



FRONING, HEIDE AND ZIMMERMANN-ELSEIFY, NINA

Die Terrakotten der antiken Stadt Elis.

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With the notable exception of Corinth, the cities and settlements that “controlled” the four panhellenic sanctuaries have shared a similar fate in terms of archaeological exploration and/or the publication of their excavations. Despite several decades of Greek and Austrian field research at Elis, the results have only been published either in preliminary reports¹ or as individual articles.² No monographic studies have emerged on the various material groups or the architecture; Elis has been mainly discussed from a purely historical perspective³ or in association with, and in the shadow of, Olympia.⁴ All the more welcome is the present book, a collaborative study by H. Froning and N. Zimmermann-Elseify, which focuses on terracotta figurines found during the Greek excavations.⁵

The richly illustrated and well-edited volume consists of a very brief introduction signed by both authors, two chapters by Froning on protomes and handmade figures, and one by Zimmermann-Elseify on both molded and handmade figurines, as well as a few molds. Thirty-two plates with grey-scale photographs of all 149 objects – several objects are shown from multiple perspectives – complement the text.

In the introduction, after brief references to the history of the excavations within the area of the ancient city, the authors address the find-spots of the objects, the quality of the clay, problems of chronology, and aspects of import and local production. A large number of terracotta protomes and figurines was found in the theater and in the southwestern part of the agora in the area occupied by temenos H, propylon J, and temple C. An equally impressive number of terracottas was found in a 2-km-long trench through the ancient city, which was dug by the local ephorate during rescue excavations (trench AΔ). A few additional objects were excavated in the south stoa, the gymnasium, and the west cemetery. Although in several cases the exact find-spot is known, the chronology had to be based on stylistic observations, because the immediate archaeological context could not be precisely dated. The general state of preservation of the terracottas is fair, with a few examples preserving traces of color. The rather soft, almost powdery, clay reveals that the major part of the material was produced locally. No doubt Elis had at least one workshop that manufactured figurines for both the city and Olympia. Precise interconnections between the workshops in Elis and those in Olympia or other Eleian centers remain unclear. Direct imports are rare; there is one probably from Boeotia, another from Corinth, and yet a third from Argos. Nonetheless, the authors do address stylistic similarities between locally-produced works and those from Corinth, Boeotia, Athens, and Magna Graecia.

After offering a rather narrow definition of the term “protome” as used in archaeological literature at the beginning of Chapter 2,⁶ Froning discusses the find-spots of 24 of them, noting that many were unearthed in a fill layer in the theater, but must have originated at sanctuaries in the vicinity. With the exception of P 23, the protomes are made of local, soft clay and seem to be products of old, nearly worn-out molds. P 23 from the late-5th century is made of harder, gray clay, but Froning argues that it is nevertheless a local product and explains the discrepancy in color and consistency of the clay as a result of the firing process. All protomes found in Elis are female and, with the exception of two, can be dated to between the mid-5th and the mid-4th century. P 21 and P 22 seem to belong to the period before the Eleian synoecism in 471/70 BCE. Formally speaking, the protomes can be divided into two main groups: a) half-figures with arms under the breast, and b) shoulder-breast figures with no indication of arms. Froning discusses a further typological subdivision of the protomes into types 1a-d through 4 so briefly that her analysis becomes rather sketchy and at times confusing.⁷ Only after a careful reading of the catalogue and a close looking at the images does the reader begin to understand her typological and formal categories. These do make absolutely good sense, but the author does the reader no favor by being extremely laconic. After discussing the interpretive possibilities of protomes in general, she concludes that with the exception of P 24, found in the west cemetery, the Eleian protomes are to be associated with sanctuaries and understood as votive offerings. The brevity that dims the clarity of the analytical part of this chapter becomes an asset in the catalogue, in which Froning presents all necessary information about each piece in a lucid and well-organized fashion in detailed, but not wordy, descriptions and with helpful bibliographical references.

In Chapter 3, Froning presents fragments of 13 handmade figures. Eleven of these objects were found in the trench AΔ. Their archaeological contexts offer no information on their original use. Only two of the figures can be associated with known public buildings. S 2, the upper part of an Amazon’s body from the early 4th century was found in the double stoa, usually identified with the Stoa of the Korkyreans (Paus. 6.24.4-5). Froning suggests that the figure was part of the architectural decoration of the stoa, perhaps an acroterion. S 10, probably belonging to a late-4th-century figure of a dancing Pan was discovered in the east parodos of the theater. Based on technical details, especially the way in which the back was finished, Froning hypothesizes that some figures functioned as architectural sculpture (S 3, 4, 9, 11, and 12), while others (S 5, 7, 8, 10, and 13) probably were free standing vo-

tive offerings. The clay reveals that the figures were produced locally. Head, arms, or hands of each figure are massive, while the main part of the body is usually hollow and was created around wooden supports that were destroyed during the firing process but left their impressions on the clay. Only insignificant remains of color – white, red, and reddish brown – are detectable. With the exception of S 1, which dates to 470/60 BCE, the figures belong stylistically to the period between the late 5th and late 4th century. Froning emphasizes that, as in other areas of Greece, here too large handmade terracotta figures are to be stylistically and formally associated with sculpture, rather than with the contemporaneous, serialized, mold-based, coroplastic products. In two brief sub-chapters, Froning attempts to place local Eleian material in the context of the production of similar objects in Athens and Corinth. Unfortunately, the author could not take into consideration the publication of the figures from the Corinthian sanctuary of Demeter and Kore.⁸ As with the catalogue of the protomes, the entries on the individual objects are clear. Due to the importance of the material, the stylistic analyses here are longer and more detailed than in the case of the protomes. S 3, 4, 6-8, and 13 are published here for the first time.

In the longest chapter of the volume, Zimmermann-Elseify discusses the smaller terracotta figurines. The majority of these objects seem to have been locally produced. Among the 112 objects presented here, only one (T 14) is probably from the Argolid and one (T 77) from Boeotia. In one case (T 108), the provenance is unknown, but it is certainly not Eleian. Although there are a few handmade figurines, most are made with the help of molds. Their front and rear sides were produced separately with molds, while their details, such as attributes, garment parts, hair locks or strands, and even arms or legs were often handmade and then attached to the mold-made parts. Eleian coroplasts often made use of a small, wooden, pointed instrument, especially for rendering facial features and hair. The production of small terracotta figurines seems to have begun in Elis immediately after the synoecism and quickly flourished. Among the most popular types – and produced until the late 4th century – are figurines in the form of a standing Kore with a water-bird on her left arm. The type was certainly influenced stylistically by Corinthian examples. Another popular type, especially in the 5th century, was the female divinity seated on a throne. Towards the end of the 5th century, local artists started producing figurines bearing attributes associated with Bendis (chiton, nebris, Phrygian cap), which Zimmermann-Elseify, however, identifies as representations of Artemis. There are also examples (T 16, 20) that clearly show Artemis according to the usual huntress type. As at many other sites, female figurines dominate the repertoire in Elis, though several examples depicting adolescent men and animals have also been unearthed. In the 4th century, naked or half-naked female figurines associated with the sculptural Aphrodite types became very popular, while iconographic types such as the hydriaphoros, the dancer, or the actor appear rather sporadically. In the Hellenistic period, the productivity of the Eleian workshops seems to have diminished, although figurines in the tradition of the Tanagra figures were still being made. Only a few examples can be securely attributed to the 1st century BCE and the Roman Imperial period. Despite several objects found in graves, the vast majority of the terracotta figurines discussed in this chapter served the needs of worshippers at local sanctuaries. The author – fully aware of the methodological problems – attempts to connect specific iconographic types with individual cults. In the absence of secure contexts, these attributions should be regarded as mere hypotheses. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that Eleian workshops produced a number of types that have no iconographic parallels outside Elis. It comes as no surprise that Corinthian products were a major source of inspiration for Eleian coroplasts, especially in the 5th century. From the second half of the 5th century onwards, relations with Boeotian workshops also grew stronger and became even more important in the 4th century. Athenian and Western Greek workshops had a weaker impact on the types produced in Elis. With the exception of its first part, which covers molds and negative casts, the catalogue is arranged according to iconographic types. Although the entries are as helpful as those in the previous chapters, they are not always as clear. For example, they do not always specify whether the object in question is being presented for the first time or has been known to scholars from previous publications or excavation reports. One often wishes that the distinction between specific and more general bibliography were clearer. Compared to Froning, who focuses on bibliography explicitly related to individual objects, Zimmermann-Elseify often includes references that address more general aspects of iconography. Her citations of the same *LIMC* articles in several entries on iconographically-related objects do not contribute anything new and disturb the fluidity of the text.

The volume has no indices, but this is hardly a problem. The chapters and subchapters are so clearly structured that the reader can easily find all the relevant information he or she seeks. In my view, a topographical map indicating the exact find-spots – a rather easy task due to the small number of objects – would have been very helpful. Despite these truly minor points of criticism, this is a very well edited volume that offers invaluable insights into the history of Elis as an artistic urban center and more generally into the production of terracottas in the western Peloponnese. We can only hope that further monographic studies about the architecture and further material groups from Elis will soon follow. Froning and Zimmermann-Elseify have indeed set the bar very high.

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NOTES

¹ In the *Praktika* or the *Archaiologikon Deltion* (Greek excavations) and in the *Jahreshefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts* (Austrian excavations).

² V. Mitsopoulos-Leon, “Tonstatuetten aus Elis. Zu Heiligtümern weiblicher Gottheiten: Funde aus einem Bothros im Bereich der Agora,” *ÖJh* 70, 2001, 81-116.

³ S. Zoumbaki, *Prosopographie der Eleer bis zum 1. Jh. v. Chr.*, Athens 2005.

⁴ N. Yalouris, *Ancient Elis. Cradle of the Olympic Games*, Athens 1996.

⁵ Not included are architectural terracottas, 4 objects representing Baubo, and an unfortunately unknown number of figurines in the Olympia museum, which the authors, for unspecified reasons, were unable to study.

⁶ According to Froning, a protome should be understood as an anthropomorphic bust in relief but without background. Here, Froning is citing F. Croissant, *Les protomés féminines archaïques. Recherches sur les représentations du visage dans la plastique grecque de 550 à 480 av. J.-C.*, Paris 1983, who, on the contrary, includes in his study what he defines as “protomés en forme de pinax” (p. 19 f.).

⁷ Froning discusses the typology in a paragraph on p. 22. The constant switching from “Form” to “Grundtypus” to “Typus” to “Variation” within a few pages does not make Froning’s categorization clearer.

⁸ N. Bookidis, *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore. The Terracotta Sculpture*, Corinth 18.5, Princeton 2010.