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MINOAN NATIVITY SCENES? THE AYIA TRIADA SWING MODEL AND THE THREE-DIMENSIONAL REPRESENTATION OF MINOAN DIVINE EPIPHANY*

*In memoria di Vincenzo La Rosa,
con profonda gratitudine*

INTRODUCTION

The Ayia Triada ‘Girl on a Swing’ model is one of the objects that most fascinates visitors to the Iraklion Museum (Fig. 1)¹. It is a clay model representing a headless female figure with long locks of hair falling to her shoulders and chest (HM 3039, 0.063 m high) that hovers in the air thanks to a thread passed through a hole located in the pelvic region of the figurine and stretched between two small pillars (HM 3133, 3134) that were in turn connected to a clay base so as to form two horns of consecration. Each pillar is surmounted by a bird with unfolded wings. The lower part connecting the two pillars has been restored: the figurine and pillars were identified as belonging to the same model on the basis of the clay type, the decoration, and the presence of holes for the passage of the thread.

Despite its popularity, this object raises several problems of chronology and iconography, which have not been addressed until recently, when Rethemiotakis convincingly argued that the swing was probably produced in the LM I period and represents a scene of divine epiphany. The two aims of this article are (1) to re-examine the data concerning this object (starting with its discovery) in order to ascertain the reliability of the present day re-composition and interpretation; and (2) to re-evaluate its context of use in relation to other contemporary figurines from Ayia Triada, so as to shed new light on the votive practices of Minoan religion.



Fig. 1 - Swing model from Ayia Triada

* I would like to express my gratitude to Jeremy Rutter for several stimulating comments and suggestions in various stages of this work and for the encouragement to accomplish it. My warmest thanks are due also to M. Albertocchi, A. Bacchetta, S. Budin, F. Gazzano, B.M. Giannattasio, P. Militello, O. Palio, S. Privitera, D. Puglisi, S. Todaro, the two anonymous referees of the *Annuario* and -last but not least!- prof. V. La Rosa. In any case responsibility for the ideas expressed remains with the author. For the English translation I thank very much S.

Todaro and M. Metcalfe.

¹ ZERVOS 1956, fig. 578; SOLES 1992, 123 (AT 5-7). For a description see RETHEMIOTAKIS 1998, 32 (n. 85). In the text HM is used to indicate the inventory number of the Archaeological Museum in Heraklion; MP is used to indicate the inventory number of the Ethnographic Museum ‘Luigi Pigorini’ in Rome; HTR is used to indicate the inventory number of the Italian Archaeological School at Athens.

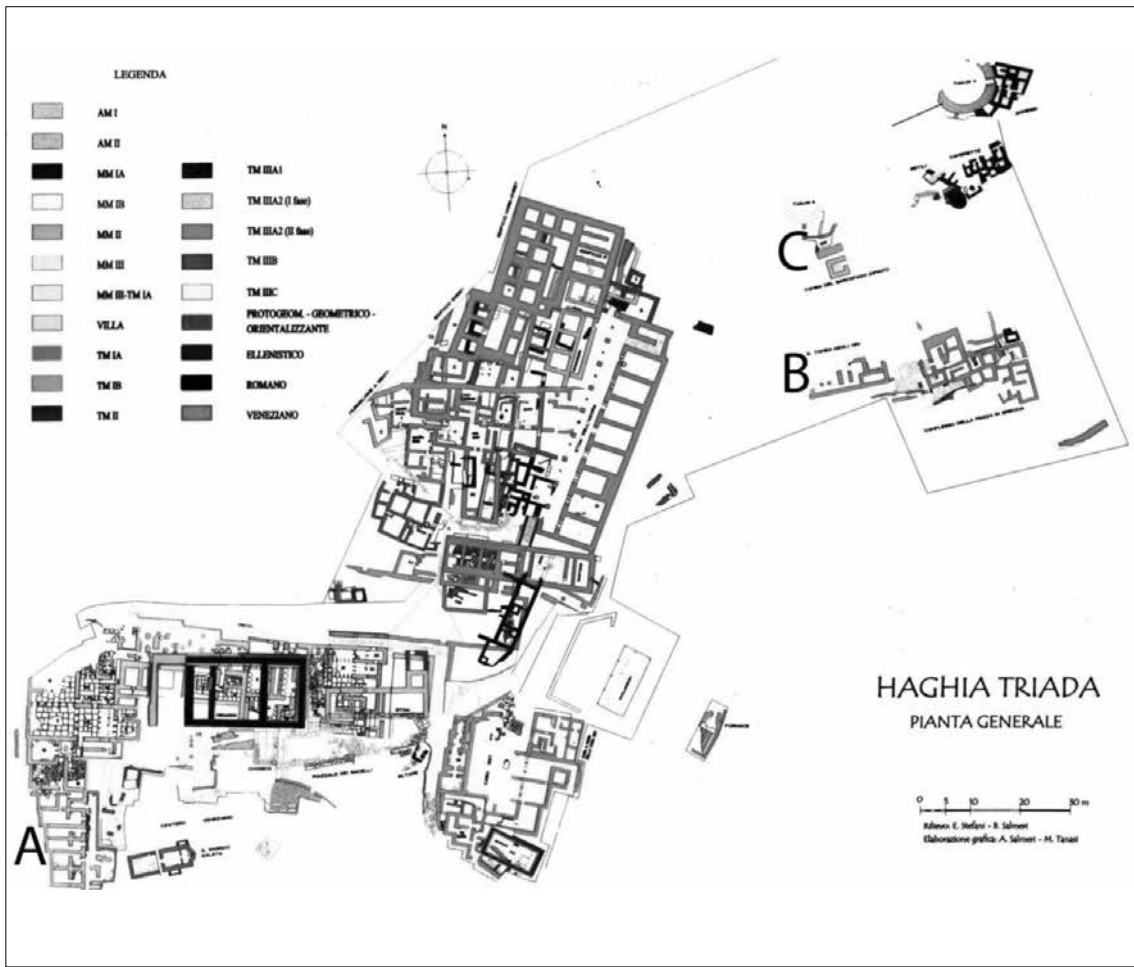


Fig. 2 - Aya Triada: plan; A = Sacello Sud-Ovest; B = Tomba degli Ori; C = Tomba del sarcofago dipinto (after *Creta Antica* 4)

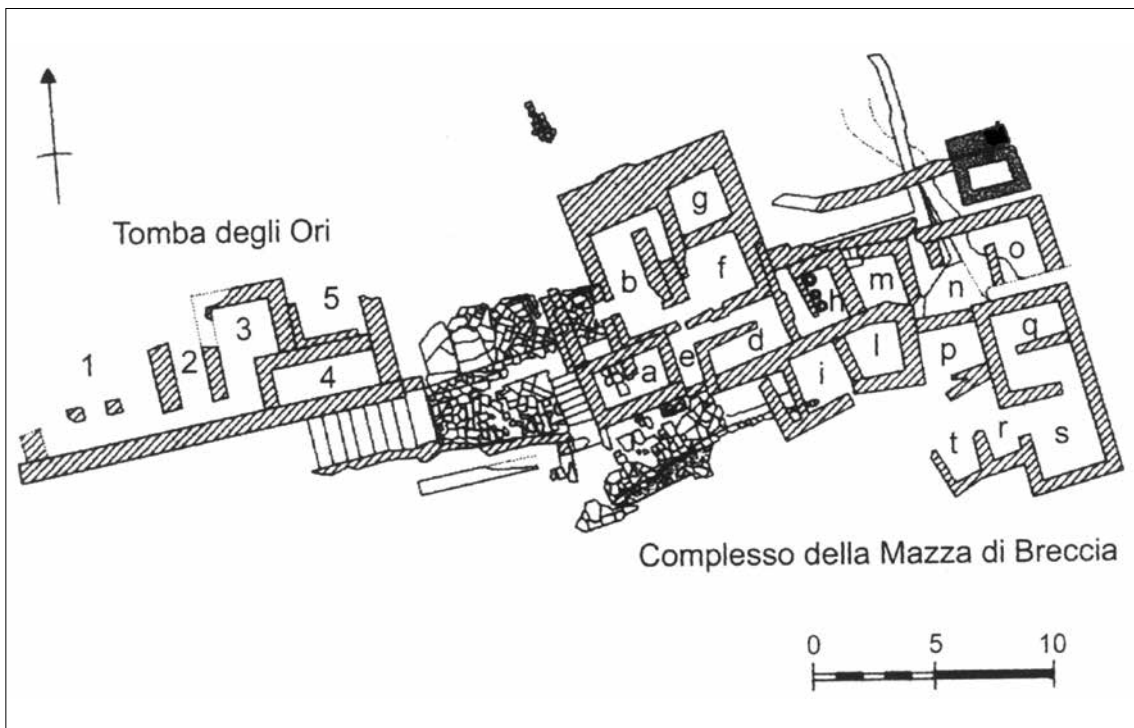


Fig. 3 - Plan of the *Tomba degli ori* and the *Complesso della Mazza di Breccia* (after PUGLISI 2003, 185 fig. 29)

REVIEW OF PRIOR STUDIES

The swing was discovered in Ayia Triada in 1903 by R. Paribeni, in the so called *Tomba degli ori* (Tomb of Gold, hereafter *TDO*: Fig. 2, B). As a matter of fact the individual pieces of the model were found in different parts of the building: the figurine in room 1, and the two pillars in room 3 (Fig. 3)². Originally, the two pillars were not associated with the figurine, probably because they were found in a different part of the building, and their restoration to the present day condition is due to V.E. Gilliéron³. Paribeni, however, thought that the clay figurine represented a young girl sitting on a swing due to the presence of a hole passing through the pelvic region, and also the position of her chest (which bends backwards) and her legs - which are outstretched with the points of the feet joined together (Fig. 1 and 11). According to Paribeni, the model indicated that the action of swinging was as important in the Minoan world as it was in the Greco-Roman⁴. The restoration of a bird with unfolded wings on top of the two pillars was suggested to Paribeni by A. Della Seta on the basis of the scenes represented on side A of the Ayia Triada sarcophagus, where two birds are placed atop two poles, each holding a double axe (Fig. 4). This reconstruction was also supported by other models found in the palace at Knossos, such as that which was thought to belong to the *Shrine of the Dove Goddess*, or those found in the *Loomweights Basement* (Fig. 5)⁵.

In 1928 the Ayia Triada swing was the subject of an important article by C. Picard, who associated it with the portrayal of Phaedra painted by Polygnotos of Thasos in the *Lesche* of the Knidians at Delphi⁶. According to the French scholar, the portrayal of the Cretan heroine, which Pausanias (10.29.3) described as sitting on a rope that she is holding with her bare hands, was similar to the Ayia Triada model, which can, therefore, be interpreted as a 'Phèdre à la balançoire'. Picard therefore hypothesised that the origin of 'swinging', a rite that involved the use of the swing and which was performed during the Athenian *Aiora* festival, probably to propitiate agricultural fertility⁷, went back to the Minoan-Mycenaean period.



Fig. 4 - Ayia Triada sarcophagus, side A; detail (after VASILAKIS s.d., 189)



Fig. 5 - Model from the Knossos *Shrine of the Dove Goddess* (after VASILAKIS s.d., 63)

² PARIBENI 1904, 73-5.

³ PICARD 1928, 50; *PM* IV, 25 n.2. I am not able to say whether the restoration is due to Gilliéron the father or the son. The swing model appears in restored form in the first (1927) edition of NILSSON 1950 (fig. 84). However, if the hypothesis that the restoration had taken place only a short time earlier is correct (as suggested by the fact that Picard's work was published in 1928), it is perhaps better to think that the recomposition was executed by Emile Gilliéron jr (1885-1939), rather than Emile Gilliéron senior (1851-1924). On this topic see recently DE CRAENE 2008, 48-51.

⁴ PARIBENI 1904, 74.

⁵ PARIBENI 1904, 747; cf. *PM* IV, 26 n. 2. A. Della Seta stayed at the Italian Mission in Crete in July 1904; for his Minoan interest, CARINCI 2001. On side A of the painted sarcophagus see LONG 1974, 35-43 and MILITELLO 1998, 155-9. For the Knossos model, *PM* I, 222, fig. 166 F;

SCHOEP 1994, 192-194 for the models from the *Loomweights Basement*. MACGILLIVRAY 1998, 41 for dating of relative deposition as MM IIB.

⁶ PICARD 1928; on Phaidra in the Polygnotos *Nekya*, recently STANSBURY-O'DONNELL 1990, 219; ID. 1999, 184-7; MUGIONE 2006, 205-6.

⁷ The rite would have probably taken place on the second day of the *Anthesteria*. Picard rejected the idea that swinging was an expiation rite, as might be interpreted on the basis of Pausanias' allusion to the death of Phaedra by hanging: this hypothesis was subsequently taken up by DIETRICH 1961. Picard's observations were in essence based on NILSSON 1915; more recently, besides DIETRICH 1961 and HANI 1978: BURKERT 1977, 358-64; SIMON 1983, 92-9; HAMILTON 1996 and AUFFARTH 1996b with bibliography.



Fig. 6 - Stone figurine from Mari
(after PARROT 1940, pl. VIII, 2)



Fig. 7 - Clay model HM 19097-8 from Ayia Triada
(after RETHEMIOTAKIS 2001, 120 fig. 132)

The two hypotheses (the connection between the rite of swinging and fertility, and the Minoan origin of the rite), had been accepted by Nilsson and Evans, and were confirmed, in Picard's opinion, by a discovery at Mari in 1938. There, in a temple dedicated to Ninhursag, the goddess of fertility, Parrot found a stone statue of a female figure sitting on a throne, with two holes that allowed it to be suspended (Fig. 6). Guided by Picard's suggestion, Parrot described it as "une statuette destinée à être «balancée» et en relation avec un vieux rite agraire" rather than as a simple *ex-voto* to be hung on the wall of the temple⁸. In other words, Picard's influential opinion about the Ayia Triada model, which was in turn based on Pausanias' description of a 5th century BC painting, led to the identification of an otherwise unattested rite that would have been performed in Mesopotamia in the 3rd millennium BC.

Despite the clear circularity of Picard's argument, scholars have ever since believed that the rite performed on a swing during the *Aiora* festivals existed in the Near East and in Crete in the third and second millennia BC⁹, and began to interpret the presence of pierced figurines as sufficient indication that similar rituals existed in other parts of Greece, even in earlier periods, as in the case of the Neolithic figurine found at Malthi¹⁰. It should, however, be noted that there are several iconographic and conceptual differences between a figurine sitting on a swing (like the one of the Ayia Triada model) and a pierced figurine (such as the one found in Mari or at Malthi): the former portrays a specific action, while the latter represents one of many possible ways in which the *ex-voto* could be deposited and displayed¹¹. Using the *Aiora* festivals to explain both is simplistic¹², and indeed after Picard some scholars have stressed that the action of swinging could be related to atonement rituals (an idea which the French scholar had excluded)¹³, as well as to fertility rituals. In any case, the statue from Mari and the figurine from Malthi cannot be

⁸ PARROT 1940, 15-6; PICARD 1941; 1948, 196-7.

⁹ See DEUBNER 1932; HANI 1978, 118-22; LINANT DE BELLEFONDS 1994, 358; AUFFARTH 1996a.

¹⁰ VALMIN 1938, 113, 339.

¹¹ See NILSSON 1950, 332, n. 7: "... the simple suspension of a figurine is not comparable to swinging"; PERDU 2003 (even if referring to later Egyptian examples of the XXV and XXVI Dynasties, with inscriptions).

¹² The fact that the *Aiora* were part of the Anthesteria festival, hypothesised on the basis of a passage from Callimachus, has recently been challenged: see especially HAMILTON 1992, 48-9; BREMMER 1999, 46-50. On the Anthesteria, recently Di Cesare in GRECO 2011, 424-426.

¹³ An analysis of the issues of 'hanging as female death' is beyond the scope of this contribution and would require consideration of the apotropaic character of the *Aiora* (*supra* n. 7), as well as Artemis *Apanchomene* from Kaphyai in Arcadia, in which atonement and fertility rituals are mixed together: see KING 1983; LORAUX 1984; DOWDEN 1989; VAN HOOF 1990. On Artemis *Apanchomene* (so called *Kondyleatis*) from Kaphyai in Arcadia (PAUS. 8.23.6-7), especially JOST 1985, 109-13, 400-2; MOGGI-OSANNA 2003, 394. On the atonement and fertility character of the *Aiora* and on the relationship with the use of offering *oscilla*, see GATTO 1969; VOISIN 1979, especially 447-50; MAZZACANE 1980.

compared to the swing model because they clearly do not represent individuals in the act of swinging and in fact, despite the large number of figurines and iconographic representations dating to the Aegean Bronze Age, the girl on the swing from Ayia Triada remains unique, which has recently led some scholars to question its restoration and therefore its interpretation¹⁴.

Rethemiotakis has recently put forward a particularly convincing proposal (in the context of a study of the figurines from Ayia Triada), in which he argues that the swing model represented a divine epiphany (as reconstructed by F. Matz), due to its remarkable similarities with another clay model from the same site, which was characterized by the presence of posts surmounted by birds¹⁵. This other model (which was retrieved from a context that has been only partially published and not well dated)¹⁶ was reconstructed by Rethemiotakis as consisting of two pillars arranged on each side of a baetyl (Fig. 7), and it might indicate that the swing model was locally produced, a possibility that would be further supported if a clay object found in the *Casa a Nord della Casa Est* in a LM I context¹⁷, could be interpreted as the pillar of another similar model.

For all these reasons it seems opportune to re-examine all the available archaeological data regarding the swing model in the hope of better contextualizing its meaning and use on the basis of the documentation provided by the site.

DISCOVERY AND CHRONOLOGY

As was previously mentioned, the individual pieces that make up the swing model were found in 1903 in the *TDO*, a building situated in the necropolis area, a few metres to the south of the *Tomba del Sarcofago dipinto* (Fig. 2 C, 3). The presence of human bones scattered within rooms 1 and 3 led Paribeni to conclude that the *TDO* complex was originally constructed as a house that was used at the same time as the Villa, but was then re-used as a tomb after its abandonment in LM IIIA2. The presence of a seal of queen Tiye, the wife of Amenophis III, among the gold jewels which Paribeni interpreted as part of the grave goods, allowed the excavator to date the context with certainty to 1450 BC, which was the date accepted at the beginning of the last century for the pharaoh's reign: today his reign is dated between 1390 and 1352 BC¹⁸.

The excavation data provided by Paribeni indicates that the figurine and pillars were found in rooms 1 and 3, which also provided human bones: the figurine in room 1 (which was furnished with pillars and interpreted as a crypt); the pillars in room 3. The data does not support the hypothesis that the distribution across two rooms was due to the fact that the model was originally located on an upper floor, because both figurine and pillars were actually found resting directly on the floor¹⁹. The discovery in 1989 of another room of the building, which had not been identified in 1903, confirmed that the structure was first constructed and used during LM I. Inside this room, which was deprived of human bones and was labeled room 5, two Egyptianizing amphorae were found which are identical to some specimens found in the destruction level of the Villa at Ayia Triada and of the Palace of Phaistos, both dating to LM IB (Fig. 8)²⁰. In fact, an amphora of the same type was also found in 1903 in room 1, at the same depth as



Fig. 8 - Egyptianizing amphora from the *TDO*, room 5 (courtesy of Centro di Archeologia Cretese)

¹⁴ YOUNGER 1995, 177.

¹⁵ DIMOPOULOU *et alii* 1993, 520; RETHEMIOTAKIS 2001, 119-20.

¹⁶ RETHEMIOTAKIS 2001, 120-1, fig. 132. The discovery is mentioned in *ASAA* 39-40, 1961-62, 671.

¹⁷ For information about this unpublished finding LA ROSA 2000b, 88. It should be noted, however, that the object could also be the pillar of a model of a real building such as, for example, that of the double door in the Monastiraki example: SCHOEP 1994, 194 fig. 9.

¹⁸ PARIBENI 1904, 734 (*CMS* II 3, 116); see LA ROSA 2000b with previous bibliography and PHILLIPS 2008, II,

18-21 for the objects from the *TDO*. The Amenophis III chronology given is that indicated in SHAW 2000, 479-83. For a later chronology (1380-1342 a.C.) see WIENER 2010, 381-7.

¹⁹ On the *TDO* findings, most recently CUCUZZA 2002, 160-5. The hypothesis of provenance from an upper floor does not explain why nothing was found in room 2 of the same building.

²⁰ LA ROSA 1992-93, 125-8. On the 'Egyptianizing' amphorae CUCUZZA 2000, 101 (nn. 9-11 from the *TDO*) and PHILLIPS 2008, I, 56-9, GIRELLA 2013, PUGLISI 2013, 100-1.



Fig. 9 - Vase with three holes from the *Complesso*, room *a* (courtesy of Centro di Archeologia Cretese)



Fig. 11 - TDO: Swing figure HM 3039 (after PARIBENI 1904, coll. 75-76 fig. 42)

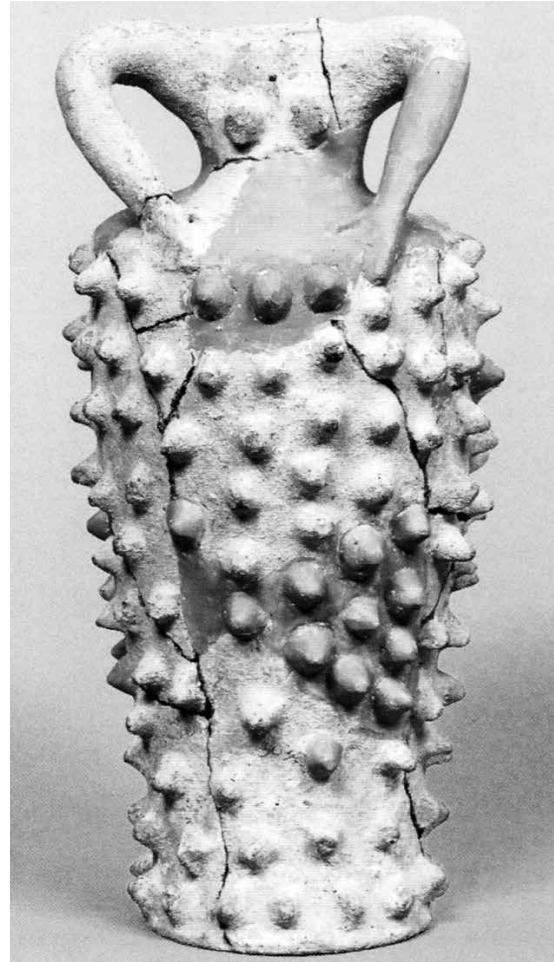


Fig. 10 - TDO: So-called *Polymastos* HM 3034 (after SFAKIANAKIS 2008, 208)

the figurine, and could support a LM I chronology for the model: the context was however certainly re-used in LM IIIA2 as demonstrated by the seal of Queen Tiyi, wife of Amenophis III (datable to 1390-1352 BC), which was probably introduced later as a grave good, as also suggested by the depth at which it was found.

Chronology aside, the interpretation of the entire *TDO* is controversial. According to Paribeni it was built as a house and used for funerary purposes only in a later period. C. Long, on the basis of its similarity with other Cretan structures used for secondary burials and characterised by the presence of crypts and pillars (mainly the *Temple Tomb* from Knossos), hypothesised that the structure represented a 'Sanctuary Tomb'. The same hypothesis was put forward at almost the same time by N. Platon, who however attributed the sanctuary to the first phase, i.e. the phase in which Paribeni believed that the structure was used as a house²¹.

J. Soles later returned to the 'House Tomb' hypothesis, which has recently been re-proposed by D. Puglisi on the grounds that the floor assemblages of *TDO* and of the adjacent *Complesso della mazza di breccia* (hereafter *Complesso*) are, in his opinion, compatible with a funerary use of the two contexts²². The question is still open as to whether the *TDO* was conceived as a burial structure from the very beginning (LM I), or was simply re-used for funerary purposes later, i.e. in early LM IIIA2. It is however certain that the building has two major phases of use (one in LM I and the other in early LM IIIA2), and this indicates that the swing model was deposited in a period of time including some part of LM I and some part of LM IIIA2.

²¹ LONG 1959; PLATON 1954, mainly 455-6. See also NILSSON 1950, 300-2; PINI 1968, 64, 76; GESELL 1985, 28; MARINATOS 1993, 91. By analogy with the Knossos *Temple Tomb* the author (CUCUZZA 2002, 164-5) has hypothesised that room 1 had a barrier between the pillars and southern

wall, where the bones were deposited.

²² SOLES 1992, 120-5; PUGLISI 2003. An examination of the findings connected with the cult in the area in MILITELLO 2001, 163-4.

An early date for the Swing model (LM I) is favoured by its contextual association, and in particular by two vases (an Egyptianizing amphora and a conical vase with three holes) that were found with the female figurine that (thanks to comparison with identical examples from the *Villa*) can be dated to LM I (Figg. 7-8). This is also the date of some other female figurines, which include a specimen defined as 'polymastos' due to its skirt being decorated with multiple small knobs of clay (Fig. 10). All these objects were found in rooms 1 and 3, although the *polymastos* figurine was found at a higher depth than the swing model²³.

An LM I date is also suggested by the painted decoration of the skirt of the figurine, which can be identified either as a herring-bone or as a stylized *foliate band* motif painted in red on a white ground, two motifs that are very common in LM I pottery from the area (Figg. 10-11). The accentuated stylization could indicate a late date within LM I²⁴. The same chronology was proposed by Rethemiotakis for a group of figurines found at Ayia Triada, Phaistos and Kannia, which shared the same technical features. He hypothesized that the figurines were the product of the same workshop, which was apparently active in the Mesara between the end of LM I and the beginning of LM IIIA²⁵.

RECOMPOSITION OF THE SWING

Before analyzing the other figurines, the single elements of the model will be examined to ascertain whether the current restoration, proposed by Gilliéron before 1928, is correct.

The presence of holes in the figurine and pillars confirms that they were part of the same composition and that the figurine was indeed suspended by a thread (Fig. 11). The position of the arms is certain because the left arm is preserved, while the right arm (totally restored) was reconstructed in the same position as the left due to the remains of its attachment to the shoulder. The position of the head, facing up, can be accepted only by supposing that the thread passed through the hands, as it does in the restoration. The lower part of at least one of the pillars (m 0.16 high) is original, while the part connecting the two pillars is a modern reconstruction. The reconstruction of the upper part of the pillars with birds with unfolded wings is also plausible, given that one of the pillars preserves part of the head and one of the wings of a bird (Fig. 1)²⁶. Moreover, it should be remembered that the representation of birds resting atop poles or columns, albeit usually with folded wings, is attested not only on the Ayia Triada Sarcophagus but also on the Knossos *Loomweights Basement* model mentioned above (Figg. 3-4)²⁷. One could, instead, challenge the way in which the two pillars have been connected in the reconstruction: it cannot be excluded that they were originally inserted into a larger common base²⁸. In this case the overall appearance of the model would make a much less explicit reference to the horns of consecration than the one suggested by the current reconstruction, as hinted at by other similar fragmentary pillars surmounted by birds found at Ayia Triada (Fig. 7)²⁹.

To sum up, even if some details of the modern reconstruction are perhaps less accurate than others, it can be safely stated that the original intention of the artisan was to represent a female figure suspended in the air, a type of composition documented at Knossos in a few other instances³⁰. However, was the action represented really that of swaying on a swing?

ICONOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

The interpretation of the model as representing a swing is based on the analyses carried out by Paribeni at the time of its discovery. This hypothesis, further defined by Picard with an explicit reference to later Greek rituals, and supported by the influential opinions of Evans and Nilsson, has been accepted almost without reserve. Until Rethemiotakis' recent work, different opinions had been expressed on the meaning

²³ PARIBENI 1903, 724-6, fig. 24; CUCUZZA 2002, 162.

²⁴ See FM 64.28; the motif is very similar to the parallel chevrons as seen in FM 58.33.

²⁵ RETHEMIOTAKIS 1997, 118. The figurine from Myrsini (SAKELLARAKIS 1973) and the one from Poros with a linear A inscription (DIMOPOULOU *et alii* 1993), datable within LM IIIA, are also characterised by a white slip above which the decoration is applied.

²⁶ Cf. NILSSON 1950, 331, n. 7.

²⁷ *Supra*, n. 5.

²⁸ It should be remembered, according to Mackenzie, that the various models found in the *Loomweights Basement* (considered to come from the *Shrine of the Dove Goddess*) related to a single clay model: cf. MACGILLIVRAY 1998, 41.

²⁹ *Supra*, n. 15.

³⁰ See lately BLAKOLMER 2012, 66-7, with a reference to the Flying fish of one of the panels from the *Temple Repositories* of the Knossos palace and to the ivory figurine of bull-leaper from the same place.

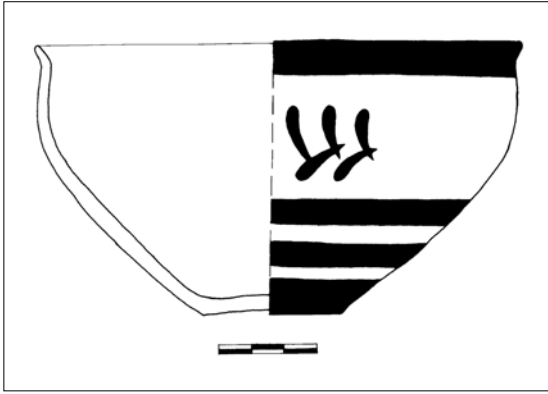


Fig. 12 - Cup HTR 1727 from the *Complesso*, room a (courtesy of Centro di Archeologia Cretese)

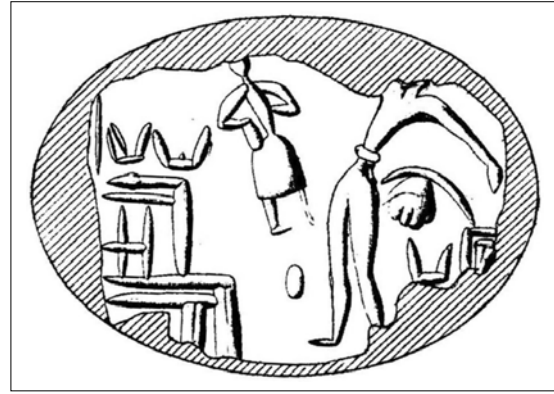


Fig. 13 - Sealing from Zakros with cult scene; CMS II 7, 1

of the swinging action, but not on the interpretation of the model as representing a young girl on a swing³¹. This interpretation was never challenged in spite of the uniqueness of the Ayia Triada model in the Minoan-Mycenean world, which has provided a large amount of clay and stone models³².

The swing is, indeed, completely absent from the Minoan-Mycenean iconographic repertoire³³, which is very richly represented in paintings, seals and stone and metal vases, mostly belonging to the last phase of the Bronze Age, i.e. the same period in which the Ayia Triada model was manufactured (probably LMI). The identification of a girl on a swing on a sealing from Zakros (Fig. 13) is anything but certain and was clearly biased by the Ayia Triada model. These remarks, coupled with those put forward by Rethemiotakis with regard to another model from Ayia Triada in which a small pillar, rather than a human figure, was represented between two vertical posts surmounted by birds, suggest that the so-called swing from Ayia Triada might have instead represented a scene of divine epiphany as reproduced on a few seals (for example the ring from Isopata) in which a small female figurine arrives flying among a few people who had invoked her apparition (Fig. 41)³⁴.

This interpretation is supported and reinforced by the birds represented on the two pillars, as they have unfolded wings as is usual in scenes of epiphany. It is possible that the pillars were in fact only a practical means through which the artisan could have represented the birds in the act of flying. Moreover, according to Rethemiotakis, the swing model constituted a group together with the other figurines retrieved from the same context, a suggestion that will now be further explored.

BEYOND THE SWING: OTHER CLAY FIGURINES FROM THE *TDO* AND THE N-E SECTOR OF AYIA TRIADA

Paribeni's report states that rooms 1 and 3 of the *TDO* provided a group of seven female figurines³⁵, which included a *polymastos* figurine, i.e. a figurine whose skirt is decorated with numerous pellets of clay. This figurine, taller than the others at 0.365m high, but unfortunately headless, is represented with both hands on her hips and a fully developed cleavage (Fig. 10)³⁶. Three of the other figurines have a cylindrical-shaped skirt and the same white slip and red/brown decoration of the figurine that was part of the swing model; none, however, have their breasts characterized. The smallest (HM 3038, 0.06 m high) has a rosette painted within a metopal zone on the back part of its skirt and a series of crosses painted on its torso and back (Fig. 14)³⁷. It is also headless, but the remains of the torso suggest that both arms were upraised. The other two figurines are better preserved. One (HM 3035), is 0.154 m high and has a foliate

³¹ *PM* IV, 24-28; NILSSON 1950, 331-2. Cf. WAGENVOORT 1930; HOOD 1971, 137. For an interpretation regarding playing (but still as a swing), DEUBNER 1932, 119-121; BUCHHOLZ 1987, 112-3. RETHEMIOTAKIS 2001, 119-20; cf. also *supra* n. 13.

³² On Minoan models see SCHOEP 1994; TODARO 2003.

³³ A clay figurine from Knossos (MH 20257; RETHEMIOTAKIS 1998, 27, eik. 17) represents a girl in a gesture similar to the one of the swing model from Ayia Triada: unfortunately, the data available for the find context does not provide useful information: *AD* 30, B2, 1975, 343,

pin. 249d.

³⁴ See RETHEMIOTAKIS 1998, 149-50; 2001, 119-20 and VARDINOIANNI 2010, 257-259. On the Minoan divine epiphany see MATZ 1958, NIEMEIER 1986, and more recently BLAKOLMER 2012, 71.

³⁵ PARIBENI 1904, 740-1.

³⁶ PARIBENI 1904, 724-5, fig. 24; RETHEMIOTAKIS 1998, 31 (n. 80).

³⁷ Rosettes are also painted on the cheeks of some clay figurines from the Temple Complex at Mycena: MOORE - TAYLOR 1999.

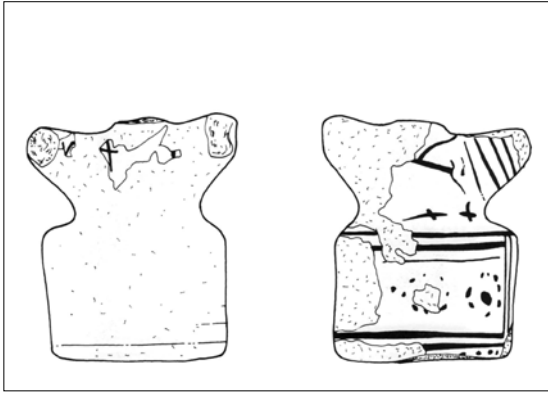


Fig. 14 - TDO: Figurine HM 3038 (after RETHEMIOTAKIS 1998, fig. 9)

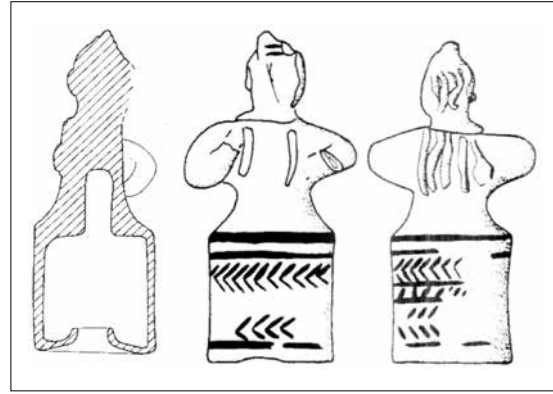


Fig. 15 - TDO: Figurine HM 3035 (adapted from RETHEMIOTAKIS 1998, fig. 6 and D'AGATA 1999, tav. VIII)



Fig. 16 - TDO: Figurine HM 3035: the head (after D'AGATA 1999, tav. VIII)

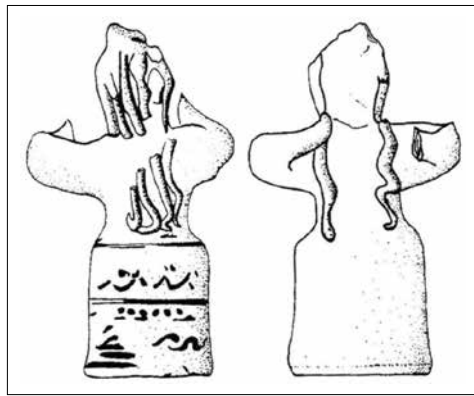


Fig. 17 - TDO: Figurine HM 3036 (after RETHEMIOTAKIS 1998, fig. 5)

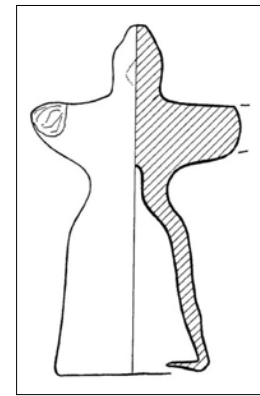


Fig. 18 - TDO: Figurine HM 3037 (after RETHEMIOTAKIS 1998, fig. 88)

band decoration on its skirt that closely recalls that attested on the figurine of the swing (Fig. 15). Its arms are outstretched: the right one is raised toward its head, while the left is lowered toward its belly. Two circular lines indicate the left eye (Fig. 16), while the remaining decoration of the face is unfortunately completely ruined. Long locks of hair, partially tied on the head, fall to its breasts and shoulder, in a similar way as the figurine from the swing. The other one (HM 3036), of similar dimensions (0.101 m high) and hair-style, has both arms outstretched, at the same height as its head. The decoration of its skirt is organized in two friezes separated by parallel lines and a series of dots. The lower frieze, which is better preserved, displays a series of quirks; the upper frieze, not well preserved, could have had either quirks or an 'iris between festoons' (Fig. 17)³⁸.

The other two figurines are more schematic, and do not preserve any trace of painted decoration (Fig. 18-19). The larger one (HM 3037, 0.106 m high) has a cylindrical-shaped skirt with a slightly everted rim; it is pierced in the lower part (like HM 3035); and has a shaved head, i.e. it is deprived of any characterization of hair style. Very little remains of the painted decoration, just a few traces of brown paint on the white slip³⁹. The smaller one (HM 3040, c. 0.07 m high) is similar in this respect, but it is also the only one in the group that preserves its arms, which are folded on its chest⁴⁰. The skirt is much simpler but, according to Paribeni, the manipulation of the lower rim might suggest the intention of reproducing her feet (Fig. 19).

The last figurine that can be attributed to this group is HM 3044 (Fig. 20, 0.08 m high). It is solid, with a white slip and illegible remains of painted decoration and might have had its arms folded on its chest, although nothing is preserved; only three locks of hairs are preserved on its shoulders.

³⁸ The motif of the quirks might have had a religious meaning considering its occurrence at Ayia Triada in LMI contexts connected to the ritual sphere (among others the *Complesso*): cf. PUGLISI 2010, 179-80.

³⁹ RETHEMIOTAKIS 1998, 32 (n. 83).

⁴⁰ PARIBENI 1903, 68-9, fig. 40b; this figurine is not mentioned in RETHEMIOTAKIS 1998 and D'AGATA 1999.



Fig. 19 - TDO: Figurine HM 3037 and small figurine HM 3040 (after PARIBENI 1904)



Fig. 20 - TDO: Figurine HM 3044 (after D'AGATA 1999, tav. II)

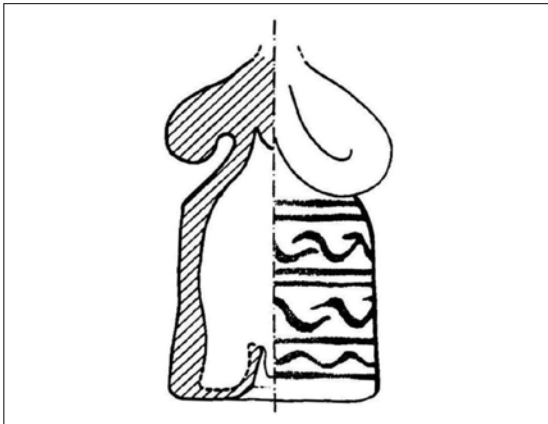


Fig. 21 - *Complesso*: figurine HTR 1885 from room g (courtesy of Centro di Archeologia Cretese)



Fig. 22 - Figurine HTR 0415 from the *Tomba del sarcofago dipinto* (after LA ROSA 2000b, p. 88 fig. 2)

Rethemiotakis' hypothesis that all these figurines were part of a coherent group is supported by their similarity in production technique and dimensions: the *polymastos*, which was indeed found at a higher level, is instead different and needs therefore to be considered separately. Taken together, the group of figurines probably represented the arrival of a divinity, as will be argued below.

It should be stressed that the NE sector of Ayia Triada provided another two figurines that, in terms of manufacture and decoration, are similar to those retrieved from *TDO*. The first is a headless figurine (HTR 1885, 0.092 m high) that displays the same manufacturing technique (including the hole in the lower part) and is similarly represented with its arms folded on its chest. Nothing is preserved of its hair, while the painted decoration, which is articulated on three friezes separated by horizontal bands, comprises quirks (on two friezes), and a continuous wavy line (Fig. 21). This figurine was found in room g of the *Complesso*, in a context that is almost certainly attributable to the LM IB period and thus further supports a LM I chronology for the *TDO* group⁴¹. The second figurine (HTR 0415) is a fragmentary specimen found within the painted sarcophagus that was discovered in a tomb situated only a few metres to the north of *TDO* and can be attributed to the beginning of LM IIIA²⁴². The torso of this figurine (the only part preserved) has its left arm raised and brought toward its mouth, and thus closely recalls the figurine HM 3035. In contrast to the figurines from the *TDO*, the breasts of this figurine are characterized (Fig. 22).

⁴¹ LA ROSA 1992-93, 151, fig. 49; MILITELLO 2001, 164, tav. XLle.

⁴² PARIBENI 1904, 67-8, figg. 37-8; D'AGATA 1999, 28, pl. VIII (A 17); RETHEMIOTAKIS 2001, 3-7, 86, figg. 4, 11

regarding HM 3035. For the provenance of HTR 0415 from the painted sarcophagus see LA ROSA 2000b, 88-9, fig. 2; for the dating of the tomb to the beginning of LM IIIA2 see LA ROSA 1999.



Fig. 23 - SSO: figurine HM 22383
(after D'AGATA 1999, tav. II)



Fig. 24 - SSO: figurine HM 1808
(after D'AGATA 1999, tav. IV)

The similarity between HTR 0415 and HM 3035, and the find context of the latter, together with the human bones and the seal of Tiyi, which was certainly later than LM IB, led La Rosa to hypothesize that the objects found together with figurine HM 3035 (which included several jewels) represented the burial assemblage of the *Tomba del sarcofago dipinto* and were dumped inside the *TDO* only after the emptying of the tomb, ending up partly in room 1 and partly in room 3. This hypothesis would explain why the fragments of the swing model were found in different rooms and would link more explicitly the pillars surmounted by birds with the representation painted on the sarcophagus, in which birds are also resting on poles that are surmounted by double axes. In any case, considering that the rendering of the birds with unfolded wings might simply have been a means to indicate that the birds were flying, and considering also the resemblance with HTR 1885, dated to LM I, it cannot be excluded that the entire group of figurines from the *TDO*, including the swing model, was produced in LM I and then re-used as a funerary burial assemblage in a LM IIIA2 tomb.

BEYOND THE SWING: THE CLAY FIGURINES FROM THE 'SACELLO SUD-OVEST' OF THE VILLA AT AYIA TRIADA AND ROOM 10 OF THE PALACE AT PHAISTOS

Another group of LM I figurines from Ayia Triada shows formal analogies with the groups retrieved from the *TDO* and thus merits consideration. The group comprises at least seven anthropomorphic figurines that were retrieved in 1902 together with two birds with unfolded wings (Fig. 23) from the west wing of the *Villa*. Lacking more precise information about the find-spot, they have been attributed to a hypothetical 'Sacello sud-ovest' (hereafter *SSO*: Fig. 2 A)⁴³. These figurines are also characterized by a thick white slip, above which several motifs were added in a red-brownish paint. Two belong to the type with a cylindrical skirt: one (MH 1808, 0.095 m high) is bringing its left hand to its mouth, while the right hand, not-preserved, was clearly upraised (Fig. 24); the other one (HM 1809, 0.096 m high; Fig. 25) has both arms folded almost on its belly, like HTR 1885, while its skirt has a decoration articulated in two friezes, the lower of which displays a motif with an 'iris with festoons' (FM 10A). This figurine has a pierced bottom, similar to some specimens from the *TDO*.

The hair and breasts of the two figurines with a cylindrical shaped skirt are not characterized. The same is true for a small figurine (HM 1806, 0.063 m high) which was modeled in the same way as the smallest figurine of the group from *TDO* and has both arms outstretched. The painted decoration, which seems to reproduce a dress, shows a cross on the shoulders that is identical to that represented in HM 3038

⁴³ Cf. HALBHERR 1902, 443-4; BANTI 1941-43, 20-2; HALBHERR-STEFANI-BANTI 1977, 53-6; GESELL, 1985, 74 (n. 13); MILITELLO 2001, 162. For the identification see D'AGATA 1999, 17: this scholar follows Banti who identified the *SSO* with rooms 27-28 of the *Villa*; PUGLISI

2010, 192 proposes a different hypothesis. The scarce quality of the information related to this discovery does not allow us to ascertain whether some figurines belong to this group or not.

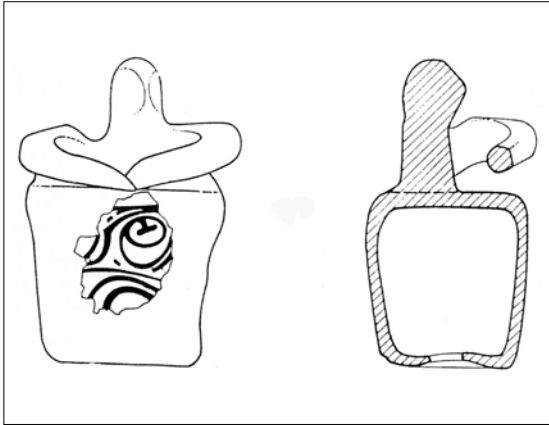


Fig. 25 - SSO: figurine HM 1809
(after D'AGATA 1999, tav. VIII)

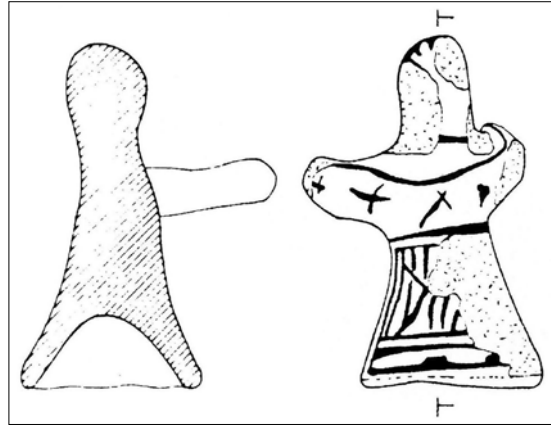


Fig. 26 - SSO: figurine HM 1806
(after D'AGATA 1999, tav. VIII)



Fig. 27 - SSO: figurine HM 1807
(after D'AGATA 1999, tav. II)



Fig. 28 - SSO: figurine HM 1805
(after D'AGATA 1999, tav. I)

(Fig. 26). Another two figurines of larger dimensions have their skirts made in the same way: one (HM 1807, 0.079 m high) has upraised arms (Fig. 27); the other (HM 1805, 0.086 m high) has only its right arm preserved (Fig. 28), but probably originally had its arms in exactly the same position as the other one. HM 1805 and 1807 have in common the characterization of breasts and hair, tied in a *chignon* on the head that also recurs on the other female figurine known from the group of the SSO (HM 1804). This figurine stands out from the group because it is of larger dimensions (0.12 m high), its breasts are characterized, it is seated with both arms outstretched, its right hand is raised to its mouth (Fig. 29), and it has a more marked characterization of its facial features, particularly eyes and ears.

Another three female figurines retrieved from Ayia Triada, two of which are now stored in the Pigorini museum in Rome, and one in Iraklion (HM 22342), are indistinguishable from the figurines of the SSO group, and indeed probably belonged to the same group that would in this case have been composed of nine female figurines and two birds⁴⁴. One of the two specimens kept in the Pigorini museum (MP 71891) is solidly made and of small dimensions (0.045 m high), and represents a female figurine without breasts and with very stylized arms that appear to have been raised (Fig. 30); the other one (MP 71889, 0.067 m high) has raised arms, brought forward, while a brush of paint on the head was maybe meant to represent its hair (Fig. 31). Figurine HM 22342, with a cylindrical and wheel-made skirt, was covered with the usual white slip above, to which a foliate band decoration in red paint was applied. The arms, unfortunately,

⁴⁴ BORDA 1946, 57 (nn. 4-5), pl. XLIII, 10, 13 (MI 71889 and 71891), D'AGATA 1999, 18 and 26-7 (n. A 9 e A 13), pl. II; RETHEMIOTAKIS 1998, 35 n. 113, fig. 7. The three specimens have been attributed to the group due to their resemblance to the figurines of the SSO group. The evident resemblances with the figurine HM 1808 and HM 3037

allow us to believe that the figurine from the Ashmolean Museum 1968.780 (RETHEMIOTAKIS 1998, 48 n. 201, fig. 24), whose provenance is given as 'probably' from the Phaistos area, belonged almost certainly to one of the two groups.

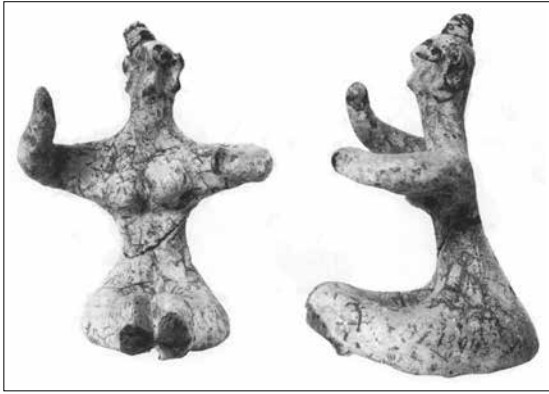


Fig. 29 - SSO: figurine HM 1804
(after D'AGATA 1999, tav. IV)



Fig. 30 - SSO: Figurine MP 71891
(after BORDA 1946, tav. XLIII)



Fig. 31 - SSO: Figurine
MP 71889 (after D'AGATA
1999, tav. II)

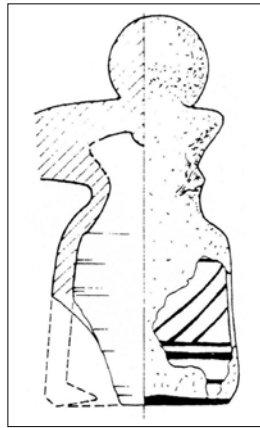


Fig. 32 - SSO: Figurine
HM 22342 (after D'AGATA
1999, tav. VIII)



Fig. 33 - SSO: figurine HM 1815
(after D'AGATA 1999, tav. I)

are not preserved but it can be assumed that they were indeed upraised; the head does not show any trace of ribs or cords interpretable as hair-locks (Fig. 32).

Yet another figurine (HM 1815, 0.042 m high) is associated⁴⁵ with the *SSO* group and, if correctly attributed, would represent an *unicum* inasmuch as it reproduces a seated young man who might have been playing a flute, because both of its elbows are resting on its knees (Fig. 33).

Rethemiotakis thinks that these figurines, like those from the *TDO*⁴⁶, were also used in a group, an hypothesis that is supported by the hole that appears in their lower part (HM 1809, Fig. 25) and also by the presence of the seated figurine HM 1804, which needed to be placed on a support⁴⁷. The similarities between the finds from *TDO* and those from the west wing of the villa (where the *SSO* was located) also include the presence of Egyptianizing amphoras, two specimens of which were found in room 15 of the villa. It is not certain if a fragment with three horizontal lines of large conical knobs found in room 15 belonged to a *polymastos* figurine, similar to the one found in *TDO*⁴⁸.

It is interesting to note, in this regard, that this association is also documented in the palace at Phaistos: a figurine similar to the *polymastos* from the *TDO* was retrieved from room 10 in association with two Egyptianizing amphoras and a group of female figurines of which, unfortunately, only one specimen is known. It is a female figurine that, with its well characterized breasts (HM 1773, 0.165 m high), white slip and red-brown painted decoration, appears to be very similar to the specimens from Ayia Triada

⁴⁵ D'AGATA 1999, 17 implicitly states that the group belonged to *SSO* probably on the basis of the year of discovery (1902). Halbherr and Banti, however, recall that the group comprised only female figurines and two birds.

⁴⁶ RETHEMIOTAKIS 2001, 120.

⁴⁷ Cf. RETHEMIOTAKIS 2001, 118-9.

⁴⁸ HALBHERR-STEFANI-BANTI 1977, 117-8. PUGLISI 2013, 21 and 107 however, argues for a provenance from corridor 9; moreover he identifies the fragments as belonging to a clay vessel.

(Fig. 34)⁴⁹. In other words, it seems plausible to suppose that a third group of figurines, very similar to the two described from Ayia Triada, existed in the palace at Phaistos and was associated with similar objects of a ceremonial use⁵⁰.

A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE FIGURINES FROM THE NORTH-EAST SECTOR AND THOSE FROM THE VILLA

The evident analogies existing between the two groups of figurines (Table I) will now be examined in detail, starting from the fact that in both cases figurines of different sizes and different skirts are attested⁵¹. The analogies between the two groups also include details of the manufacturing technique: both groups include figurines with wheel-made skirts and figurines with hand-made, solid skirts (usually of smaller dimensions). Moreover, all the figurines have white slip and red-brown decoration. The analogy also concerns the painted decoration, especially the motif of the iris between festoons and the cross on smaller figurines. Another common feature is the fact that only female individuals are represented: the male figurine HM 1815 (Fig. 33) has only dubiously been associated with the *SSO* group and, as will be argued below, it might have a particular explanation. Finally, it should be noted that the gestures are also similar, at least from what can be inferred from the positions of the arms: elbows are always raised, and the arms are outstretched (HM 1806, 1804, 3038, 3036), while hands can be either both on the belly (HM 1809, small and *polymastos*) or one on the belly and the other on the mouth (HM 1808, 3035). It is also interesting to note that the degree of characterization of breasts, and the hair style depicted, allows three groups to be distinguished which can easily be attributed to as many age classes, as is also hinted at by the different height of the figurines (Fig. 19, tables II-III):

a) figurines without indication of breasts and with a rounded and shaved head. This group comprises all the small sized figurines, as well as the hand-made ones and those that are solidly made (HM 3037, 3038, 3040, 1806, 1808, 1809, MP 71889, 71991).

b) figurines without indication of breast but with some locks of hair, made in relief. Generally, the figurines of this group have a wheel-made cylindrical skirt (HM 3035, 3036, 3039, 3044).

c) figurines with prominent breasts and long hair tied in a chignon on the top of the head (HM 1804, 1805, 1807).

A comparison with the situation documented at Akrotiri in LM I, and at Brauron in a much later period, makes it possible to hypothesise that the figurines of group *a* represent girls of about 6-7 years old; those of group *b* represent pre-pubescent girls of about 9/11 years old, while those of group *c* represent fully developed women, and thus either teenagers older than 14/15 years old, or adult women⁵².

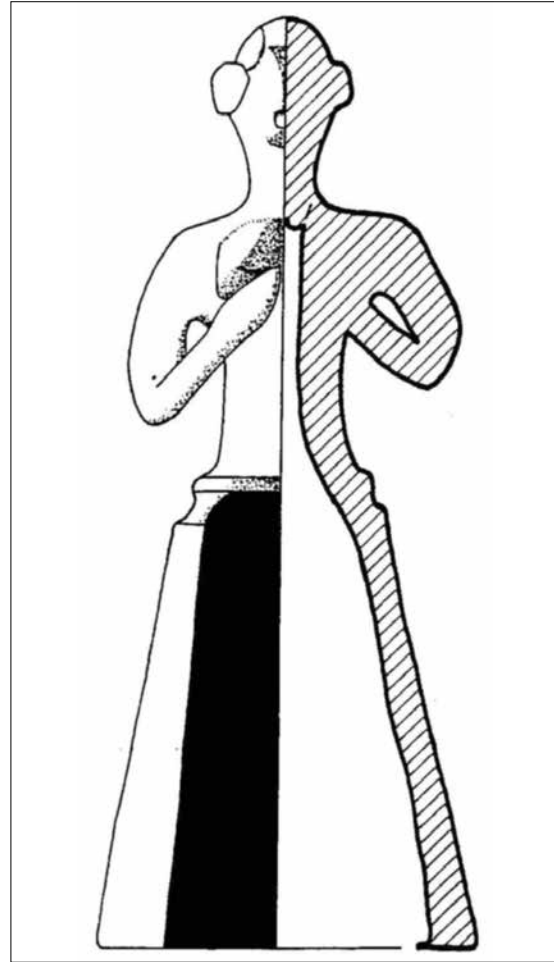


Fig. 34 - Figurine HM 1773, from Phaistos Palace, room 10 (after RETHEMIOTAKIS 1998, fig. 86)

⁴⁹ PERNIER-BANTI 1951, 114 fig. 62; GESELL 1985, 186, fig. 62; RETHEMIOTAKIS 1998, 37 (n. 121), fig. 86. Unfortunately it is not possible to understand whether some of the elements that were illustrated by RETHEMIOTAKIS 1998, 37-8 and which display technical and iconographic features similar to the figurines under discussion belonged to the group of figurines found in room 10. For a cultural interpretation of room 10 see PALIO 2001.

⁵⁰ The fragments of clay figurine with cylindrical skirt and of at least two birds from a LM II dump related to the 'domestic shrine' of House X could hint at the presence of a coroplastic group also at Kommos.

⁵¹ Regarding the *SSO* group, D'AGATA 1999 has hypothesised that the differences in size and dress might be intended to reflect differences in the social rank and/or age of the offerings.

⁵² MARINATOS 2002; CHAPIN 2007; ID. 2009.

Inventory number	Provenance	Height	Halbherr / Paribeni	D'Agata	Rethemiotakis
HM 3034	Tomba degli Ori	36.5	MAL 1904, fig. 24		80
HM 3035	Tomba degli Ori	15.4 / 14	MAL 1904, fig. 37-38	A17	81
HM 3036	Tomba degli Ori	10,1	MAL 1904, fig. 38-39		82
HM 3037	Tomba degli Ori	10.6	MAL 1904, fig. 40		83
HM 3038	Tomba degli Ori	6.0 / 6.7		A12	84
HM 3039, 3133, 3134	Tomba degli Ori	6.3	MAL 1904, fig. 42		85
HM 3040	Tomba degli Ori	7.1	MAL 1904, fig. 40		
HM 3044	Tomba degli Ori	7.7 / 8		A10	86
HM 1804	Sacello Sud-Ovest	12 / 10.8	MAL 1903, fig. 55b, tav. XI	A6	72
HM 1805	Sacello Sud-Ovest	8.6 / 8.3	MAL 1903, fig. 55a	A2	73
HM 1806	Sacello Sud-Ovest	6.3 / 6.2		A1	74
HM 1807	Sacello Sud-Ovest	7.9 / 7.8	MAL 1903, tav. XI: 2.1	A3	75
HM 1808	Sacello Sud-Ovest	9.5 / 9.7		A5	76
HM 1809	Sacello Sud-Ovest	9.6 / 8.7	MAL 1903, fig. 55c	A4	77
HM 1815	Sacello Sud-Ovest	4.2		A7	
HM 22383	Sacello Sud-Ovest	2.7		A8	
HM 22342	Sacello Sud-Ovest?	9.5		A13	113
MP 71889	Sacello Sud-Ovest?	6.7		A9	
MP 71891	Sacello Sud-Ovest?	4.5			

Table I - Figurines from TDO and SSO at Ayia Triada, with inventory number, height (in cm) and cross-references to previous publications by HALBHERR - PARIBENI - D'AGATA 1998 and RETHEMIOTAKIS 1998 (HM = Heraklion Museum; MP = Museo "L. Pigorini", Rome; when two measures are provided, the first is as reported by D'Agata, the second is as reported by Rethemiotakis)

Different ages, as hinted at by the degrees of breast growth and hair styles, might have coincided with different gestures that are not always easily identifiable due to the fact that arms are usually lacking. For example, the gesture of bringing the hand to the belly is only performed by the figurine of the first group (a).

The analogies between the two groups of figurines from Ayia Triada should not let us overlook the existence of some differences that refer mainly to the age of the individuals represented. The figurines of *TDO* (table II), with the exception of the *polymastos*, all belong to groups (a) and (b), while the figurines from *SSO* (table III) belong to groups (a) and (c). In other words, while the group of clay figurines from the *TDO* lacks adult individuals, the group from the *SSO* lacks pre-pubescent girls.

The rich iconographic repertoire of Ayia Triada in LM I and LM IIIA-B, which consists of paintings, seals, relief representations on stone vases and clay figurines, enables us to ascertain that age indication in female individuals (represented through the degree of breast growth and differences in hair style) was coherent between the different categories of representation, in a way that recalls the pattern noticed in the paintings from Akrotiri. The best example of this is the frescos of the 'Small Procession' from Ayia Triada, which can be dated within the time-span between LM I and LM IIIA (Fig. 35): several women are depicted on two superimposed registers within a space framed by horns of consecration⁵³. The women represented in the upper register have long locks of hair and wear a dress that is different from that worn by the shaved women that are represented in the lower register. Even in this case it seems possible to hypothesise that the former were adult women (and indeed their dresses seem to leave their breasts naked⁵⁴), while the latter were girls of a younger age. Similarly, the way in which the figurine of the swing model (Fig. 11) and figurine HM 3035 (Fig. 15) are represented recalls, very closely (both for the

⁵³ MILITELLO 1998, 309-20.

⁵⁴ See *CMS* II.6, n. 5 and *CMS* II.6, n.28 from Ayia Triada.

Inventory number	Hair style			Body growth/development			Position of arms			Painted decoration	Cylindrical skirt
	Shaved head	Locks	Chignon	Breast	Tall	Short	upraised	Outstretched	Folded on chest/belly		
MH 3035		X								X	X
MH 3036		X						X		X	X
MH 3037	X										X
MH 3038						X	X			X	X
MH 3039		X					X			X	
MH 3040	X					X			X		
MH 3044		X				X		X		X	
<i>MH 3034</i>				X	X						X

Table II - Features of the figurines from TDO (in italics those dubious)

Inventory number	Hair style			Body growth / development			Position of arms			Painted decoration	Cylindrical skirt
	Shaved head	Locks	Chignon	Breast	Tall	Short	Upraised	Outstretched	Folded on chest / belly		
MH 1804			X	X	X		X			X	
MH 1805			X	X	X		X			X	
MH 1806	X					X	X			X	
MH 1807			X	X	X		X			X	
MH 1808	X				X			X		X	X
MH 1809	X				X				X	X	X
<i>MH 22342</i>	X				X			X			X
<i>MP 71889</i>	X				X			X		X	
<i>MP 71891</i>	X					X			X		

Table III - Features of the female figurines from SSO (in italics those dubious)

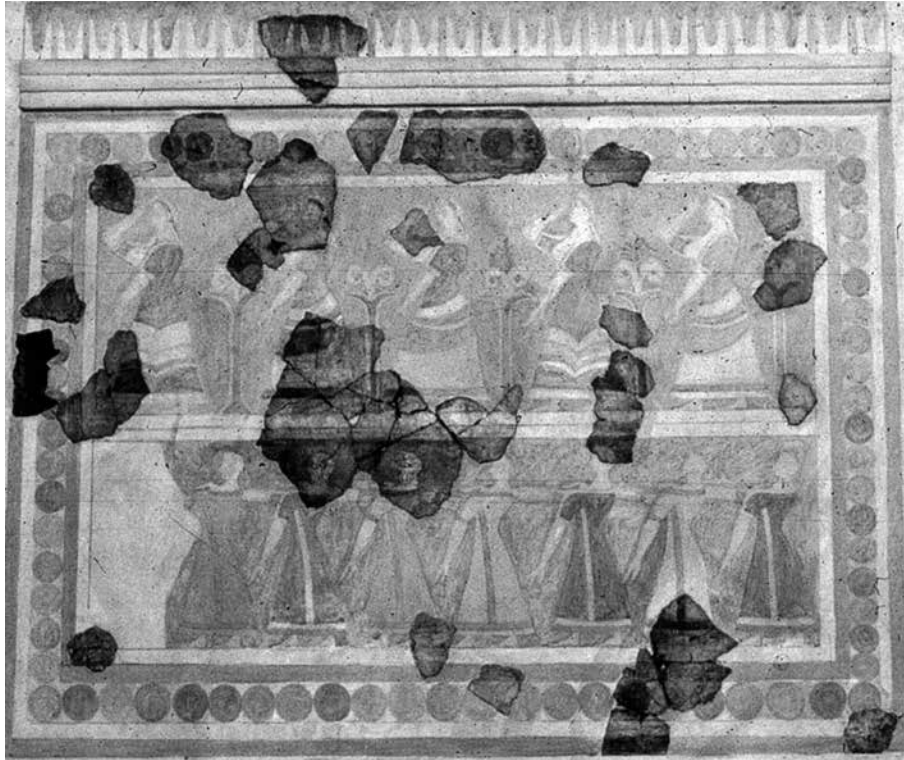


Fig. 35 - Fresco of the 'Piccola Processione' from Ayia Triada (after MILITELLO 1998, ta. 10A)

decorative motif of the dress and for the hair style) the so-called priestess that is painted on the long sides of the Painted Sarcophagus from Ayia Triada (Fig. 4). It seems therefore (a) that a standardized iconography existed at Ayia Triada between LM I and LM IIIA2, which through details of body growth (mainly breast growth) and hair style, distinguished the women represented on the basis of their age; and (b) that the type of dress worn was also an important criterion to further distinguish the women represented on the basis of the role played in the ceremonial sphere.

Other differences between the two groups of figurines refer to the presence of isolated and outstanding types: the girl on the swing and probably the *polymastos* in the *TDO* group (Fig. 10); the seated woman of larger size and, probably, the male figurine in the *SSO* group. Before discussing these figurines, it seems worthwhile to observe that two very similar groups of figurines were used at the same time at Ayia Triada in the *Villa* and *TDO* respectively, suggesting that the two contexts, which were already considered similar due to the presence of peculiar ritual vessels such as so-called Egyptianizing amphorae (Fig. 8), were used for similar ceremonies.

Even the group of figurines from room 10 of the Phaistos palace attests the association between these peculiar amphorae and clay figurines, in the context of a room that was located next to an open court used for ceremonial rituals, i.e. the west court of the palace. It is unfortunate that the available data for this context are too scarce to allow a thorough comparison with the evidence from Ayia Triada. It might not be a coincidence that the only published figurine from Phaistos, HM 1773 (Fig. 34), differs from the figurines found in Ayia Triada because it wears a necklace, as do the figurines found in the Kannià *Villa*⁵⁵. The type of dress worn by this figurine, which leaves its breasts naked, suggests that it represented a fully grown-up girl; the lack of indication of hair, on the other hand, suggests that the girl had just been shaved, and was thus between 14 and 15 years old.

THE FUNCTION OF THE GROUPS OF FIGURINES

The clear analogies between the two groups of figurines uncovered in the *TDO* and *SSO* of the *Villa* at Ayia Triada, raise questions about the function that they might have performed in the buildings in which they were found. Dress, hairstyle and anatomical details of the individuals represented are used in a

⁵⁵ RETHEMIOTAKIS 1998, 39-41.



Fig. 36 - Mavrospilio: the 'kourotrophos' HM 8345 (after RETHEMIOTAKIS 1998, fig. 12)

coherent and consistent way that might allude to different classes of age. Building on Rethemiotakis's interpretation of the swing as a divine epiphany, it could be proposed that the two groups represented a specific scene, which is also reproduced in other categories of finds (seals, paintings, ivory and stone vessels). In other words, even if the clay figurines of the two groups found at Ayia Triada were not inserted in a common base, they might have been conceived to be seen as single components of a larger composition representing a precise scene, and might be thus assimilated to the models. In fact, some figurines have a hole in their base and are hollow (Figg. 15, 18, 21, 25). This feature has been related to the manufacturing process of the figurines, i.e. as the outcome of the particular way in which they were produced and fired. It was in other words hypothesised that these figurines, like those uncovered at Keos, were made by modelling the clay around a wooden stick⁵⁶. This technique, although particularly effective for the production of specimens of large dimensions such as the one found in Keos (which are sometimes up to 1m high), appears excessive with figurines which are usually 10 cm high. Alternatively, it can be suggested that these holes were used to temporarily apply the figurines to a base, making it possible to interpret both groups from *TDO* and *SSO* as compositions, which could be recombined and dismantled on specific occasions⁵⁷. At any rate, two elements must be highlighted. Firstly, it should be considered that the find-spot of the figurines from the *TDO* included objects, such as the egyptianizing amphorae, which were certainly used in the context of ceremonies performed in the paved court that is located to the East of the building, bordering the *Complesso*. The latter building also included ritual objects that were used in the same rituals, as the discovery of fragments of 'portable altars'⁵⁸ and egyptianizing amphorae in the court, seems to attest. It should therefore be remembered that a figurine similar to those from the *TDO* in terms of manufacture, decoration, hairstyle, and gestures (HTR 1885, Fig. 21), was found in room *g* of the *Complesso*. Also, the figurines from the *SSO* could have plausibly been used during rituals that were performed in the nearby court⁵⁹, as was certainly the case for the figurines found in room 10 at Phaistos, which also provided two egyptianizing amphorae and was indeed only accessible from the court and in communication with room 11⁶⁰.

Secondly, it should be considered that several indications suggest that clay figurines were moved about in the Late Bronze Age Aegean so as to be displayed in the course of ritual ceremonies. The evidence, consisting mainly of wall-paintings but also clay figurines, essentially refers to the Greek

⁵⁶ D'AGATA 1999, 19-20, 28.

⁵⁷ Seven male and one female bronze figurines were found in a niche of room 7a in the Villa at Ayia Triada in the typical posture of right hand on the forehead and left arm extended along the body (HALBHERR-STEFANI-BANTI 1977, 124-126). They also each had a protuberance that was probably used to secure the figurines to a wooden base: VERLINDEN 1984, 114.

⁵⁸ LA ROSA 2000a.

⁵⁹ Many objects uncovered in the west wing of the Villa at Ayia Triada (including the stone vases and the

egyptianizing amphorae from room 15) were used in ceremonies in the upper court, as the discovery of several sherds of the boxers' rhyton by the theatre stair and portico 11 seems to attest (HALBHERR-STEFANI-BANTI 1977, 201). Stair 47 made the passage between the two sectors easier: see CUCUZZA 2011.

⁶⁰ If the *SSO* were placed in rooms 29-30 of the Villa at Ayia Triada (Puglisi pers. comm.), it could be compared to rooms 10-11 of the Phaistos palace, since both pairs of rooms did not communicate with other rooms and were only accessible from the outside.

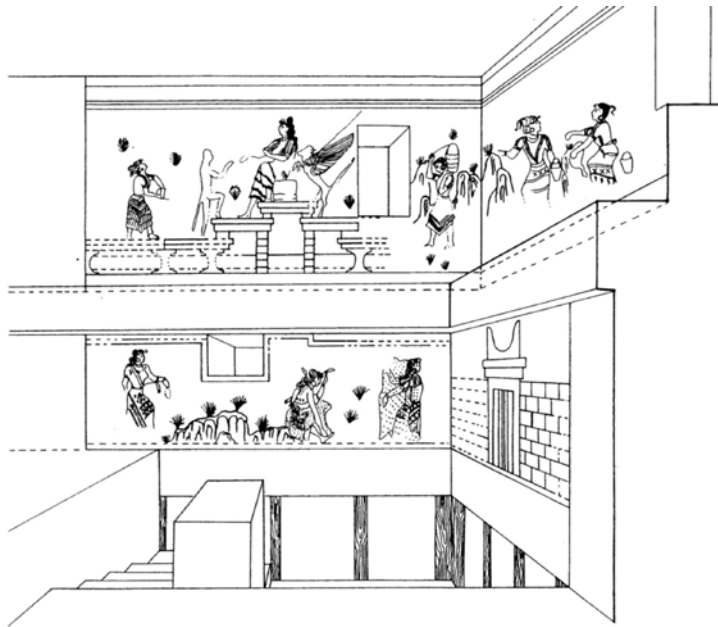


Fig. 37 - Akrotiri, Xeste 3: frescoes from room 3 (after IMMERWAHR 1990, p. 60 fig. 20)

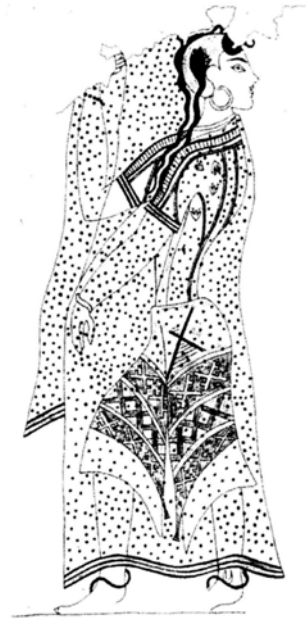


Fig. 38 - Akrotiri, Xeste 3: the 'veiled girl' (after REHAK 2004, p. 89, fig. 5.6)

mainland⁶¹. However, S. Budin has recently and convincingly demonstrated that the *kourotrophos* from Mavrospilio (datable to LM II-III A1) should be interpreted as representing a woman offering a male divine figurine to a divinity (Fig. 36)⁶². One should thus wonder whether this practice was already attested in the Neopalatial period, also on the basis of the evidence provided by the figurines from Ayia Triada and Phaistos. That a certain degree of continuity existed in religious practices between Minoans and Mycenaeans has already been stressed by B. Jones on account of her analysis of representations of female clothes used in rituals⁶³.

THE AYIA TRIADA FIGURINES AND THE WALL-PAINTINGS FROM XESTE 3 AT AKROTIRI

The three different age classes of the Ayia Triada figurines, as suggested by their differing height, breast characterization, and hairstyles, finds a striking comparison in the wall-paintings of Xeste 3 at Akrotiri (Fig. 37)⁶⁴: in the upper frieze, young attendants with shaved heads and undeveloped breasts gather crocuses to be offered to the goddess who is represented in a seated pose with long hair (partially knotted up on the head) and well-characterised breasts. A similar hairstyle and cleavage also characterizes two of the women represented in the lower frieze: particular attention has been devoted to the hairstyle of the seated figure, whose hair-locks are gathered in a *chignon* held by a metal pin of a type that has been found in the archaeological record⁶⁵. The third woman in the lower frieze (Fig. 38) is veiled and stands out due to her shaved head and undeveloped breasts: considering that she is coming from the same place towards which the other women are directed, she has been interpreted as a girl who has already performed a ritual that apparently involved the cutting of her hair. However, she belongs to the first age class, the same as the crocus gatherers represented in the upper frieze; older women, characterized by a different hairstyle (a sort of *sakkos*), are depicted on the wall-paintings located on the upper floor of room 3 (Fig. 39).

⁶¹ RETHEMIOTAKIS 1998, 156-7: a handle of one of the *Goddesses with upraised hands* from Kannia (RETHEMIOTAKIS 1998, 39, pin. 26c-d) hints at its transportability, which is also attested at Kavousi - Vronda, on the figurines of the same kind placed on the platform to the West of Building G. On representations of the transport of figurines, IMMERWAHR 1990, 119-20 and fig. 33 and WHITTAKER 2009, 106-7, who recalls a fragmentary wall-painting from Mycenae, in which a woman holds a small female figure on her hand; *contra* REHAK 2007, 221-2 and JONES 2009, 317-8, who interpret the latter figure as a real

child, despite the extremely small size. See also BLAKOLMER 2010, 48-9. AR 2009-10, 36 refers of a new painting from Tyrins that represents "a female figure apparently holding a smaller figurine".

⁶² BUDIN 2007-08; 2010, 8-18.

⁶³ JONES 2009, 335-6.

⁶⁴ VLACHOPOULOS 2007; 2008. on such paintings see particularly REHAK 2002, 2004, 2007, who makes reference to the vast bibliography on this subject.

⁶⁵ VAGNETTI 1999.



Fig. 39 - Akrotiri, Xeste 3: an adult woman (after REHAK 2004, p. 88, fig. 5.2)

Considering that in Xeste 3, hairstyle, breast development and dress define different age stages⁶⁶ exactly as seen in the clay figurines from Ayia Triada, one might hope that a comparison between Akrotiri and Ayia Triada could make sense of some details documented by the Cretan figurines.

The careful rendering of the left eye in HM 3035 (Fig. 16), for instance, can be compared with the emphasis which characterises, with different colour, the eyes of figures from Xeste 3, which has been tentatively referred to a particular use of saffron⁶⁷.

Yet another element strengthens the comparison between the clay figurines from Ayia Triada and the painted figures from Xeste 3 at Akrotiri: it is the cross motif painted on the dress of young girls on the smallest clay figurines from Ayia Triada and on the attendants that are painted on the walls of the upper floor of Xeste 3 (Fig. 14, 26, 38). The paintings from Xeste 3 have unanimously been interpreted as representing a female initiation ritual, which involved the offering of crocuses to the goddess⁶⁸, who has been identified as the female figure sitting on top of a wooden platform, alongside a griffin with unfolded wings while a monkey is offering stamens.

THE AYIA TRIADA FIGURINES AND THE DIVINE EPIPHANY

To return to the swing model and its interpretation as a divine epiphany, as first proposed by Rethemiotakis on the basis of the similarities with numerous scenes of epiphany represented in Minoan art, and on the basis of another clay model from Ayia Triada that (differently from the swing model) has a pillar rather than a figure in the centre (Fig. 7). The pillar, in agreement with some iconographic representations from the Aegean, can be considered as an equivalent of the baetyl that, according to a study conducted by P. Warren, was part of a specific ritual that entailed three stages aimed at conjuring the divine epiphany⁶⁹. One stage, the one in which the baetyl is embraced and kissed, was possibly represented in a clay model from the Kamilari *tholos*, where a kneeling figurine embraces and kisses a phallic pillar that indeed recalls the one from the Ayia Triada model⁷⁰. If the pillar is indeed related to a ritual that aimed at summoning the divine epiphany, then it seems possible to argue that the figurine that replaces it in the swing model represented a goddess.

Small flying figurines are, on the other hand, attested on Minoan seals and sealings and are usually interpreted as divine epiphanies. Aside from a few exceptions, such figures can most of the time be recognised as female individuals on account of their dress and/or their hairstyle. Several recent studies have focused on such flying figures and on some objects that also appear on some seals or sealings. E. Kyriakidis, for example, has observed that such Flying Objects are always represented in the same way and has thus proposed that they might have been images of constellations⁷¹, a proposal that can be accepted for the objects, but seems more problematic for the flying figures, who differ from one other in terms of sex and gestures.

⁶⁶ CHAPIN 2007; 2009; REHAK 2007.

⁶⁷ REHAK 2002, 48-50.

⁶⁸ See now ALBERTI 2009. Crocus is used to decorate both dress and jewels of women: REHAK 2004. See also GIUMAN 2002, REHAK 2002, 49-51; 2004 and DAY 2011.

⁶⁹ WARREN 1990: the three phases are: (1) getting closer to the baetyl after having deposited a femal gown; 2)

touching the baetyl so as to invoke the divinity (whose arrival is announced by birds or butterflies); 3) holding the baetyl so as to embrace the divinity.

⁷⁰ LEVI 1961-62, 69, fig. 85; see WARREN 1990, 201 n. 46.

⁷¹ KYRIAKIDIS 2005.



Fig. 40 - Cup F 1278, from Phaistos Palace, room LIII and LV (after LEVI 1976, tav. LXVIIa)



Fig. 41 - 'Fruitstand' F 65 + 786, from Phaistos Palace, room XXVIII and LIV (after LEVI 1976, tav. LXVI)



Fig. 42 - Isopata golden signet-ring (CMS II 3, 51)

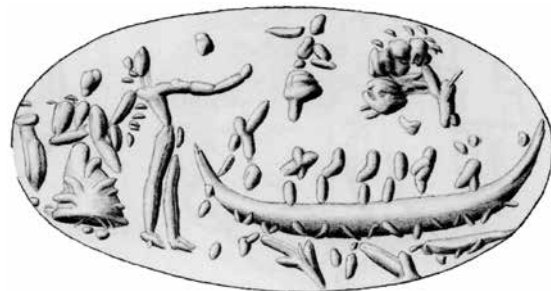


Fig. 43 - Ashmolean Museum golden signet ring 1938.1127 (CMS VI, 280)

Some scholars have proposed that the flying figures were indeed smaller than the others because they were meant to be perceived as represented in the background, i.e. at a certain distance from the figure represented in the foreground, an interpretation that raises several problems. Firstly, it should be noted that in the Aegean, at least in the Late Bronze Age, individuals placed on different grounds are represented at the same size (see the 'Flotilla fresco' from Akrotiri). Secondly, some scenes, such as the one represented on the seal-ring *Ashmolean Museum* 1938.1127 (CMS VI, n° 280, Fig. 43), unequivocally represents flying individuals. The most famous representation of a flying figure, on the gold ring from Isopata, presents a small female figure on one side of the main scene that consists of four women in an outdoor setting, with lily flowers in the foreground (Fig. 42). The traditional interpretation, according to which the scene depicted on the ring represented a divine epiphany summoned by a dance, has recently been challenged by some scholars who, while ruling out the possibility that dimensions were but a means to suggest distance (and to indicate thus that the smaller figure was in the background at a certain distance from the ritual performed in the foreground), proposed that the scene represented several stages of the same event⁷². It must be recalled, however, that the flying figure, despite its small size, is characterized in a way that makes it easily distinguishable from the figures in the foreground. It has a short dress, which does not cover its calves, and its breast is not depicted, two elements that allows us to identify it with a female child. Its long hair, represented with small dots exactly as in the figures on the foreground, confirms this idea, while the fact they are wind-swept might be a further hint that the figure was flying. The position of its feet, and the gesture of the up-raised left arm represents an exact match for the figurine on the swing from Ayia Triada (Fig. 11). These remarks seem to support the traditional interpretation of the scene as

⁷² For the traditional interpretation MATZ 1958. Cf. REHAK 2000; CAIN 2001; see BLAKOLMER 2012, 69-75.

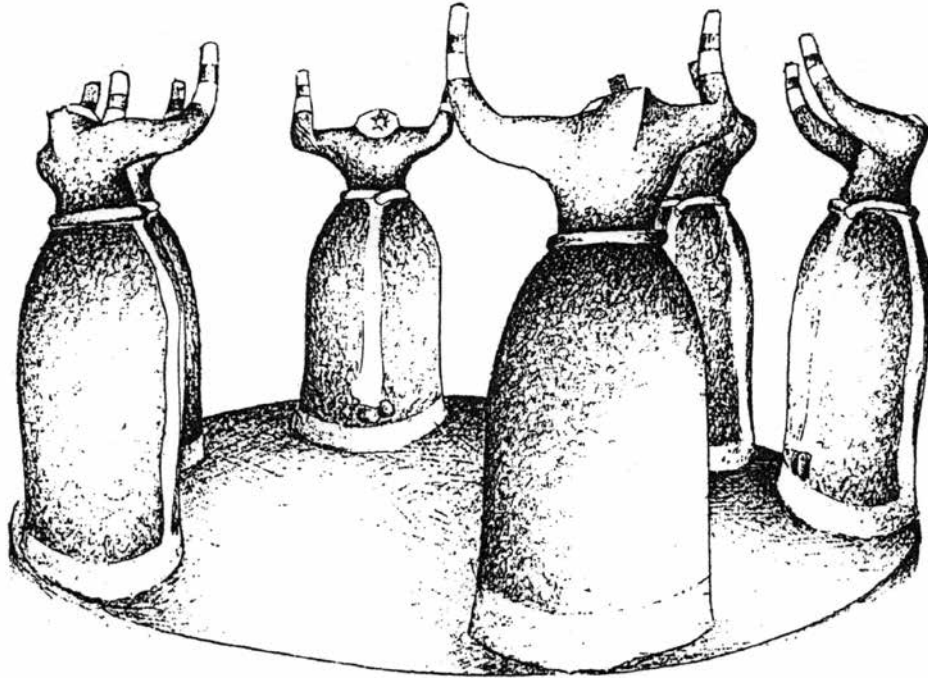


Fig. 44 - Middle Minoan clay model from Ayia Triada (after LA ROSA 1995, 543 fig. 7)



Fig. 45 - The 'Sacred Conversation' golden signet-ring from Poros (after RETHEMIOTAKIS - DIMOPOULOU 2003, 43 fig. 4)



Fig. 46 - Ayia Triada Villa, room 14: Female figure on the northern wall (after MILITELLO 1998, tav. 2)

the representation of a divine epiphany, an interpretation that, on the other hand, goes well with the scene carved on the lid of a LM IB ivory pyxis, recently uncovered at Mochlos, on which a small flying figure and a larger seated figure are represented which have been identified as goddesses⁷³.

EPIPHANY AND DANCE

The scene on the Isopata ring can be compared with the scenes represented on two vases decorated in Kamares style that were found in the Phaistos palace⁷⁴: a cup (F 1278, discovered in rooms LIII and LV), and a fragmentary fruit stand (F 65 + 786, discovered in rooms XXVIII and LIV). The interior of the cup displays two female figures performing a dance to the sides of a standing figure (who has a triangular body)⁷⁵, in a rural setting that is hinted at by the presence of four flowers on the right part of the figurative field (Fig. 40). The representation is very similar to that of the fragmentary fruit stand, which was most

⁷³ SOLES-DAVARAS 2010; *Chronique des fouilles en ligne*, Id. 1909 (2010) with some good pictures.

⁷⁴ SCHIERING 1999 and especially WARREN 2001, 64-66, figs. 2-4. See also GESELL 1985, 124-7 (n. 103), fig. 29-30.

⁷⁵ On scenes of dance in Aegean art, particularly in Crete, GERMAN 1999 and LIVERI 2008. PUGLISI 2010 envisages a *kernos* ritual, which also comprises a communal dance.

probably used in the same context as the cup: the bowl displays two figures, identical to those on the cup, who dance on either side of a central figure of larger size (but in this case with the same type of body as the smaller figures) who is holding lilies in her hands; the rim of the bowl displays some probably female figures (as seems likely from the treatment of their faces), who are bent over so as to gather grass or flowers; other female figures, with their hands behind their backs, are represented on the pedestal of the vase (Fig. 41).

The analogy of this representation with the frescoes that decorate the lustral basin in Xeste 3 at Akrotiri is evident. The gestures of the figures represented on the lustral basin and on the pedestal of the fruit stand seem to indicate dance-movements. This is quite clear at least for the gesture that involves the raising of the right arm and the lowering of the left one, along the side: the representation on the two vases from Phaistos is quite explicit. The same scene, on the other hand, appears on the Isopata ring and on the *Sacred Grove and dance fresco* at Knossos. It is instead less obvious to interpret the gesture of bringing the arm behind the back as a dance-movement, even if similar clay figurines are also attested. At any rate, it should be observed that a MM II fragmentary clay model from Ayia Triada⁷⁶ suggests that alongside the gesture of holding the hand of the other dancers (as in a clay model from Palaikastro), or leaning the hands on the other dancers' shoulders (as in the Kamilari model) another dancing gesture might have existed that entailed the upraising of both arms, like the two female figures on the Isopata ring (Fig. 44).

Therefore, if the outdoor setting is the link between the scenes represented on the vases from Phaistos, the ring from Isopata and the scenes from Xeste 3 in Akrotiri, the link between the vases from Phaistos and the figures on the ring from Isopata is reinforced by the fact that the figures are represented as making the same gestures, as can be easily appreciated when comparing the central figure from the scene in the ring with the side figures painted on the fruit stand and on the cup from Phaistos. A further element of comparison between the vases from Phaistos (especially the cup, Fig. 40) and the Isopata ring is provided by the presence of a smaller figure, which was identified with the divinity whose epiphany has been summoned by the dance⁷⁷.

Strictly related to this representation is the one documented by the fruit stand (Fig. 41), where the two figures represented on the rim recall the crocus gatherers depicted on the wall from Xeste 3 (Fig. 37): moreover, the central figure, holding lilies in her hands, is identified with a deity. The larger size of the figures identified as deities is a well attested convention of Aegean iconography: in spite of the fact that she is sitting, the goddess represented on various seals is as tall as the pilgrims or the daemons bringing her the offerings.

Besides sitting, the divinity can be represented while dancing: the former case is attested on the wall-painting from Xeste 3 at Akrotiri or on the seal-ring with the sacred conversation from Poros (Fig. 45), the latter on the Isopata ring (Fig. 42), in which the central figure has been interpreted as a divinity. Yet another dancing goddess quite probably appeared on the wall-painting that decorated the back wall of room 14 in the *Villa* of Ayia Triada: the figure dances in an outdoor setting, rich in flowers, in front of a platform that is very similar to the one on which the goddess from Xeste 3 is seated (Fig. 47)⁷⁸. On the left wall of the same room a woman is depicted kneeling close to two large stones (possibly two baetyls), among several flowers (Fig. 46)⁷⁹: every detail suggests that the scene represents a 'baetyl ritual' aimed at summoning the divine epiphany.



Fig. 47 - Ayia Triada Villa, room 14: the so-called goddess on the eastern wall (after MILITELLO 1998, tav. 4)

⁷⁶ LA ROSA 1995, 542-3, fig. 7.

⁷⁷ In the Palaikastro model the divine epiphany, summoned through dancing, is hinted at by the presence of the birds: GESELL 1985, 119 (n. 97); YOUNGER 1998, 75. See also PUGLISI 2010, 202-4.

⁷⁸ A comparable wooden structure is carved on an ivory pyxis from staircase 53, which is placed next to room 14

(HALBHERR-STEFANI-BANTI 1977, 97-8), on which see REHAK 2007, 214-5.

⁷⁹ MILITELLO 1998, 250-3; JONES 2007 has a rather different reconstruction, whereby the figure has its head leaning forward, but does not affect the overall interpretation of the scene.

The goddess from room 14 at Ayia Triada has a multi-layered skirt, a developed naked breast and long hair: the latter two peculiarities also characterize the kneeling woman. The goddess seems to be dancing, and the extreme care devoted by the painter to her right foot, which was modified, was probably intended to better express the idea of movement⁸⁰. Both arms of the goddess are up-raised, like those of the figure on the left side of the Isopata ring, confirming that this gesture was indeed a precise dance-gesture.

This brief analysis seems to show that a Minoan goddess was represented either seated (Xeste 3 and various seals) or dancing (Ayia Triada, room 14): this divinity was represented as an adult woman, with a well developed cleavage, and seems to be correlated with dancing and flower gathering and offering (crocuses and/or lilies⁸¹). It is perhaps possible to hypothesise that the goddess danced with her worshippers prior to sitting and receiving the offerings: in fact, among the flowers represented on the wall-painting from room 14 in the *Villa* of Ayia Triada there are also lilies and crocuses, i.e. two bulbous species that are offered to the goddess in the scenes from Phaistos and Akrotiri, but also in other seals of the Aegean Bronze Age⁸².

CONCLUSIONS

The ritual of making offerings to the adult female divinity entailed a clear distinction in age classes, which were clearly hinted at in the frescoes from Xeste 3 at Akrotiri and also in the two groups of clay figurines from Ayia Triada. As stated above, the latter exhibit marked differences in terms of size, breast characterization, hairstyle, dress and gestures.

The data examined in this paper enables the existence of another female divinity to be envisaged, who was represented as a child, i.e. with undeveloped breasts, and who arrives flying: it is the flying figure that appears in the Isopata ring and in various other seals and, quite probably, also on the Kamares style cup in Phaistos. But, above all, this new divinity is iconographically represented in a three-dimensional way in the swing model from Ayia Triada, in which the divine character of the female figure is hinted at by the fact that it could be replaced by a pillar (as proposed by Rethemiotakis) and by the presence of birds with open wings. One wonders, therefore, whether two Minoan goddesses existed: an adult, and a child characterized by long hair and not yet developed breasts. If we instead envisaged the existence of a single goddess, we would be left with the conclusion that two different stages of the divine epiphany were represented on the Isopata ring as well as on the two vases from Phaistos: the advent of a child goddess, and her rapid aging, perhaps favoured by dancing.

The two groups of clay figurines from Ayia Triada seem to support the first hypothesis, since they represent only partially comparable female figures. The *TDO* group seems to represent the epiphany of the child goddess, whereas the *SSO* group might represent the epiphany of the adult goddess, who is probably indicated by the seated figure that, aside from being of larger dimensions than the others, recalls very closely the seated goddess in terms of cleavage and hairstyle (Fig. 29), who is about to receive offerings on the wall-paintings from Xeste 3 at Akrotiri, on a sealing from Ayia Triada and on the ring-seal from Poros. The possible presence in the *SSO* of a seated male music-player could allude to dancing, and this is unsurprising because throughout the Aegean Bronze Age musical instruments are often played by men⁸³. If one accepts that the *polymastos* figurine was also a part of the *TDO* group, then one could hypothesise that its fully developed cleavage suggests that it represents an adult goddess accompanying the child goddess, identifiable in the figurine from the swing model (Fig. 10)⁸⁴.

Drawing upon these observations, it is possible to attempt a reconstruction of the scenes represented by the two groups of figurines. The figurines of the *TDO* group on the one hand seem to represent the epiphany of the child goddess that appeared, between two birds, in front of the worshippers, who were all

⁸⁰ The care and details used in the representation of the feet, which are never represented in details in the other clay figurines, in the case of the divinity found in room 14 might depend by the need of hinting the act of dancing in a bi-dimensional representation: in the *Sacred grove and dance fresco* (and probably also in the *Piccola processione* from Ayia Triada) the act of dancing is indeed hinted by the representation of a movement of group, while in the clay figurines the same action is represented more easily thanks to the third dimension.

⁸¹ See CMS V suppl. 1B, 113 from Anthia, on which two

female figures, one holding a lily, the other a crocus, stand in front of a structure crowned by horns of consecration.

⁸² On the relationship between plants and female individuals in the iconography of the Late Bronze Age in the Aegean, see MAMMEL 2011.

⁸³ YOUNGER 1998, 54-9. It also needs to be considered the male presence in female rituals (BRELIICH 1969), as documented for example by the male figures painted in the lustral basin from Xeste 3 at Akrotiri: VLACHOPOULOS 2007.

⁸⁴ On this subject, see BLAKOLMER 2010.



Fig. 48 - *TDO*: conjectured composition of the clay figurines

children (Fig. 48). On the other, they suggest that the epiphany was summoned by a dance, as indicated by the similarity between the gestures of some figurines (HM 3035, 3036 and 3038) and the Isopata ring. The *SSO* figurines instead seem to represent an offering scene to an adult goddess, who is seated amidst worshippers of three ages (pre-pubescent girls, pubescent girls, women). Even in this case, the divine character of the representation was underlined by the presence of birds with unfolded wings (Fig. 49). These two groups could have been occasionally joined by other clay figurines, made with the same technique but found isolated at Ayia Triada, such as HTR 1885 (Fig. 21) with reference to the *TDO* group.

If these observations are correct, the discovery of figurines in certain rooms would not be a sufficient criterion to qualify these rooms as cult places, but would simply hint at the existence of some sort of relationship between the room and ritual practices performed elsewhere⁸⁵: these places, in the case of Ayia Triada, could be identified respectively in the court located in front of the *Complesso* in the area of the cemetery (for the *TDO* group) and in the upper court located in the settlement (for the *SSO* group). It therefore seems to be meaningful that the MM model, which probably reproduces a scene of divine epiphany summoned by a dance, was found at Ayia Triada at a short distance from the court located between the *TDO* and the *Complesso*, which appears to have already been paved in MM II⁸⁶.

The composition of the two different scenes represented by the *TDO SSO* groups could have taken place thanks to the offering of different figurines in the course of ritual practices that one could correlate

⁸⁵ PRIVITERA 2008, 155-8.

⁸⁶ LA ROSA 1992-93. See CUCUZZA 2011 on the

analogies between this space and the Minoan 'theatrical areas'.



Fig. 48 - TDO: conjectured composition of the clay figurines

to female rites of passage. The two compositions, in other words, would be the outcome of different offerings that aimed to compose a specific scene, in which the figurines were part of a ritual action⁸⁷. It is in this sense that a comparison can be proposed (as has been hinted at in the title of this contribution) with the Nativity scene of the Christians, i.e. with the composition, through several figurines, of a group that represents a divine scene (the birth of Jesus and the adoration of the shepherds and the Three Wise men).

The existence of a female divine couple, composed of an adult and a child, could perhaps facilitate a better understanding of scenes such as the one depicted on the Isopata ring, where both of them were

⁸⁷ For a much earlier comparison see the group of clay and lithic figurines dating to the Middle Calcolithic period found in the 'Ceremonial Area' at Kissonerga-Mosphilia (Cyprus), which represented a scene of child-birthing: PELTENBURG 1988; GORING 1991; STEEL 2004, 103-6. See also MARANGO 2009, 84-6. See *supra* n. 56 for the representation of the action of offering figurines in the

Aegean Bronze Age; the figurines found on the bench of the Sanctuary of the Double Axes at Knossos might have been used in a similar composition: cf. GESELL 2004, 134. See RETHEMIOTAKIS 2010 for a divine epiphany represented through the opening or closing of the door del the clay model within which the figurine of divinity is portrayed.

seemingly depicted. The same subject appears on the ring of Minos and on the recently discovered ivory pyxis from Mochlos.

The meaning of the two goddesses (adult and child respectively) can be easily understood when one thinks about the idea of re-birth that is implied by the type of offerings (crocuses and lilies) that appear on the wall-paintings from Xeste 3, as well as in other representations mentioned above; crocus and lilies are also attested in the decorative motifs of the clay figurines of Ayia Triada as well as in the *kourotrophos* from Mavrospilio, which probably represents an offering that, due to hairstyle and lack of breast characterisation, can be compared to the second age groups which have been distinguished in this contribution in the clay figurines of Ayia Triada.

This idea of re-birth, which is hinted at by the type of bulbous plants and by the female child/adult couple, could perfectly suit the deposition of a group such as the *TDO* one in a building that is correlated to the funerary sphere, such as the *TDO*. The link between bulbous plants and vegetation deities has already been tackled by P. Rehak and A. Vlachopoulos, who have stressed the possible connections between the Aegean representations (particularly those from Akrotiri) and the historical Greek sources⁸⁸: Kore was kidnapped when she was on a lawn full of bulb flowers (iris, hyacinth) and while she was collecting a narcissus (Hymn to Demeter, 6-11)⁸⁹. Even the presence of two goddesses of different ages seems to hint at the connection between Minoan and Greek religion, while confirming the existence of a Minoan pantheon⁹⁰.

At any rate, it is intriguing to observe that both vases and figurines hint at the reduplication at Ayia Triada of the same rituals and representations in both the *Villa* and the cemetery. The existence of a similar groups of figurines in the Phaistos palace would bear witness to the popularity of rituals performed through three-dimensional representations in the western Mesara, as already hinted at by the famous models from the Kamilari tholos⁹¹, and by a series of Pre- and Protopalatial antecedents identified at Ayia Triada and Phaistos, which can be interestingly connected, at least in two cases, to rituals aimed at summoning the divine epiphany⁹².

In conclusion, the interpretation of the swing model and of the related figurines as a scene of divine epiphany makes it possible to set such objects within the wider context of LM I Ayia Triada. It also allows a better definition of Late Bronze Age Cretan religious beliefs, and allows us to acquire interpretive elements that help in clarifying the role of figurines in the context of Minoan rituals.

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UNA SCENA DI NATIVITÀ MINOICA? IL MODELLINO DI ALTALENA DA HAGIA TRIADA E LE RAPPRESENTAZIONI TRIDIMENSIONALI DELL' EPIFANIA DIVINA MINOICA - Questo articolo esamina l' iconografia e il contesto di rivenimento del cd. modellino di altalena da Hagia Triada e prova ad accertare se esso possa essere considerato parte di un gruppo comprendente altre figurine, usato per rappresentare una scena di epifania divina. L' ipotesi è avvalorata dall' esistenza di un secondo gruppo di figurine, proveniente dal medesimo sito, che sembra esser stato concepito in modo unitario per rappresentare una scena di offerta alla divinità. I due gruppi di figurine da Hagia Triada forniscono nuovi dati relativi all' uso che delle figurine fittili si faceva nella Creta Minoica, nonché alle divinità Minoiche in generale.

ΜΙΝΩΙΚΗ ΣΚΗΝΗ ΓΕΝΝΗΣΗΣ; ΤΟ ΟΜΟΙΩΜΑ ΤΗΣ ΑΙΩΡΑΣ ΑΠΟ ΤΗΝ ΑΓΙΑ ΤΡΙΑΔΑ ΚΑΙ Η ΤΡΙΣΔΙΑΣΤΑΤΗ ΑΠΕΙΚΟΝΙΣΗ ΤΗΣ ΜΙΝΩΙΚΗΣ ΘΕΪΚΗΣ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΕΙΑΣ - Το άρθρο αυτό εξετάζει την εικονογραφία και το κλειστό σύνολο όπου βρέθηκε το ομοίωμα της αιώρας από την Αγία Τριάδα και προσπαθεί να επαληθεύσει με ποιο τρόπο μπορεί να θεωρηθεί ως μέρος μιας ομάδας που θα συμπεριλάμβανε άλλα αγαλματίδια που θα απεικόνιζαν σκηνή επιφάνειας. Η συγκεκριμένη ανάγνωση υποστηρίζεται από την ύπαρξη μιας δεύτερης ομάδας αγαλματιδίων από τον ίδιο χώρο, που φαίνεται να έχουν παραχθεί για να συνδυαστούν μεταξύ τους σε μια σκηνή αφιέρωσης στη θεότητα. Οι δύο ομάδες αγαλματιδίων από την Αγία Τριάδα προσφέρουν ένα χαρακτηριστικό αδημοσίευτο της χρήσης των πήλινων αγαλματιδίων στη Μινωική Κρήτη και, γενικότερα, της μινωικής θρησκευτικότητας.

⁸⁸ REHAK 2007, VLACHOPOULOS 2007. See also GIUMAN 2002.

⁸⁹ See SCARPI 2002, 5-7.

⁹⁰ See BLAKOLMER 2010.

⁹¹ Concerning chronology and the interpretation of the Kamilari models, NOVARO 1999; LEFÈVRE-NOVARO 2001.

⁹² TODARO 2003; LA ROSA 1995, fig. 7; Id. 2010.

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