

Production of female figurines at Mastos, Berbati

By
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Abstract

Although only a small part of the Mastos hill in the Berbati Valley has been excavated, the site has produced an amount of figurines in line with some major Mycenaean centres. To date, fragments of 139 well-produced female figurines have been documented, including pieces of almost all known types. The Mastos figurine material provides a unique possibility to study a corpus of figurines from a recognised pottery production area. The female figurines were most likely part of the production in the workshop at Mastos and there are indications that we should perhaps consider that the figurines were destined for distribution within the region and perhaps beyond.

Introduction

This article is based on the Mycenaean female figurines from the excavations conducted by A.W. Persson and Å. Åkerström during the 1930s and 1950s in the area of the 'Potter's Quarter' at Mastos (*Fig. 1*).¹ The excavations

covered the east side of the small hillock of Mastos in the westernmost corner of the Berbati Valley, just over the hills from Mycenae. Studies of the material are still ongoing but have so far yielded fragments of 139 female figurines.² The bulk of these derive from the excavations in the 1950s, more exactly, from the so-called 'Dump', a ridge-like concentration of mainly pottery sherds on the east side of the 'Terrace Wall' (*Table 1*).³ This area has produced 66%

glass beads (Säflund 1965, 28–34, tomb II). The latest published figurines from the area are the ones assembled during the Berbati-Limnes survey. The female figurines amount to eight pieces, which are discussed by Schallin in the recent survey publication (Schallin 1996, 168, fig. 36, nos. 42–43, 75, 77, 81, 143–144, 162). Finally, as recently as 1999 several female figurines were found during a survey covering the whole of the Mastos (forthcoming work by Wells & Lindblom, eds., in the Swedish Institute series).

² I would like to thank Docent Berit Wells and Docent Ann-Louise Schallin, who entrusted me with the publication of the female Mycenaean figurines from the early excavations at Mastos. I would also like to thank the participants of the LH-project for their contributions in the cataloguing process and for the original drawings of the following figurines: Docent Ann-Louise Schallin (*Figs. 2:4; 3:3–6; 5:1; 6:1–3*), Mr. Kálmán Uray (*Figs. 2:9; 5:2*), Dr Nenad Petrović (*Figs. 2:3; 6:4*), Ms. Lena Klintberg (*Fig. 2:7*) and Ms. Karin Backensved (*Figs. 2:1; 3:1; 4; 6:5, 7*). The animal figurines from Mastos are being published by Dr Nenad Petrović and the group figurines by Mr. Kálmán Uray, the former with a contribution in the present volume.

³ The work on the Late Helladic material from Mastos is still ongoing and the designations used in Table 1 and in the text are preliminary.

¹ The first mention of female figurines from Berbati Valley is a short notice in *Archäologischer Anzeiger* where Persson (1935, 201) reports from the first season of work by Swedish archaeologists in the area. During the season the team excavated a chamber tomb, in which were found three complete, somewhat unusual Psi figurines and a seated figurine. The end of the arms of Psi figurines are thickened into a rounded extension, so as to be more "hand-like" (published in Wace 1936, 276–278; Holmberg 1983, 15f., 43, nos. 55–57, all three missing at the time of Holmberg's publication). During the next season, four Phi figurines were excavated in another chamber tomb and published by Säflund. The tomb is dated to the LH IIIA period and the figurines are one Proto-Phi, two Phi-A and one Phi-A kourotophos. They were found together with the milk teeth of a child and

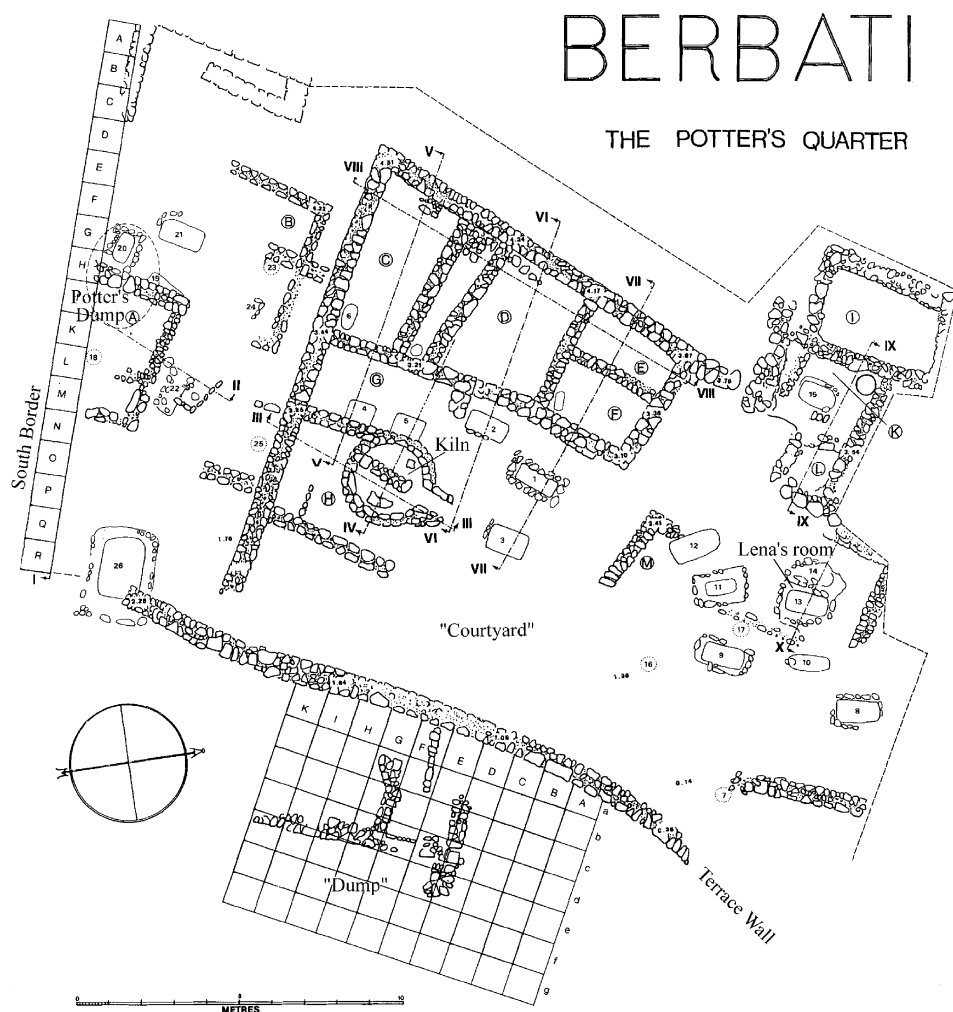


Fig. 1. The Potter's Quarter (Åkerström 1987; extra clarifying details added after information by A.-L. Schallin, pers. comm.).

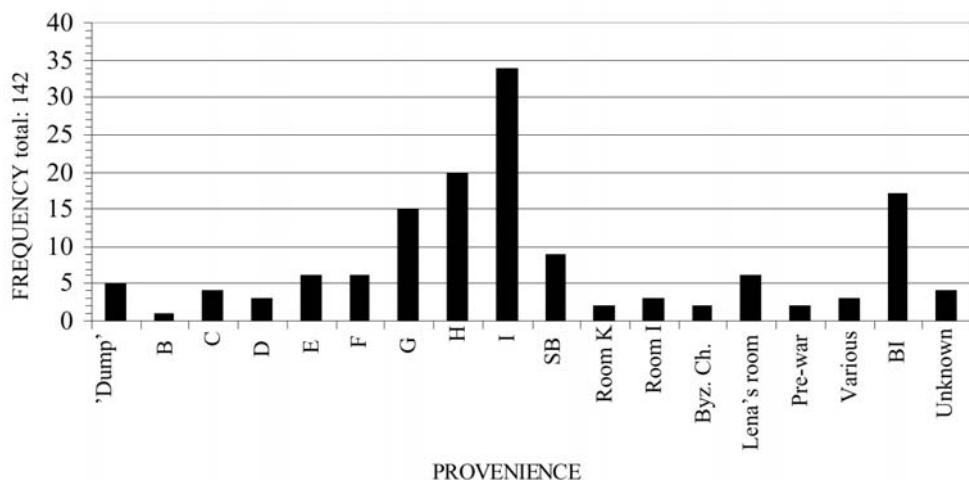
of the total figurine count and sections G, H and I have produced 73% of these figurine fragments. An exact provenience is lacking for 16% of the fragments while the rest were scattered over the site, from the 'South Border' to 'Room I' in the northwest corner of the excavated area. The nature of the 'Dump' and the processes that created the assemblage makes the stratigraphy very difficult to interpret.⁴ However, three find groups have been isolated: the 'Potter's Dump'

with LH II remains, connected with the kiln, 'Room I' with LH IIIA1 pottery; and 'Room C' containing LH IIIA2 pottery.⁵ In a discussion of the deposits, in an appendix to the study of the pictorial pottery, Åkerström mentions fe-

⁴ For the nature of the assemblage, see Persson 1936, 139; Åkerström 1952, 43; *idem* 1987, 24f., 69f.; Schallin 1997, esp. 78f.; *eadem* 2002, 151.

⁵ Åkerström 1987, 24f., 71, 135–138.

Table 1. Provenience of the female figurines from Mastos, Berbati.



* "Dump" includes pieces that cannot be attributed to a specific section (B–I) of this large assemblage; "SB" is the equivalent of South Border; "BI" encompasses the figurines with unknown provenience but which are fitted with Berbati inventory numbers. The total of the chart is 142 on account of that six fragments forming three figurines were found in separate sections: sections I and H; section I and SB; different subsections of section I.

male figurines from the two deposits dating to LH IIIA.⁶ The main focus in his publication, however, is on the pictorial pottery and no details of the figurines are discussed. Thus, unfortunately, only two of the existing female figurine fragments assignable to a specific figurine type can be further attributed to one of these deposits with a reasonable degree of certainty.⁷

Indications of figurine production

Ceramic research today is heavily biased towards pottery studies and many scholarly hours have been devoted to the mapping of the movements of vessels and/or potters within the Mycenaean area. The aim of this article is to present the idea that figurines should also be included among the items manufactured for exchange or trade, or at least that the possibility should be investigated further.

A question that inevitably arises when studying figurines from a recognized pottery production area is whether or not also the figurines were produced at the site. If they were, the figurines from Mastos represent a singular oppor-

tunity to study figurines in their production context. Dealing with material from the area of a potter's workshop, one would expect to find a certain amount of wasters. Expectations have been met here as a large amount of pottery wasters ranging from Middle Helladic ware to LH IIIB shapes have been found, and the presence of a kiln supports the picture further, even though the preserved kiln might have been in use only until LH IIIA1.⁸ Neutron Activation Analysis (NAA) has also showed that the clay composition of the Mycenae/Berbati group dominates the LH III fine painted ware in the Argolid.⁹ The workshop at Berbati has moreover been put forward as the most probable location for the main production site of this

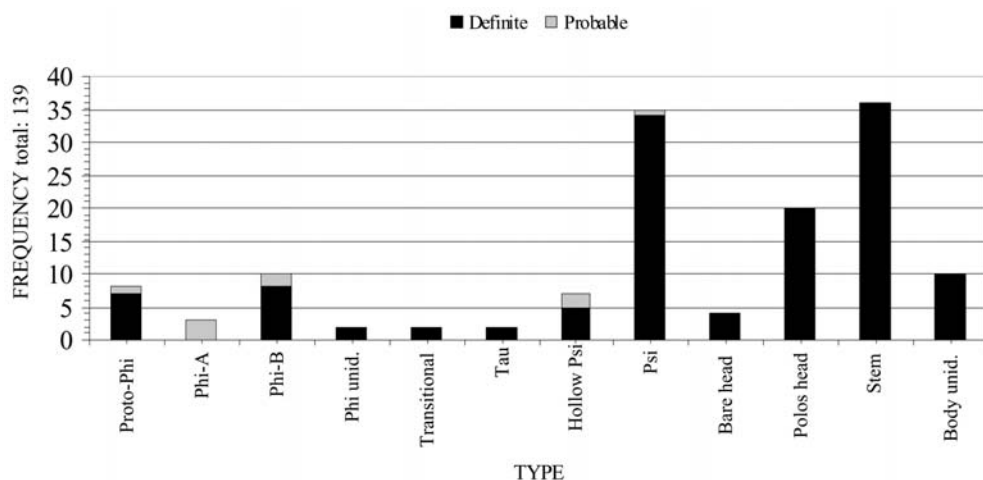
⁶ Åkerström 1987, 135–138 ('Appendix 3'): LH IIIA1 deposit in Room I: "A small number of humans and animals"; LH IIIA2 deposit in Room C: "In all 43 fragments, 18 human, 25 animal."

⁷ See below, section on Proto-Phi figurines.

⁸ Åkerström 1987, 24.

⁹ Mommsen *et al.* 1988, esp. 169, table 2; *idem* 1995, esp. 514f., table 1.

Table 2. Distribution of the recognized types of the Mastos female figurines.



Mycenae/Berbati cluster.¹⁰ The evidence for extensive pottery production at the site during Mycenaean times is therefore strong, although this says nothing about the market for this pottery: recently published results of clay sampling in the Berbati Valley do not include the successful identification of actual clay beds in the valley consistent with the type of clay shown by analyses to have been favoured by the potters in the Mycenaean workshop at Mastos.¹¹

As for the female figurines, only two pieces, both from the 'Dump', show definite signs of misfiring. They have the typical greenish coloured fabric, no preserved slip and dark brown to greyish brown decoration. Moreover, one of the misfired figurines, a stem, leans greatly to one side and is probably deformed as well. Åkerström also mentions a misfired female figurine,¹² although it is not as yet identified as one of the figurines in my study. There are usually examples of overfired figurines in most figurine materials, but the clear misfires, even if only very few, must be considered as definite signs of near-by production. Chemical and/or petrographic characterisation studies would give further indications as to the place of production for the Mastos figurines. In the early

1980s R.E. Jones performed an analysis on some Mycenaean decorated sherds from Berbati in the BSA collection, including three figurines (two animal and one Hollow Psi figurine). He also performed tests on the clay from the streambed of the Asterion, a rivulet passing Mastos to the north, and assigned it to a Mycenaean group of LH IIIB pottery. After testing the pieces of pottery he characterised them as being 'local', a characterisation that would seem to apply to the pieces of figurines also as nothing else was indicated.¹³

All considered, including the similarities in production techniques of pottery and figurines such as the decorative scheme, material used,

¹⁰ Mommsen *et al.* 2001, 84.

¹¹ Whitbread, Ponting & Wells 2007, esp. 184, 187–191. It should be noted that the Mycenaean-Berbati category is only a general designation for the northern Argolid area; the name is based on the two sites that have supplied the majority of the sherds that made up the Mycenaean-Berbati group in the analysis.

¹² Åkerström 1940, 297.

¹³ Jones 1986, 200–202, 897. The scientific methods used were Optical Emission Spectroscopy and Neutron Activation Analysis.

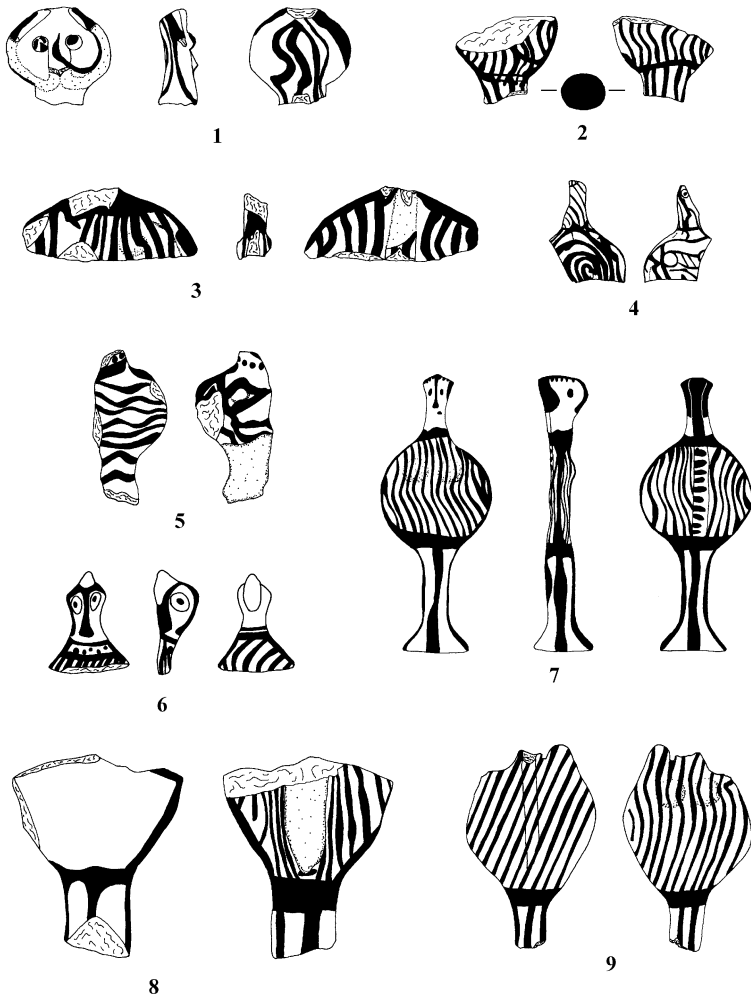


Fig. 2. Proto-Phi (1–5) and Phi figurines (6–9), scale 1:3.

and work facilities needed, an obvious conclusion is that potters from time to time were also figurine makers—in the workshop at Mastos, and probably elsewhere as well.

The Mycenaean figurines from the Mastos excavations

If we may assume that the figurines were indeed produced at the site of Mastos during the Late Helladic period, let us try to form a basis for fur-

ther analysis by looking at the range of types and their chronological implications. The question to keep in mind is how the examination of the figurines can help to expand the understanding of the site of Mastos during the Late Bronze Age.

The corpus includes almost all the known types (*Table 2*) and the variation in the material is illustrated by a few examples: beginning with the typologically earliest figurines, there are no examples of the Naturalistic type. There is,

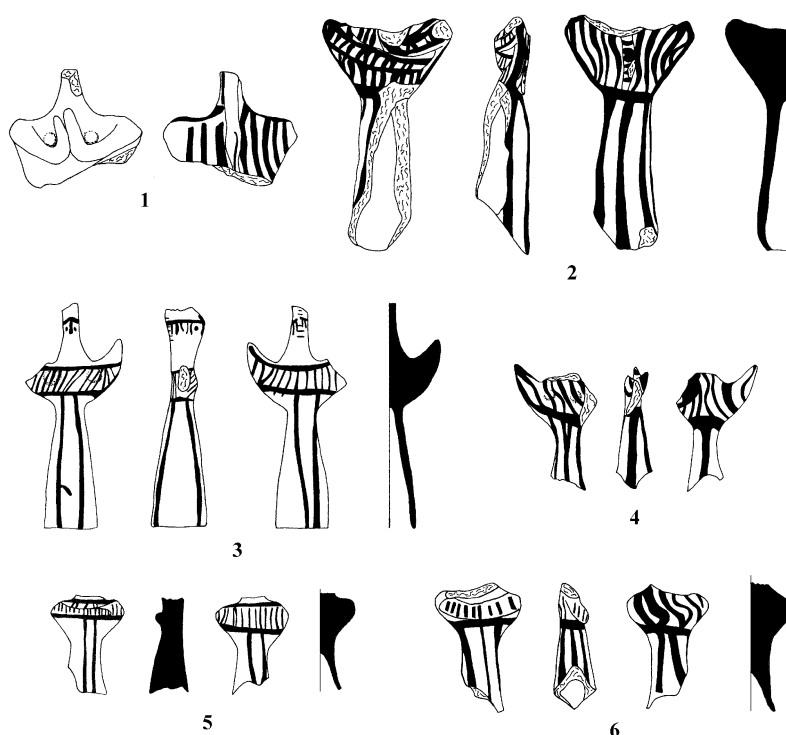


Fig. 3. Transitional (1–2), Hollow Psi (3–4) and Tau figurines (5–6), scale 1:3.

however, a proportionally high amount of Proto-Phi figurines, ranging from early to fully developed pieces. One of the earliest (*Fig. 2:1*) has arms applied at the front of the body and especially highlighted, pellet breasts, a combination confined to the LH IIIA1 period.¹⁴ The developed pieces are generally of a more common type, including pieces with both a slight plasticity of the arms (*Fig. 2:3*) and very stylised versions where the arms are only hinted by painted stripes (*Fig. 2:2*). Developed but less common is a figurine (*Fig. 2:4*) that has a small, bird-like face, set on a tall neck. The back of the neck is decorated with neatly spaced, diagonal lines resembling two heads from Midea and Mycenae, respectively, the latter also in combination with the uncommon spiral motif on the back.¹⁵ The small, applied eyes are marked in the centre by a dot. One piece (*Fig. 2:5*), with a very broad body covered with horizontal stripes, deserves

special mention. It is one of two figurine fragments that might derive from the LH IIIA1 deposit found by Åkerström in Room I, and as such one of the only two figurines that so far could be assigned to a narrowly dated context.¹⁶

One of the three probable Phi-A figurines has a short hair knot (*Fig. 2:6*), which is uncommon but paralleled by a piece from Mycenae.¹⁷ They both also have a necklace in a reserved zone at

¹⁴ Weber-Hiden 1985, 309, pl. 3.

¹⁵ Midea (F3): Ostense 1998, 152, 242, pl.108; Mycenae (53-671): French 1971, 146, pl. 24a.

¹⁶ The second piece is an unusually decorated, broad and oval stem.

¹⁷ Mycenae 53-42: French 1971, 119, fig. 16d.

the front. There are only eight definite Phi-B figurines and only two of the securely attributed ones are of the standard Phi-B type, one of which is almost intact (*Fig. 2:7*).¹⁸ Another piece (*Fig. 2:8*) has all the general characteristics of a Phi-B figurine but has an estimated height of approximately 18 cm. One of the most unique figurines in the Mastos material is a Phi figurine with an unexplainable lump on the right shoulder (*Fig. 2:9*). A stylised version of a kourotrophos comes to mind, but they tend to show more detail and the preference is to depict the child with its head on the mother's left side.

The two Transitional figurines (*Fig. 3:1–2*) are interesting, due to the fact that there is one of each sub-type and the types are found at very few sites.¹⁹ Both in body shape and arm arrangement they fall nicely into the two groups established by E. French and exemplified by figurines from Mycenae and Kara Hymettos.²⁰ The figurine of the diamond-shaped type is best preserved and has a very fortunate break at the front of the stem allowing for an insight into its manufacturing technique. It has apparently been fashioned from a c. 7 mm thick, flattened piece of clay that has been folded into the hollow stem, the upper body then flattened and the arms cut and folded or possibly applied separately over the body. The inside has striations very similar to wheel marks that seem to be traces left by a flattening device.

The Hollow Psi figurines are quite plentiful with seven examples, whereas the two Tau figurines are perhaps more in line with what could be expected. There are very standardized, well-produced examples of both types (*Fig. 3:3* and *3:5*), but also figurines of seemingly lower standard or local taste, with less delicate and organized lines (*Fig. 3:4* and *3:6*). According to French, interestingly enough both Hollow Psi and Tau figurines are otherwise almost completely restricted to the most well known sites in the Argolid and Attica (including Aegina and Salamis), with examples also from Thebes and Pylos.²¹

The many Psi figurines are largely of standard type with one exception. One figurine

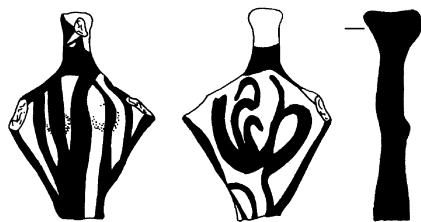


Fig. 4. Unusual Psi figurine, scale 1:2.

(*Fig. 4*) has a flat, triangular body with very short and pointed arms in a Psi gesture.²² No details are rendered apart from a pair of small breasts, almost completely moulded into the body. The back of the head protrudes outwards and upwards and can possibly be interpreted as a crown/hat or a less developed polos. The head is covered with disorganised lines: the front of the body features broad vertical bands and the back, a spiral motif resembling a flower. This piece should prob-

¹⁸ This figurine is attributed to Berbati with a question mark, and as such perhaps a piece that was salvaged after the war. The possibility of a non-Berbati provenience should be considered. There are also two other definite Phi-B figurines but they are both well below normal height, one being a genuine miniature.

¹⁹ French 1971, 185–187. This is also a new contribution to French's distribution chart, where the box for Transitional figurines is left empty (p. 185).

²⁰ French 1971, 123f., pl. 17a, b.

²¹ French 1971, 126, 128, 185–187. It is noticeable that the Sanctuary of Aphaia on Aegina with a total amount of 339 female figurine fragments has the same amount of Hollow Psi figurines as Mastos (Pilafidis-Williams 1998, 14–16).

²² The triangular, asymmetrical body shape finds two nice parallels among the figurines from the Berbati-Limnes survey (Schallin 1996, nos. 81 and 162), both however without head and most of the decoration, making any further comparison impossible.

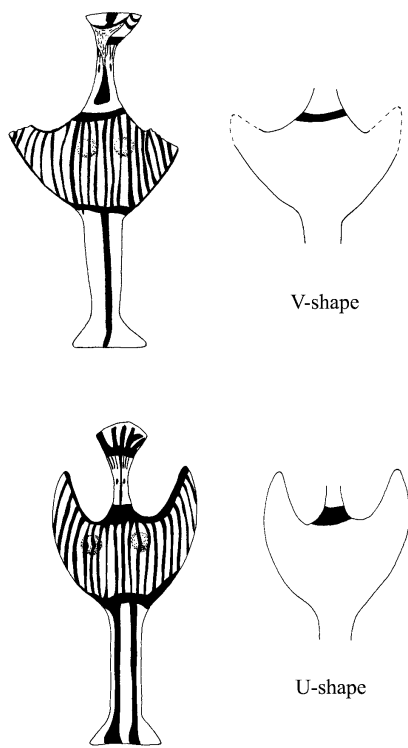


Fig. 5. The V- and U-shapes of Psi figurines from Mastos, Berbati, scale 1:3.

ably be seen as an early version and a dating to LH IIIA2 seems reasonable.²³ Notable among the Psi figurines is also a distinction between two different body shapes—a U-shaped and a V-shaped upper body (Fig. 5). The shape is also transferable to the space between the arms and neck on the pieces where this area is preserved. There is no apparent chronological difference between the two groups and the relation between head, body and stem is the same in both instances.²⁴ Even so, the difference could nevertheless be a chronological one. Another interesting possibility is that they are instead the result of different hands in the same workshop. No parallel has been found for the three pieces from the chamber tomb excavated in 1935. These figurines, which appear to have been produced by one individual, can be dated to LH IIIA2

and display certain early features such as a broad and tall body, rounded arm tips and perhaps also the monochrome polos.²⁵ They should probably be considered the earliest Psi figurines from the Berbati area and all the Psi figurines from Mastos should thus be given a later dating.

There are so far no examples of the High-Waisted Psi type, as defined by French,²⁶ among the Mastos material. Several pieces from Mastos have a higher than “natural” waist, all resembling Mycenae 52-41 and thus none with an undisputable high waist in the manner of Mycenae 29-181.²⁷ It is not clear whether French acknowledges raised waistlines also on Psi proper.²⁸ Possibly the figurines from Mycenae are more stylised, and therefore more easily classifiable to one or the other of French’s typology, but this is not the case in nearby Berbati. Whether or not the lack of this type is a reflection of chronology, a lower degree of stylisation at Mastos or simply local preference, is a question that remains open. In terms of chronology, it could mean that the High-Waisted Psi type was later than the production of figurines at Mastos. Weber-Hiden has assigned the type

²³ A possible attribution to the Late Psi type must also be mentioned, which is indicated by the seemingly less projecting arms and the lengthened neck. However, the applied breasts, characteristic for Late Psi, are lacking, and in combination with the lack of developed polos, an early Psi proper attribution seems to be most likely.

²⁴ That is, the body (neckband-waistband) in relation to the stem and head, with a general chronological development from similar height of the body and stem to a body equalling the head in height.

²⁵ Holmberg 1983, 43f.; French 1971, 128f.

²⁶ French 1971, 131–133. High waist being when “... the painted waist comes above the junction between the body and the stem ...” (Pilafidis-Williams 1998, 16).

²⁷ French 1971, pl. 19b.

²⁸ French (1971, 128) limits the Psi type proper to “... those figurines with Psi type arms, columnar stems, and natural waist-line. Those with hollow stem and those with columnar stem and high waist are treated separately ...”.

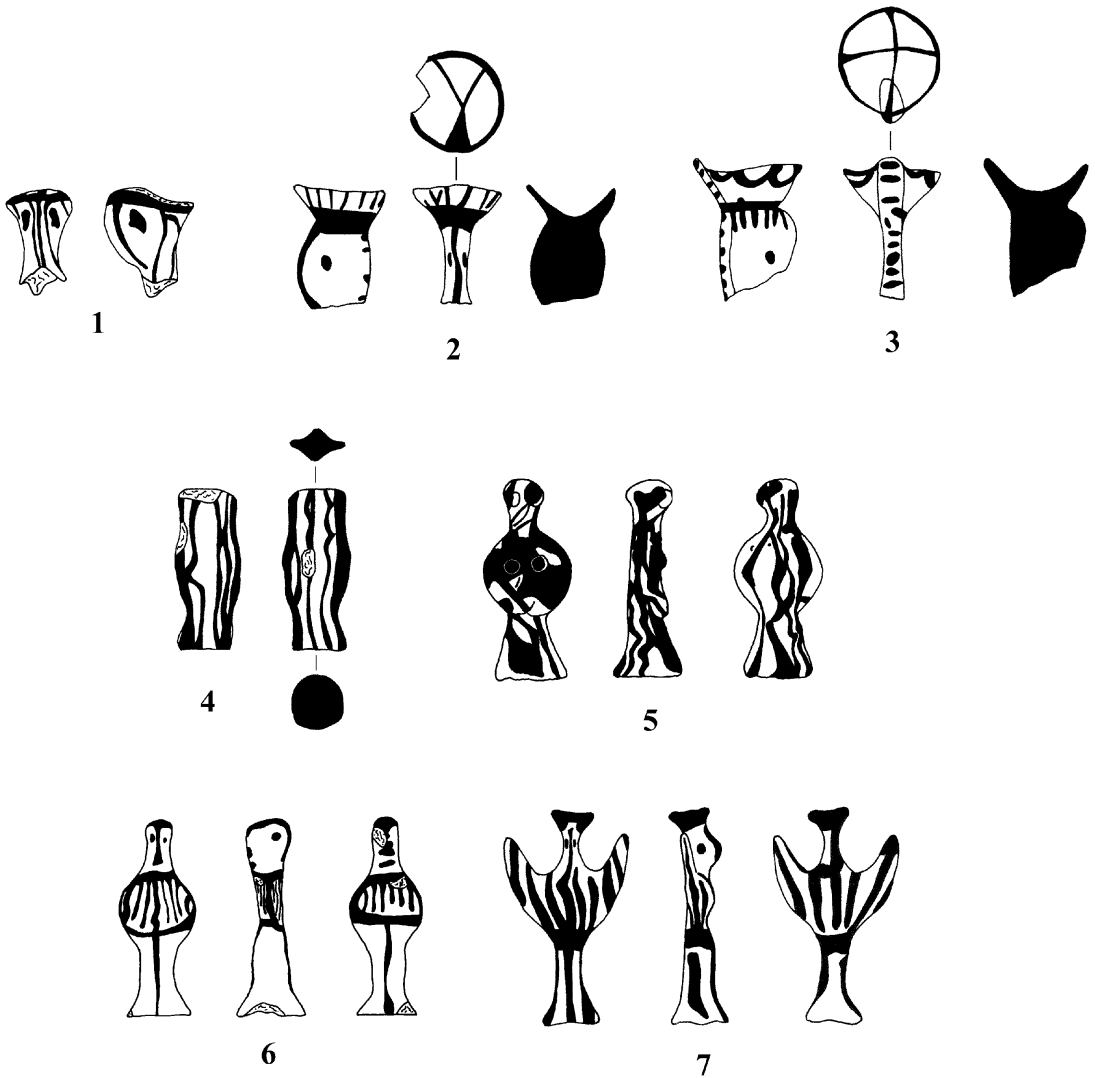


Fig. 6. Bare head (1), Polos heads (2–3), unusual stem (4) and miniatures (5–7), scale 1:2.

to a use phase limited to LH IIIB1, a rather short duration of production in comparison with most other types of female figurines.²⁹ During this period, however, pottery production at Mastos appears still to have been extensive, which in turn would indicate that the figurine production ceased before the pottery production, or that the lack of the High-Waisted Psi type is rather to be characterized as the result of a more limited repertoire.

Heads and stems are dominated by polos-bearing heads and columnar stems with most commonly three bands. There are only a few bare heads, one being one of the misfired pieces (*Fig. 6:1*). This head, somewhat larger than normal, has the main characteristics of a Phi head but the very pointed back of the head with

²⁹ Weber-Hiden 1985, Abb. 1.

a cross on top closely resembles a Psi-type figurine. Lines of differing length covering the face further distinguish this typologically transitional figurine. The polos-bearing heads are all very well produced and display all the common features, the most common decoration being festoons, and the distribution between painted and applied plaits is almost even (*Fig. 6:2–3*). Finally one stem is worth special mention (*Fig. 6:4*). It has a diamond-shaped cross section and is to my knowledge a unique piece.

The fairly large number of small-sized figurines, including three genuine miniatures, is also noticeable. Each of these three represents a very nice example of its respective type, i.e., one Proto-Phi, one Phi-B and one Psi figurine (*Fig. 6:5–7*).

To sum up, the Mastos figurine corpus supplies us with a very varied range of material and a combination of both standard types and pieces that display an unusually high degree of local inventiveness. For the Proto-Phi figurines, this is in keeping with their early nature but since a large part of the Mastos material is catalogued, and considering the variation of the material, it is notable that only two securely attributed Phi-B figurines have been found that conform completely to the typology. Most of the figurines are wearing a polos and are thus assignable to LH IIIA2 through LH IIIB.³⁰ The increase in standard-type figurines during this main period of figurine popularity seems to be more or less confined to Psi and Hollow Psi figurines. There are no figurines from Mastos, or to my knowledge from the Berbati area, that can be securely attributed to the Late Psi type.

The chronology and purpose of the figurines

By attempting to set this discussion into a chronological framework a picture is presented of a varied, small-scale production until sometime in the LH IIIA2 period when the polos-wearing Psi figurines first appeared and the production range became more standardised. From a pronounced local touch to the general

types during most of the LH IIIA period there is a gradual conformation to the Mycenaean standard. This fits very well with the main development of the Berbati Valley as presented from the intensive survey conducted in the region. The Late Helladic period in the valley begins with signs of an independent, self-governing region and in late LH IIIA1/early LH IIIA2 the production of pictorial pottery commences.³¹ The major period of activity in the Berbati Valley falls within the LH IIIA2–LH IIIB1 periods. Around 80% of the catalogued Late Helladic sherds from the survey can be attributed to these periods.³² At Mastos there are indications of an intensification of production during this time, suggesting a change of the workshop's organisation, probably as a result of Mycenae's annexation of the site in the wake of its own expansion.³³ There is strong evidence of the manufacture of pictorial pottery at Mastos from LH IIIA2 through LH IIIB. Most probably the local inhabitants provided such vessels together with other products from the valley as commodities destined for trade and distribution within the exchange network of the palaces.³⁴ The pictorial vases represented, however, only a minor part of the pottery production in the Potter's Quarter and other kinds of fine, decorated vessels were also part of the repertoire, most notably open shapes such as deep bowls and kylikes.³⁵

Considering the abundance of figurines from the area of a workshop along with the indications of figurine production discussed above, the question of local production of figurines at Mas-

³⁰ E. French (1971, 176) puts the beginning of the polos at the very end of the LH IIIA period. The differing numbers of Phi and Psi figurines is even more noticeable when adding the polos heads and the stems of probable Psi attribution. The Psi type figurines constitute more than half of the corpus of type-attributed figurines.

³¹ Schallin 1996, 171.

³² Schallin 1996, 169, fig. 35; *eadem* 2002, 148.

³³ Schallin 1996, 170–172; *eadem* 1997, 82.

³⁴ Åkerström 1987, 119; Schallin 1996, 171.

³⁵ Schallin 2002, 153–155.

tos seems to be settled. It is a conclusion that fits well into the general picture of the area. What remains to be discussed is the purpose of the figurines after production. Mycenaean figurines are connected with the popular cult. The large numbers are mainly found in the vicinity of major Mycenaean centres. The site that has yielded the most figurines is of course Mycenae, followed by Tiryns.³⁶ The amount of figurines found at Mastos is also quite impressive considering the relatively small area of the workshop, especially as 66% derive from the area of the 'Dump' (10 × 7 m). There are already more female figurine fragments from Mastos than from the whole of Asine (LH IIIA–LH IIIC)³⁷ and close to the same amount as has been recovered on the acropolis of Midea (LH IIIA–LH IIIC).³⁸ Furthermore, the Mastos figurine count equals the 127 pieces from the Hagia Triada/Kleines open-air sanctuary (the middle of LH IIIB)³⁹ and comes close to the 175 fragments of female figurines from the Marmaria sanctuary at Delphi.⁴⁰ There are no potential cult installations at Mastos apart from two successive benches in 'Room C'. On discovery they were interpreted as altars based on the associated finds, including figurines, and a general resemblance to the similar structure at Asine.⁴¹ It has, however, been suggested more recently that the benches equally well could have been used within the area of pottery production or be the remains of a domestic context.⁴² There are, thus, no compelling signs for the use of a large amount of figurines within the workshop after production. It cannot be excluded, however, that a few do derive from religious activities as the use of figurines need not be connected to any specific or marked structure. We do not know much about the Mycenaean settlement outside the workshop but the high amount and spatial concentration of the figurines indicate in my view that the material should not be assigned exclusively to local settlement use.

It has been suggested elsewhere that production of surplus pottery for trade started at the Mastos workshop already in the LH II period featuring mostly drinking vessels, e.g. Ephyraean goblets and Vapheio cups. This produc-

tion may very well have been the basis for the wealth enabling one person to build a tholos tomb, which was used on only one occasion in LH IIIA1. The workshop with its trained workmen then came under Mycenae's control, with the fine ware production continuing and flourishing.⁴³ At this point the extended production was geared towards pictorial pottery but also delicate open vessels, as mentioned above, and probably also intended for a wider distribution than the immediate vicinity of the Mastos hill. The large amount of figurines found in the

³⁶ During a week in August 2001, I had the opportunity to view a large number of the female figurines from Tiryns, counting close to 900 fragments with a clear dominance of the Late Psi type. I am very grateful to Prof. Joseph Maran for this opportunity. For Mycenae, see Schliemann 1878, 105; French 1971, 107, 181. A difficulty with this argument is naturally that only the larger centres have been extensively documented.

³⁷ Frödin & Persson 1938, 308–310 (7 female and 3 animal figurines are published); Fransson 1994 (32 female figurines); Hallesjö 1987 (46 animal figurines).

³⁸ Ostenso 1998, 151–156, nos. F1–F39 and Demakopoulou & Divari-Valakou 2001 (93 female figurine fragments). Possible figurines from the East Gate area, excavated by P. Åström, have not been included.

³⁹ Kilian 1990, 185–190.

⁴⁰ Demangel 1926, 5–36.

⁴¹ In 1937 the room was uncovered and two subsequent phases of the complex were discovered. In the earliest building, dating to LH IIIA, the excavators found a built-in bench in the southwestern corner and below it two or four female Mycenaean figurines. Åkerström (1938, 553) mentions four figurines, although in a later article (1952, 38) he mentions only two fragmentary figurines. This structure, with the finds left *in situ*, was built over in LH IIIB by a similar room within a larger complex. In the western wall of this new room a stone-cut bench was found and on it a fragmentary figurine (Åkerström 1938, 553; *idem* 1952, 38–41). Another structure mentioned as possibly being of ritual function is a bottomless krater on a bench in 'Room K'. See also Schallin 2002, 144f., fig. 3.

⁴² French 1971, 107; Schallin 1997, 79.

⁴³ Wells & Runnels 1996, 456f.

small area of the workshop suggests that they may have been another, smaller part of the surplus production at this time.

The question that must be asked is whether or not the Mycenaean settlements produced the figurines they needed or whether we should consider a trade, or perhaps a supervised production and distribution of figurines in various places. When studying the figurines from Tiryns' Syringes, I. Weber-Hiden noted that almost all the comparanda she found derived from the major sites in the Argolid. She suggested that the figurines may all have been products of one single workshop and that they were distributed to different settlements from there.⁴⁴ The same could be said for the comparanda of the Mastos figurines. A comparison like this, however, is dependent on the available publications on the subject, which here are very much concentrated around major Mycenaean centres. A further complication is that the majority of comparanda lies within the typologically earlier types, which due to their often very detailed and imaginative nature are more easily compared with other pieces. The standardisation of the types during late LH IIIA2 to LH IIIB renders instead any visual comparison of figurines from different sites very difficult. For any variations noted, one must also consider the variation within one potter's repertoire and style of decoration. A study of micro-variations, within and between settlements, could nevertheless still prove to be helpful. Specific artistic or technical traits, such as perhaps the distinction presented above between a U-shaped and V-shaped upper body of Psi figurines from Mastos, could potentially help to identify characteristics of certain workshops and thus complement the few scientific analyses including figurines in their samples. Thus, NAA performed on chosen pieces of the figurines from the Sanctuary of Aphaia on Aegina indicated that some of them were not locally made but had clay mainly consistent with that of the Mycenae/Berbati cluster.⁴⁵ Whether the distribution is a result of an import of a group of figurines, or of

movement of people from the Argolid to the sanctuary, remains open for discussion. One example of the group, however, is a figurine with paddle-shaped arm tips, otherwise known only from the narrow area of Mycenae, Berbati, Prosymna and Tiryns.⁴⁶ The evidence in this case suggests that the paddle-shaped arm-tips were a local feature confined to the Argolid, perhaps even to one workshop.

Mastos as a production centre for Mycenaean female figurines

The Mastos figurines have a chronological range of LH IIIA1 to LH IIIB. Their chronological development as a whole follows that of the pottery frequencies in the valley, which puts the peak of activity at the Mastos to LH IIIA2–LH IIIB1. The high amount of Psi type figurines, including Hollow Psi, polos heads and at least half of the unidentified stems,⁴⁷ suggests that there might be predominance towards the later of the two periods, an attribution that would match the time when the larger complex was built at the site.⁴⁸ The workshop and settlement were peacefully abandoned sometime in LH IIIB2 and there is nothing that would suggest a

⁴⁴ Weber-Hiden 1990, 55.

⁴⁵ Pilafidis-Williams 1998, 166–169 (Appendix 2).

⁴⁶ Aegina: Pilafidis-Williams 1998, 20, no. 81, pl. 35; Mycenae: French 1971, 128f., tomb 80, NM 3104; Tiryns: Rudolph 1973, 60–63, tomb XIV, no. 11, pl. 35; Prosymna: Blegen 1937, e.g., tomb 38, no. 730, and tomb 45, no. 635. According to Pilafidis-Williams and French there is also one piece from Salamis (NM 3670). These tips of Psi arms, Aegina and Mycenae being the most extraordinary examples, are considered an early trait of the Psi type before the crescent shape with pointed ends is fully established.

⁴⁷ This assumption is based on the inference that as the Psi type is the major category of the classified figurines at Mastos, at least half and probably more of the unidentified stems should also be assigned to this group. Very few stems show early traits.

⁴⁸ Åkerström 1987, 49; *idem* 1987, 24.

later dating for any of the figurines in the present study.⁴⁹

The female figurines were in all likelihood produced at Mastos as suggested by their large numbers, the misfired pieces, the location, and by their variety and many unique features, signs of relative closeness to the place of production. Furthermore, the high quality of the pottery as well as of the figurines suggests that professional workmen were engaged at the site. The quantity of female figurines from the Mastos area is unexpected and equals or even surpasses the amount of female figurines found at some well-known Mycenaean centres. Mastos most likely managed a surplus production of pottery already during the Early Mycenaean periods, a tradition that continued into the LH IIIB2 period, and there are indications that figurines became produced for an external market in LH IIIA2, around the time of the introduction of Psi type figurines. The distribution area for the figurines, however, remains uncertain. LH IIIA2–LH IIIB is the dominant period for the masses of fine ware pottery found in the ‘Dump’ and this is also the main period of popularity for Phi-B as well as Psi figurines.⁵⁰ In view of figurine data from other Mycenaean locations, it is surprising that only 2 definite (and 1 probable) Phi-B fragments compared with 25 fragments and one probable whole figurine of standard Psi

have been found within this limited area.⁵¹ The possibility of a chronological explanation for the predominance of Psi figurines should be considered but unfortunately we lack the stratified deposits needed for a definite interpretation. Another possibility would be that one production centre specialised in, or at least concentrated on, one type of figurine, Psi figurines in the case of Mastos, reflecting production directives or mere fashion, an aspect which should not be overlooked.

The evidence for production of female figurines at Mastos, thus, is convincing. Furthermore there is cause for suggesting that this production went beyond local needs. The discrepancies in numbers of Phi-B and Psi figurines could be one sign of a directed production. Finally, it is a thrilling possibility that Mastos may have been one of the main suppliers of figurines in the Mycenaean cluster, at least during LH IIIA2–LH IIIB1 when the figurine production peaks. This is, however, a question that for the moment will have to be left unresolved.

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⁴⁹ Åkerström 1987, 24.

⁵⁰ For the chronology of Phi figurines, see French 1971, 118 and Weber-Hiden 1985, 308, Abb. 1.

⁵¹ In Weber-Hiden’s study of the Syringes at Tiryns this ratio is six Phi-B figurines to 23 Psi figurines (total figurine count is 66), of which only two are standard Psi figurines and the bulk is Late Psi and Hollow Psi. This puts the dating mostly at LH IIIC (Weber-Hiden 1990, 53). At Midea (Ostenso 1998) the ratio is eight (six definite) Phi-B to twelve Psi figurines (four Hollow Psi, four standard Psi, two High-Waisted Psi and two Late Psi-A). The chronology ranges from LH IIIA–LH IIIC. With the addition of the West Gate figurines the amounts are adjusted to 14 standard Psi figurines compared to eleven Phi-B figurines.

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