



DigIt

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DigIt

Editorial

What an exciting and transformative 6 months for *Dig It!* Our Journal simultaneously became peer-reviewed, international, and larger – including more pages and including more people into the editorial process.

It has been an ever rewarding experience, and I look forward to holding in my hands the printed Journal with 7 research papers from authors in 5 countries; 2 field reports; 2 conference and website reviews; 1 interview with a veteran of archaeology; and a friendly 'hello' from a fellow archaeology student journal from Buffalo, US.

I would like to extend the warmest 'thank you' to my three congenial fellow editors Jordan Ralph, Antoinette Hennessey and Matthew Ebbs for their drive, motivation, ingenious ideas and hard work. To the authors for trusting us with their papers and spending days and nights improving them. To the permanent review panel consisting of Rhiannon Agutter, Amy Batchelor, Robert DeWet-Jones, Anna Foroozani, Simon Munt, Dianne Riley, Zoe Robinson, Fiona Shanahan, Rhiannon Stammers, Isabel Wheeler for their gentle language editing. To the anonymous reviewers for their insightful feedback. To ArchSoc for their financial, organisational and emotional support.

Dig It intends to provide opportunities for professional development to young researchers who wish to familiarise themselves with the different roles in the publishing process, from writing over editing and layouting through to reviewing. As it turns out, the greatest learning experience was probably had by us editors, after all – and we would like to thank everybody else involved in the Journal for allowing us to transform an idea sketched in December 2013, through trial and error and hard work, into something to be proud of. With the mouse still dizzy from the final layouting work, we are looking forward to the next challenge that will be *Dig It* Volume 2, Issue 2.

Jana Rogasch

Editor, *Dig It*: The Journal of the Flinders Archaeological Society
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President's Address

I would firstly like to say welcome to our new and continuing members for 2014. We look forward to delivering an outstanding service of both professional development and social networking to our Society's members. I would like to thank the 2013 committee for their efforts in providing a great network for both students and professionals. ArchSoc continues to be the largest and most active student archaeological society in Australia, a feat that has been recognised by other institutions around the country.

A number of ArchSoc and Departmental events have kept our Society busy throughout the start of the year. These events include the Digger's Shield cricket match against the Paleontology Society, the National Archaeology Student Conference (NASC) hosted at Flinders University, the Ruth and Vincent Megaw Annual Lecture in Archaeology and Art, presented by Professor Emeritus Brian Fagan, and recently, the maritime-themed annual pub crawl. We are hoping to run a field exercise later in the year, details to be advised. ArchSoc activities are displayed on the notice board outside HUMN 112 and details are sent out via our mailing list <archsoc@flinders.edu.au> so keep an eye out for future events.

As some of our returning members may notice, *Dig It* has now become a peer-reviewed journal. As our membership has grown this year, we are also gaining a number of international readers and contributors. The editorial team welcomes your contributions for future issues of *Dig It*. I would encourage our members to publish here where many of your fellow peers can read up on what other members are conducting research on.

Now in our 22nd year of existence, the Flinders Archaeological Society will continue to flourish, bringing out the best in our members for the industry of tomorrow. Get involved when you can! We are always looking for volunteers to lend a hand, generate new ideas, help run social events and professional development opportunities, or simply come along and show some support. I hope to see all of you around some time on campus or at one of our many events. Don't forget to follow us on Twitter (@FlindersArchSoc), like our Facebook page, and follow our blog (<http://flindersarchsoc.org>).

Bradley Guadagnin

President, Flinders Archaeological Society 2014

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Adelaide city at dusk. Photograph: Andrew Wilkinson, 2014

Figuring Out the Figurines:

Towards the interpretation of Neolithic corporeality in the Republic of Macedonia

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Abstract

Neolithic figurines are often subject of keen discussions and debates between two main theoretical standpoints. The one side tends towards deification of the anthropomorphic figurines, whilst the other determines these artefacts as mediators in social relation among individuals and communities. Thus, the first group of researchers idolises the figurines as fertility symbols, whereas the others considerably profane their social function. This paper aims to explore these breaking points and from there on to develop multi-relational interpretations towards the character of some Neolithic figurines. In this context figurines found in the settlements from the Republic of Macedonia will be used for further observations. Particular cases associated with medieval and contemporary visual culture, as well as recent gender ritual issues will be proposed for thorough understanding of the body representations.

Introduction

Research on prehistoric figurines followed various approaches and methods, and suggested various interpretations for their function and meaning. Some are associated with traditional elaboration of body representations while others propose more thorough anthropological consideration of social and symbolic components incorporated within figurines. This paper will include several methodological directions, and will attempt to make the subject more tangible through emphasis of certain features and use of these complex objects. On one hand, the domination of female figurines and accentuation of particular body parts will be addressed, while on the other, more anthropological observations will be proposed regarding their corporeality, gender and fragmentation. For more detailed observation, several case studies from the Republic of Macedonia (Macedonia) will be used. These studies consider Neolithic figurines from Pelagonia, Ovče Pole and the Skopje Valley, together with ethnographic and historical data from these and neighbouring areas.

A History of collision

Neolithic figurines have always raised particular interest and attention among archaeologists and researchers of the Neolithic visual culture, corporeality and religious forms. In an attempt to understand their appearance and significance, there have been, in recent decades, many hypotheses concentrating on what and whom the figurines represented, as well as on motives for their use. In addition, there were numerous analogies which relate these objects to approachable ethnographic material, psychological background and the cognitive basis of ancient people, or even with the contemporary perception of the human body and its aesthetics. Consequently, in trying to interpret the figurines from their own perspective, two basic academic groups

evolved.

On the one hand there were 'traditionalists' trying to 'deify' the figurines, including them in pantheons which had their own deities and epiphanies, manifested through the Neolithic figurines (Figure 1). Thus, figurines were gradually classified according to interpretations such as Great Mother, Mother Earth, Bear Mother, Birth-giving Mother, Bird Goddess, and Snake Goddess (Gimbutas 1982, 1989; Golan 2003; James 1959; Mellaart 1967; Neumann 1963). Moreover, this concept started to be generalised, so that all feminine representations were generally identified with goddesses or Great Mothers without examination, or consideration of the possibility that they could belong to other supernatural beings or individuals.

This foundation led to all figurines from the Palaeolithic to the Bronze Age being included within the same context of interpretations, proposing that they were forerunner representations of the classical feminine goddesses. An uninterrupted divine link was thus created and remained unchanged for 35,000 years, existing in a certain form through the Classical Period until the Middle Ages, using the characters of Gaea, Hera, Demeter, Cybele or the Virgin Mary. This academic identification of prehistoric female representation was established in the 19th century when miniature figurines were considered visual and cognitive announcements for the later Near Eastern and Mediterranean goddesses. Soon afterwards, an additional theoretical milieu was proposed which explained the Neolithic as a matriarchal society and provided a justification for the large production of female figurines (Gimbutas 1982; James 1959). One of the first proponents for the so called 'mother right' or matriarchate in prehistory was Johann Jacob Bachofen, who had a significant influence on sociologists, psychologists, historians and archaeologists (Bemberdjer 2003; Georgudi 2011). His theoretical platform was overwhelmingly employed in the 20th century among various academicians who proposed different methods of support. The social theories and archaeological data stimulated Erich Neumann, one of the most influential psychologists of the mid-20th century, to develop his idea of The Great Mother as the universal deity worshiped among various cultures from prehistory until modern times (Neumann 1963). This work in turn impacted a newly established feministic wave which was in quest of multidisciplinary arguments for a social domination of women in the past. This branch of feminists and those of the 'goddess movement' believed that societies worshipping the Great Mother were practicing matriarchate and that figurines represent this social system. Considering the enormous quantity of archaeological data interpreted in favour of these hypotheses, such academic movement stirred speculative interpretations and promoted its proponents.

One of the most prominent apostles of second wave feminism, endorsing figurines as Mother Goddesses, was Maria Gimbutas, a name which simultaneously evokes adoration and harshness among feminists and archaeologists. As one of the loudest proponents of the 'goddesses' academic stream, her hypotheses were followed by numerous archaeologists trying to adjust her models to their case studies. Additionally, due to her popularity

Gimbutas was often referenced during disputes regarding the 'goddesses' approach in archaeology, and her work frequently criticised. Although previously Gordon W. Childe, Arthur Evans and James Mellaart had a similar approach when interpreting figurines as Mother Goddesses, no one was so rigorously observed as Gimbutas. Her name frequently appeared in the titles and text of papers of other archaeologists who were concerned by her archaeological approach and its effects (Biehl 1997; Meskell 1995; Talalay 1994). As a reaction to the interpretations of Neolithic figurines as goddesses, numerous researchers emerged and attempted to respond with a more systematic approach, as well as adding their own observations on the significance of the figurines. These archaeologists pushed aside any possibility that the figurines were related to deities, and almost completely denied all the attributes previously applied, especially those associated with fertility. Consequently, the academic perception of the figurines started again from the beginning, completely ignored the earlier attempts of their definition and concentrated on new details which offered a completely different source of information (Bailey 2005; Biehl 1996; Handsman 1991; Hansen 2007; Hardie 2007; Talalay 1993).

One of the first to oppose the 'divine' elements of prehistoric figurines was Peter Ucko who proposed new perspectives for observing and understanding figurines. Besides his criticism of Mother Goddess hypotheses, he presented various models for a systematic approach towards figurines including concerning more thorough analysis of their look, context, and also of the ethnographic and historic information associated with similar material culture (Ucko 1962, 1968). Although he was against direct analogies of ethnographic evidence to archaeological context, he found various examples with human body representations as motivation for the broader understanding of prehistoric figurines. The Neolithic anthropomorphic miniatures were not only seen as religious devices, but also as dolls which can have didactic features or can be employed in various rituals in connection with initiation or magic. However, aside from Andrew Fleming's (1969) paper his ideas were not supported by the archaeologists focused on figurines in the following 1970s and 1980s, the majority of whom still explained them as goddesses or idols.

The first loud reaction against the traditional interpretation of figurines occurred immediately after the death of Gimbutas in 1994. In the same and following year a number of papers by Lauren Talalay (1994), Lynn Meskell (1995), Margaret Conkey and Ruth Tringham (1995) and Randi and Gunar Haaland (1995) appeared criticising both Gimbutas and the 'goddesses'. In the following decades, more papers were published addressing the same problem and promoting new directions of figurine research (Biehl 1997; Joyce 2003; Knapp and Meskell 1997; Lesure 2002; Meskell 1998; Tringham and Conkey 1998; Ucko 1996). From today's perspective, the period from the middle of 1990s until the first half of 2000s was most crucial for significant changes to archaeologists' approaches towards figurines. As early as the 1990s there were new perspectives in figurine research (Bailey 1994; Joyce 1993; Skeates 1994; Talalay 1993), however these only received more attention and support after the publication of the aforementioned works criticising the 'goddesses' movement in archaeology and figurine interpretation. Gradually, new theories were developed claiming that Neolithic figurines instead embodied ideas of 'people for the people', suggesting they explain the way individuals perceived themselves and their own bodies (Figure 1). These theories include figurines as part

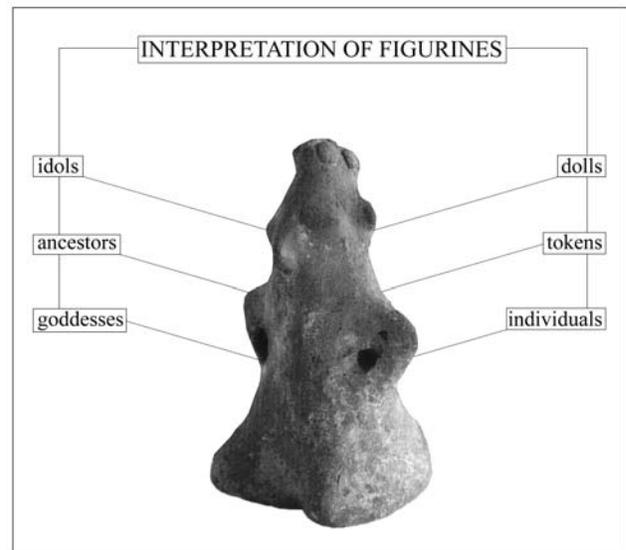


Figure 1: The two directions of figurines interpretations (created by author)

of the Neolithic visual dynamics and as agents in the complex symbolic communication among individuals and between the communities of one or several regions. In this case, the accent was on corporeality which transmits messages and ideas among social groups, and where figurines are involved as a medium.

The spectrum of figurine understanding was significantly broadened from 1990 and various observations were proposed regarding their significance or use. No longer were figurines interpreted as goddesses or idols, but as individuals, ancestors, dolls, toys, effigies, sex objects or contract devices. Regarding the ethnographic cases, such wide employment of miniature human representations is possible and therefore upheld, but the ethnographic analogies are still questioned and not always accepted. Nevertheless, these works raised new issues not previously considered in regards to the figurines, such as gender, identity, agency, personhood, fragmentation or corporeality (Bailey 2005; Chapman 2000; Hamilton et al. 1996; Hansen 2007; Joyce 2000; Robb 2008). The anthropological oriented research of figurines stimulated broadening of horizons and incorporated various social and symbolic components associated with the human body. However, besides the progressive and thought provoking approach, there were not many convincing arguments on the figurines' meaning and significance. Although these important and scientifically restrained interpretations attempted to define the proper significance of the Neolithic corporeal representations, they still did not offer the most elementary answers to: (i) what and whom the figurines represent; (ii) what was the motive for them to be modelled with definite iconographic features; and finally (iii) what was their actual use? In some way, although profound and tenable, recent theories are not more convincing than those endorsing deities and idols, as while the so-called 'traditionalists' could not offer substantive arguments for Neolithic figurines as religious devices promoting fertility neither could the post-processualists confirm that they were strictly associated with personhood and individualism.

Both theoretical groups attempted to assert the significance and exceptional character of the figurines. In their own periods when such totally different approaches were proposed, they were in line with the current anthropological and social theoretical processes, however, from our perspective nowadays it is easy to be critical

towards previous theoretical streams in archaeology without understanding the primary context of their emergence and era. The essence of each theoretical course can be extracted and tested or modified through recent data and epistemological concepts. Therefore two main perspectives will be addressed concerning the prevalence of female figurines and body accentuations, as well as anthropological aspects of corporeality, gender and fragmentation. They will be further supported with case studies from Macedonia including figurines from particular Neolithic settlements, but also medieval frescoes and contemporary rural rituals.

Why are there so many female figurines?

Besides agriculture, husbandry, stockbreeding, pottery and solid dwellings, the Neolithic in the Balkans introduced figurines as well. Although figurines on the European continent were produced in the Upper Palaeolithic, they were not part of the symbolic engagement of communities inhabiting the Balkan Peninsula (McDermott 1996; Soffer et al. 2000; White 2006). In fact, Palaeolithic figurines were common in the area comprising Austria, Slovakia, Italy, France and Germany, which area later in the Neolithic would be associated with the absence or scarcity of human representations in clay. With the introduction of farming, southeast Europe became a focal point for the symbolic incorporation of body images with thousands of figurines and various anthropomorphic artefacts produced since the Early Neolithic. The body appeared to be important for the first agricultural communities in the Balkans and besides numerous miniature figurines entire human bodies or particular parts were represented on, or integrated within, vessels, house and oven models, 'altars' or stamps. Such variety of mediums for incorporation of human representations suggests that more complex processes were associated with the body than mere portrayal. Anthropomorphism and the hybrid relationship of bodies with dwellings and households were essential visual and symbolic principles involving corporeality as a major metaphor for explaining the new Neolithic man-made environment (Naumov 2010a). Typically, such symbolic bodies were mainly female.

There are many discussions on the representation of sex among Neolithic figurines and other anthropomorphic objects. The majority of archaeologists agree that most of the figurines with determined sex are female. There are, however, also a number of those archaeologists who question the methods of sex determination and propose that Neolithic societies preferred sexless body representations (Nakamura and Meskell 2009; Nanoglou 2006; Ucko 1962). There is constant discussion on gender issues regarding prehistoric figurines and the determination of their sex (Bailey 1994, 2005; Biehl 1999; Bolger 2003; Handsman 1991; Hardie 2007; Joyce 2003; Knapp and Meskell 1997; Lesure 2002; Meskell 2001; Nakamura and Meskell 2009). These observations are worth considering and should be incorporated within future research, but the statistics and ratios of Balkan figurines still confirm the prevalence of female representations. Various case studies associated with figurines verify that sexless figurines outnumber those with apparent male or female genitalia. Besides the genitals there are further attributes which designate sex among Neolithic figurines. Several authors propose the presence of secondary gender features consisting of breasts, buttocks, belly, hand position and deliberate fragmentation which only appear to be

present in female figurines (Lesure 2011; Naumov 2009a). In the Balkans there are almost no male representations with such features. The male figurines from various Neolithic settlements mainly consist of upright or seated bodies without breasts, large buttocks, bulged abdomens, hands positioned on torso or traits of deliberate fragmentation of the head and legs. As it will be explained below, various case studies confirm these ratios and propose more thorough observation within Neolithic gender issues.

It can be suggested for the Balkans that female figurines prevail whenever there are sexually determined human representations. It should be also considered that for the majority of sites figurines are indeed sexless, displaying no primary or secondary sexual features. Such ratio opens the discussion as to whether these figurines actually represent sexless bodies or rather were portrayals of female or male characters without asserting their sex or gender. Anthropological approaches in figurine research introduce a wide range of possibilities for such representations regarding the third gender or uninitiated children (Hollimon 1997; Meskell 2001; Naumov 2014). Although thought-provoking, these observations are difficult to prove. Therefore, figurines with apparent primary or secondary sexual features are more suitable for gender determination and the vast majority of them are female representations. Therefore, it should be reconsidered why there is a prevalence of female representations in the Balkan Neolithic. This question stimulated a variety of controversial answers supporting the grand narrative and universalistic approach, as well as a stream of archaeologists who tried to deny that female figurines outnumbered the male.

The mixture of ideas, statements and hypotheses associated with figurines' meanings stimulated many archaeologists to approach with their own understanding of this prehistoric visual phenomenon. One of these archaeologists was Noel Morss who dealt with female figurines in the American southwest, but who attempted to apply the universalist model to all prehistoric figurines in the world. Morss considered that female figurines equated with fertility and they appeared with the introduction of agriculture and the human use of clay (Morss 1954). Although his observations were based on the more modest data available in the period of his work, there are numerous arguments not supporting his thesis. Namely, female figurines are also common for communities which do not practice agriculture such as those of the European Upper Palaeolithic or the Early Jomon period in Japan (Figure 2). In both cases clay was used for modelling human representations among foragers and the images represented both corpulent females and asexual stylised bodies with reduced corporal features. After Ucko's paper and book (1962, 1968), many archaeologists found ethnographic evidence that female figurines are not always associated with fertility, but often engaged in didactic processes, initiation rituals and magic (Lesure 2011; Talalay 1993). Although progressive in its own time, from today's perspective Morss' thesis can no longer be applied to all female figurines as they can have various meanings and employment.

Consequently, many authors proposed alternative theories on the prevalence of female figurines. Although more thorough than Morss' approach they are not much more convincing, yet still provide new horizons in figurine research and understanding of particular gender phenomena. Some suggest more social background for asserted femaleness in the Neolithic, such as the relationship of particular female individuals with (re)productive

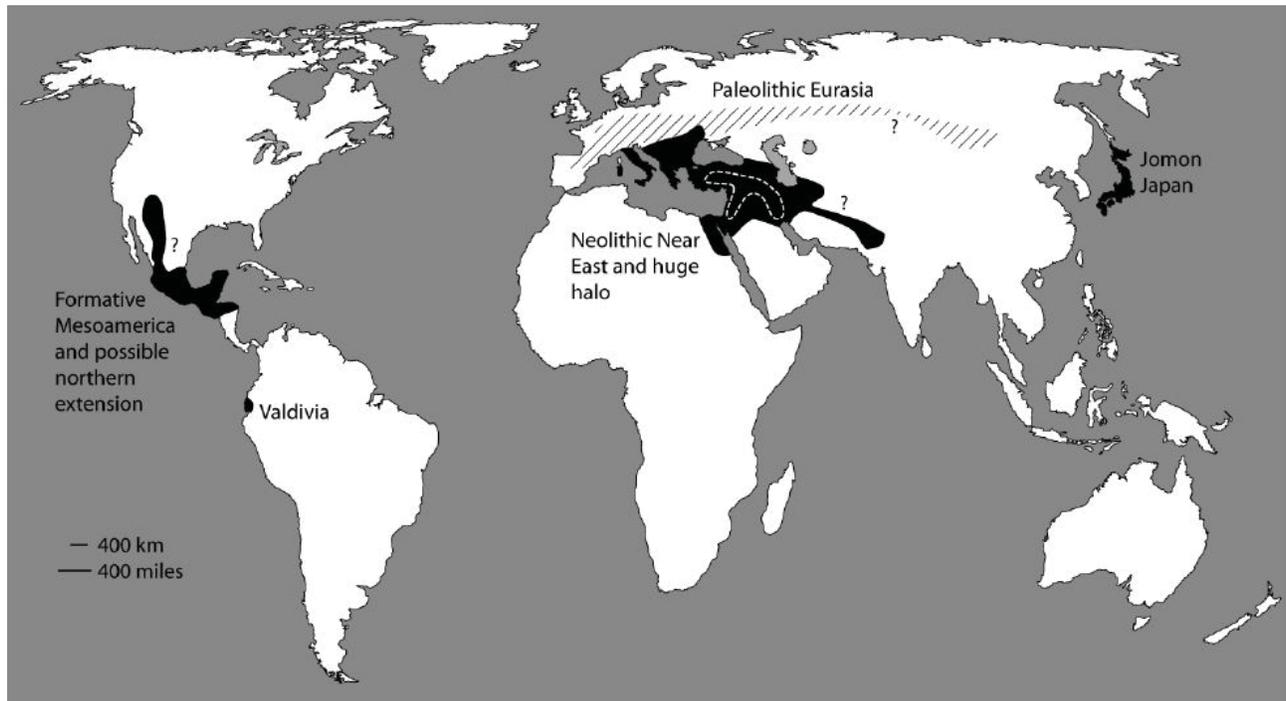


Figure 2: The distribution of prehistoric figurines (after Lesure 2011: Figure 4)

labour and political contests over power, while others consider corporal factors, climatic condition and constant exposure of the female body to biological threat in periods of pregnancy or harsh seasons (Bailey 2005; Bolger 2003; Joyce 2003; Lesure 2011; Voigt 2000). One of the recent interpretations for the large quantity of female figurines was inspired by the author's observation of self-representation among the Upper Palaeolithic figurines (McDermott 1996). According to McDermott, women in Palaeolithic societies produced images of themselves which represent the point of view of those who modelled or carved them. Even though his interpretation was critically questioned in the meticulous comments following the paper, it had significant influence on archaeologists focused on female representations in the Neolithic. They also considered such figurines as self-representation of women, but incorporated more social aspects within, associated with silenced and oppressed groups in the Neolithic societies (Bailey 2005). Apart from the interesting standpoints of these theoretical perspectives, none of them were compelling and grasped as major episteme for the figurine interpretation.

Probably the most influential hypothesis, although currently rejected by many, was that proposed by Etienne Renaud who suggested that all female figurines were goddesses (Renaud 1929). Similar to Morss' practice, he explored figurines from the American southwest and afterwards promoted his idea of the divine character of prehistoric femaleness. Along with the Bachofen matriarchy model (Bemberdjer 2003), his idea had an explosive worldwide effect and attracted numerous archaeologists who started to identify figurines in their contexts as divinities. In line with Renaud's interpretation, if the Neolithic was a matriarchal society it was rational that its pantheon consisted of female deities and the numerous female figurines therefore represented these deities. Followed by highly esteemed scholars such as Evans, James, Mellaart and Gimbutas, this universalist perspective had enormous impact in archaeology and its effects are easy to notice even among

current practitioners. Although such an idea is today mainly abandoned, it is worth further academic attention in order to be more thoroughly reconsidered or entirely ignored. At present there is not one solid argument that the Neolithic figurines are not representations of deities, except for the ethnographic cases regarding the multifunctional character of human images and the abstract theoretical alternatives associated with identity, gender, sexuality, embodiment or politics. On the other hand, not a single fact was contributed confirming the employment of figurines as goddesses or their association with religion and eventual pantheon.

Further examination is therefore necessary in order to provide a more thorough insight into figurine relationship with beliefs, religion or any other social and symbolic processes within Neolithic communities. In this paper two main connections between figurines, femaleness and corporeality are proposed. Primarily, this is a more anthropological approach considering three various asynchronous cases regarding female images, visual propaganda and ritual acts involving women, but not associated with female images. Additionally, several case studies of figurines from Neolithic settlements in Macedonia are discussed in order to assert that femaleness could be a local manifestation not promoted or practiced by all societies, even in neighbouring regions.

Asynchronous consideration of female images

Archaeologists often incorporate ethnographical cases in order to better understand the significance and meaning of figurines. Since the approach of directed analogies was considered problematic, many criticised the relevance of interpretative relationships between prehistoric and 20th century tribal societies (Ucko 1962). In the 1990s a new generation of archaeologists became more oriented towards anthropological and social theory and attempted to interpret the figurines through gender issues, corporeality, embodiment, agency, identity or sexuality (Bailey 1994; Joyce 2005; Marcus 1996; Meskell 1998; Robb



Figure 3: Map of the Balkans with indicated position of the Republic of Macedonia (created by author)

2007). Although this approach did not provide exact answers as to whom the figurines represented, it broadened the directions of exploring the human representations in the past. Soon it became apparent that the body is a much more complex platform for social and symbolic processes and that it can be observed through various perspectives. Therefore, in this paper three different cases of female body representations and engagements, including contemporary commercial visual culture, medieval frescoes and traditional rural rituals in Macedonia (Figure 3), are discussed in order to assert that femaleness could be both a manipulated and an invisible concept associated with propaganda or intimate rituals. These cases are related with different periods and consider diverse mediums and scenes in the exposition of the female body. In such contexts, the bodies of profane or sacred individuals confirm that representations could be associated with a range of engagements and meanings in the same period and even on the same image. Such asynchronous cases are set in relationship with the aforementioned discussions on Neolithic female representations and their prevalence, visualisation, ambiguity and particularity of context. It becomes apparent that goddesses and housemaids or priestesses and photo models could be represented and involved in the same social structure promoted or invisible within material culture.

Contemporary advertising visual culture

Within Macedonia, and indeed through the whole of Europe, advertising occupies a huge percentage of modern media space. Furthermore, regardless of the media type (including television, radio, magazines, posters or shop windows), the female body is dominantly present. In the context of this paper, static visual media would be of special interest, in which the images are not movable but mostly concentrated on just one fixed 'portrayal', such as with Neolithic figurines. Thus, if the most popular magazines or billboards in cities were analysed, it could be determined that attractive female bodies are placed mainly in the foreground – the choreography suggesting the quality of the product or the idea being promoted. These images also attest to the aesthetical parameters of how the media believes a 21st century woman should look and the ideals which can be suggested through the female body. Considering that billboards and magazines are

currently the most employed static visual media, in some way they become contemporary material culture in which the human body is displayed as an image. If such material culture is analysed, an anthropologist or future archaeologist would have a glimpse into a desired and partly manipulated female body very different to one which is symbolically incorporated in rituals or religion.

On the contrary, the actual and real symbolic engagement of the body in 21st century Macedonia is quite different – indeed even almost unregistered in the above-mentioned media. Namely, a huge number of women are engaged in activities that do not have any visual manifestations in the popular media, and, due to their uniqueness, sometimes even acquire a partly esoteric character. In line with the aforementioned relationship between figurines and fertility, of special interest are rituals concerned with women who could not have children. These individuals, by visiting particular sacred locations (most often rocks, caves, stones, waterfalls), perform certain activities in the hope that conception might result for the participants (Vražinovski 1999, 2000). These rituals are practiced by many generations and still involve women from both villages and cities. On particular days in the year they visit the event locations far from settlements, along with their husbands or relatives. During these apparent fertility rituals there is no single female image or item (material culture) present which asserts the fertility or a deity associated with the ritual. These two examples of advertising visual culture and esoteric female ritual indicates that prevailing images of women can be promotional and that fertility rituals do not always require the support of female images. Even though not related to Neolithic social context, these contemporary cases support the idea that the female body can be employed in various modes and settings in a single society.

Medieval frescoes

The next case study describes the symbolic engagement of female body within a religious unit which involves various represented characters of women. Such visual representations are painted on the frescoes of numerous medieval churches in Macedonia, where on certain fresco zones and particular areas of the church, women (saints) and ktitors (sponsors) are both represented (Miljković-Peppek 1971; Radojčić 1964). These painted scenes are mainly of: (i) Virgin Mary – as the 'supreme' mother; (ii) an accompanying women painted in the secular scenes who represents the life of some saint to whom the church is dedicated;



Figure 4: Medieval fresco with female saints at St. George, Kurbinovo (Grozdanov and Haderman Misguich 1992: Figure 27)

(iii) women-martyrs who are credited for helping to preserve Christianity, and (iv) ktitors (sponsors), wealthy women who, together with their husbands, financed the building and fresco paintings of the church (Figure 4). It is important to note that most of the represented women have visual similarities and that they do not significantly differ except by the clothes or their presence in particular scenes.

If it is considered that a church comprises one spatial and religious unit, most of the represented characters are associated with a particular visual and symbolic narrative. Most of the characters are related to the New Testament, some are historical individuals related with Christianity and there are also imaginary people who are set within scenes in order to support the dramatic and descriptive character of the painted scenes. Such visual units indicate that various characters with quite similar outlook could belong to different categories of individuals or saints. Although painted on a single wall, some of these women are servants, peasants, mistresses, royals, martyrs, saints or a supreme religious character such as Virgin Mary. Most of them are represented once in the entire church, but some are repeated on various scenes within fresco paintings (Djurić 1974; Grabar 1982). If compared with Neolithic figurines, such a case confirms that similarly represented female individuals in a single visual micro-unit can depict different characters with diverse historical or religious functions and significance. From that perspective the female figurines with unified features unearthed in particular local context, could be associated with goddesses and other mythical characters, or equally as easily with actual women.

Material culture in recent rural settlements

Besides the tangible religious units where the female body is variously incorporated, there are also other domains of social and symbolic engagement where the female body had a significant role, which is not visible or asserted through actual portrayals. Some of the most interesting cases for anthropological research by Balkan ethnologists are villages from the 19th and 20th century across the whole territory of Macedonia. From the numerous ethnographic data it could be concluded that populations inhabiting the villages in this period did not produce explicit, detailed representations of the female body, in contrast with the Neolithic figurines or medieval saints (Naumov 2006). It is important to stress that these villages were Christianised and maintained this tradition, but they simultaneously practiced their ancient traditional rites which were different from the church standards and official religious ethics.

In the beginning of the 20th century, Macedonians and other Balkan populations used a huge quantity of pottery for everyday purposes, and also for rituals associated with wedding, burials and agriculture. They did not produce any figurines of clay except on extremely rare occasions (Chausidis and Nikolov 2006). Everything within the domain of figurative body representation was under the auspice and control of the Christian church, so that the families in their homes had few icons. Still, the symbolic corporeal components were transposed onto utilitarian material culture and rites that do not employ human representations. Thus, the language and ritual choreography should be asserted as being the most suitable media for manifestation of the symbolic corporeal aspects – especially the ones which include female bodies. Namely, numerous vessels and objects which were partly involved in rituals were referred to with terms related to certain parts of the female body or with women who were high-ranked in the hierarchy within families. Thus, some vessels were named

in relation to pelvis or uterus, the regenerative area, or signified certain feminine social categories (Chausidis and Nikolov 2006; Naumov 2008a). Even when bread was ritually prepared the objects used for its decoration were named as 'sister-in-law', while the loaf was referred to as dolls or grandmothers (Krstevska 2005; Naumov 2008b; Petrović 1996).

The majority of female corporeal concepts, however, are preserved at the level of ritual choreography and numerous activities related to weddings – often concentrated on the bride and especially on the mother-in-law (Malešević 1995; Petreska 2001). Everything that symbolically enhanced the female body was focused in the domain of domestic rituals without leaving noticeable traces in the material culture. Referring back again to Neolithic societies, miniature figurines could be only a portion of the entire symbolic mechanism involving the female body. Besides its incorporation into acts not tangible to us, the body (especially that of women) was a central metaphor among first agricultural communities inhabiting Macedonia and the Balkans in general. Vessels, house and oven models, 'altars' and stamps were modelled with apparent female features (genitalia, breasts, pregnant belly or enlarged buttocks), although the majority were sexless (Naumov 2009a). The prevalence of the female body, associated not only with figurines, but with various embodied items as well, could be a result of the significant ritual status of the women or their engagement in the household activities. In that context, material culture with human representations is not always connected with deities, but can also be associated with common people and their needs, struggles, negotiations and notions.

The three asynchronous cases from one region, the Republic of Macedonia, support the idea that there is no single interpretation of anthropomorphic images, neither in a particular area, nor in a specific time. In various settings within a single community the body can be employed in diverse modes, as it can have different associations in one visual unit. The images of bodies can be both representation of deities that people worshiped, but also of women they respected. Therefore is not whom these figurines represented, but what they represent that is significant. Their meanings can be solid or vary even in a single community, but their appearance and context provide much more information on how they were used and what their purpose was in both the social and symbolic spheres. In order to understand such characteristics of embodied material culture, a short overview of figurine production in particular local settings is necessary and especially of those unearthed from several Neolithic settlements in Macedonia.

Neolithic corporeality in the Republic of Macedonia

Figurines are found in almost all Neolithic sites in Macedonia (Figure 5). Compared with pottery findings their number is quite small, but they are still able to provide information for particular visual and symbolic principles associated with the human body. How many figurines are recovered from an excavation, and also how many of these are published, depends on the modes, methods and scale of excavated sites and the extent of publications related with these sites (Naumov 2014). For that reason, the majority of the figurines remains unpublished in museums depots and is not familiar to anyone other than the excavators. There are, however, several recent case studies that introduce these artefacts into the archaeological discourse (Naumov and Chausidis 2011; Naumov

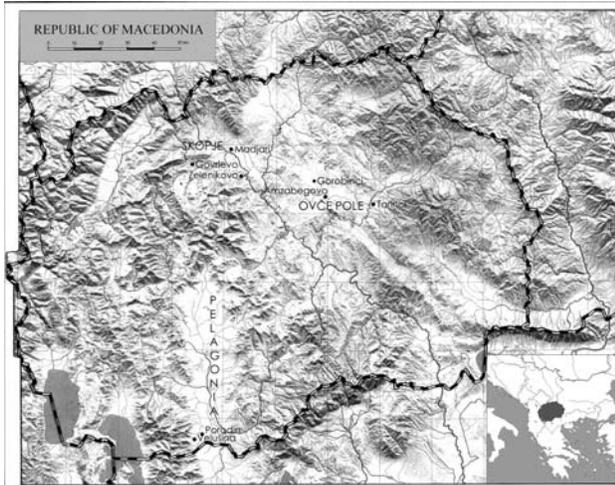


Figure 5: Map of the Republic of Macedonia with the sites and regions mentioned in text (created by author)

2014, in press). This allows for a more balanced study that is not subject to the bias of publication practices, which favour gendered figurines.

Neolithic figurines in Macedonia rarely attract particular attention for detailed study, although they were constantly promoted in short excavation reports and museum catalogues as some of the most outstanding artefacts in Macedonia (Garašanin et al. 1976; Kolištrkoska Nasteva 2005; Simoska and Sanev 1976). There were only few authors partially focusing their work on Macedonian figurines (Gimbutas 1976a; Korošec 1954; Srejić 1968), although the interest is significantly changed in the last decades (Karpuzova 2007; Naumov 2009a, 2009b, 2010, 2011, 2014, in press; Sanev 2006; Temelkoski and Mitkoski 2001). Recent publications provide new data for the Neolithic figurines which were unearthed from 1950s to 2000s in the Skopje Valley, Pelagonia, Ovče Pole and Polog, all of which are regions in Macedonia (Figure 5). The remaining part of the paper will be focused on both general overview and case studies in order to explore two main and not always common directions of figurine research.

General overview

Regarding the Neolithic figurines, certain visual and typological features should be noted in order to define corporeality. Considering the figurines found in Macedonia, it should be pointed out that most of those with determined sexual features are figurines of female individuals (Figure 6). From 289 published figurines from this region, for 137 the gender was determined; this includes 128 figurines with feminine genitalia, nine with those of a male and three that bear genitalia of both sexes (Naumov 2014). Therefore, the dominant presence of the female figurines in Neolithic Macedonia should be considered, as well as certain important details modelled on their bodies; namely that most of the female figurines have small applied breasts and wide modelled buttocks (Figure 7). The position of the hands is often directed on the breast, abdomen and genitalia or hips. On the majority of the miniatures, the face almost never has details. It is also worth emphasising that numerous examples are intentionally modelled in order to be fragmented, mostly where the head is attached or the legs are joined (Naumov 2009a). It might seem unusual, but the deliberate fragmentation of figurines is common practice for the Neolithic Balkans and several discussions and hypotheses have been proposed (Biehl

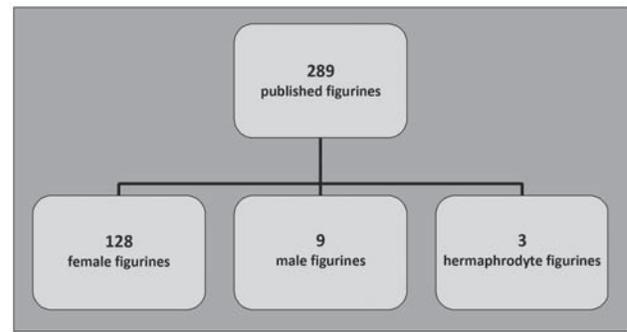


Figure 6: The total number of published figurines and their gender ratio (diagram by author)

1996; Chapman 2000; Gaydarska et al. 2007; Gheorghiu 2001; Talalay 2004).

These visual features reflect the figurines' purpose, but are also associated with the characters represented by them. The specific modelling and repetition of particular features suggests a tradition in figurine production which is associated with their possible function or the characters they represent. Small breasts, big buttocks, hands positioned on the torso, as well as their fragmentation is common for the figurines from many Neolithic sites from the Early to Late Neolithic. These features can be considered as general regional characteristics constantly associated with female figurines, although there are cases where only some of these features are present (Naumov 2009a). As will be more thoroughly discussed below, only a few figurines from Pelagonia and only one from Skopje Valley have a bulged belly with the hands positioned on it, a form which clearly indicates pregnancy (Figure 7). All the others do not have hands associated with the torso or an accented abdomen. Of particular importance are small breasts which suggest that represented characters are not pregnant women, but probably female individuals who already had children. It could be proposed that these were representations of young or mature individuals; women whose biological changes as well as their position in the community were altering their social status. In that context the figurines were probably broken and deliberately fragmented during the rites of passage, when a woman passes from one social category to another (Naumov 2009a). Despite numerous figurines which do not share the same features, these could be associated with womanhood, sexuality, birth giving and other biological processes common for the female individuals.

Crucial changes in women's bodies are frequently manifested in the aforementioned rural ritual practices, although they cannot be used as direct evidence for the functions and

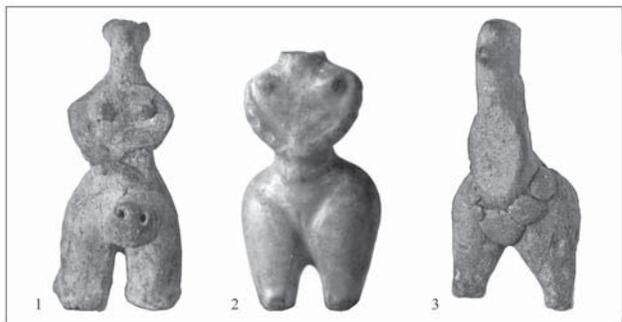


Figure 7: Neolithic figurines from: 1. Velushka Tumba – height 6.0cm (Kolištrkoska Nasteva 2005: Figure 3); 2. Madjari – height 6.8cm (Sanev 2006: Figure 11); 3. Grgur Tumba – height 5.5cm (Kolištrkoska Nasteva 2005: Figure 3)

purposes of Neolithic figurines. In some parts of Macedonia, the mature woman changing her status into mother-in-law has an especially important role in the rituals that follow this shift of status. In addition, control over essential segments of the house is accentuated, as well as the finalisation of the regenerative potential and confirmation of the realised birth-giving functions, which are manifested by providing descendants in the family. During the performance of these rites, the mother-in-law transposes her regenerative potential to the bride, but also emphasises her domination over certain members of the small community. This ritual choreography is followed by the symbolic imitation, such as the 'decapitation' of the mother-in-law or with asserting the genital area and buttocks as crucial parts confirming reproduction (Malešević 1995; Petreska 2001, 2002). The acts within this ritual, as well as its significance for rural societies, resemble the features and practices associated with figurine appearance and fragmentation. Surely, such ethnographic examples can be used only to broaden horizons of possible symbolic women engagements in the Neolithic, although the figurines could be employed and understood entirely differently by those who produced, used or only perceived them.

Therefore, despite the general observation and interpretation of figurines from Macedonia, more thorough insight into their local features is proposed in order to confirm that figurines did not have singular functions, meanings and purposes. The case studies from several sites in Pelagonia, the Skopje Valley and Ovče Pole are discussed which clearly indicate various preferences towards human representations in the Neolithic. Such cases would be further used to propose more complex social incorporation of figurines within the visual manifestation of local identities of communities inhabiting particular regions.

Local preferences

Although figurine production in Macedonia is often seen in a wider geographical framework, case studies of particular areas and sites provides a much better understanding of the local preferences. Although some of the visual and symbolic principles employed throughout the human body are the same as those implied within general perspectives, the figurine analysis of each site asserts variations which significantly differ from the previous research approach towards Neolithic corporeality in Macedonia. Four case studies are considered to assert this point and based on published (the Amzabegovo and Porodin case studies) and unpublished data (Govrlevo and Zelenikovo). They consist of sites from three different regions (Pelagonia, Ovče Pole and Skopje Valley), with Govrlevo and Zelenikovo being neighbouring settlements (Figure 8).

Amzabegovo is probably one of the best known and published Neolithic sites in Macedonia. Excavated by several teams in the 1960s, it provided significant information on the establishment of the first agricultural settlements in Ovče Pole and their existence throughout the remaining Neolithic phases (Gimbutas 1976b; Korošec and Korošec 1973; Sanev 2009). There are speculative interpretations of the Amzabegovo figurines, and they are properly documented, so that a well-grounded elaboration of body representations could be performed (Gimbutas 1976a). According to the excavators of the site, 54 figurines in total have been excavated during several research seasons – both the Korošec and Gimbutas excavations –, but only 43 are documented in detail (Figure 8). Only two figurines were found in the earliest levels of the settlement (Early Neolithic) while the majority date from the Middle and Late Neolithic (Figure 9). Although the sex

Figurines	Total	Female	Male	Hermaphrodite	Sexless	Undetermined
Amzabegovo	43	7	0	0	19	17
Porodin	32	20	1	1	3	7
Govrlevo	13	7	1	0	3	2
Zelenikovo	83	42	3	0	13	15

Figure 8: The total number of published figurines from Amzabegovo and Porodin, and the number of figurines unearthed in Govrlevo and Zelenikovo

of half of the figurines cannot be determined, most (19) of the remainder are sexless representations, seven are female and there is not a single artefact with apparent male features. Statistical data therefore indicate that the sexless figurines outnumber those of female and male, which is opposite to the general scale of figurines from Macedonia. Also it is worth noting that most of the figurines in Amzabegovo appear when the intramural burials, especially of infants and young individuals, decrease (Naumov 2013; Nemeskéry and Lengyel 1976). This suggests that the majority of figurines emerge as exchange to Early Neolithic burial practices, so that the focus on the symbolic human body was transformed from ritual to representative in the Middle Neolithic. It could, therefore, be proposed that the sexless figurines are most likely in relationship with buried children, that is individuals who were not sexually determined until their initiation (Naumov 2014). These figurines could be also associated with ancestors, sexless human like beings or with those that represent third gendered characters. However, for this particular case the funerary data and deposition of figurines in pits supports the idea for their relationship with buried children.

The figurines from Porodin are entirely opposite to those from Amzabegovo. Porodin is not published in detail (Grbićet al. 1960), but the monograph shows 32 figurines of which 20 are female representation. There are also three sexless figurines, one male, one hermaphrodite and the rest are small fragments whose sex cannot be determined (Figure 8). Although there is the possibility that only certain figurines were selected for the publications, it is evident that the majority of figurines with represented sex are female and are closely associated with formal characteristics observed on figurines from other Neolithic sites in Pelagonia. In Porodin, as well as in Veluška Tumba, Mogila, Optičari, Grgur and other Pelagonian settlements, the figurines have corpulent

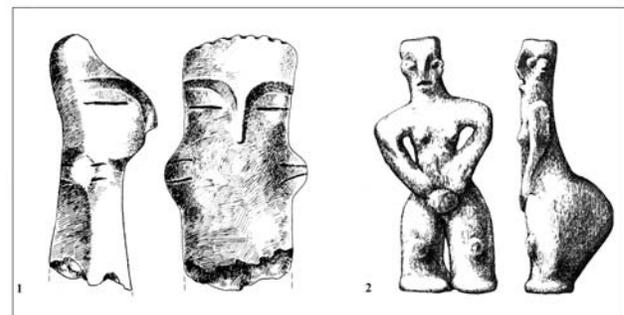


Figure 9: Anthropomorphic figurines from: 1. Amzabegovo – height 10.0cm (Korošec and Korošec 1973); 2. Porodin – height 12.4 cm (Garašanin 1979)



Figure 10: Anthropomorphic figurines from: 1. Zelenikovo – height 3.8cm (photo by author); 2. Govrlevo – height 8.4cm (photograph by author)



Figure 11: Anthropomorphic house models from: 1. Madjari – height 39.0cm (Kolištrkoska Nasteva 2005: Figure 42); 2. Porodin – height 25.5cm (Kolištrkoska Nasteva 2005: Figure 43); 3. Govrlevo – height 35.0cm (Chausidis 1995: Figure 6)

bodies which consist of large buttocks, bulged bellies and hands positioned on abdomen or genitalia (Figure 9). The figurine production in this region confirms that communities preferred the representation of sexuality, obesity and probably fertility among women which is contrary to the preferences in other regions, such as Ovče Pole and Skopje Valley (Naumov 2014).

The Neolithic settlements in the Skopje Valley provided numerous figurines embodying women or girls, but without accentuation of their sexuality, obesity and fertility as was the case in Pelagonia (Figure 10). Several excavations in Zelenikovo (Galović 1964; Garašanin and Bilbija 1988; Garašanin and Spasovska 1976; Grbić 1954), provided 83 mostly unpublished figurines of which 42 are female, three male, 13 sexless (Figure 8), while the rest are fragments whose sex cannot be determined (Naumov in press). The gender ratio in Govrlevo is similar, seven female, one male and three sexless (Figure 8), although the total number of unearthed figurines is significantly smaller, 13 in total (Naumov in press). It is surprising that the community at Govrlevo, neighbouring and contemporary to Zelenikovo, produced such a small amount of figurines. Bias in data acquisition is excluded, since excavations in Govrlevo were very detailed (Bilbija 1986; Fidanoski 2011, 2012; Fidanoski and Tomaž 2010; Georgiev and Bilbija 1984). It will be discussed below why such diverse practices occurred in neighbouring communities, but it is noteworthy that both were focused on the female body. Of all figurines unearthed from Zelenikovo and Govrlevo, there are only two which have more corpulent buttocks, while there are none with indicated genitalia or hands positioned on the torso. Although the Neolithic figurines from the Skopje Valley could comprise similar concepts as those in Pelagonia these miniatures have a much reduced exposure of the sexual or gender features.

Conclusion

The cases discussed confirm that the human representations do not always share the same preferences and most probably

manifest different individuals, characters or corporeal principles. The communities in Ovče Pole tended to represent sexless bodies more frequently, which is confirmed among the figurines from Gorobinci and Tarinci, but published only partially in the excavation reports (Garašanin and Garašanin 1961; Sanev 1975). In spite of that, it appears that the Pelagonian inhabitants of Neolithic settlements concentrated on female bodies with enlarged buttocks, bellies, visible or covered genitalia, as well as on hands which are often positioned on the torso. In the Skopje Valley, the majority of produced figurines also were of female bodies, but with the exclusion of one figurine from Madjari, none of them display gestures and they rarely depict enlarged buttocks and genitalia. Surely, further case studies from other sites are necessary in order to have a much better insight into gender preferences within figurines. The current results do provide a new glimpse into corporeal variety in the Neolithic of Macedonia and largely contrast with the previous general overviews of female figurines from this region (Karpuzova 2007; Kolištrkoska Nasteva 2005; Sanev 2006).

Even in the domain of female body the Pelagonian and Skopje Valley cases point out the apparent differences in accentuation of particular features and in the modes of their employment. Namely, many of the female figurines in Zelenikovo are modelled in order to be easily fragmented, which is also confirmed on some miniatures from Govrlevo (Naumov in press). Although indication for fragmentation is noticed among Pelagonian figurines, a further in-depth analysis is necessary to understand their involvement in such symbolic practices. As previously mentioned, the fragmentation is currently confirmed only on female figurines which raises the question of the infrequency of male bodies among human representations. Both the general overview and the case studies confirmed the minimal presence of male figurines in Macedonia with only nine such artefacts known so far. It is unclear why male bodies are neglected even if interpretations for religious or social aspects of figurines are considered. Many cultures incorporate male gods in their religion, and many societies involve male individuals within visual processes and portrayed them as figurines, sculptures or monuments. The male population was surely as significant as the female in the Neolithic economy and social spheres, so that it remains to be determined why they are not more frequently present in visual culture.

In spite of that, male representations are significantly outnumbered by the female or sexless anthropomorphic objects. This practice does not involve only figurines, but also other artefacts that represent the entire human body or of only some body parts, such as vessels, house and oven models, or 'altars' and stamps (Chausidis 2007, 2008, 2010; Naumov 2009a; Naumov and Chausidis 2011; Sanev 1988, 2006). These anthropomorphic hybrids rarely depict primary sexual features, yet frequently have breasts, protuberant stomachs or hands positioned on torso, which among the miniatures are considered as secondary female features (Figure 11). Therefore, it is more consistent to observe figurines in relation to these anthropomorphic hybrids as they are not only providing further information on represented gender, but also on the complex notion of the Neolithic corporeality. These specific artefacts further indicate variety in human body representation and highlight the embodiment as crucial concept associated with anthropomorphs. That is to say, not all Neolithic communities in Macedonia were equally concentrated on the production of hybrids and miniatures. Recent research confirms that in some settlements anthropomorphic house models are

much more often present than miniature figurines (Naumov and Chausidis 2011; Naumov 2014). For example, contrary to the small production of figurines (13), the population inhabiting Govrlevo was mainly focused on anthropomorphic house models (159). Contrary to the situation at Govrlevo, Zelenikovo communities almost ignored hybrids, with only 12 artefacts found compared to the numerous miniatures, totalling 83, which were unearthed from the site (Naumov 2014, in press).

Such diversities associated with human representations clearly indicate that Neolithic communities were variously employing the body within symbolic processes and visual culture. The striking dissimilarities of miniature and hybrid production among neighbouring settlements, such as Govrlevo and Zelenikovo, as well as the local preferences towards female or sexless bodies in various regions, further involves figurines in the complex realm of identity manifestation through material culture. The study of the Early Neolithic pottery confirms the employment of different patterns painted among communities in the various regions of Macedonia (Naumov 2009c, 2010b). Considering the involvement of material culture within visual endorsement of identity, it cannot be excluded that anthropomorphic miniatures and hybrids were incorporated in such processes as well. The overall analyses of figurines and human representations in general provide numerous categories of data which demonstrates the complex incorporation of these objects in various symbolic and social processes. A further thorough examination of figurines through particular case studies and publishing of entire sets and contexts will contribute to a better understanding of Neolithic corporeality and its potentials in tracing the cognition and social processes within the first agricultural societies in Macedonia and the Balkans.

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