

Theory & Methodology

Inscribing Bodies in Bronze Age Cyprus



What is Materiality?

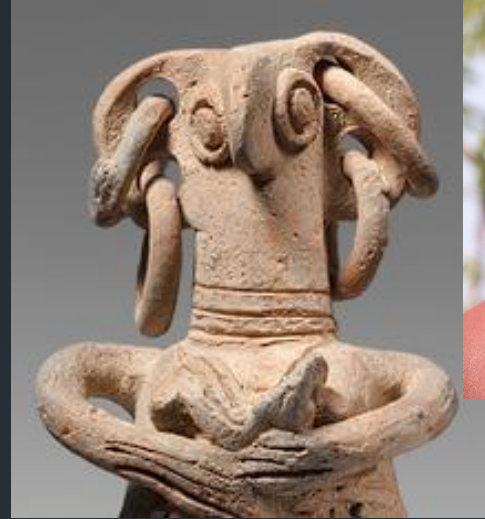
- This describes the quality, character or properties of things & the materials of which they are made of the material of which a thing is made:
 - Its thingness
- Explores the entanglement of people & objects & how the two shape each other in recursive relationships



Kotsiatis model, Cyprus

Materialities of the Body

- Body as material culture
- How & why people inscribe & shape their body:
 - Temporary or permanent
 - Internal (ingestion) or external
 - Adornment
- Embodiment, agency, identity & style



Layering the Body

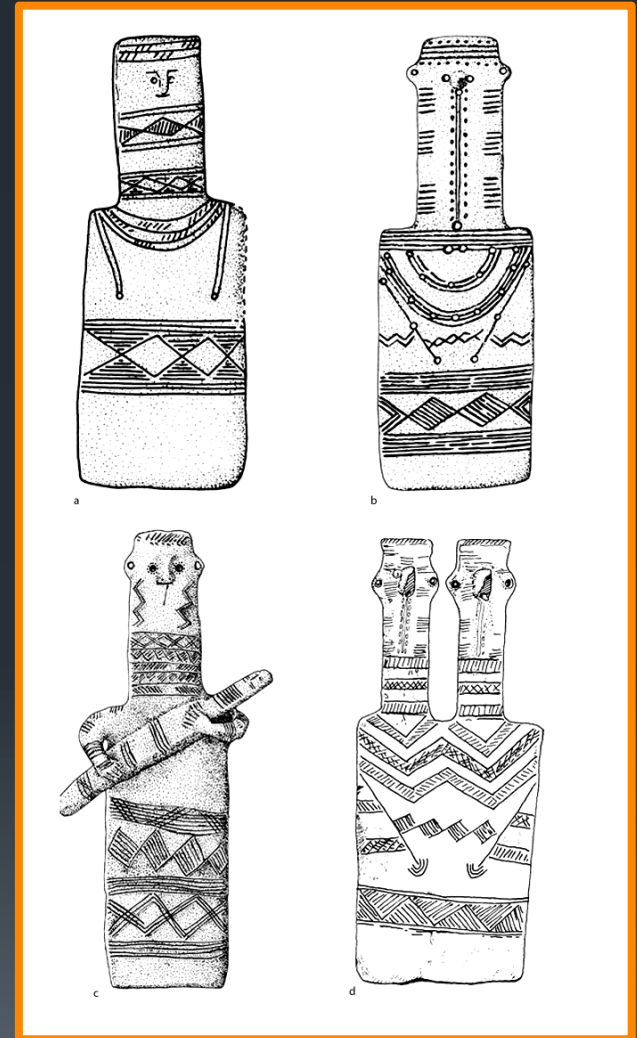
- A material means of creating a second skin/boundary
- Direct interaction with the body:
 - Tattooing, scarification, henna
 - Hairstyles, depilation
- Frequently mediated through artefacts:
 - Clothing
 - Personal adornment
 - Buildings/cars etc.
- Communicates social position, social roles, status



Nuer, scarification

Red Polished Figurines

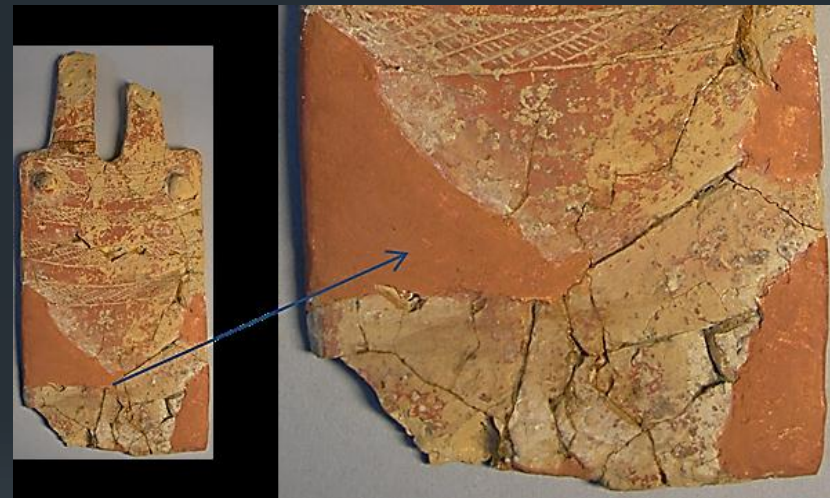
- EC-MC transition, primarily from north coast
- Between 20 - 35.5 cm high
- Three main types have been identified:
 - Single-headed figure
 - Single headed figure holding an infant in a cradleboard against the left shoulder
 - Figure with double or triple necks & between one or two heads



Red Polished figures

Functionality of the Figurines

- Consistently funerary
- Not designed to be portable, hand-held objects
- Do not appear to be intended to be free-standing without support:
 - Consistent pattern of wear on the base of the figures result of placing the object in the ground for some time
 - Possibly meant to be displayed & viewed



Figurine from Lapithos

Depicting the Body

- Emphasis is not on the gendered, physical body
- Emphasis is on the layered, adorned body:
 - The second skin
- Generally accepted that the markings represent combination of textiles, jewellery, personal adornment, hair, face-markings
- The same visual message is reiterated in all the plank figure:
 - Specific ways in which the MC body was layered & performed, perhaps within highly visual ceremonies in the mortuary arena



Red Polished figure

Depicting the Body

- “there is a focus on the face & on value-added attributes of jewellery & clothing; on the beautification & social presentation of the body” (Webb 2016: 15)
- We can relate these decorative motifs with actual items of material culture recovered from contemporary tombs
- Lapithos:
 - Most figures & also evidence greater emphasis on the adornment of the physical body
 - Notable staging of objects in tombs: placement of the figures near skulls or in proximity to beaded faience necklaces, in metal rich burials, & with ritual vases



Double-headed RP figure

Summary

- Red Polished figures provides a valuable source of visual information for exploring treatment of body the early MC periods
- Very deliberate use of costume, personal adornment & body markings to inscribe the body
- Headdresses, clothing & items of personal adornment layered onto the body as a second, social skin
- Evidence for tattooing, scarification as further means of inscribing the body
- Emphasis on staging the body in ceremonial contexts, :
 - Seemingly static plank figures highlight the importance of visual display & the many ways in which the social skin might be produced from different materials