

# «Craft Economy» and Terracotta Figurines. Approaching Systems of Production through Coroplastic Studies

Stéphanie Huysecom-Haxhi – Antonella Pautasso

## Introduction

Since the first discoveries of the nineteenth century the coroplastic research has undergone a remarkable evolution. For a long time considered as trinkets, and therefore studied mainly from the point of view of the history of art, terracotta figurines are now studied and published scientifically, according to specific methods of analysis and integrated approaches. Particular attention has been paid in the last twenty years to production techniques and to the reconstruction of the operational sequence, as well as to the human factor behind the crafted object. Archaeologists also have had the benefit of several ethno-anthropological studies that provide thought-provoking theoretical frameworks for an understanding of the economic and social dimensions of craft production in Antiquity.

The panel “*Craft Economy*” and *Terracotta Figurines. Approaching Systems of Production Through Coroplastic Studies* organised by the editors and chaired by J.P. Uhlenbrock within the 19<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Classical Archaeology held in Cologne and Bonn in May 2017, whose main topic has been *Archaeology and Economy in the Ancient World*, was therefore an opportunity to revisit, in more detail and through recent studies of specific cases, different aspects of the terracotta craft production.

The eight contributions published here explore coroplastic production by differing approaches. With only few exceptions, they focus on the Greek world from the Archaic to the late Classical periods.

A first section includes four papers more specifically related to the technical and production issues. The rich corpus of terracotta statues from the ancient cities of Marion and Arsinoe in Cyprus, analysed in detail by **Nancy Serwint**, is the starting point for examining the different techniques and production strategies adopted by the craftsmen. Through an attentive observation of the objects and mainly of all the traces left on the inner walls by the coroplast’s work, the author explains the techniques used for shaping the statues (handmade with the particular methods of coiling and slab construction, wheel-made and mould-made, all these techniques can be combined), focusing on the different production strategies, which depend on the skill of the coroplast, on the availability of materials and on the market demand. The analysis of several technical features of a large nucleus of terracotta figurines and protomai from the votive deposit of Piazza San Francesco at Catania, together with the first results of the archaeometric analyses, leads **Antonella Pautasso, Vanessa Chillemi, Ambra Pace and Lighea Pappalardo** to suggest the activity of a local production-unit, although in absence of direct evidence, such as kilns and moulds. The identification of a specific craftsman’s

hand, featuring repeated craft procedures, allows the authors to develop some remarks on the organisation of the production and on the possible involvement of young apprentices working side by side with more expert coroplasts. One of the most important aspects to be considered in the reconstruction of a workshop's activity is the range and the amount of the imported items and at what extent they can affect the local production, from the technical and stylistic point of view. This is the case of the coroplastic material found in Kirrha, discussed by **Stéphanie Huysecom-Haxhi**, who highlights the main features of a workshop that seems to be more specialised in the importation of many terracottas than in the mechanical reproduction of the imported types through the *moulage* and *sourmoulage* practices, which have developed their own original style inspired by different foreign models. An anthropological approach to the economic and social dimensions of terracotta production has been chosen by **Gina Salapata** in her paper focusing on miniature versions of votive items. Starting from the study of the mould-made plaques from the sanctuary of Agamemnon and Cassandra in Laconia, the scholar wonders about the factors, which may influence the production and selection of small terracottas, concluding that the size of a votive gift does not affect its symbolic and religious value.

The four papers of the second section are geared more towards diffusion and consumption issues, and to the relationship between production and religious needs in particular as part of local worship particularities. In her paper on a group of female and male standing offerers from the Thesmophorion of Iasos in Caria, **Marina Albertocchi** frames the production in a regional context, by identifying a main production centre or workshop at Halikarnassus, responsible for the dissemination of different iconographic types in the neighbouring sites. The diffusion of Greek models and types beyond the Greek world is a fascinating topic of research. From the study of a large amount of coroplastic items – among those about fifty moulds – found in a pit of late Hellenistic Punic city of Karalis in Sardinia, **Maria Adele Ibba** selected a group of moulds depending on Greek prototypes. Focusing on a group of female busts and their details, such as the earrings, as well as on a preliminary examination of the clay, the author suggests the origin of the moulds from Greek Sicily and discusses patterns of diffusion of coroplastic types between Sicily and Sardinia. In the following paper, **Geltrude Bizzarro** focuses on the entanglements between consumption and production. Through an examination of the main iconographic types of terracotta figurines from the sanctuary of Pontecagnano, the author highlights the semantic value of the statuettes of offerers and their attribute, as a reflection of the ritual practices actually devoted to the deity Luas in the Campanian sanctuary. Finally, a general overview of a still less known coroplastic production has been proposed by **Maria Elena Gorrini** in her paper on the terracotta statuettes from the recent excavations of Kinik Höyük in southern Cappadocia. The small number of terracottas in question includes imports from the neighbouring areas, most of all anthropomorphic figurines, and a local production represented especially by animals.

We would like to express our gratitude to the organisers of the 19<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Classical Archaeology for allowing us to publish the proceedings of the panel on coroplastic studies in a special volume. We also sincerely thank all the authors for their participation at the panel and for the quality of their contributions.