

FIGURINE FROM CUCUTENI–TRIPOLYE

A life in your hands?

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CUCUTENI–TRIPOLYE CULTURE

East Romania, Moldovia, Moldova & Eastern Ukraine
5000-3000BCE
Settlements varied from 20-700+ buildings
Permanent/functional settlements

Bailey, 2005

Image: Lazarovici et al. 2009;14









ART OF THE CUCUTENI-TRIPOLYE

Above: Cucuteni B pots with geometric, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic motifs. (Lazarovici et al. 2009;78)
Top Right: Monumental altar (Lazarovici et al. 2009;160); Top Left: Parto of a Hoard from Ariuşd (Lazarovici et al. 2009;16)

FIGURINE FROM DRĂGUŞENI



Left: Cucuteni A figurine from Drăguşeni(Amarie, 2013)

- Cucuteni A/ Tripolye B1 period
  - 4600–3900 BCE
- 23.7cm tall and 7.4cm wide at the hips
- Fired clay
- Discoloured from handling
- Incised markings
- Is it a sedentary posture?



Map of the main sites of the Cucuteni/Tripolye culture with Drăguşeni (site 14) highlighted (Bailey, 2005 pg.104)

DIFFERENT FIGURINES



- Usually found individually
  - Fragmented
- Usually followed a contemporary trend
  - Carving patterns could vary
- Individual identity no prioritised
- Sexually ambiguous
- Not always incised

"Anthropomorphic Plastic Art from Cucuteni A"

-(Lazarovici et al. 2009;80)



Fig. 3: Three equal lumps of clay used in an experiment by the author (Photo by Cornelia Cătuna).



Fig. 4: Experimental modelling the conical legs (Photo by Cornelia Cătuna)



Fig. 5: Experimentally modelled conical legs and pelvis (Photo by Cornelia Cătuna).



Fig. 6: Twisting the point of the feet during an experiment by the author (Photo by Cornelia Cătuna).



Fig: 7: Forming the torso by pinching the clay during an experiment by the author (Photo by Cornelia Cătuna).



Fig. 8: Experimental modelling of the head (Photo by Cornelia Cătuna).



Fig. 9: Final assemblage of the experimental figurine by pressing the torso onto the pelvic area (Photo by Cornelia Cătuna).



Fig. 11. A figurine made by a 9 year old child from the village of Vădastra after three years from his first experiment (Photo by the author in 2003)

Recreating a figurine with "Ritual Modelling"

-(Gheorghiu, 2010;64,65)







Making the figure - modern perspective (Bull, 2023)

TAKE AWAY POINTS

- Formed the body by squeezing out one large piece of clay
  - Did not allow for the buttocks and wouldn't have allowed for some posters
- The clay needs to have dried out enough to carve - 'Leather phase'
  - It would have had to be carved in multiple settings
    - Carving made the ridges dry out quicker
- The body bend required it to sit somewhere propped up
- Quality light was needed
- Requires a steady hand- a technically skilled adult
- Hypnotic/meditative, repetitive work
- Spiral had to be impressed by something coiled

BIOGRAPHY OF THESE OBJECTS

- Clay shaped to human form
  - Uniform pattern for it
- Made by individual? Group?
  - To be an individual? Is there an identity to it?
- Transformed by fire into a permanent object (and more hardwearing)
- Portable size but not carried around with daily tasks
  - What with such similar items between settlements, were they transported far and wide (spread of knowledge, skill)
- Often deposited in fragments.



'Female and Male figurines' (Ramon2002, 2008)



Male?

Hatchings on belt and bandolier

-suggests the hatchings represent a woven fabric

Arranged with legs spread apart & a penis(?)

Prominent, pressed in nipples - this can be on both

Pellets can also be knees and navels

(Bailey, 2005)

Female?

Flat chest but ornamented?

Exaggerated buttocks

Legs always together

Posture of sitting up/ resting against something or leaning forwards

Total body coverage

Altenative interpretation:

Alive and shrouded?

Non-gendered



Images: (George Dumitriu; aer Mantu et al. *1997.)*



Cucuteni A figurine from Drăguşeni (Amarie, 2013)

IDENTITY

- Obscurity of the body and face
  - Total body covered
  - Discouragement from focusing on the individual (Bailey, 2005)
    - Heads sometimes made of discs (Bailey, 2005)
  - A way of manipulating power in communities? (Gheorghiu, 1996)
- Strict rules for design?
  - Tattoos, ornamentation, clothing(Marinescu-Bîlcu, 2000)
    - By extension, scarification?



Incised Figurines and reimagined wrappings in Gheorghiu (2010;67)

FUNERARY & ADORNMENT

- Little evidence for in-settlement burials
  - Occasionally external tombs found
- Patterning could be a shroud
  - Posture suggests body is wrapped
  - Chest piece could be a necklace
  - Decoration is meant to be adornment?
- Stand in for corpse - a transition of identity? (Bailey, 2005)
  - Ritualised deposition (Chapman, 2000)



Ornamented Figurine, (Lazarovici et al. 2009;80)

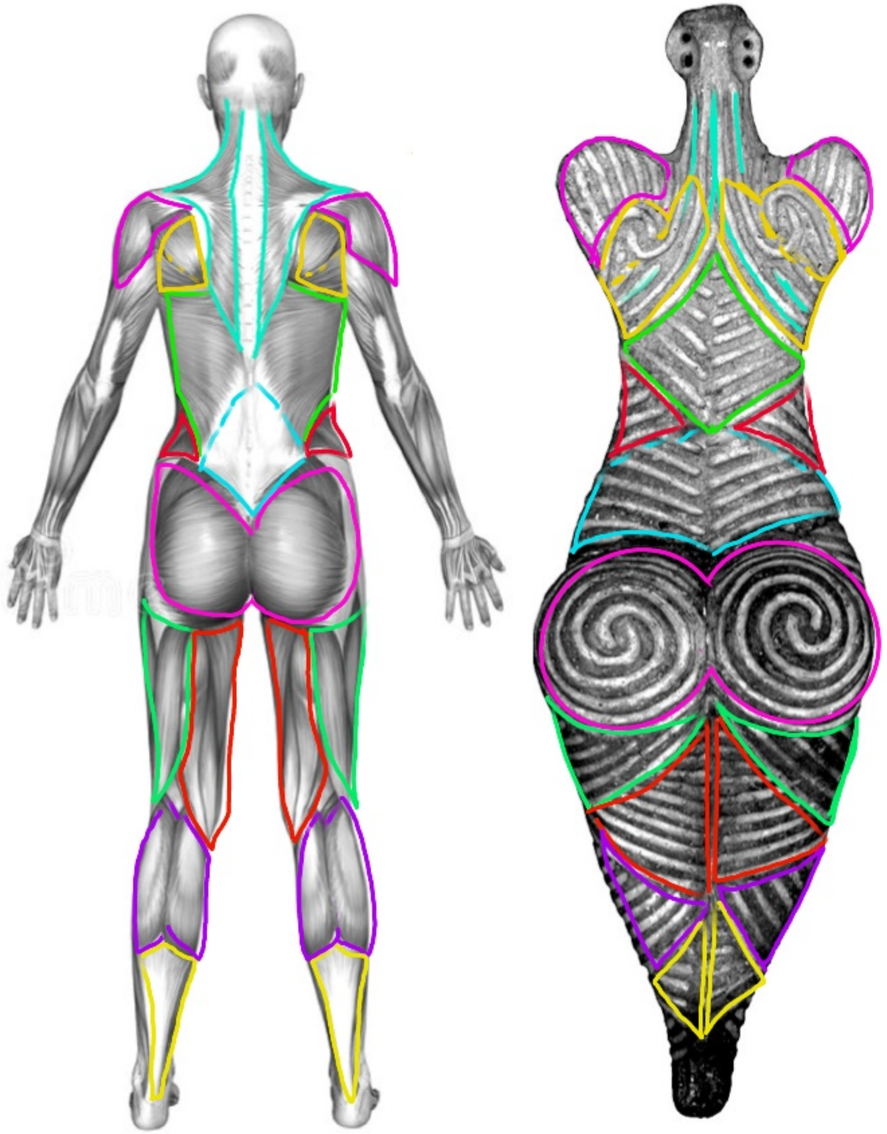
RELIGIOUS USE



"Cult Complex from Dwelling"

-(Lazarovici et al. 2009;117)

- Found in matched pairs along with pots
  - Associated with dance (Bailey, 2005)
- The figurines arms are upward curving, a dynamic shape?
- Containers representative of sanctuaries? (Lazarovici, 2009)
- Offerings to soon to be 'dead' houses (Chapman, 2000)
- Representative of a Goddess and/or ancestors?



PHYSICAL BODIES

- Direction and groupings
- Prominent bones and fine spirals
  - Tactile terrain?
- Possible uses:
  - Medicinal/healing?
  - OR
  - Anthropophagy (Bolomey, 2000)
    - Mortuary record almost non existent except for isolated, gnawed, cut and fragmented nones

Left: Rear view of Muscle Anatomy (photo from Shapesense); right: Rear view of Cucuteni A figurine (Amarie, 2013) (Drawing on photos by E. Bull)

A NOT -SO- SMALL LIFE?

Thank you.



Cucuteni A figurine from Drăguşeni (Amarie, 2013)

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