

# Appearance and perceptions of Neolithic figurines – Nuances of covering and nudity: Evidence from Greece

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## Zusammenfassung

### Wirkung und Wahrnehmung neolithischer Figurinen – Aspekte von Verhüllung und Nacktheit: Beispiele aus Griechenland

*Neolithische Eidolia (dreidimensionale kleine Darstellungen) können Wesen, Artefakte und Themen widerspiegeln, die entweder auf konkrete Dinge Bezug nehmen und im wirklichen Leben existieren oder von ihren Schöpfern erdacht wurden. Die Identifizierung spezifischer ikonographischer Merkmale und die Rückschlüsse auf die Gründe für ihre Auswahl bleiben jedoch eine Herausforderung. Insbesondere auf anthropomorphen Tonfiguren können Kleidung oder Bedeckungen des Körpers, des Kopfes und der Gliedmaßen dargestellt, hervorgehoben oder angedeutet werden; auch »Nacktheit« kommt vor, was auf unterschiedliche Bedeutungen und Aspektnuancen schließen lässt. Das Erscheinungsbild der Figuren kann Bedeutungen impliziert, ausgedrückt oder verschlüsselt haben, die über regionale und zeitliche Trends und typologische Variationen hinausgehen und sich hinter einer Vielzahl von Fassaden verbergen. Ziel dieser Studie ist es, die potenziellen Interpretationen und Funktionen spezifischer Merkmale auf den Figurinen zu erkennen, die möglicherweise mit Kleidung, Gewändern oder allgemein mit »Bedeckung« zu tun haben. Eine Reihe dieser Bilder, die in häuslichen Kontexten in Griechenland gefunden wurden und potenziell signifikante ikonographische Elemente aufweisen, wird hier untersucht, um mögliche Hypothesen zur Identifizierung solcher dargestellten Elemente vorzuschlagen und zu überprüfen. Darüber hinaus wird versucht, spezifische ikonographische Merkmale und ihre Position auf den Figurinen mit Artefaktbelegen aus häuslichen und Grabkontexten zu vergleichen. Die vorgestellten Figurinen datieren aus dem Frühen Neolithikum bis zum Endneolithikum und stammen hauptsächlich aus Mazedonien, Thrakien und Thessalien – Parallelen und Nachweise aus verwandten, vergleichbaren neolithischen Kulturen in anderen Regionen Südosteuropas und dem Nahen Osten werden ebenfalls berücksichtigt. Die möglichen Wahrnehmungen und »Lesarten« der dargestellten Menschen werden erörtert, wobei der Schwerpunkt auf ihrem Aussehen liegt, ob sie nun bedeckt, nackt oder etwas dazwischen sind.*

**Schlagwörter** Anthropomorphe Figurinen, Neolithikum, Griechenland, Bedeckung, Nacktheit

## Summary

*Neolithic eidolia (three-dimensional small images) may reflect beings, artefacts, and themes, either concrete and existing in real life or imagined by their human creators. Identifying specific iconographic features and inferring reasons for their selection remains challenging. On anthropomorphic clay figurines, in particular, clothing or coverings of the body, head, and limbs may be represented, emphasised, or inferred; ›nudity‹ also occurs, suggesting varied meanings and nuances. The figurines' appearance may have implied, expressed or encoded meanings deeper than regional and temporal trends and typological variations, hidden behind a variety of façades. This study aims to recognise the potential interpretations and functions of specific features present on the figurines, possibly related to clothing, garments or ›covering‹ in general. A number of these images, found in domestic contexts in Greece and bearing potentially significant iconographic features, are examined here in order to propose and verify possible hypotheses for the identification of such represented elements. Additionally, an attempt is made to compare specific iconographic features and their position on figurines to artefactual evidence from domestic and burial contexts. The figurines presented date from the Early to the Final Neolithic period and originate mainly from Macedonia, Thrace and Thessaly – parallels and supporting evidence from related, comparable Neolithic cultures in other regions of Southeast Europe and the Near East are also taken into account. The potential perceptions and ›readings‹ of the humans represented are discussed, focussing on their appearance, whether covered, nude, or something in between.*

**Keywords** Anthropomorphic figurines, Neolithic, Greece, covering, nudity

## CHARACTERISTIC TYPES OF ANTHROPOMORPHIC FIGURINES OF MACEDONIA AND THRACE

Northern Greece (based on Andreou et al. 1996, 538 Tab. 1):	WESTERN MACEDONIA	CENTRAL MACEDONIA	EASTERN MACEDONIA	THRACE
FINAL NEOLITHIC (FN; Chalcolithic) 4700/4500–3300/3100				
LATE NEOLITHIC (LN) 5400/5300–4700/4500				
MIDDLE NEOLITHIC (MN) 5800/5600–5400/5300				
INITIAL/EARLY NEOLITHIC (EN) 6700/6500–5800/5600				

Tab. 1 Characteristic types of anthropomorphic figurines from Macedonia and Thrace, Early to Final Neolithic.

Tab. 1 Charakteristische Typenvarianz anthropomorpher Figuren aus Makedonien und Thrakien, Früh- bis Endneolithikum.

## Introduction

In Neolithic Greece<sup>1</sup>, anthropomorphic three-dimensional clay imagery is most often fragmentary, mostly female, and rarely male; it may also lack sex indication (more often in later phases; cf. Marangou 2009). Beyond decorative patterns, the details may reflect a concrete or imagined presence or even the absence of specific elements. These may constitute attributes of clothing, garments or accessories worn on the head, limbs, or body of depicted anthropomorphs, which may or may not represent real persons. Some of the attributes may be perceived as representing or implying actual items of clothing or indicating an enhancement with coverings in an (unknown) material. Ornaments, emphasised corporeal natural characteristics, marks, pigments or tattoos seem to be important on ›naked‹ (parts of) figurines and could show different ›levels‹ of nudity or even its accentuation. One should keep in mind that, originally, elements in perishable materials may also have been attached to the figurines, so the terms ›nude‹ or ›covered‹ could have had varied nuances and meanings.

Identification and interpretation, as well as any inferences about the reasons why certain details were selected to be represented, remain challenging; this is particularly the case when a figurine lacks a precise archaeological context. However, considering selected examples of figurines that present such details (beyond regional or chronological variations, naturalism or abstraction), potential perceptions and readings of Neolithic embodied humans and their appearance may be suggested. Here, the focus is on Early to Final Neolithic Greek<sup>2</sup> material from domestic (not burial) contexts, but also includes artefacts without contextual information, mainly from Northern Greece, Macedonia and Thrace (Tab. 1), as well as Thessaly. In addition, some parallels are mentioned from related, comparable Neolithic cultures in neighbouring regions, in South-Eastern Europe and the Near East (cf. Papathanasopoulos 1996, 24–25 Fig. 2). When available, reference is also made to actual garments or accessories found in domestic contexts – possibly depicted on figurines – while also taking into account existing evidence of such artefacts' connection to human burials. The present paper aims to propose possible directions or

1 General chronological framework of Neolithic archaeological phases for Thessaly (based on Reingruber et al. 2017, 50 Tab. 5):  
**Initial Neolithic and Early Neolithic (EN):** 6600–5980 or: 7000 (including pre-ceramic)–5900 BC for Thessaly and the Balkans, according to Bonga 2019, 160 Fig. 2,

**Middle Neolithic (MN):** 5980–5500,  
**Late Neolithic (LN):** 5500–4500,  
**Final Neolithic (FN):** 4500–3300.  
 For a global general chronological table of the Neolithic in the Eastern Mediterranean and Haimos Peninsula (Χερσόνησος του Αίγιου) see Papathanasopoulos 1996, 28–29 Fig. 3.

2 Principal sites of the Neolithic in Greece: Papathanasopoulos 1996, 198–208 Fig. 60. Diagram of the development of Neolithic figurines, based on the pieces of the exhibition: Papathanasopoulos 1996, 144–145 Fig. 41.

supporting hypotheses for the identification and interpretation of such ›covering‹ elements represented on figurines.

### Figurine details implying actual human clothing or coverings

Actual personal ornaments may have been attached to figurines, e.g. rings or labrets made from organic or inorganic materials, including metal. These are either physically preserved or inferred from perforations in the clay or bone figurines' ears or mouths (Marangou 1993, 327; Marangou 1996, Fig. 7; Marangou 2020, 36–37 Fig. 2a–c) and are confirmed by burial evidence<sup>3</sup>. In addition, iconographic elements on figurines may represent garments (such as ›hoods‹) or embellishments that also served as functional fittings, hung, fastened, fixed, or sewn onto clothing or accessories. This may be implied by characteristics of real artefacts (e.g. multiple perforations on the periphery of a ring) originating from domestic contexts but may also be corroborated by funerary data indicating such items' connection to the garments or adornments of the dead. Some iconographic features could, therefore, imply the existence of such coverings on real humans. The depicted, incised, impressed, modelled or painted ornaments include single or multiple elements: necklaces, collars, rings around arms, wrists or ankles, belts, bands or straps with ›appliqués‹, buckles, ›diadems‹, headdresses, and hairnets (Marangou 1992a, 175–177; Marangou 1993; Marangou 2020).

### Covering bodies and limbs

Neolithic necklaces can be composed of multiple rows of varying numbers of beads, made of such materials as dentalium, stone, bone or animal teeth; necklaces vary in length, too, some amounting to hundreds of beads (Chondroyanni-Metoki 2022, 334). When an incised ›necklace‹ is draped over the incised hair/hairnet of a figurine (Fig. 1a–b; Marangou 2020, 52 Fig. 6), it may represent an embellishment strung on a cord. Conversely, when the ›necklace‹ stops at the shoulders in front (cf. Fig. 1c–d) and hair/›hairnet‹ is incised on the neck and upper shoulders, covering them (Marangou 1993, 328 Fig. 2a; Marangou 2019, Pl. 78, M220), it may not be a necklace. Instead, it could represent ornaments sewn or fastened onto a garment or patterns woven into clothing covering the torso, possibly indicated by additional decorative patterns on the body (cf. Fig. 1e–f). Arc- or V-shaped, long ›necklaces‹ may be composed of one or more rows and may reach down to the waist, just above the figurine's navel; a lower row may also form a loop between the figurine's breasts (cf. Fig. 1c) and is sometimes doubled or tripled on the back of the image, again reaching the waist. So-called ›counterweight necklaces‹<sup>4</sup> depicted on

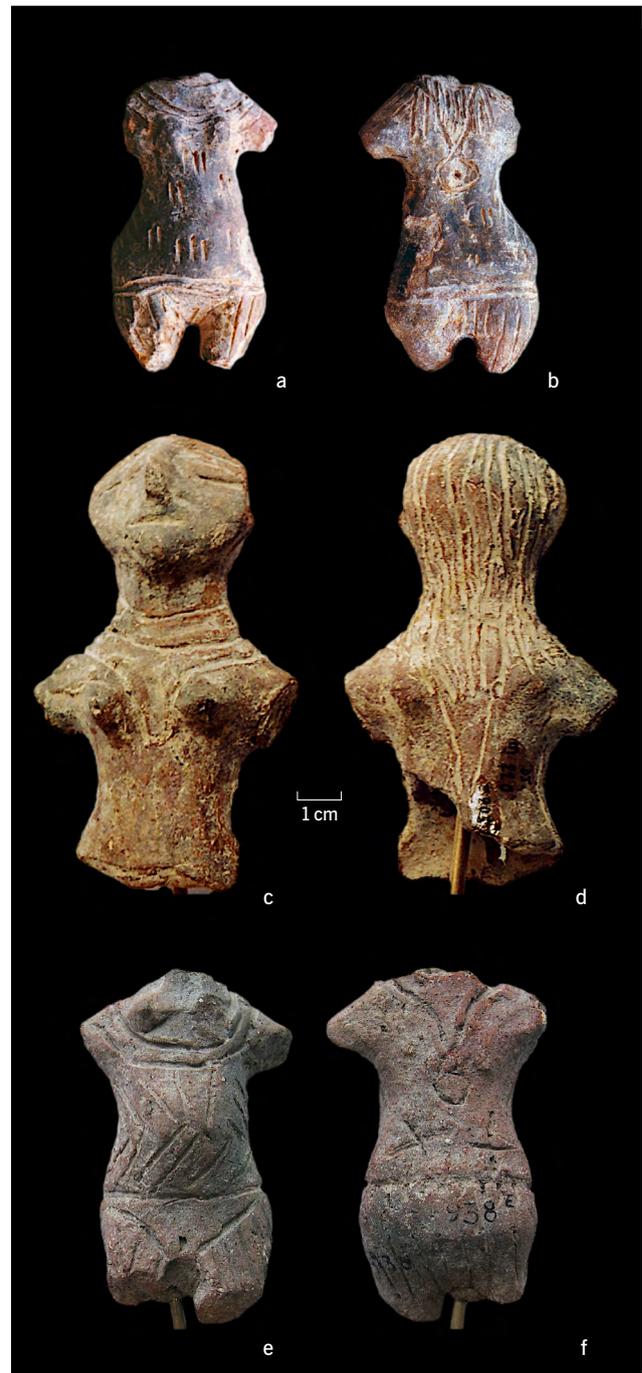


Fig. 1a–f Late Neolithic fragmentary female figurines with rich incised decoration, showing belts, ›necklaces‹, buckles and ›pendants‹ (Dikili Tash, Eastern Macedonia; e–f: Museum collection).

Abb. 1a–f Spätneolithische, fragmentarisch erhaltene Frauenfiguren mit reicher eingeritzter Verzierung, die Gürtel, Halsketten, Schnallen und Anhänger zeigen (Dikili Tash, Ost Mazedonien; e–f: Museumssammlung).

figurines display double or multiple arcs on the chest (cf. Fig. 1c,e); one row falls between the shoulder blades on the back, forming a V or a loop (cf. Fig. 1d,f; Fig. 2a; Marangou

<sup>3</sup> E.g. in FN Varna, Bulgaria: Fol/Lichardus 1988, Fig. 36, labrets, earrings, and diadem on clay ›mask‹ in tomb 2; Le Premier Or 1989, 151; ›clous‹ on teeth of skeleton in tomb 134.

<sup>4</sup> The term was an interpretation given to necklaces of later periods, supposedly comprising a heavy necklace on the front and a ›counterweight‹ on the back, in order to distribute the weight (Marangou 1993, 329 with references).

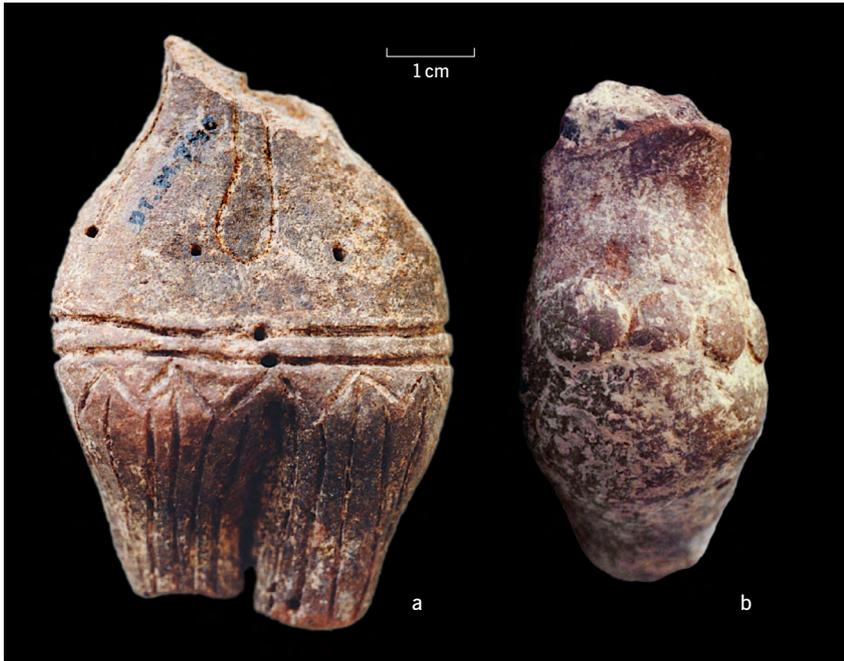
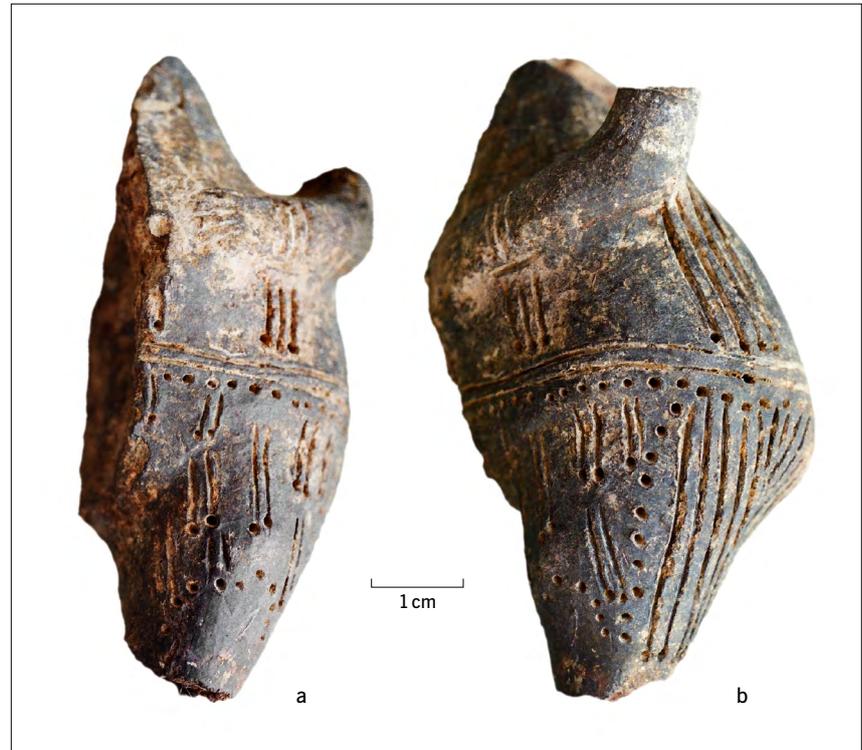


Fig. 2a–b a Late Neolithic fragmentary female figurine (lower body preserved) with rich incised decoration, belt, the loop of a necklace or garment on its lower back and legs wraps (Dikili Tash, Eastern Macedonia); b Late Neolithic fragmentary female figurine with modelled clay pellets around the hips (Thermi, Central Macedonia).

Abb. 2a–b a Spätneolithische, fragmentarisch erhaltene weibliche Figurine mit reicher eingritzter Verzierung, Gürtel, »Halskette mit Gegengewicht« und Beinwickeln (Dikili Tash, Ostmakedonien); b spätneolithische, fragmentarisch erhaltene weibliche Figurine mit modellierten Tonkugeln um die Hüften (Thermi, Zentralmakedonien).

Fig. 3a–b Late Neolithic richly decorated female body with belt, bracelets, knee decoration and multiple incised and dotted ornaments along body and legs, clothing embellishments or hanging decorations (Dikili Tash, Eastern Macedonia).

Abb. 3a–b Spätneolithischer, reich verzierter weiblicher Körper mit Gürtel, Armbändern, Knie-dekorationen und zahlreichen Verzierungen entlang des Körpers und der Beine (Dikili Tash, Ostmakedonien).



1993, 330 Fig 3a.d; 330 Fig. 4a; 331 Pl. I.2; Marangou 2020, 53 Fig. 7). A trapezoid ›pendant‹ may be shown (cf. Fig. 1f; Marangou 1993, 330 Fig 4a; 331 Pl. I,1; Marangou 2020, 52 Fig. 6), sometimes bearing a central impressed point (cf. Fig. 1b). This could have been a ring-shaped fitting (made of shell?) with a pin, that secured items of clothing on the back (or front) of a figurine. This would confirm the above-mentioned possibility that, at least in case the ›necklace‹ – ›counterweight‹ or not – is covered by hair/hairnet, instead of a necklace, it would rather depict clothing or garment details.

Multiple ›rings‹/bracelets are occasionally shown on figurines (Fig. 3; they may encircle both arms, the upper

arms and/or the forearms or wrists, and possibly represent bracelets. Interestingly, burial evidence supports this interpretation: skeletons may wear one or more real bracelets on one or both arms, near the armpit or elbow (references in Marangou 1993, 327). ›Ankle rings‹ on figurines are less common (absent on foot in Fig. 4a) and more likely attested on the feet of anthropomorphic vessels. They may be indicated by either parallel horizontal incisions, occasionally filled with coloured paste, by grooves and impressed points (Fig. 4b) or modelled clay pellets (Grammenos/Kotsos 2002, 228). Parallel ›anklet‹ incisions may also appear on figurines, even if footwear is not explicitly shown; ›anklets‹ may even appear in the absence of modelled feet (Fig. 5;

Fig. 4 Late Neolithic fragmentary figurines' or anthropomorphic vessels' feet (Dikili Tash, Eastern Macedonia). a Without decorative elements; b with incised and dotted motifs.

Abb. 4 Spätneolithische, fragmentarisch erhaltene Figurinenfüße (Dikili Tash, Ostmakedonien). a Mit eingeritzten; b mit gepunkteten Motiven.



Marangou 2020, 38–39). Actual ›rings‹ are made of shell, bone, stone, or clay, but may also have consisted of strings of beads or perforated shells. Ring-like depictions on figurines may then alternatively, instead of bracelets, represent such strings, attached to sleeves (as in Fig. 3), or the hems of leg wraps or ›trousers‹ (on ›trousers‹: cf. Sarri 2018, 168). Leg ›wraps‹ may in fact be suggested by parallel vertical lines incised along the legs (cf. Fig. 1a–b.e–f; Fig. 2a; Fig. 3).

Linear items encircling the hips of Late Neolithic (LN) female figurines would represent belts, both as functional fittings and clothing embellishments. They consist of simple or double incisions (cf. Fig. 1a–b.e–f), sometimes impressed with deep points and/or triangles or trapezoids incised parallel to the incised ›belts‹ (cf. Fig. 2a; Fig. 3; Gimbutas 1986,

231 Fig. 9; 10; 233 Fig. 14; 236 Fig. 21 Pl. LII,1a–b; Marangou 2020, 53–54 Fig. 7–8). Such impressed or incised patterns (cf. Fig. 2a) or modelled clay pellets (cf. Fig. 2b) may represent a series of beads or appliqués sewn on a garment, such as a hip band (Marangou 1992b, 25 Fig. 3,1–2; Adam-Veleni et al. 2017, 190 No. 21), and the ›hairnet‹ representations seem to comprise similar impressed dots (see further).

Belts are incised or modelled as a band, worn more often around the waist than the hips of rare LN male figurines (Fig. 5; Marangou 1992a, 421 Fig. 72d; Marangou 2019, Pl. 80, M491; Marangou 2020, 36 Fig. 9); this possibly implies a loin-cloth. In addition to a waist-belt or waist-band, male figurines may be depicted wearing a chest or shoulder strap diagonally across the thorax (LN–FN; several examples



Fig. 5 Late Neolithic fragmentary male figurine with doubly incised waist belt, double U-shaped arch under right armpit and ›ring‹/anklet around preserved left leg extremity without foot indication (Dimitra, Eastern Macedonia).

Abb. 5 Spätneolithische, fragmentarisch erhaltene männliche Figur mit eingeschnittenem Taillengürtel, doppeltem U-förmigem Bogen unter der rechten Achselhöhle und ›Ring‹/Fußkettchen um das erhaltene linke Ende eines Beines ohne Fußandeutung (Dimitra, Ostmakedonien).

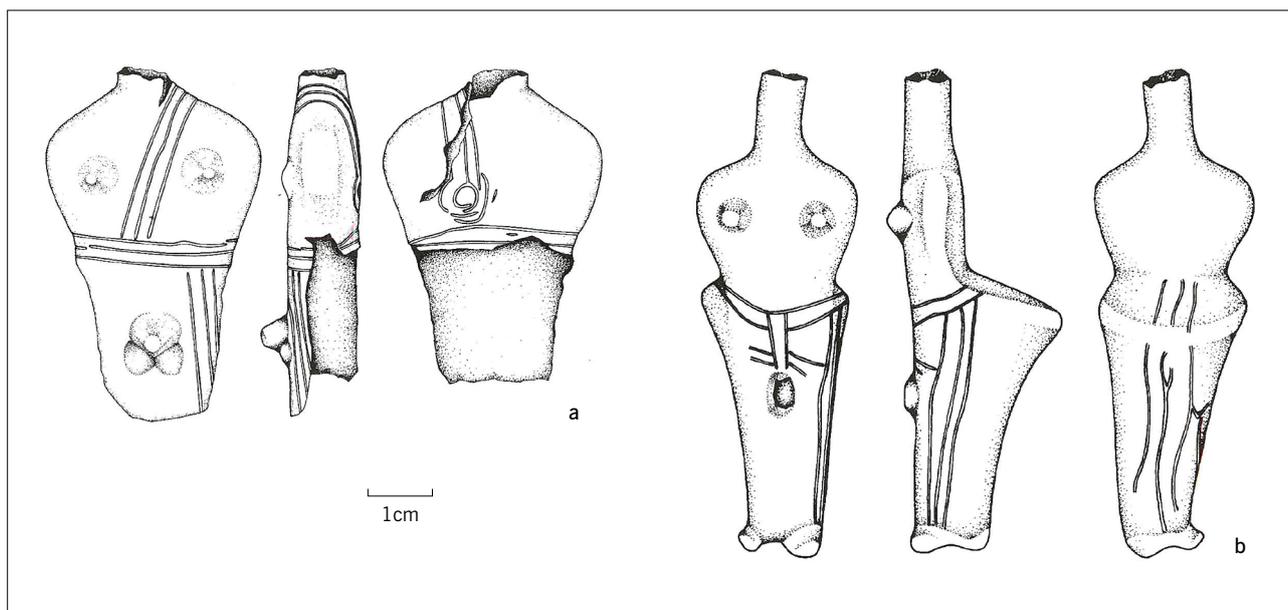


Fig. 6a–b Late Neolithic figurines from Makri: a Hermaphrodite or male with waist belt, diagonal strap on front and back of torso and hanging band on its right lower body; b Hermaphrodite or female with hip belt, a hanging band on the front, in the middle of the lower body and clothing folds or decoration on the side and back.

Abb. 6a–b Spätneolithische Figurinen aus Makri: a Hermaphrodit oder Männerfigur mit Hüftgürtel, diagonalem Riemen auf der Vorder- und Rückseite des Rumpfes und Hängegurt am rechten Unterkörper; b Hermaphrodit oder Frauenfigur mit Hüftgürtel, einem Hängegurt an der Frontseite, in der Mitte des Unterkörpers sowie Kleiderfalten oder Verzierungen an der Seite und am Rücken.

from the Cucuteni-Trypillia Culture in Monah 2016, e.g. 192–193 Fig. 37–38; 195–196 Fig. 40–41; see also Marangou 2020, 36 with references). This has also been preserved on fragmentary examples as a double U-shaped arch incised below the armpit (cf. Fig. 5 on its right; Gimbutas 1982, 51 Fig. 10; Marangou 1997, Pl. 67c; Marangou 2020, Fig. 9). A figurine, interpreted as a hermaphrodite (LN Makri, Thrace, Greece, Efstratiou/Kallintzi 1994, 46 Fig. 31), displays a diagonal strap and a band-shaped waist-belt with an additional vertical band on the side, suspended over the figurine's hip (Fig. 6a; cf. Monah 2016, 193 Fig. 38.2). However, one should not exclude the possibility that the figurine represents a male, with the gender-typical waist-band and diagonal chest strap, since breasts are only slightly indicated (on the drawing). Another LN figurine from the same site, different than the previous one, similarly interpreted as a hermaphrodite (cf. Fig. 6b; Efstratiou/Kallintzi 1994, 46 Fig. 32; Adam-Veleni et al. 2017, 217 No. 95), could, in fact, represent a female, due to the characteristic body shape, accentuated breasts, the incised belt hanging below the belly, as normally female figurines' belts, with a central vertical band falling on the front and more parallel vertical and horizontal incisions encrusted with white material on the side and the back of the body and limbs; if so, the much lower modelled front detail could be part of the central, vertically incised hanging garment, instead of indicating male gender.

Actual accessories or applications found in domestic contexts may have been sewn on clothing or used to attach

a garment or band, such as a buckle fixed on a belt band (Kyparissi-Apostolika 1992, Pl. 32a). Various types of artefacts may have served as buckles, including long, narrow clay buckles displaying four to five perforations (Ifantidis 2019, 163–168 Fig. 56). Other artefacts, with four perforations, interpreted as 'pendants', could instead be belt buckles (Chondroyianni-Metoki 2022, 341 Fig. 17). Additionally, some ring-shaped artefacts are too small (diam. < 40mm) to be worn as bracelets – even by children, and too large for finger rings. While they may have been worn as pendants, these items, too, could have been decorative fasteners for clothes (Martínez-Sevilla et al. 2021, 826–827).

This may be confirmed by evidence for potential buckles from burial contexts. For example, trapezoidal 'pendants' (*Ostrea edulis* valves) with perforations, probably originally fastened to clothing, have been found near both clavicles and forearms, on one or both shoulder blades, exceptionally on the pubis and sometimes on, under or near the pelvic bones, near the left elbow or behind the back of skeletons, at the presumed level of a belt (Cantacuzino 1969, 54). In the case of some marble 'bracelets', one with four symmetric perforations around its periphery was found on the pelvis of a young individual (of undetermined gender), while several other small examples with two to four perforations were found in adult burials, again possibly having been used as belt buckles (Boncuklu Tarla, Konya Province, Türkiye, Pre-Pottery Neolithic<sup>5</sup> [PPN] B: Kodaş 2019, 11–12 Fig. 10).

Probable bands, straps or leashes shown on figurines could either cover the body directly or be draped over

5 Pre-Pottery Neolithic (PPN)A: 9700–8500 BC; PPNB and PPNC: 8500–6500 BC (after Levy 2018).

Fig. 7a–b a Early Neolithic fragmentary pregnant figurine gesturing with her arm and wearing a band draped down her front; the so-called ›Thinker‹ (Anargyroi, Western Macedonia); b Early Neolithic fragmentary female figurine with applied, incised large clay band around her neck that falls to a V in front (Prodomos, Thessaly).

Abb. 7a–b a Frühneolithische fragmentierte »schwangere« Figur, die mit ihrem Arm gestikuliert und ein Band trägt, das über ihre Vorderseite drapiert ist; die sogenannte »Denkerin« (Anargyroi, Westmakedonien); b frühneolithische, fragmentarisch erhaltene weibliche Figur mit einem applizierten, eingeritzten breiten V-förmigen Tonband um den Hals (Prodomos, Thessalien).



clothing. In fact, bands, ribbons, strings or cords – wider than appliquéés – seem to be represented. An example is shown around the neck of a fragmentary female figurine from EN Prodomos, Thessaly, Greece (Fig. 7b); another is draped down the front of an EN pregnant female figurine from Anargyroi, Western Macedonia, Greece (cf. Fig. 7a; Adam-Veleni et al. 2017, 185 No. 7). ›Bands‹ appear separately on both shoulders of a figurine from EN Thessaly (Papathanasopoulos 1996, 301 No. 206; Gallis/Orphanidis 1996, 337 No. 285; Orphanidis/Malakasioti 2011, 183 No. 95;

210 No. 148). ›Straps‹ may be held in the hands (Peterson 2016, 136 Fig. 8), as shown by an EN Thessalian figure from Prodomos who carries a container, its prototype possibly made of soft material, without excluding animal hide, on their back (Fig. 8). In rare cases, Early/Middle Neolithic (EN/MN) figurines seem to wear or to be adorned by bands or straps made from animal skins, such as a Thessalian example depicted with two strips marked by rows of rounded dots (felid?) and incised ›paws‹ falling from the shoulders to the middle of the torso over the breasts (Fig. 9; Gallis/Orphanidis 1996, 282; 335; Toufexis 2003, 263 Fig. 29,20)<sup>6</sup>. This interpretation is not inconceivable since the remains of wild carnivores, particularly *Felidae*, have occasionally been found in prehistoric contexts, including domestic ones in Greece (Yannouli 2003; cf. a large, clay, felid head from Vassilika, Central Macedonia, end of MN: Marangou/Grammenos 2005).

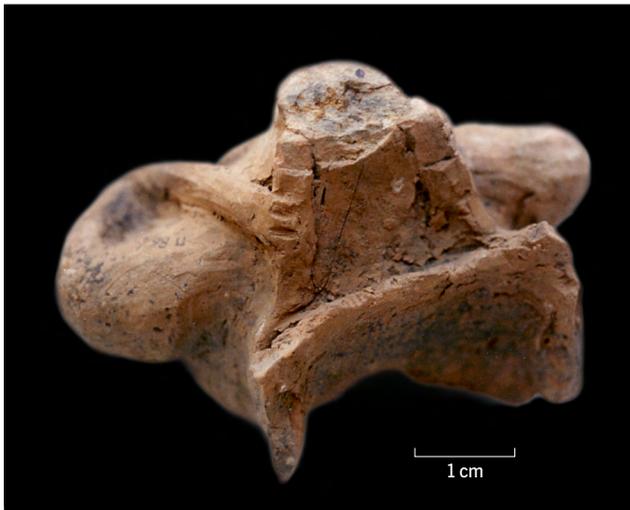


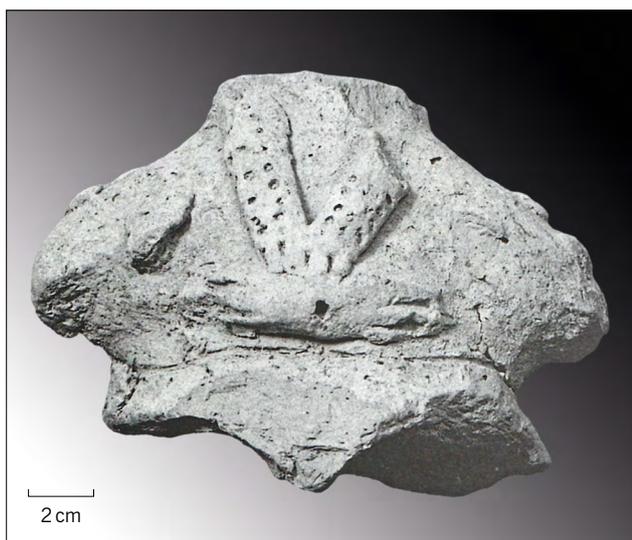
Fig. 8 Early Neolithic fragmentary figure holding straps with both hands, carrying receptacle, imitating a prototype probably made of soft material on their back (Prodomos, Thessaly).

Abb. 8 Frühneolithische fragmentierte Figurine, die mit beiden Händen Riemen hält und ein Gefäß aus weichem Material auf dem Rücken trägt (Prodomos, Thessalien).

Corporeal forms and details may be emphasised on figurines' body contours by possible complex clothing embellishments. Pointed vertical lines and double or quadruple vertical lines or dots, sometimes bordered by small oblique parallel lines (cf. Fig. 3a–b; cf. Fig. 1a–b), are incised between the armpits and hips, under the arms, or along the hips and legs of LN female figurines from Dikili Tash, Eastern Macedonia, Greece (Marangou 1993, 330 Fig 4a.d; 5; 7; Marangou 2020, 54 Fig. 8). They could represent combinations of applications and beads or decorative textile patterns on tight fitting garments such as dresses, skirts, aprons or leg wraps.

Evidence from personal adornments associated with human burials seems to support hypotheses that connect such represented details to actual clothing. In fact, beads arranged on the side and along a skeleton may show the

<sup>6</sup> See also further on possible head coverings in hide. Cf. Levy 2018 on leather sandals.



**Fig. 9** Early or Middle Neolithic figurine torso, hands with incised fingers on the belly, two dotted bands falling on torso, possibly animal hide with four incisions indicating paws (Magoula Bei, Larissa, Thessaly, museum collection).

**Abb. 9** Torso einer früh- oder mittelneolithischen Figur, Hände mit eingeschnittenen Fingern auf dem Bauch, zwei gepunktete Bänder, die auf den Torso fallen, möglicherweise Tierhaut mit vier Einschnitten, die auf Pfoten hinweisen (Magoula Bei, Museumssammlung, Larissa, Thessalien).

edges of garments and thus the shape of garments, as in FN Varna tombs 3 and 43 (Fol/Lichardus 1988, 200; 219). Biconical beads were arranged on the left side along a man's skeleton, while the individual with the most richly furnished grave was buried in clothes trimmed with gold and carnelian beads and circular gold applications (Higham et al. 2007, 644). Impressed dots forming a circular pattern, that decorate the knee of a LN figurine (Fig. 3a–b) are comparable to perforated applications with a row of dotted lines around their edges, possibly sewn on fabric, found at knee level of a FN skeleton (Fol/Lichardus 1988, 200 Fig. 2).

Hanging decorations could also be represented on figurines, as the short vertical parallel lines ending into dots mentioned above (cf. Fig. 3). They could have consisted of joined strands of material, such as on ›fringed/string skirts‹. A similar apparel would have partially covered and partially revealed the lower body according to M. Nikolaidou (2007, 195). A. Melniciuc and A. Kovacs (2019) describe similar ›apron‹ representations of painted or incised fringes – some including applied beads – on the lower body of figurines associated with the Neolithic Cucuteni-Trypillia Culture. It has also been suggested that girdle and neck adornments were not only decorative items but also functioned as sets of dance accoutrements, intentionally manufactured as strung musical rattles, which made body movements audible and maintained rhythm when dancing in ritual situations (Southern Levant, Levy 2018, 41).

Representations of ›fringed skirts‹ on Neolithic figurines were proposed by E. L. Baysal (2019, 142–143 Fig. 8) as a possible parallel to evidence from burials, in particular

**Fig. 10a–b** a Middle Neolithic head with incised facial features, possible tattoos(?) and headdress (Stavroupoli, Central Macedonia); b Late Neolithic hollow head of a figurine or from an anthropomorphic vessel with painted or tattoo face decoration, ›diadem‹ on the forehead and perforated ears (Dimitra, Eastern Macedonia).

**Abb. 10a–b** a Mittelneolithischer Kopf mit eingeritzten Gesichtszügen, möglichen Tätowierungen und Kopfschmuck (Stavroupoli, Zentralmakedonien); b spätneolithische Figurine oder Hohlkopf von einem anthropomorphen Gefäß mit gemalter Dekoration, ›Diadem‹ auf der Stirn und durchlöcherchten Ohren (Dimitra, Ostmakedonien).

concerning an example from Hacilar, Burdur Province, Türkiye. In certain neonates-with-mothers burials, *Cyprinidae* teeth with small natural perforations on their roots might have been attached to an apron or string skirt related in particular to women and infants at Vlasac, in the area of the Danube Gorges, Serbia, in the Mesolithic-Neolithic transition (Boric/Stefanovic 2004, 540).

In some cases, marks on the body or face, pigments or tattoos may have been represented. The use of real needles for scarifying (tattooing) the skin has been considered plausible (Nikolaidou 2007, 195). This may explain the two crosses (seen on Fig. 1f) or the circles or lozenges incised on both sides of the lower back of other LN female figurines above their incised ›belts‹ (Marangou 1992a, 357 Fig. 8d; 358 Fig. 9a). This may also account for the parallel incised lines (MN Stavroupoli, Central Macedonia) or the angular



**Fig. 11a–d** a Middle Neolithic head with complex coiffure, possibly beads or perforated shells fixed on cap or hood (Stavroupoli, Central Macedonia); b Early Neolithic head with band around the crown (Prodromos, Thessaly); c Middle (?) Neolithic head with conical hat with brim, possibly in animal hide, and two painted lines around hat from Sofades, Karditsa (Magoula Margarita), Thessaly; museum collection in Volos Athanasakeio Archaeological Museum, Thessaly; d Late Neolithic flattened head with possible matting or cordage head-cover (Stavroupoli, Central Macedonia).

**Abb. 11a–d** a Mittelneolithischer Kopf mit komplexer Frisur (Stavroupoli, Zentralmakedonien); b frühneolithischer Kopf mit Band um die Krone (Prodromos, Thessalien); c mittel(?)-neolithischer Kopf mit konischem Krempehut, möglicherweise aus Tierhaut, und zwei gemalten Linien um den Hut aus Sofades, Karditsa (Magoula Margarita) Thessalien, Museumssammlung, Athanasakeio Archäologisches Museum von Volos, Thessalien; d spätneolithischer abgeflachter Kopf mit möglicher Kopfbedeckung aus Matten oder Tauwerk (Stavroupoli, Zentralmakedonien).



or undulating painted motifs (LN Dimitra, Eastern Macedonia) depicted on faces, as on some fragmentary heads (cf. Fig. 10a–b; Marangou 1992a, 420 Fig. 71g; Marangou 1996, 191 Fig. 7; Adam-Veleni et al. 2017, 203 No. 59).

## Headdresses

Marks on the forehead of a MN fragmentary hollow head from Dimitra, Eastern Macedonia, Greece (Fig. 10b), possibly a fragment of an anthropomorphic vessel, instead of pigments or tattoos, may be considered a ›diadem‹ or headdress. Besides possible ›diadems‹, figurines display various other types of headdresses or coiffure, including long strips/braids with horizontal incisions falling from a parting on top of the head, known from EN Prodromos, Thessaly, Greece (Gallis/Orphanidis 1996, 90–91 No. 22–23; 94 No. 26; 104–105 No. 36–37; Papathanasopoulos 1996, 301 No. 206; 312 No. 232), or headbands around the crown, as depicted on another EN figurine from Prodromos (Fig. 11b).

Conical clay hats may also be worn by EN/MN figurines; an example from Thessaly is decorated in a ›spotted‹ pattern, created by carving small, round depressions with a sharp tool (Gallis/Orphanidis 1996, 72 No. 4). Another (possibly MN) example from Thessaly displays a hat with a modelled brim bearing at least five punctuations, painted lines around the brim, halfway up the hat's crown and around the chin, and a perforation on the peak (Fig. 11c;

Orphanidis/Malakasioti 2011, 129 No. 1). The ›spotted‹ pattern around the brim of the first example might represent the fur of a wild carnivore (see also above), an indication of individual prestige or status, according to G. Toufexis (2003, 269). Other undecorated conical clay, ›caps‹ – which in some instances may be removable, such as those from Final Neolithic figurines from Aegina, Attica, Greece – would probably be the accessories of seated male figurines (Alram-Stern 2016, Pl. IXa; XIc). Such images were found under the floor of a house, some in miniature vessels, and/or paired with a non-gendered figurine. A large clay LN head whose face displays a series of points below the mouth and multiple perforations through the ears, suggesting non-preserved labrets and earrings, also wears a modelled ›hood‹ on its head, separated by an incised line (Fig. 12). In addition, patterns incised on the crowns of LN figurines with flattened heads (see further) from Central Macedonia could imply a head-covering of cordage or matting (Fig. 11d; Hourmouziadis 1994, Fig 24γ; 25γ; Adam-Veleni et al. 2017, 205 No. 64; cf. 207 No. 71); this might also be an openwork construction, possibly representing twining, or a more rigid basket-work-like structure (cf. Levy 2018, 41).

A LN female figurine head with incised ›hair‹ from Dikili Tash (Marangou 2019, 88, Pl. 81 M1226; Marangou 2020, 50 Fig. 1) displays a unique headdress; this may be attested by an incised, trapezoidal pattern marked with a dot near the periphery of the lower side of the trapezoid, while a ›fringe‹ also falls over the forehead (Fig. 13); more ›hair‹ incisions



Fig. 12 Large head with modelled and incised headdress and several perforations along the ears and on the mouth (Dikili Tash, Eastern Macedonia, museum collection).

Abb. 12 Großer Kopf mit modelliertem und eingeritztem Kopfschmuck sowie Durchlochungen entlang der Ohren und am Mund (Dikili Tash, Ostmakedonien, Museumssammlung).

fall under a vertical perforation (ear?), on the front, on each side of the head; two triangular patterns with a dot in the centre (tattoos?) are also incised under the eyes. The depiction of the ›hair‹, including the ›fringe‹ on the front, might, in fact, represent a hairnet, as several dots are marked within and among incisions that indicate the ›hair‹. These may represent (strings of) beads, in the last example sewn onto netting, retained by a ring resembling a perforated *Spondylus* or *Glycimeris*, attached to the hair with a bone pin. Most of the LN/FN artefactual pins of similar types are slightly curved towards their distal tip (Fol/Lichardus 1988, Fig. 143). This form could be explained if these pins were used to attach a circular element or ring of large diameter to a fabric, or to the hair. Moreover, one might also compare the »coiffure« of the MN head from Central Macedonia in Fig. 11a to caps with sewn beads or perforated shells, as described below, besides the similar use of beads in series on ›string skirts«.

Burial data compare well with the depictions of some figurines' headdresses. In the Franchthi Cave, Peloponnese, Greece, shell ornaments found in a late Mesolithic burial had enlarged perforations around their circumference, suggesting their use as decorative elements, potentially sewn onto garments or caps (Perlès 2018, 187). Evidence from burial sites shows that applications or beads of *Spondylus*

shells, arranged in rows on garments, were worn on the deceased person's forehead as a ›diadem« (tomb 292 of Cernica, Ilfov County, Romania: Cantacuzino 1969, 14 Fig. 3,5; see also the ornamented clay ›mask« in Varna tomb 2: Fol/Lichardus 1988, 222–239 Fig. 26). Several headdresses composed of shells sewn onto caps were found in adult and child burials (Levant, Natufian, 13 500–9600 BC: Levy 2018, 40 Fig. 4,2). Another example comes from the burial of a headless adult female at Vlasac, Danube Gorges, dated after 6200 BC. There, 178 carp-tooth ornaments, most of them perforated in order to be sewn onto a cloak or headdress, were found on both sides of the neck and below the shoulder blades of the deceased (Boric et al. 2014, 23 Fig. 13). According to FN burial evidence from Gradistea Ulmilor, Giurgiu County, Romania (Boian Culture) 24 *Dentalium* beads and two copper ›hairpins« as well as a biconical clay object were discovered near the skull of a skeleton (Angheliescu 1955, 311; Comsa 1965, 363). J. Levy (2018, 40) mentions the spacing of gazelle bone beads from a head covering in a child burial from the El Wad Cave, Carmel area, Haifa District, Israel (Natufian Culture 13500–9600 BC), suggesting that they had been attached to a hairnet. Hairnets are attested since the Upper Palaeolithic but are frequently known from the Pre-Pottery Neolithic A, B, and Chalcolithic Levant as representations and artefacts (Levy 2018, 40 and note 14;

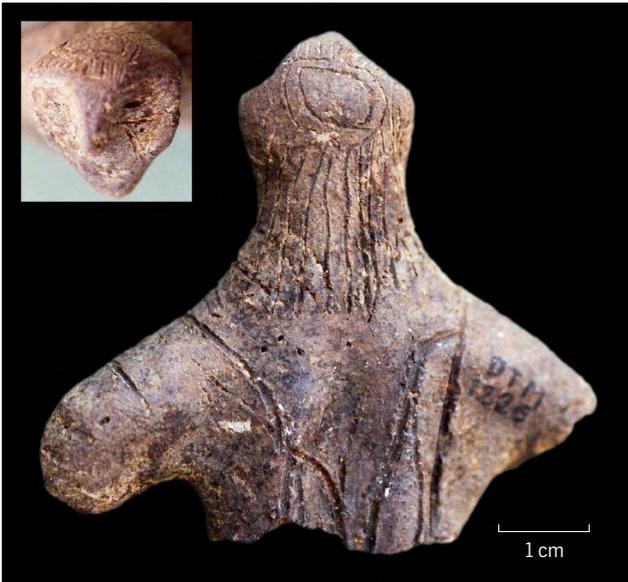


Fig. 13 Late Neolithic figurine with incised possible hairnet and (clothing?) features on body; incised fringe on the forehead and two triangular patterns (face tattoos or pigments?) under the eyes (Dikili Tash, Eastern Macedonia, museum collection). Back view of body and front of face.

Abb. 13 Spätneolithische Figurine mit möglichem Haarnetz und eingeritzten Merkmalen am Körper sowie zwei dreieckförmigen Mustern (Gesichtstattoo oder Pigmentierungen?) unter den Augen (Dikili Tash, Ostmakedonien, Museumssammlung). Rückansicht des Körpers und Vorderseite des Gesichtes.

### Variations: age and particularities

Ornamentation may be depicted on any anthropomorphs – there seem to be no categories of persons that were excluded from adornment; in particular, the young, the old, and individuals with disabilities<sup>7</sup> would not have been stigmatised.

This is implied by some exceptional representations, such as a well-decorated LN figurine from Dikili Tash (Fig. 14), that may represent a female who potentially suffered from Klippel-Feil syndrome<sup>8</sup>, a 'marker of growth disturbance', such real cases having been attested in burials<sup>9</sup>. The figurine's standard incised decoration of the body, plausibly representing clothing embellishments, a 'necklace'

see also Marangou 2020, 30 on 'hairnets'; netting techniques were already used in fishing, with twisted vegetal cordage and notched net sinkers known since 23 000–25 000 BP (Levy 2018, 40; 47; Adovasio et al. 1996).



Fig. 14 Late Neolithic figurine of a woman potentially affected by Klippel-Feil syndrome with incised belt, necklace or cloth accessory, as well as a dotted and incised decoration or folds of clothing on body (museum collection, Dikili Tash, Eastern Macedonia). Front and back view and face.

Abb. 14 Spätneolithische Frauenfigur, die möglicherweise am Klippel-Feil-Syndrom leidet, mit einem eingeritzten Gürtel, einer Halskette oder einem Stoffaccessoire und eingeritzte oder gepunzte Verzierungen am Körper (Museumsammlung, Dikili Tash, Ostmakedonien). Vorder- und Rückansicht sowie vom Gesicht.

7 Pathological or handicapped individuals are exceptionally represented. For example, the head of a figurine of a 'Down syndrome child' from EN Prodromos (Thessaly; Theocharis 1981, 64 Fig. 25), an 'hydrocephalus', 'a subject of suffering', according to G. Hourmouziadis (1994, 212 Tab. 87 [upper part]), or an individual with trisomy 21, according to A. A. Diamandopoulos et al. (1997).

8 See for example: Wikipedia contributors. (2025, June 15). Klippel-Feil syndrome. In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, from <[https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Klippel%E2%80%93Feil\\_syndrome&oldid=1295799330](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Klippel%E2%80%93Feil_syndrome&oldid=1295799330)> (16.09.2025).

9 A congenital fusion of cervical vertebrae producing a short neck, a low posterior hairline, and a limited movement of the neck, has

been attested on an individual buried in LN/FN Alepotrypa Cave in the Peloponnese, southern Greece (Papathanasiou 2005, 382–383 Fig. 6).



Fig. 15a–b Late Middle/Early Late Neolithic house model interior and figurines (Platia Magoula Zarkou, Thessaly).

Abb. 15a–b Spätmittel-/Frühspätneolithisches Hausmodell mit Interieur und Figurinen (Platia Magoula Zarkou, Thessalien).

around the neck, a ›pendant‹ between the breasts, folds of clothing, a pointed pattern on the lower back, and a hip belt, as in previously described examples, its long hair arriving to its waist, and its facial features do not seem to result from a novice's work (as e.g. Marangou 2024, 83 Fig. 10b). However, the head, with an almost inexistent neck, seems to rest on the trunk, as it may happen due to an abnormal fusion of cervical vertebrae. Another example comes from Dispilio, Western Macedonia; the LN figurine of an old man with probable kyphoscoliosis is shown wearing a (male) accessory: an incised triangular ›apron‹ with a series of circular decorations around the waist (Hourmouziadis 2002, 254–256; Adam-Veleni 2017, 189 No. 17).

The absence of stigmatisation of handicaps is also confirmed in various sub-periods and regions by several special burials of embellished real humans that display pathologies of different kinds and who therefore were not socially segregated; this could possibly also be due to awe or respect (see also Stavreva 2022, 175). The meticulous representation

on pathological figurines' clothing, embellishments and/or accessories would seem to reflect this attitude in burial treatment.

Figurines may be adorned regardless of their dimensions, while exceptional cases of combined figurines of different sizes may show age differences of represented humans. An LN scenic clay model of a house interior from the tell Platia Magoula Zarkou, Thessaly, contains several human figures: two ›couples‹ of a standing female and a seated, non-gendered figurine, of different sizes, as well as a smaller, probably younger female. They wear similar ›dresses‹, although the smaller individual was apparently less embellished than the larger ones (Fig. 15; Gallis 1985; Gallis 2022; Alram-Stern 2022). In addition, four very small figurines, one of them possibly also female, with slight differences in shape, size and decoration, could plausibly represent young children (Marangou 2009, Pl. XIh). The scene seems to present stages of childhood, non-gendered versus gendered children and adolescents(?). The smallest

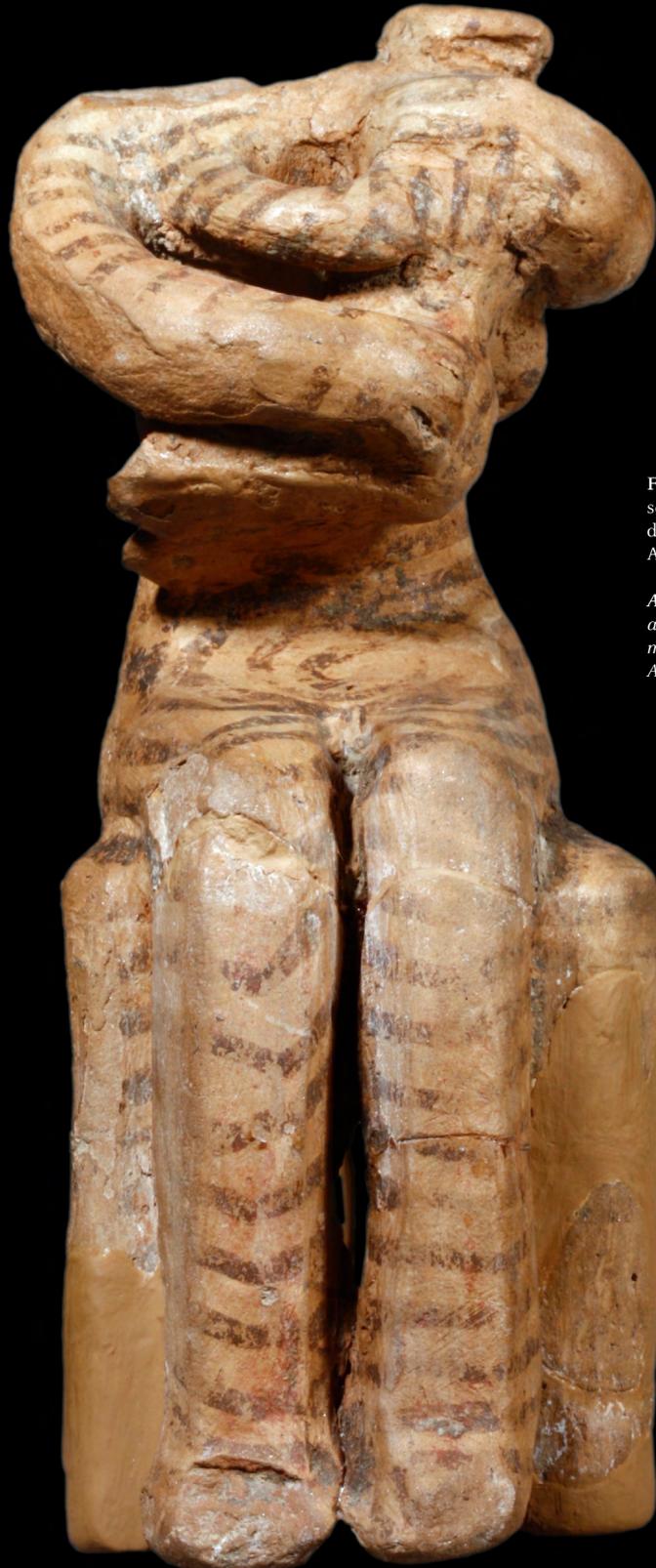


Fig. 16 Late Neolithic »Kourotrophos«, a woman seated on a seat holding a child with painted decoration (Sesklo, Thessaly, Athens National Archaeological Museum).

Abb. 16 Spätneolithischer »Kourotrophos«, eine auf einem Stuhl sitzende Frau, die ein Kind hält, mit aufgemaltem Dekor (Sesklo, Thessalien, Archäologisches Nationalmuseum Athen).

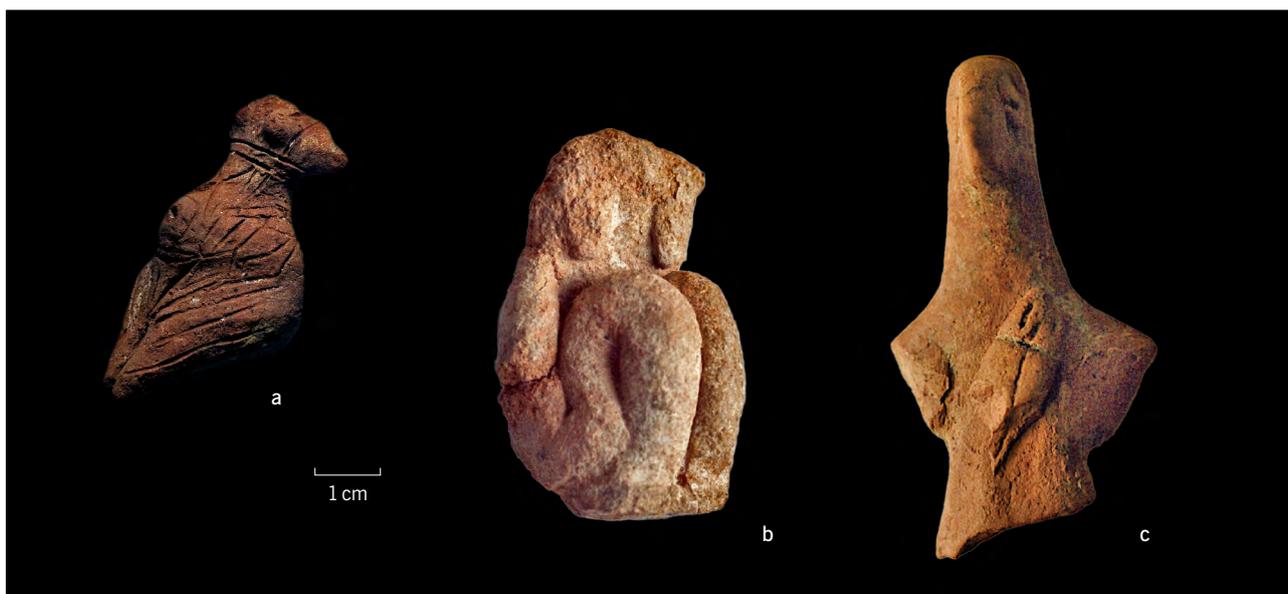


Fig. 17a–c Late Neolithic richly ›clothed‹ and decorated pregnant female (Dikili Tash, Eastern Macedonia); b Late Neolithic birth-giving, crouching, nude female (Pefkakia phase II, Thessaly); c Early Neolithic figurine holding on the breast, breast-feeding a probably swaddled infant (Prodromos, Thessaly).

Abb. 17a–c Spätneolithische, reich »bekleidete« und verzierte schwangere Frau (Dikili Tash, Ostmakedonien); b spätneolithische gebärende, kauernde, nackte weibliche Figurine (Pefkakia Phase II, Thessalien); c frühneolithische Figurine, die wahrscheinlich einen eingewickelten Säugling stillt (Prodromos, Thessalien).

and more flattened, unstable figurine might possibly represent a swaddled infant<sup>10</sup>. Therefore, the house model could include, besides adults, small females or elder children possibly taking care of younger siblings (three young children or infants and a newborn). None were excluded from personal adornment, although the clothing was differentiated, plausibly due to various young age stages.

Concerning age variation, the use of adornments in burials, including *Spondylus*, does not seem to depend on the gender or age of the deceased, as such objects were also found in burials of adolescents, children, and even infants (Baysal 2019, 148). In Toumpa Kremastis Koiladas, Western Macedonia, almost all of the personal ornaments in a LN group of burials (mainly *Spondylus*) were found with children younger than four years of age (Chondroyianni-Metoki 2022, 343). Neolithic child burials from the wider region, for example, MN (5500/5400–5000/4900 BC) and LN (5000/4900–4500/4400 BC) Hungary, also contained jewellery. In particular, a string of beads 36–45cm long was found on the hips of a three-year-old girl (Anders et al. 2023, 49), while bead girdles were discovered around the waists of three juveniles (Anders et al. 2023, 42). The burial of a one-year-old child in Vlasac (6800–6450 BC) was associated with 701 perforated pieces of carp teeth and 22 shell beads that most likely were originally attached to some kind of burial cloak (Boric et al. 2014, 22 Fig. 11). In late Pre-Pottery Neolithic B (7500–7000 BC) Ba'ja, Southern Jordan, the remains of two three-to-four-

year-old children, and two infants, aged between birth and six months, were associated with about 1150 shell and stone beads<sup>11</sup> (Benz et al. 2020, 97 Tab. 1; 99 Fig. 3). The assemblage of beads discovered in the pelvic area of one of the older children could be a belt or a beaded border, therefore the corpses would have been decorated with a ›cloth/clothing/belt with many beads‹ (Benz et al. 2020, 98–99; 101–102)<sup>12</sup>. It may be interesting to examine possible differences of burial treatment concerning cloth covering between infants and children, their treatment indicating specific stages of social embodiment related to age according to D. Boric/S. Stefanovic (2004, 543)<sup>13</sup>.

A comparison between »*kourotrophoi*«, female figures holding an infant or child, may also infer the representation of differing clothing in nuanced childhood stages. A LN Sesklo figurine, Thessaly, Greece, of a richly decorated, seated female (whose head is missing; Papatathanasopoulos 1996, 307 No. 221) holds a child who seems to be older than a swaddled infant since at least its arms are unwrapped (Fig. 16). The child's surface is richly painted in patterns, spirals, and horizontal bands that are closely comparable to the decoration of the woman holding it; the similarity of their garments may also be an indication that the swaddling period is over. This contrasts with the (probably) swaddled infant held on the breasts by the EN ›breastfeeding‹ female figurine (Fig. 17c) and would suggest that the Sesklo child figurine had already transited to another age

10 This type of figurine is not unique, other examples are known, as from LN Eastern Macedonia, e.g. in Adam-Veleni et al. 2017, 211 No. 79–80.

11 Beneath their crania and torsos, a triangular-shaped space contained aligned shells and cowries, while rows of shells were also found

lying on and within their cranial bones, and other beads formed the border of this arrangement. According to M. Benz et al. 2020, the ›beads were probably all sewn onto some kind of cloth, on which the two older children rested and which covered their heads‹ (a cloak?).

12 M. Benz et al. (2020) suggest a differentiation of some sub-adults that could suggest social status even among infants or children.

13 Infants could have been ›wrapped up in layers of (swaddling?) clothes‹, as, for example, attested from anthropological evidence (Boric/Stefanovic 2004, 542 with references).

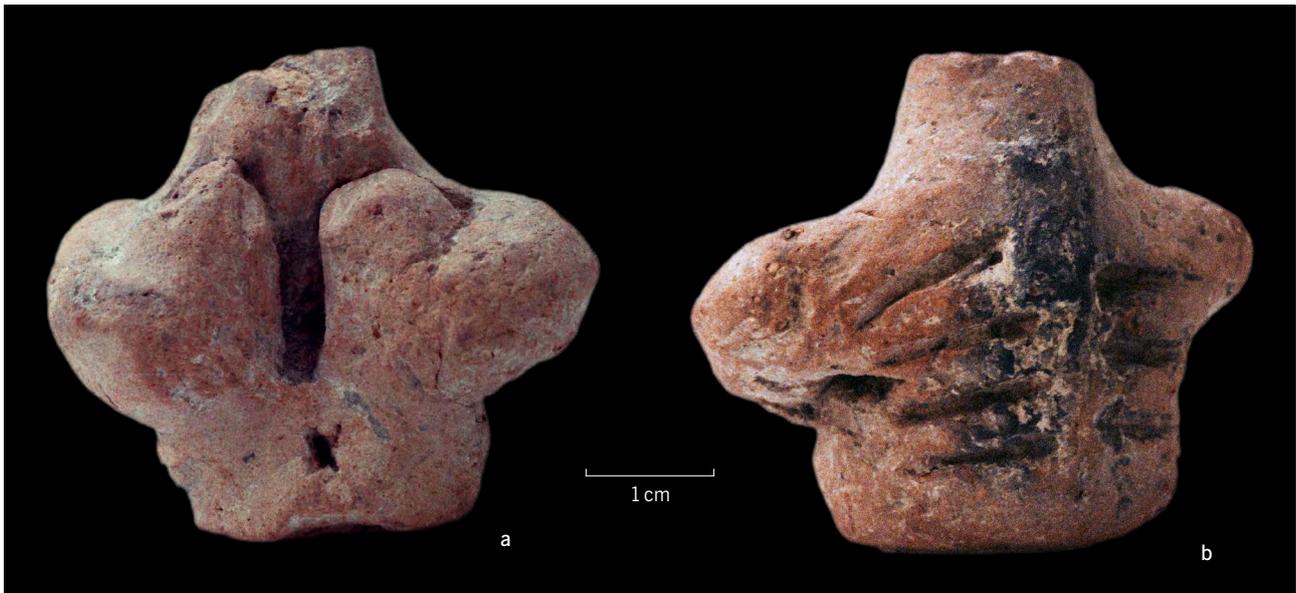


Fig. 18a–b Early Neolithic figurine in crouching, birth-giving posture; a front; b back of the figure showing accentuated spinal column (Prodromos, Thessaly).

Abb. 18a–b Frühneolithische Figurine in geduckter, gebärender Stellung; a Vorderseite; b Rückseite der Figur mit hervorgehobener Wirbelsäulendarstellung (Prodromos, Thessalien).

stage than that of swaddled infants, as already dressed and decorated differently. Interestingly, the Sesklo child's head, face turned towards the right shoulder of the woman, seems to already display a head deformation, which could confirm the transition to a different than swaddled infant life stage<sup>14</sup>. Besides, its flattened head shape is similar to some examples of adult(?) figurines' ›deformed‹ heads, possibly wearing a particular matting or basketwork head cover (cf. Levy 2018, 4; for Near East iconographic parallels), as described above (cf. Fig. 11d, LN Stavroupoli, Central Macedonia; Adam-Veleni et al. 2017, 207 No. 71; LN, Thessaloniki region, surface find). The latter type of flattened head examples originates from areas with close relationships concerning LN figurines typology (Adam-Veleni 2017, 211 No. 80, described by E. Stefani), and where ›swaddled infants‹ figurines (see above, footnote 10), similar to the above described, Platia Magoula Zarkou example, were also found.

Different nuances of the term ›anthropomorphic‹ may be distinguished on clothed or covered figurines, suggesting various age- and life-stages. But it remains to be explained why certain figurines do seem to wear nothing.

### Nudity with nuances

In the rare cases when complete or partial nudity would be necessary in real-life situations, it also appears on figurines<sup>15</sup>. This is attested by images of the birth-giving process

(as in Fig. 17b; Fig. 18)<sup>16</sup>, and similarly during breastfeeding (cf. Fig. 17c; Koukouli-Chrysanthaki et al. 2007, 74 Fig. 56; 58; Adam-Veleni et al. 2017, 209 No. 74; see also breastfeeding figurines in Biehl 2015, 194 Fig. 10,5; 197 Fig. 10,8; 198 Fig. 10,9). The spinal column on the back of nude, birth-giving figurines may be accentuated (cf. Fig. 18b)<sup>17</sup>; the figurine is crouching, a typical birthing position (Papageorgiou 2023, 47–48), particularly in the past. The depiction of the old male with probable kyphoscoliosis mentioned above shows a similar accentuation of his bent spine, apparently also due to his hunched posture. While generally not shown on common nude figurines, the marked spine and bent back may also seem to convey pain or suffering (for different reasons) in both these cases.

Nudity is also depicted in the Neolithic, often in EN standard postures of naturalistic clay figurines of males from Sesklo (e.g. Papathanasopoulos 1996, 298 No. 203) and females from Otzaki Magoula (e.g. Papathanasopoulos 1996, 299 No. 204). The EN or MN so-called ›twins‹, siblings or couple(?), or otherwise closely – without excluding socially – connected persons, from Domeniko, Thessaly, Greece, provide another example: two genderless nude figures standing close together, touching at the buttocks' level and embracing (Papathanasopoulos 1996, 314 No. 234). Furthermore, several FN figurines from Thessaly are ›acrolithic‹ (equipped with a stone extremity); they have schematic, mostly crude clay bodies (Fig. 19a; Fig. 20a), to which elaborately decorated stone heads are added (reconstruction: cf. Fig. 19b)

14 The swaddling process starts immediately after birth and may last for months or up to at least one year; if the infant reposes on a hard surface, such as wooden boards, it may provoke a widened cranium deformation (Marangou 2010, 18 Fig. 2,20 with references).

15 In contrast to pregnant females, often depicted as richly clothed (cf. Fig. 17a).

16 Gimbutas 1989, 196 Fig. 7,46; Weisshaar 1989, Pl. 66,13.17,2; Marangou 1992a, 34; 264; Pl. 13m; Gallis/Orphanidis 1996, 198–199 No. 143–144.

17 On accentuated spinal columns cf. Meskell/Nakamura 2005, 168 Fig. 83; Huth 2008, 493 Fig. 1; Schmidt 2013; Mauer/Zierhofer 2020.

(e.g. Papathanasopoulos 1996, 305 No. 216–217, FN). They are predominantly non-gendered although, exceptionally, females with accentuated breasts occur (Marangou 1992a, 423 Fig. 74d). In contrast to the Thessalian figures' crudely-modelled, ›nude‹ bodies, the stone heads are carefully worked and even elaborately painted.

It is possible that these figurines were not intended to be permanently nude; missing elements and lost organic materials such as textiles, wood, feathers, or cereal grains may have covered or been attached to them. For example, various cereal grains are imprinted (deliberately?) on seemingly precise locations on the surface of an acrolithic genderless clay body from FN Rachmani, Thessaly, Greece (cf. Fig. 19a; Marangou 1992a, 423 Fig. 74c). Even if this happened unintentionally, due to figurines being modelled in spaces containing grain, clay pellets imitating individual grains are known; they may decorate shoulders, arms or hips of figurines (Gimbutas et al. 1989, 366; Pl. 8,1.1; Gallis/Orphanidis 1996, 211 No. 154; 335 No. 282) or represent eyes (Adam-Veleni et al. 2017, 185 No. 7; Orphanidis/Malakasioti 2011, 135 No. 10; 212 No. 151). The latter were formerly called ›coffee-bean eyes‹ (Hourmouziadis 1994, 247 footnote 20; Pl. 16b). It is also possible that lost elements, such as feathers or real grains, including those arranged in a series, may have been used as ornaments on figurines and worn by humans (Marangou 1992a, 142; cf. Kyparissi-Apostolika 1992, 187; Hourmouziadis 1994, 220–221), perhaps even attached to garments or clothing.

Interestingly, a few thousand fossilised grains of *Lithospermum purpureo-coeruleum* – more than a hundred of them perforated at one or both ends (of the grain) – were found in a hemispheric vase (Ulmeni tell, Gumelnița A1 Culture; Carciumaru 1985). The vase also contained about 190 (intact or fragmentary) red ochre or white-coloured terracotta beads, some of them perforated, as well as about 200 microlithic quartzite tools, some seemingly used for cutting and perforating. The ensemble could correspond to a bead-making process: perforated grains and terracotta beads, each measuring a few millimetres, would have been

combined to form ›necklaces‹ (Carciumaru 1985; Marangou 1992a, 143). A comparable use of perforated grains of the same species as strung beads has been proposed for other finds, such as an ensemble of over 600 grains from Kodjadermen (Gumelnița Culture; Carciumaru 1985, 2).

Furthermore, there are acrolithic figurines bearing woven textile imprints (cf. Fig. 20) on their clay torso and/or abdomen (Marangou 2009, 89; Pl. XIIIb–c; Marangou 2020, 39–40 Fig. 10; cf. Hansen 2007, 276 Fig. 170), but not under their flat base, as would be the case if the figurine was simply stabilised on a textile during modelling (as it happens with pottery). In addition, a fragmentary schematic (›stylised‹) upper part of a figurine (no gender indication visible – male?) from the site of Ulucak, İzmir Province, Türkiye (level Vb, 6500–6000 BC), discovered in association with 22 spindle whorls and a stamp, still bore an actual textile fragment on the left shoulder, extending to the torso (Cilingiroglu 2009, 17 Fig. 7). This ›textile piece was executed as a plain weave made with one warp and one weft; it is impossible to tell whether the figure had been clothed or simply kept wrapped in a cloth‹ (Cilingiroglu 2009, 15). While a functional use of textiles, – such as during clay modelling – cannot be completely excluded (Schoop 2014, 426; Marangou 2020, 40), the evidence may also imply an application of body coverings, possibly before completely drying the figurine. In any case, the presence of textiles conceivably suggests their occasional removal or replacement (Marangou 2020, 13; 15).

### Significant domestic contexts of anthropomorphic figurines

Actual adornments, especially in shell, mainly beads, pierced shells, or *Spondylus* bracelets and bone pins, occur in the context of figurines and miniatures, as on the LN site of Dimitra, where bangles or beads, mostly made of shell, were attested in 26 of their 34 studied domestic figurines' contexts (Marangou 1997, 243). In LN Dikili Tash, real jewellery is included in seven of the ten known domestic asso-

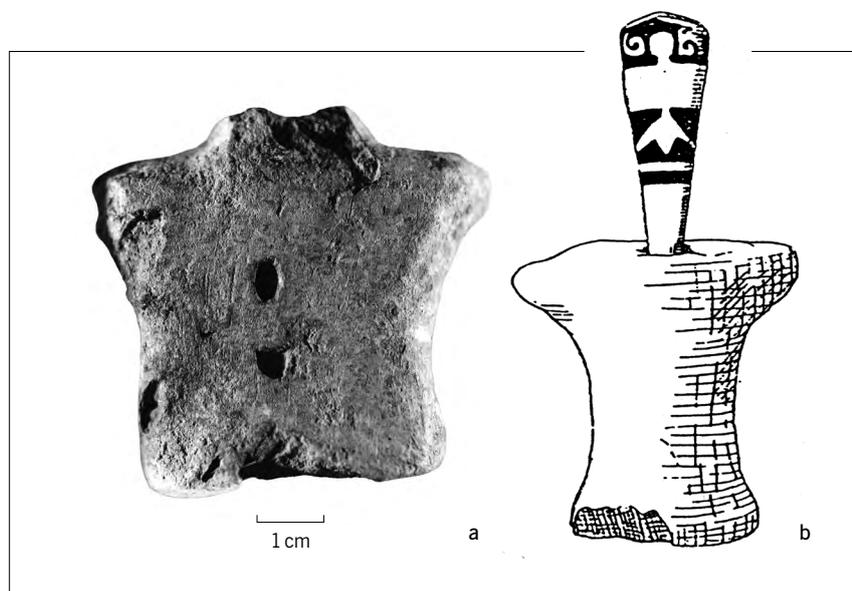


Fig. 19a–b Final Neolithic non-gendered acrolithic body with grain imprints (Rachmani, Thessaly); b reconstruction of Final Neolithic acrolithic figurine (Thessaly).

Abb. 19a–b Endneolithischer, nicht genderspezifischer akrolithischer Körper mit Kornabdrücken (Rachmani, Thessalien); b Rekonstruktion einer endneolithischen akrolithischen Figurine (Thessalien).

Fig. 20a–c Final Neolithic non-gendered acrolithic body with textile imprints (Tsangli, Thessaly).

Abb. 20a–c Endneolithischer akrolithischer Körper mit Textilabdrücken (Tsangli, Thessalien).



ciations of figurines (Marangou 1992a, 421 Fig. 72g), which include a male with a belt and application. All but one were embellished with represented attributes. Therefore, in at least some cases, genuine personal ornaments were found in direct association with clay figurines; in these examples, most of them would also have been ornamented with representations of similar ornaments. The links of Neolithic figurines with adornment (represented or real) that possibly suggest gender or status seem to be tight.

Besides personal ornaments, figurine contexts include food storage areas, such as clay silos containing grains of wheat or lentils, and food preparation areas, such as hearths. Figurines were found close to a quern and a hearth, as well as near a storage space at the site of Dimitra II (MN) and III (LN; Marangou 1997), among other sites in the Balkans (Marangou 1992a, 222–224). Figurine contexts also include objects associated with textiles, such as weaving and spinning tools, spindle whorls or loom weights (Marangou 2020, 40–41). For example, a schematic figurine was found on a pile of 28 clay loom weights on a house's clay bench next to a hearth (House 4 of Piscul Cornisorului, Sălcuța III Căușeni District, Romania; Marangou 1992a, 223 Fig. 26a–b with references); elsewhere, a ›cult scene‹ with figurines and ›temple‹ models was found near a vertical loom on the second floor of a building, also comprising a clay ›altar‹ (Radigrad, Karanovo IV or V, Sliven Province, Bulgaria; Gimbutas 1982, 251). In Rachmani, acrolithic genderless figurines were found in a house containing 22 spindle whorls, various grains and tools (Wace/Thompson 1912, Fig. 28), while spindle whorls and female figurines were found together (Marangou 2020, 40; with more references) in Dikili Tash and Franchthi. In at least some sites, female figurines seem to be rather connected to food preparation and spinning,

while non-gendered figurines are associated with storage and weaving (Marangou 2020, 40).

Spinning or weaving tools assembled in significant numbers, if not simply indicating a specialised fabrication area, might also convincingly imply groups of women working together in certain spaces, also containing figurines. At the same time, the proximity of figurines and other symbolic objects to hearths, the centres of everyday life, has been emphasised (Marangou 1992a, 222). Parallel activities, utilitarian and intangible, are also implied by miniature representations, both functional and symbolic (Marangou 2024, 69). While working collectively, women could have sung to the rhythm of the loom, told tales or recounted actual events; such activities seem to have been practised quite early (Marangou 2020, 42) and till the recent past.

### Changing appearances

The appearance of Neolithic figurines was not necessarily static. They may have undergone specific alterations, changing not only hats (e.g. FN Aegina figurines discussed above) or garments but also heads – as in a case from the FN site, Rachmani. Here, five stone heads, four clay torsos and two fragments were discovered together in house Q; at least two stone heads (one decorated, the other without preserved decoration) could fit the holes of torsos, but they were found separately – not fixed in any clay body – in their last use<sup>18</sup>. Different decorated heads could have been fixed to ›neutral‹ bodies, as suggested by the reconstruction in Fig. 19b, differentiating them and so individualising (Marangou 2009, 89–90), or periodically changing their identity (Marangou 2020, 32).

<sup>18</sup> Wace/Thompson 1912, 43 Fig. 25a–c; 28g; Marangou 1992a, 143; Marangou 2009, 73; Marangou 2020, 32.

Moreover, the figurines' faces could plausibly be changed. A female, according to S. A. Luca (2014), LN standing figurine from Liubcova, site Vinča C, Banat, Caraş Severin County, SW Romania, wears a ›tunic‹, close-fitting ›trousers‹, and a pendant or fibula ›fastens‹ its ›shirt‹ on the front and on the back (Fig. 21). Its head is broken and the arms are perforated. It holds a mask in its left hand on the shoulder and an *askos* (a globular clay vessel) in the right on its hip (Luca 1990; Luca 2014); it would have been found together with other anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines in a burnt building (Horvath 2010, 121). Interestingly, the figurine's body incisions are inlaid with white, while the mask's incisions are highlighted with red paste, clearly indicating that the mask changed the figurine into a different entity (Marangou 2009, Pl. XIVd; Marangou 2020, 51 Fig. 3). ›Masked‹ figurines examples are also attested elsewhere, such as a MN removable, lozenge-shaped mask belonging to a pillar-headed figurine from Achilleio, Thessaly, Greece (Gimbutas 1989, 359, Pl. 7,17).

Besides figurine representations, life-size masks are well attested since the beginning of the Neolithic period and even earlier. They may be anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, or hybrid and made of stone, bone, and clay (Marangou 2009, 11–13 with references; 2020, 32–34). A striking example is the partial anthropomorphic mask made from elk antler (Fig. 22) (Kostyleva et al. 2001; Marangou 2009, Pl. XIVa–c; Marangou 2020, 51 Fig. 4), found together with wild animal

bones and clay sherds in a pit dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC in the Upper Volga plain (Volosovo Neolithic Culture). Hollowed out internally and equipped with perforations for securing it, the mask has a high forehead with a detailed nose and eyebrows and would have covered the upper part of a human face. Neolithic human skeletons buried close to the (possibly ritual) pit show similarities to the mask's forehead and nasal proportions (Kostyleva et al. 2001).

A temporary change of face, head (covering), or garment implies the possibility of variation in the role, gender, or status of human beings. This may indicate ambiguity and/or fluidity, emphasise alternative readings of the depictions, and generally denote performance. The possibility of varied narratives suggesting continuous fluidity of role, status, or social gender of figurines, and therefore of real or fictive persons does not seem inconceivable. Among other possibilities, such a change could materialise transitional procedures such as initiations or signal depictions of imaginary beings. In oral traditions, narratives of tales or past events can change each time they are transmitted. Material objects may be employed, either in flexible combinations of figurative representations (Marangou 1996; Marangou 2009) or by transformations of heads, faces, attire or coverings (Marangou 2020), to alter connotations or contents related to identity, gender, or social role. This interpretation presupposes the participation of ›knowers‹ such as ritual specialists, connoisseurs, or wise men and women using material means – including figurines – to transmit narratives or/and carry out performances.

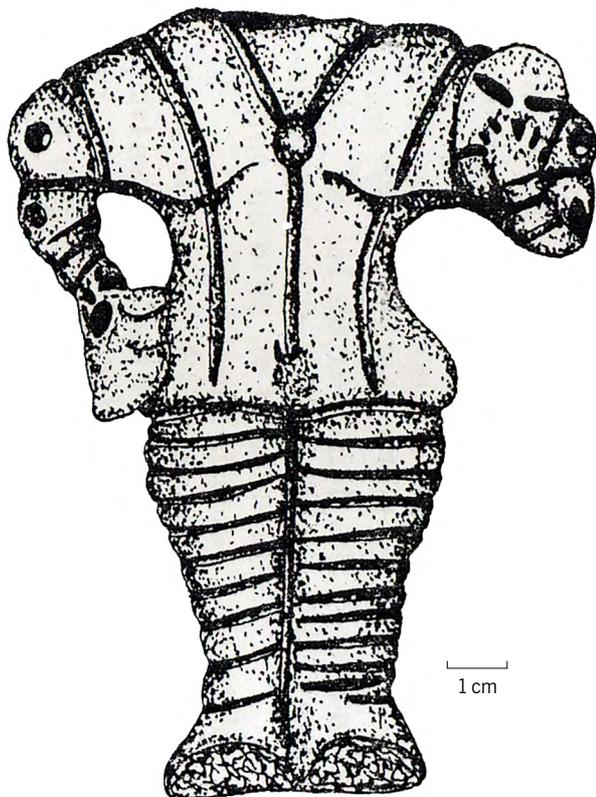


Fig. 21 Late Neolithic, clay figurine from Liubcova, holding a mask in the left hand and a vase (*askos*) in the right one.

Abb. 21 Spätneolithische Tonfigur aus Liubcova, die in der linken Hand eine Maske und in der rechten Hand ein Gefäß (*askos*) hält.

## Conclusions

In Neolithic Greece, particularly in Macedonia, Thrace and Thessaly, various ways of draping, clothing, or covering, which combined deliberately selected adornment and functional aspects, were represented on clay anthropomorphic figurines from domestic contexts as examined in this paper. In an attempt to identify and interpret such characteristics as a depiction of possible components of actual human appearance related to clothing or garments, reference was also made to artefacts – suggested prototypes of the representations – as attested from Greek Neolithic domestic and burial contexts, as well as parallels from Southeastern Europe and the Near East.

Body-, limb-, and head-coverings, facial or corporeal markings and the physical characteristics accentuated on represented beings would have been highly meaningful. The differentiation of coverings may depend on the figurine's gender or age, but there appears to be no exclusion from adornment in cases of human difference or disability. Nudity is represented in nuanced ways, including in particular life situations, such as giving birth.

Elements imitating real features may be present and/or emphasised, missing and/or invisible. Attachments made of perishable materials may have been originally present – either permanently, temporarily or periodically. Changes in the appearance of figurines (also suggesting modifications of human appearance) may be attested by the evidence for alternative head coverings, masks, or heads; figurines' body



Fig. 22a–c Eneolithic life-size, elk antler partial mask (Veselinovo Culture, Sakhtych, North-Western Russia).

Abb. 22a–c Äneolithische lebensgroße Teilmaske aus Elchgeweih (Veselinovo-Kultur, Sakhtych, Nordwest-Russland).

coverings and clothing may be implied by non-preserved or impermanently used artefactual elements. This evidence corroborates the likelihood of fluid scenarios during the use of figurines, involving their identity, transitional stages or narratives, in addition to their plausible movements and varying combinations as material objects.

Figurines as physical artefacts may be perceived as material aids used in everyday life and representing it, while a female involvement may be suggested from attested, related domestic activities. At the same time, with their iconographic features, they may also refer to symbolic practices and processes. They may have participated in an intangible transmission of messages or narratives, possibly intervening between real or fictive *personae* or within social groups. In an imaginary world, human depictions and fiction, concrete features and intangible conceptions may have been combined without clear frontiers. Considering the nuances of covering and nudity in figurines' appearance may lead to perceptions alluding to concrete and symbolic aspects of the ›Stone Age history of clothing‹. ›Reading‹ the appearance of the figurines as perceived and understood by their creators and users, with their deeper meanings and nuances, constitutes a continuing challenge to our understanding and interpretation of Neolithic ›coverings‹ and nudity.

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