

**PILZ, OLIVER**

*Frühe matrizengeformte Terrakotten auf Kreta: Votivpraxis und Gesellschaftsstruktur in spätgeometrischer und früharchaischer Zeit.*

*Beiträge zur Archäologie Griechenlands 2.*

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Reviewed by Katja Sporn (katja.sporn@sbg.ac.at)

Cretan terracottas from the Late Geometric and Archaic periods have never been the focus of a general study, although significant numbers thereof are well known, mainly from Axos, Gortyn, and various other sites in east Crete. The book under review is more than welcome because it fills this gap in scholarship. It represents an updated version of Oliver Pilz's doctoral thesis submitted at the University of Jena in 2008. The book constitutes the second volume in a new series entitled *Beiträge zur Archäologie Griechenlands*, edited by Heide Frielinghaus and Jutta Stroszeck.

As the author states, his initial aim to conduct a stylistic analysis of the Cretan evidence and to establish a new chronology had to be altered, since the important material stored in the Herakleion Museum was inaccessible on account of the construction of the new museum. The focus of the research therefore shifted towards an iconographic analysis of pinakes and, as the subtitle indicates, the function of these objects in ritual and social life on the island of Crete in Late Geometric and Early Archaic times.

The book is divided into 4 main chapters framed by a foreword and an introduction at the beginning and a brief summary at the end. A catalogue and selective yet thorough indices complement the volume. The photographs are carefully chosen and well reproduced.

In the introduction, the author discusses general issues concerning the meaning of terms, such as sacrifice, prayer, and votive offering. Terracotta objects are to be understood as votive offerings, which can be distinguished from a sacrificial act by their longevity. On Crete, as well as in the rest of Greece, there is a change in the votive habit in the later part of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE that is reflected in far more numerous and richer offerings. Of course, this is also true for the evidence from sepulchral contexts. The introduction is quite lengthy, especially because the author wishes to clarify the function of terracottas in general, and pinakes in particular, within sanctuaries. Pilz seems to believe that pinakes actually played a role in the ritual and were carried in processions. However, the evidence in support of his hypothesis – mainly images on Attic red-figure vases and literary sources – do not refer to processions, but rather to the carrying of pinakes by single persons or small groups. His idea that the Cretan pinakes, whose iconography often refers to initiation, were offered within the context of certain initiation rites is plausible, although it would prove that the character of these offerings was private rather than communal.

The first chapter draws generally upon the typology, production, and assemblage of the terracottas. The section on typology offers some new insights into Cretan terracottas of the Early Iron Age. Pilz discusses two main types of human-shaped terracottas: relief pinakes and figures. The latter are single figures with flat or depressed backs, but with greater depth than the figures on pinakes. Scholarship still refers to both groups as pinakes. Pilz argues convincingly that although Phoenician pinakes of Astarte did influence the iconography of Cretan examples, such as the naked goddess pinakes, there were forerunners of molded plaques already in Late- and Sub-Minoan Crete. There is no evidence of the workshops that produced the Cretan pinakes, but it is striking that artists only rarely used the same molds for the production of the figures on relief amphorae and pinakes. Thus, pinakes and relief amphorae were most probably not produced in the same workshops. Relief amphorae and pinakes might even complement (or rather exclude) each other, since no pinakes have hitherto been found at the main production areas of relief amphorae (Prinias and Aphrati). Of course, one needs to emphasize that no sanctuary of the type where usually pinakes were dedicated (suburban and rural) has been excavated in Prinias and Aphrati.

Very important are Pilz's observations on the exchange of types on Crete ('Typenaustausch'). Examples of types known in Praisos appear at smaller sites in the surrounding area, which is expected, but they also appear in Lato. Since a microscopic analysis of the terracottas was not conducted and none of the workshops producing the pinakes could be detected, the background of this exchange – e.g. 'traveling' molds, traveling coroplasts – must remain open. Only one type appears in both east and central Crete (type V7), but generally there are only a few common types among 7<sup>th</sup>-century central and east Cretan terracottas. It would be worth studying this phenomenon – which contrasts with the evidence from later periods – in the future with respect to other material groups, such as ceramics and bronzes.

As regards the setting and assemblage of pinakes, Pilz uses all the possible information, mainly from non-Cretan sources, to define the contexts in which the pinakes were displayed. He concludes that they were chiefly used in religious contexts and discusses some possible non-cultic contexts, as well. I have to disagree with his suggestion that the set of pinakes, two protomai, and the

horns shown on the Berlin Foundry cup indicate a non-cultic setting. In a similar way, the pinakes in the background of a cockfight on a Boiotian kantharos in Würzburg denote the cultic setting of the scene. So far, relief pinakes seem to have been used both on Crete and in mainland Greece (especially Attica) only in cultic contexts, never in graves, and rarely in houses.<sup>1</sup> Cretan pinakes or relief figures, however, are never depicted on local pottery, so we can only deduce from their find-spots that their primary use was in a cultic setting. For a fruitful discussion of the display of these objects or their duration of display in sanctuaries, Crete cannot offer any additional information.

The second chapter addresses find contexts. It is organized topographically, starting from east to central Crete and reaching as far as Axos, Eleutherna, and Melidoni. To the east of these sites, there have not yet been any relevant finds, but there is a general lack of evidence for this part of Crete in the Iron Age. Some Cretan pinakes were found outside of the island: at the Heraia of Argos and Perachora, as well as in Gela, Metapontum, and possibly Tarentum. The chapter provides a fine introduction to Early Iron Age sanctuaries on Crete. Although it references mainly sanctuaries that have already been included in Mieke Prent's study,<sup>(2)</sup> it goes further with respect to the materials from Anavlochos, which Pilz publishes himself, from Kroussonas, a rather unknown but important site in central Crete, and from Eleutherna. The presence of Cretan material in south Italy deserves a more thorough discussion. Unfortunately, Pilz does not offer a hypothesis as to why these pinakes exist in Magna Graecia. Were they offerings made by Cretans? Did Cretan craftsmen working in south Italy produce them? Were they souvenirs from Crete brought back by citizens of these south Italian cities? The conclusions of the chapter summarize the find-spots of the pinakes, primarily in sanctuaries, with the exception of individual pieces discovered in some settlements. Only at Kroussonas can a domestic cult be assumed due to an association with miniature ceramics and animal figurines, whereas at the settlements of Azoria, Donades, and Xeniania the function of the pinakes must remain open. Are these singular pieces stored for other uses? In table 2, Pilz distinguishes three groups of sanctuaries where pinakes have been found. The largest group (A) consists of small suburban or rural open-air cult places connected with fertility cults, where cult activity seems to have started only in the late 8<sup>th</sup> and early 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. The use of sanctuaries of group B seems to have been restricted to a limited number of participants. In such sanctuaries, only small numbers of pinakes were found, often associated with more expensive votives. Cult activity in these sanctuaries commenced already in Proto-Geometric times at the latest. In the sanctuaries belonging to group C, there have been found many relief terracottas and far fewer metal votives. Pilz reaches the conclusion that pinakes were mostly associated with fertility cults in suburban and rural settings. Occasionally, pinakes are also found in larger extra-urban sanctuaries (e.g. Kato Symi).

The chapter on iconography and the development of style is the lengthiest. After an introduction to the chronology of Cretan Daedalic art and the establishment of 5 stylistic groups (I-V), Pilz divides the chapter into two sections dedicated, respectively, to relief figures and pinakes. Each group is further subdivided by motif. Since some analyses, such as the interpretation of naked female figures or multiple female figures, concern both groups – which do not even seem to have a real functional difference – they could have been considered together. In this chapter, Pilz deals especially with the provenance of the various motifs. Interestingly, Pilz assumes that the motif of the naked female figure does not depend on Near Eastern terracottas of a type never found on Crete, but rather on ivory plaques with the same iconography that did find their way to the island. The yellowish-white slip, which can be observed on early terracottas, might have referred to the ivory color of the iconographic prototypes. The iconography of the Cretan Daedalic figures cannot be easily interpreted. Pilz stresses some general, well-known facts, but also formulates some new ideas. For example, his interpretation of the standing male figure in a long garment with an upraised right hand (mainly known from Praisos and its vicinity) as a worshipper, as well as his tracing of the motif's origins in Hethitic and Neo-Assyrian art, appear convincing. Unfortunately, Pilz does not go much further than earlier scholarship with respect to the mythological figures. Narrative scenes are generally quite rare in Cretan art, and it is difficult to discern mythological topics among them. Besides the murder of Agamemnon, the killing of Bellerophon, the Chimaira, Herakles and Pholos, and two gods in a chariot (a still unconvincing interpretation of a singular motif from an unpublished deposit at Siteia), one misses a discussion of the warrior/male child abduction scenes known from east Crete,<sup>3</sup> as well as the puzzling scene of a seated woman holding on her lap a baby with outstretched arms (a figure is missing on the right) on a pinax from Lato.<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to note that clear mythological topics are up to now known only from central Crete, although this impression might be misleading, since east Cretan narrative scenes might simply refer to (unknown) local Minoan rather than pan-Hellenic traditions. The differences between east and central Cretan motifs are generally striking. For example, single male figures appear almost exclusively in east Crete and in the earlier phases, warriors as well as riders are – especially in central Crete – quite rare as opposed to east Crete. Equally interesting is the fact that themes, such as the naked goddess, the master or mistress of the animals, and the sphinx, which are depicted on rather elite metal objects in late Geometric times, also appear in 7<sup>th</sup>-century Crete on larger numbers of clay objects.

The final chapter addresses the meaning and function of the pinakes. Although the significance of the themes could have been treated in the previous chapter along with the iconography, the function of these objects is important to consider, as it could help clarify their role in a cultic context. According to Pilz, one specific scene could even refer to a performed ritual: the *anasyrma* motif, i.e. the unveiling of the pubic area. The motif could be referencing a possible fertility cult. However, the relevant literary sources are not Cretan. It therefore seems unlikely that this type, which occurs not only on Crete, but also in other areas in Greece, has anything to do with such a ritual. In addition, if the iconographic type was introduced from the East, then the motif does not necessarily have any association with Cretan customs.

Concise conclusions round up the volume. The catalogue is organized mainly according to find-spots, rather than types, and each part is further subdivided into the five established stylistic sequences (see above). In terms of the internal arrangement of the material, the structure makes sense, although it creates some problems for the user: If one is searching for a very specific type without knowing its find-spot, the catalogue's arrangement makes the task rather difficult.

In conclusion, the book is a welcome and thorough contribution to the study of Cretan terracottas in the Late Geometric and Early Archaic periods. It covers all the aspects one may expect from a study based mainly on published material, which could not be entirely studied firsthand. We can only hope that in the near future a study of the large amounts of relevant material kept in the Archaeological Museum of Herakleion will be possible.

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**NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> See now K. Karoglou, *Attic pinakes. Votive images in clay*, BAR IS2104, Oxford 2010.



<sup>2</sup> M. Prent, *Cretan sanctuaries and cults. Continuity and change from late Minoan IIC to the Archaic period*, Leiden 2005.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, B.E. Erickson, "Roussa Ekklesia, Part 1: Religion and Politics in East Crete," *AJA* 113, 2009, 372

fig. 16-17.

<sup>4</sup> In his catalogue, p. 331 Lat V?/6. Another puzzling scene shows a warrior obviously stealing or threatening a baby, who holds its arms out to a woman with an upraised left arm. So far, these are only known from East Crete (exact provenance remains unknown), see K. Sporn, "Kretische Mythen versus Mythen über Kreta. Zum Beginn der Darstellung von Mythenbildern kretischer Thematik," in I. Kaiser – W.D. Niemeier – O. Pilz (eds), *Kreta in der geometrischen und archaischen Zeit*, Kolloquium am Deutschen Archäologischen Institut Athen, 27.–19.1.2006 (forthcoming).