: 290.

⁵⁸ Lemos 2002: 96.

We can infer that the Italian use was probably inspired by the same sources that inspired the Greek one. The Aegean market might have provided Italy with Anatolian figurines without attaching to them any local belief. While the Balkans (for the bell-shaped appearance) and Cyprus (for the movable legs)⁵⁹ gave Greece different models to which a local cult was applied. The ideology behind this funerary practice, connected with cremation burials and metal artefacts of European influence, seems a syncretism between Hallstatt funerary symbology and Mycenaean-based cults of clay idles. Although the presence of the Greek bell-shaped figurines in child-burials may suggest their use as toys, the fact that they were found also in adult female-burials (sometimes identified as burials of the unwed)⁶⁰ makes this interpretation far too simplistic. The articulated limbs were unsuitable for standing dolls, as they needed to be hung. This would have made them not very appealing to children and, in addition, as Muratov points out, they were too fragile to play with, and a more plausible purpose would be of rattle-like apotropaic charms.⁶¹

Describing the ones found in the Eridanos graves at Athens, Viermeisel-Schlörb admits that their use was related specifically to funerary purposes.⁶² It is interesting that most examples in Attica occur in pairs, while in Lefkandi they are found singly, even though another pair was found at Ayia Anna (Skyros), where there was a strong Euboean influence. None of them were found outside graves, and in all these cases the 'dolls' appeared together with objects appropriate to female-burials.⁶³ Many assumptions have been made about their connection with the female world. Reber recognised in them the EIA ancestors of the classical terracotta jointed dolls representing the toys that girls could have dedicated to Artemis before their wedding.⁶⁴ This was endorsed by Barber, who saw in the vertical lines incised on their waist a connection with the string-belts worn by the contemporary European maidens, marking their newly acquired marriageable status.⁶⁵ But all these theories, however appealing, remain speculative. The ultimate answer to the question about their factual use in daily life as well as in tombs remains unknown.

⁵⁹ Babbi 2011: 291; Sapouna-Sakellarakis 2002, 121, Fig. 3.

⁶⁰ MacKinnon 2007: 473-504; Parker Pearson 1999: 21 ff.

⁶¹ http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/gtal/hd_gtal.htm (October 2004), accessed on May the 4th, 2014, 3:01pm.

⁶² Viermeisel-Schlörb 1997: 3, 4.

⁶³ Burr 1933: 565 fragment of a doll from Agora geometric grave 33; Vierneisel-Schlörb 1997; Xagorari 1996: 73-76.

⁶⁴ Reber 1991: 105.

⁶⁵ Barber 1991: 255-259; 1994: 59-56.



Figure 3: EIA bell-shaped doll from Athens (Kerameikos Museum), Mureddu 2014.

If they were a new type of idol, why are they so rare? It is also striking that their association with Attica and Euboea (or Euboean areas of influence). This fact could bring forward new speculation about the point of origin of a novel Greek ideology/religion linked to a cultural mix which had in those regions where trade had remained central during the EIA its fulcrum. As Lemos reminded, Protogeometric Athens and Lefkandi seem to have been among the first Greek regions to revive or start anew their trade links after the post-palatial period. In the multicultural circulation of objects and ideas which must have permeated the Mediterranean in the EIA,⁶⁶ these centres certainly intercepted and joined commercial connections which encompassed European fashions and ideas. In fact they imported (and exported) a new set of bronze items, especially weapons and jewels arriving from the Central- and Eastern-European regions as well as Italy.⁶⁷ The bell-shaped dolls, though probably locally made, amalgamated ideas connecting Greece with Cyprus and the Balkans. Since Athens is the area in which most of them were found, the Attic city and its commercial circuit could well have been the melting pot where a novel and mixed culture originated, involving both the mentality of the living and the eschatology of the dead (if still mostly unintelligible to us).

⁶⁶ Broodbank 2013: 445-505

⁶⁷ Lemos 2002: 101-104.

3. Discussing the change

The transition from the Mycenaean period to the post-palatial one does not seem to show significant changes; 'Phi' and 'Psi' figurine types kept being worshipped and used in tombs, at least by a smaller portion of the post-palatial society, and were then gradually substituted during the SM phase by newly introduced female figurines, the mourning type, which became the popular type in LH IIIC and SM religious settings. The PG period presents instead the introduction of new dolls with articulated limbs, elements of an unclear folkloristic cult.

	LH IIIC Early	LH IIIC Middle	LH IIIC Late	Sub-Mycenaean/Sub-Minoan	Proto-Geometric
Late Psi Types	████████████████████				
Mourning Type		████████████████████			
Oxen	████████████████████				
Birds			████████████████████		
Fantastic creatures				████████████████████	
Bell-shaped					████████████████████

Table 1: Diachronic development of terracotta figurines from LH IIIC to Proto-Geometric.⁶⁸

If Terracotta figurines can be understood during the palatial period as idols for a probable cult of the ancestors, and as such propitiated through offerings, they also represented a connection between the living and the dead. Specimens found in both domestic and burial contexts at the end of the BA suggest that these idols could be used also privately outside the sanctuaries to communicate with the underworld in order to maintain a connection with dead relatives, being from that point on invested with the new status of tutelary deities. But what does the gap after LH IIIC represent? What is the meaning of the newly introduced bell-shaped dolls?

As aforesaid, all theories fail in providing a coherent picture and a satisfactory interpretation. Until further discoveries, my opinion is that at some point during the passage to Sub-Mycenaean and Proto-geometric, at the very beginning of the EIA in Greece, something changed at a cultic level. The material culture found in tombs clearly

⁶⁸ This chart has been created using selected excavation reports documenting the sites of Mycenae, Perati, Salamis, Athens, Lefkandi, Naxos and Knossos. After Tzonou-Herbst 2002; Iakovidis 1970; Vierendeis-Schlöörb 1997; Desborough, Coldstream 1979, Vlachopoulos 2006, Coldstream, Catling 1996.

shows the “arrival” in Greece of a mentality imbued with a strong warrior culture, connecting prowess in battle with a glorious after-life, affecting therefore the whole funerary rites. Bell-shaped dolls, if still far from being clear, are likely to be part of those rites. The most ancient dolls of this kind are apparently of Greek origin, perhaps symptoms of a change in the personal relationship of the Greeks with a new idea of underworld for which the older Bronze Age figurines were no longer effective. These new types should probably be seen not as bell-shaped dolls, but as doll-shaped bells, or rattles, talismans against evil spirits. It is clear that a new eschatology had been acquired from foreign ideologies which fitted well in the Greek mentality, ideas coming perhaps from another Indo-European culture like Hallstatt, via Balkan trade contacts occurring during the EIA. New beliefs syncretised with the Greek concept of death and after-life, which, after the collapse of the palaces and disappearance of their priesthood, had been deprived of the institutions appointed to engage with the necessary rites. The new eschatology, filling this gap, could have given birth to funerary practices and objects able to ward evil off during the final journey in the realm of the dead.

Conclusions

Terracotta figurines, as miniature models of humans, animals and objects, seems to originate in order to interact with entities either invisible or missing, whether from the dead or the divine world. Although several inconsistencies persist, the link with the sacred is hard to deny. The initial ‘goddesses’, believed to connect the living with the dead, seem to have been the most used figurines during the Bronze Age, but after an evident gap between LH IIIC and the Protogeometric a change occurs in the mainland. From the 10th century BC Attica and Euboea produced a completely different kind of figurines, later influencing their neighbours. These bell-shaped figurines with movable limbs (characteristics also seen in the Balkans and Cyprus) appear to be a consequence of international trade, and their use, far from the simplistic theory of toys, is more likely to be connected to apotropaic powers protecting the dead from the evil spirits endangering their journey into the other life. The idea of an underworld which included several levels and a perilous journey from which only the brave ones or those under magical protection could complete, was the result of the various influences that an uncertain Greek religion was experiencing during this period. The disappearance of the official religion of the palaces

must have left a gap in the relationship with the other world that the Greeks were glad to fill with all those foreign beliefs that could provide a convincing alternative.

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Chronological Abbreviations

BA: Bronze Age.

EBA: Early Bronze Age.

EIA: Early Iron Age.

PG: Proto-Geometric.

LBA: Late Bronze Age.

LH: Late Helladic.

SM: Sub-Mycenaean.

Journal Abbreviations

AM: Mitteilungen des Deutschen archäologischen Instituts, Athenische Abteilung.

AJA: American Journal of Archaeology.

ArchKorr: Archäologisches Korrespondenzblatt.

BSA: Annual of the British School at Athens.

Arch. Eph: Ἐφημερίς Ἀρχαιολογική.

SIMA: Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology.

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