
QUALITIES OF HUMANNESS

Material Aspects of Greek Neolithic Anthropomorphic Imagery

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Abstract

This article considers the materialization of human representations in Neolithic northern Greece and particularly the materials used in their production. Contending that materialization is contingent upon but not reducible to the materials used, an attempt is made to understand the implications of using different materials to represent humans, especially clay and stone. Thus, it is suggested that in the earlier Neolithic, clay and stone were reserved for different classes of artefacts. Human figures in this period show an interest in action, whereas in the later Neolithic, changes occur that suggest a preoccupation with the substance of the figures. It is suggested that these changes point to the emergence of different subjectivities during the later Neolithic.

Key Words ◆ figurines ◆ materialization ◆ materials ◆ Neolithic
◆ representation

INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been a significant rise in the number of archaeological studies that attempt to tackle the issue of materiality, each time with different prospects and results. The very term materiality has been used differently by various authors and this precludes us from arriving at a consensus regarding its meaning (see for instance the discussion in Boivin et al., 2005 following the article by A. Jones, 2004; and the discussion in Knappett, 2007; Miller, 2007; Nilsson, 2007 and Tilley, 2007, following the article by Ingold, 2007). In particular the conflation of

material characteristics and materiality is worth clarifying, in order to address questions regarding the material presence of the people, without resorting to a materialist determinism (see Thomas in Boivin et al., 2005). This is an important move, especially in view of recent opinions that think of the concept of materiality as redundant at its best and as an 'obstacle to sensible enquiry into materials, their transformations and affordances' at its worst (Ingold, 2007: 3).

Is there a difference between conceptualizing the world in terms of materiality rather than materials and their properties? It is evident that the recent emphasis on materiality stems from a need to put emphasis on the 'physicality' of the artefacts, to resurrect the 'material' in material culture, after a long preoccupation with just 'culture'. It is also evident that this is what Ingold aims at in his intervention against the concept too (Ingold, 2007, but also Ingold, 2000), namely an emphasis on the world as a physical reality rather than as a mere cultural construct. Yet there are differences in the way these two approaches conceive of matter and the material,¹ differences that are important for the articulation of a research agenda that aims to interpret the inhabitation of a material world.

The way I see it, material properties tend to refer to unchanging qualities of matter, that need a constant reference back to the 'primary' material, in order for the artefacts to be interpreted (e.g. a stone tool is always conditioned by the properties of stone as a material). Although this is a move that to a certain extent remains unavoidable for us (i.e. 'western archaeologists'), it is also a move that precludes us from arriving at a non-essentialist interpretation of the world. Henare et al. (2007) have described this kind of approach as epistemological, one that keeps intact the previous ontological categories and applies them to the object of study. In this way stone tools for example are always tools made of stone, that is, things that combine two otherwise distinct perceptual (and ontological) categories, rather than 'stone-tools', in other words, an altogether new ontological category, which rearticulates the whole matter of the world (Holbraad, 2007). Henare et al. (2007) gloss this latter approach as ontological, that is, they aim at bringing forth an ethnographic practice that no longer uses ontological categories, in our case material properties, as analytic constructs but as an outcome of embedded action. Accordingly ontological schemata are the product of situated practices and our objective should be to contextualize them and explore their position in an articulated system.

Henare et al. (2007: 5) think that 'materiality' as a concept is particularly laden (along with 'objects' and 'artefacts') and prefer to refer to 'things'. I would suggest that there is a certain misunderstanding lurking here. Materiality as a concept is not of the same order as 'objects', 'things', 'artefacts' or 'materials' nor of their properties. Materiality is

not coextensive to the material (as a noun); it is rather a quality of the materials, of objects, things or artefacts. Yet it is not the same as the properties of the materials (Thomas in Boivin et al., 2005), for materiality is the quality that refers to the physical presence of the materials, their being tangible, their being part of the material world. The materiality of a stone tool should not be reduced to the properties of the stone used (its hardness or softness, its colour and so on), rather, it should keep on referring to the 'thingness' of things, to the material aspect of the world (Meskell, 2004: 13–4). The world here stands not only for things but for all animate and inanimate entities, that are no less material than things. Moreover, properties bring out a rather possessive relation between matter and its characteristics, whereas 'identifying' characteristics is arguably a valuation process, which might differ from context to context, something that further attests to the irreducibility of a material presence to its material properties. Drawing largely upon Fowler (2004: 112–13), I will refer to the characteristics of matter (e.g. its dryness or its permanence) as 'qualities' and I will use 'substances' to refer to the categories of matter (e.g. stone, clay, flesh or snow; see later in the article).

MATERIALS IN PROCESS

That said, it is at least evident that the specificity of materialization is contingent, among other things, on the material used. This means that the presence of things, or persons, materializes through specific materials, the qualities of which have particular effects on them and the world of which they are part. So, the study of the relations between material qualities and materialization enables an understanding of how beings (animate and inanimate) 'come to matter' (see Butler, 1993).

The slide from materiality to materialization is made on purpose. If materiality refers to the material aspect of any entity, to their matter in general, then it is important to emphasize that this materiality is not static. Following Butler, I argue that matter is but 'a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter' (Butler, 1993: 9, emphasis removed). It is important to understand that whatever the materiality of someone or something, it is contingent upon the reiteration of practices that give this materiality an intelligible form. Someone's or something's materiality is not given but rather it is the effect of articulatory practices that govern material identity. This is not to deny that material qualities are real; on the contrary, it is to emphasize that the very description of these qualities is part of their constitution (Butler, 1993: 10–11). In this sense, the process of materialization never ceases, and the 'effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter' is contingent upon the authoritative discourses reiterated in each case. Arguably, this is a process that cannot

be reserved only for things or only for persons, thus it cross-cuts the usual distinctions between subjects and objects (Miller, 2005). From this perspective, all entities are always in a state of becoming and their matter is contingent upon the discourses that govern the process of materialization in specific contexts. The task then is to identify these discourses; to ask through which discourses people, animals, plants or things come to materialize as subjects, objects or any other category.

It might seem that the task I just set out to work at is rather one-sided. The study of the discourses that govern human action has quite often resulted in a 'discourse determinism' (Meskell and Joyce, 2003: 15), that is in an overt emphasis on the restrictions imposed by discourse on to the human subject, leaving aside her/his experiential constitution. Although I am invoking a rather Foucauldian use of discourse here, I am inclined, following Butler (1999) rather than Foucault (see also Laclau and Mouffe, 2001: 107), to see no contradiction between discourse and its embodiment. Matter is not theorized here as a *tabula rasa* waiting to be inscribed, rather, discourse is entirely coextensive with its being practised, performed. In the words of Miller: 'On the one hand, we produce religion or finance; on the other, the existence of religion and finance produces our specificity as a priest in ancient Egypt, or as a Japanese derivatives trader. So our humanity is not prior to what it creates' (2005: 9–10). There is no discourse outside the practices that materialize the discourse (Miller's 'objectification'). It is pertinent here to clarify that in this formulation, discourse is not restricted to language. I am following Laclau and Mouffe (2001) and identify discourse with a structured totality (that can never attain closure), which results from articulatory practices, that is, from practices that establish 'a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice' (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001: 104).² This ability to modify relations cannot be reserved only for language (compare Thomas, 2000: 154 and 2005: 16–17 where he reduces signification and discourse to language). To the extent that no action can be exactly identical to another and no context can be reproduced in its entirety, every practice modifies a relation among elements and so every practice is articulatory. In this way, there is no distinction between discursive and non-discursive practices (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001: 107). The choice of which practices should be brought out as important is of course political. So, the task of identifying the discourses that governed the materialization of animate or inanimate entities is not identical to finding some abstract rules that governed social life in the past. It is exactly to bring forth the ways that people, animals and things came to matter through the rearticulation of previous practices in particular contexts.

The following argument seeks to present an aspect of the materiality of certain artefacts from Neolithic northern Greece. As these artefacts

represent humans, it is evident that their materiality would have had a specific impact on people's experience of their own materiality. That is, these artefacts would have been implicated in discourses that pertained to the very existence of their users, by referring explicitly to their bodies, addressing the boundaries and the substance of their own being. The articulation of the qualities of any artefact representing a body would arguably serve as a framework for understanding and experiencing one's own body in a certain way.

I focus on a particular aspect of the materiality of these artefacts, namely the use of different materials, particularly clay and stone. Since I have already argued that materiality and material qualities are not co-extensive with each other, it follows that this focus is not self-evident in a study of materiality issues. Although the distinction between form and content is naturalized in our own 'western' framework as an effect of various discourses that have been analysed in many occasions (see Thomas, 2004), I hope it will become apparent that this is not an entirely 'epistemological' approach (in the way Henare et al., 2007 mean it; see earlier), but the results do extend to 'ontological' concerns too. I do not mean to suggest that we can proceed free of our own epistemological categories, but I will try to suggest alternative categorizations, that might cross-cut or subvert our own.

My aim in this article then is to discuss the effect of the different materials used in the representation of humans on an understanding of one's own body and the formation of an embodied subjectivity. In other words I ask how the materialization of the human form in clay, stone or any other material is brought to bear upon the positioning of the self in the world, having as a case study the Neolithic period in northern Greece. In what follows I shall concentrate particularly on the area of Thessaly and western Macedonia, Greece (Figure 1). Due to difficulties in distinguishing between Early and Middle Neolithic, unless in stratigraphic correlation, I subsume both periods under the term 'earlier Neolithic' (in this I follow Halstead; e.g. Halstead, 1994). Absolute calendrical dates for Neolithic Greece are provided in Table 1.

TABLE 1 Chronological scheme of the Greek Neolithic

Early Neolithic	6700/6500–5800/5600	Earlier Neolithic
Middle Neolithic	5800/5600–5400/5300	
Late Neolithic I	5400/5300–5000/4900	Later Neolithic
Late Neolithic II	5000/4900–4700/4500	
Final Neolithic	4700/4500–3300/3100	

Data according to Andreou et al. (1996: Table 1) with adjustments



FIGURE 1 Map of Greece with sites mentioned in the text and the tables.

- 1: Mandalo,
- 2: Ambelies,
- 3: Stavroupoli,
- 4: Thermi B,
- 5: Olynthos,
- 6: Paliambela,
- 7: Makriyalos,
- 8: Revenia,
- 9: Rachmani,
- 10: Ayia Sophia,
- 11: Damasi 4,
- 12: Tsangli,
- 13: Pyrgos,
- 14: Sesklo,
- 15: Dimini,
- 16: Pefkakia

CLAY RULES

During the earlier Neolithic there were various artefacts representing humans in Thessaly. Most numerous were the clay figurines found in hundreds in excavated settlements. Stone figurines were quite uncommon during the earlier Neolithic in Thessaly; we have found just a few that could be earlier Neolithic in date (fewer than five are published from the whole region), but none of them can actually be securely, in other words, stratigraphically, dated to the period (Nanoglou, 2004). The picture is similar in southern Greece (Talalay, 1993: 58–65) and western Macedonia (but see the newly found stone figurines from Revenia – Besios and Adaktylou, 2004). In representing humans, stone was mainly used when making anthropomorphic pendants (Kyparissi-Apostolika, 2001: 51). We have not found any bone or shell figurines from secure earlier Neolithic deposits.³ Finally, there were also vessels that were either shaped in the form of a human, or bore paintings of humans. Clay figurines outnumber all the other categories put together. Regarding the material used, we may divide the artefacts into two groups: the representations (figurines or vessels) made of clay and the anthropomorphic pendants made of stone.

There is another trait that underscores the aforementioned distinction. The clay figures were all depictions of whole bodies (Nanoglou, 2005: 143). The same could be said for the clay vessels, for, irrespective of the emphasis put on a particular part of the body (usually the head), we could

suggest that the vessel in its entirety referred to the human body as a whole (see Pileidou, 2006 for the most up-to-date catalogue of anthropomorphic vessels) and the representations of humans on the surface of the vessel again depicted the whole body (e.g. Theocharis, 1973: plate XVIII).⁴ On the contrary, figures that depict only part of the body (e.g. the lower half, or just the genitals) always bear suspension holes (see Nanoglou, 2005: 144). So, there is a group of representations of the whole body indicating a preference for clay. There is also another group of depictions of the whole body or part of the body, which were made of stone and were probably suspended from somewhere.

These findings may suggest that stone was used in pendants, because of its durability (Kyparissi-Apostolika, 2001: 51). But the issue is more complex. The trend of depicting the whole body during the earlier Neolithic was so pervasive that any deviation should be considered exceptional. So, however limited, the instances of depicting part of the body in pendants, may suggest that pendants might have been classed as a different category of artefacts. That pendants were suspended, irrespective of where they were suspended from, supports this interpretation. Whatever the purpose of depicting only part of the body, it is important that clay was not considered suitable for this purpose or, respectively, stone enabled the figure to be partial. In other words, despite the fact that both figurines and pendants represent the human body, they may have constituted different ontological categories (Henare et al., 2007) and may have been used in quite different contexts, having quite different connotations.

Wear traces on some clay figurines suggest that some of them might have been placed on a surface for a certain period of time or on a considerable number of occasions for such wear to have been caused (Nanoglou, 2005: 147). Many of them were too heavy to carry around all the time. On the contrary, we have at least one example, albeit of Late Neolithic date, of an anthropomorphic pendant that formed part of a necklace (from Stavroupoli, see Grammenos and Kotsos, 2002: 237, ME 186, table 4c). So, it is possible that these two groups of artefacts were actually carried around in a different fashion: the figurines might have been fixed somewhere or carried in bags or by hand and the pendants worn on the body (in both cases we do not know whether visibly or not). Human shaped vessels or vessels with painted figures were possibly handled in the same way as figurines, that is, placed somewhere or carried with the hands. This difference in use may suggest that clay images, figurines or vessels, counted as 'autonomous' figures in the community, whereas pendants were wholly associated with the bodies to which they were attached. In other words, clay images could stand for themselves in a way stone pendants could not. A pendant was part of the body that wore it. As with clothes, pendants (and ornaments in general) negotiate

the boundaries of the body by being part of it.⁵ A clay image represented the human body, perhaps counting as a distinct entity, although this need not mean that figurines were used in isolation from each other. On the contrary, present evidence, albeit not extremely strong, suggests that they were used or at least conceived of in groupings (Nanoglou, 2008a).

It seems that the difference between figurines and pendants is further enhanced through the use of different materials. Why should an 'autonomous' figure materialize in clay and what was part of the user's body materialize in stone? To answer this question one could consider the technological aspects of these two practices, for the process of manufacture could be equally or more important than the final product (Talalay, 1993: 127, note 27). Baking clay was a new technology in the Neolithic (see Bailey, 2005: 5), but perhaps the important thing is that clay was made through an additive process, that is by gathering raw clay, fuel and anything else important, and profoundly transforming the raw material, from malleable soil to hard pottery (Talalay, 1993: 30–1). Manufacturing stone images on the other hand entailed the use of ground stone technology, a practice that removes part of the raw material, instead of adding to it (Flenniken, 1985: 191; Andrefsky, 1998: 30), and one that transforms it in quite a different manner than the firing of clay (see Hendrix, 2003: 412–13 regarding Cycladic figurines from the 3rd millennium BC). Hourmouziadis (1973) points out a particular method of manufacturing figurines in Neolithic Thessaly, the use of inner clay cores, on which layers of clay were added and he suggests that this method alludes to the actual human body and its skeletal structure. He further suggests that perhaps making a figurine was equivalent to narrating the myth of creation (Hourmouziadis, 1973: 40). In fact there are ethnographic cases where the production of pottery is associated with the production of people (Gosselain, 1999: 212) and clay images could have invoked the way people were produced, irrespective of the use or not of inner clay cores. There are after all reasons to believe that making pots and making figurines were not so distinct practices. Leaving the myth of creation aside, it is interesting that clay images were made of different components. Although the final product was always a 'complete' body, it is possible to suggest that people understood this end product as a synthesis of parts (Talalay, 1993: 30).⁶ The same is true of pottery. Thus it is possible that figurines and pots were not considered in contradistinction (see Bailey, 2005: 187–8), but rather as instances of the same continuum (see David et al., 1988, especially Hodder's contribution, p. 382). Contrary to clay figures, stone pendants were made of one piece. They seem to embody cohesion. So, it is extremely thought-provoking that exactly these artefacts are often representations of only a part of the body. Perhaps then, because of their fragmented status, these images needed to be of a different substance, since they were part of another body, from which they hung.

We could go a little further and suggest that the reduction sequence provided the stone pendants with the chance to withhold a certain attachment to the human body from which they hung and to which they supposedly belonged. Accordingly, 'autonomous' images had to be made of clay in order to stand alone. They had to be made from scratch in order not to be attached to an already existing human body. Consequently, we can assume that the two materials were bestowed with different qualities; qualities that were deemed important for their respective uses. However, it is not just an issue of different materials, but an issue of the production of two different ontological categories, two ontologically different artefacts; their material was also constitutive of their meaning (Holbraad, 2007). It is not just a simple convergence of a floating form and an underlying material, but the constitution of something like 'active-clay-figures' and 'part-of-the-bodies-that-wear-them-stone-pendants'. I think we can safely suggest that these two classes of artefacts were not interchangeable and were utilized, at least ideally, in different contexts, enabling the constitution not necessarily of different subjects but of different aspects of a subject. Perhaps the qualities attached to clay figures were brought to bear upon scenes of engagement that invoked groupings or gatherings and the 'heating up' of relationships, that is, engagements that focused on the negotiation of relationships among members of the community (which also included very few indeed domesticated animals, see Nanoglou, 2008a). On the contrary pendants might have invoked a rather different world, one that could relate to specific persons by virtue of their being worn by specific bodies and one that could involve discursive fields beyond the community (perhaps that is why animals depicted in stone pendants are not domesticates, but frogs or fish or others).

STONE STRIKES BACK

During the earlier part of the Late Neolithic (i.e. the Late Neolithic I period) the use of clay and stone in the representation of humans remained much the same, although it is fair to say that there are not many assemblages from Thessaly dated to this period and the ones we know are not without problems (see for example Tsangli, the excavation report of which is from the beginning of the 20th century and phases are rather schematic, Wace and Thompson, 1912: 86–130). What does actually change in this period, and continues to the next, is the way humans are depicted. Contrary to the depiction of an active body in the earlier Neolithic (as mentioned before) the body is rather static in the later Neolithic (Figures 2 and 3), so there is actually a rearticulation of the previous tradition in terms of iconography (Nanoglou, 2005). Moreover there seems to be a concern with appearance, for many of the

figures bear various incisions, a trend that gradually dies out in the following Late Neolithic II period. Another noticeable difference is that there were more clay figures with holes, especially on their hands, that may have been used for suspension. Again, there is no way of knowing what they were suspended from, especially since some of them were too heavy to be hung from the neck. Nevertheless, the already mentioned pendant from Stavroupoli dates to this period and there are also a few examples of figurines bearing a depiction of a pendant, although not in the form of a human (there are two from Makriyalos, one of which is shown in Figure 2). These cases might suggest that at the time the whole practice of making pendants was being renegotiated, but that is as far as we can go on that subject.⁷

During the same time it seems that there is a change in the representation of figures on vessels. There are actually a great number of human figures on vessels in the form of anthropomorphic handles, something that does not seem to be the case for earlier periods (although detailed data are missing). Moreover, Pappa et al. (2004) report 120 zoomorphic handles from a single, albeit exceptional, context in Makriyalos I, of the Late Neolithic I period (Pappa et al., 2004: 36), but iconographic parallels with the figurine assemblage from Makriyalos suggest that this identification is not definitive and that some of these could even be depictions of humans (Nanoglou and Pappa, forthcoming).

In terms of the material used, the picture changes in the later part of the later Neolithic (i.e. the Late Neolithic II and the Final Neolithic

FIGURE 2 Figurine with incised pendant on its chest from Makriyalos I.

Drawing by M. Kargoglou. Courtesy of M. Pappa

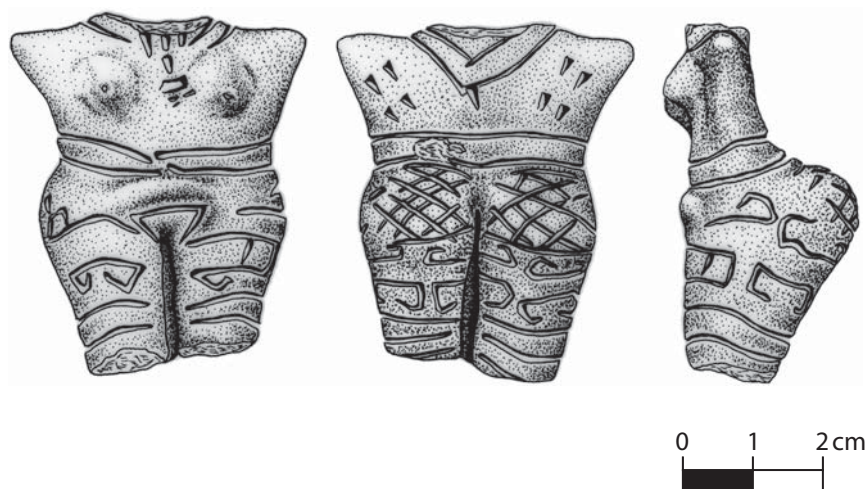




FIGURE 3 Figurine from Damasi 4. Surface find. Figurines of this kind were common in the later Neolithic.

period, see Table 2). There is abundant evidence of a proliferation of stone figurines, both in eastern Thessaly and in western Macedonia (Table 2; see also Marangou, 1992. We do not have much data from western Thessaly and the case in eastern Macedonia is different, see Nanoglou, 2006; although Late Neolithic I figurines from eastern Thessaly are not tabulated here, because of lack of exact numbers, there have been virtually no stone ones recovered). What is perhaps equally important is that most of the later Neolithic stone figures are made of marble. The case of Makriyalos is eloquent (Figure 4): the Late Neolithic I phase has yielded 111 anthropomorphic figurines, of which only three are made of stone, whereas the Late Neolithic II phase provided 109 anthropomorphic figurines, of which 62 are made of stone, 41 of clay and 6 are parts of 'acroliths' (see next paragraph; Nanoglou and Pappa, forthcoming). The

same picture holds for other contemporary settlements in the area (e.g. Dimini, where however 'acroliths' are more abundant than in Makriyalos; Tsountas, 1908, Skafida, 1992). Vessel handles in the form of heads continued to be abundant, so clay continued to be used extensively for the representation of the human form.

Another important change in terms of materials is the relative proliferation of 'acroliths', a type of figurine that consists of a clay body and a stone head (Figure 5).⁸ Acroliths probably existed in earlier periods (Nanoglou, 2006), but during the Late Neolithic II and the Final Neolithic period they account for a small but recurrent part of figurine assemblages from settlements in eastern Thessaly (Table 2). In western Macedonia they are present in Makriyalos (Nanoglou and Pappa, forthcoming), Paliambela (Nanoglou, 2004) and Mandalo (Papaefthymiou-Papanthimou, 1987), but they differ in certain aspects from the ones from Thessaly. According to the evidence available, acroliths from Thessaly consisted of a clay body, usually tempered with much chaff and poorly fired, and a stone head, most of them made of marble and sometimes decorated with painted motifs. The examples from eastern Thessaly have a head with perpendicular section. In Rachmani, Wace and Thompson (1912: 43)

TABLE 2 Late Neolithic figurine assemblages

	Late Neolithic I			Late Neolithic II (+ Final Neolithic)		
	Clay	Stone	Acroliths	Clay	Stone	Acroliths
Pyrgos	No deposits			4	–	1
Sesklo	No deposits			5	11	1
Dimini	No deposits			8	13	5
Pefkakia	No deposits			22	4	12
Ayia Sophia	No deposits			4	3	–
Rachmani	No deposits			5	–	9
Makriyalos	108	3	–	41	62	6
Stavroupoli*	167	–	–	No deposits		
Thermi B	12	–	–	No deposits		
Ambelies**	473	3	–	No deposits		
Olynthos	No deposits			2	2	–
Total	868	6	–	91	95	34

Data according to Nanoglou (2004). Only figures with a more or less stratigraphically secure date are included. Pendants are excluded and so are vessel handles. Data from Sesklo and Dimini are confined to the excavations by Tsountas.

*Data according to Grammenos and Kotsos (2002, 2004). I include some dubious examples from Grammenos and Kotsos (2002), which are not pictured, but not some examples that I consider to be vessel legs.

**Data according to Chrysostomou (2000).

found bodies and heads that they believed belonged together. Yet, because of the poor firing of the bodies and their subsequent wear, it is impossible to tell whether the heads were removed on certain occasions or whether they were permanently mounted in the body. It seems certain that, because of the poor firing, such a practice would have caused the head to be rather unstable. What is more, at least one surviving example from Dimini (Tsountas, 1908: pl. 36.1) has a head that is wider at its base and therefore cannot be removed from the body, without destroying it. Thus, it is more likely that bodies and heads were permanently joined together (see Talalay, 2004: 149, for a different view).

The same differentiation between head and body is evident in Makriyalos II, although there the bodies were well fired (in Paliambela



FIGURE 4 Stone figurines from Makriyalos II.

Courtesy of M. Pappa

and Mandalo bodies were also well fired, but we do not have any actual stone heads from these two sites). This is an even better indication of the convergence of the practice of pottery and stone tool technology, since the bodies of the acroliths from Thessaly were not well baked. In Makriyalos II clay bodies occasionally even bear incisions, clearly invoking the clay bodies of the previous phase (like the one in Figure 2).

There is yet another significant difference between the heads and the bodies in acroliths, one that accords well with the characteristics of the stone figurines that proliferate in the same period. Most of the times, heads are disproportionably big in relation to the body, and this is evident in both acroliths and stone figurines, but not so in clay images. The difference in proportions between the head and the body could suggest that stone figures focused on the head, an observation that echoes certain changes in clay figures. Apart from the great number of vessel handles, mentioned earlier, in the form of a head, which amounts to an increase in the occurrence of heads in the 'iconographic landscape' of these communities, there are figurines that combine two or three heads with a common torso, thus making the head the necessary condition for the figure to count as an entity (Nanoglou, 2005: 150–1).

Nevertheless, heads and bodies of both clay and stone figures are treated in similar ways when it comes to rendering details (Figures 3 and 4). Particular characteristics of the face or the body (nose, mouth, breasts) are rare indeed. There are very few examples of stone figures with painted motifs (Skafida, 1992: table 25a–b) and these do not seem

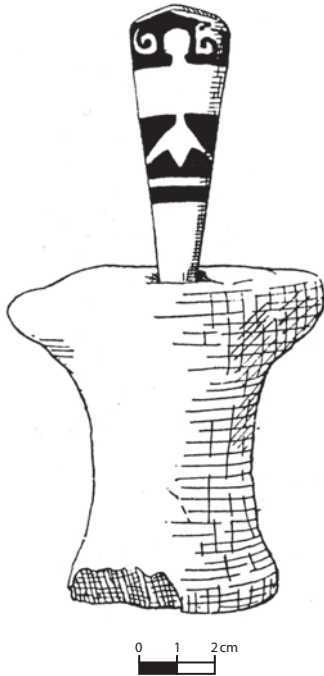


FIGURE 5 Acrolith from Rachmani. After Wace and Thompson (1912: Fig. 25b).

to depict anatomical details. A similar, though not so extreme, scarcity of painted or incised motifs is evident in clay figures. The hands of both clay and stone figures are always rendered as stubs. The lower part of the body is always compact, with neither legs nor any other detail shown in stone figures, whereas there are a few clay figures that do depict legs. Moreover, stone figures show a tremendous standardization of their form throughout Thessaly and western Macedonia: they can be categorized in just two or three types (see Figure 4). The clay figures are less standardized, yet their variation is not great either. All these point to a formalized image of the human, without specific details. It is an image of the human that perhaps invites generality more than particularity.

FROM ACTION TO SUBSTANCE

It seems then that we can observe the emergence of a new discourse on human representation during the later Neolithic, one that combined aspects previously held apart. As I have already argued, earlier Neolithic uses of stone were quite specific when it came to the representation of humans, being reserved for anthropomorphic pendants. This tradition did not cease during the later Neolithic (Kyparissi-Apostolika, 2001) and arguably it was a tradition upon which people were drawing when making figurines. This is not to say that the making of pendants was some kind of a model for the manufacture of figurines, rather that the discourse of pendants would have been one among others that constituted a frame of reference for the manufacture of figures. As long as we can accept the different values of stone and clay in the earlier Neolithic, we can confirm that the manufacture of stone figures in the later Neolithic was a meaningful rearticulation of the discourses on the representation of the human body. That is, it seems that stone and clay were of different ontological matter in the earlier Neolithic of Greece and continued to be so, but under different associations. The emerging question then is: What did this new discourse come to signify and what might have been the implications of this? I suggest that a 'landscape' of figures made of different materials would pose certain questions as to the substances embodied by the figures and, by association, as to the substances embodied by the people themselves.

The main change that accompanies the implementation of a 'new' material in later Neolithic representations, or rather the rearticulation of existing discourses drawing different boundaries between representational fields, is that from the depiction of an active body in the earlier Neolithic to the depiction of a static one in the later Neolithic (as mentioned earlier and see Nanoglou, 2005). If we want to turn to ethnographic parallels, in order to gain some further insight, this difference could be compared to the one Ingold (2000, especially pp. 111–31) observes between animic and totemic representations. Referring to hunter-gatherers, Ingold draws a distinction between picturing humans and animals in action (animic) and depicting them as static (totemic). He interprets this difference as evidence of a different approach towards time. Animic epistemologies constitute a world in the making; they deal with a perpetual circulation of life-form, whereas totemic epistemologies conjure a world with ever-present forms, a world made once and for all (Ingold, 2000: 112). Building on Ingold's observations, one may relate the earlier Neolithic representations to a preoccupation with the present, with a world in the making. Contrary to that, the static later Neolithic figures project a rather unchanging picture of the body. Two things are important in the latter case. First, while in animic epistemologies the substance of all creatures is the same, in totemic ones, substances are shared by various creatures, but not all creatures of the world share the same substance (Ingold, 2000: 114). The interest in the substances that make up each creature accords with the interest in the use of different materials in later Neolithic figures. Second, although static representations emanate a picture of permanence, there is a concern about the way things got to be what they are, a concern with the past (Ingold, 2000: 113, see also Descola, 1996: 88 for the relation between totemism and descent groups). This again accords well with a certain preoccupation with the past that emerges in the later Neolithic, especially a past that was static and not the result of continuous exegetical negotiation (Nanoglou, 2001: 313, see also later in this article).

I do not mean to propose that the earlier Neolithic society in northern Greece was animic, while the later Neolithic was totemic. In any case, both terms are analytical devices and should not be reified. After all, the two modes can be combined within a single society (Descola, 1996: 88; Fowler, 2004: 123). Importantly, they provide certain insights as to the connotations that active and inactive figures could have for the people. It is tempting to see the implementation of different materials in later Neolithic figures as referring to figures consisting of different substances. What I am suggesting then is that in the earlier Neolithic the interest was in the activities that constituted the identity of the figure, whereas in the later Neolithic the interest was reallocated to the substance that made up the figure.

WHAT IS ONE MADE OF?

The general trend towards more static and, more importantly, less detailed representations, a trend that applies to both clay and stone figures, suggests that it was not an issue of crafting competence, or lack of it, that drove the manufacturers into making such 'simple' forms. That is to say, we cannot attribute the choice of a generic form, what many authors refer to as 'schematic', to the material used. The manufacture of 'elaborate' stone figures, even though they are just a few, underscores this argument.⁹ Within this general trend, stone and clay figures have some differences. I have already mentioned the proportionally bigger head in stone figures. Secondly, stone figures never have a flat base, which is characteristic of most clay figures (Figures 3 and 4, a continuation from earlier Neolithic pendants and clay figures respectively?). But all these differences do not undermine the general trend and thus highlight the most important difference: the difference in the material used. In view of the lack of details, it is as if the material was what had to appear, in order to produce a meaningful form. It is tempting to suggest that in this case the material was, in a way, the form of the figure. In the words of M. Holbraad, their meaning 'is literally constituted by the things [read: materials] to which it would otherwise be assumed simply to "apply"' (2007: 206). This perhaps is further highlighted by the fact that nearly all stone figures are made of marble and so there is an association with a more specific material.

So, it seems that the distinctiveness of the two groups I have described rests mainly on their different material. I have already mentioned their different production processes and some potential concomitant consequences, but an understanding of these processes, in the context of Neolithic Greece, is very difficult. The production of figurines follows in general the production of pottery; the time and effort spent on manufacturing figurines (individually, not the class as a whole) seems to decrease relatively in the later Neolithic. Unfortunately this does not bring us any closer to understanding the valuation processes of figures. Contexts of use are indeed scarce in Neolithic Greece and contexts of disposal are all we have, but even these contexts are poorly understood (see Nanoglou, 2008a, for a discussion of the earlier Neolithic contextual information). Most of the excavations in Greece are too small-scale to produce any meaningful contextual information. From the bigger excavations, most published ones are old and thus their information is not really useful (e.g. Sesklo and Dimini – Tsountas, 1908; Tsangli, Rachmani – Wace and Thompson, 1912). Some recent excavations do not proceed in an evaluation of the contexts, indeed are nothing more than catalogues with disparate pieces of information (Grammenos and Kotsos, 2002, 2004). Distribution maps from other recent excavations at the moment do not confer any important information, apart from the fact that figurines are

found all over the place (e.g. Dimini – Skafida, 1992). Other sites have mainly produced figurines from disturbed contexts (e.g. Paliambela – Nanoglou, 2004; Ambelies – Chrysostomou, 2000).

Notwithstanding this frustrating picture, there are some things that do come out. Based on disparate evidence of figurines found in groups and some iconographic indications, it seems that earlier Neolithic figurines were meaningful in groups rather than individually (Nanoglou, 2008a). On the the other hand, there are no known cases of later Neolithic figurines found in groups. This is largely an argument *ex silentio* for now, but in Makriyalos, habitation pits have no more than one or two figurines in their fill (Nanoglou and Pappa, forthcoming).¹⁰ There are of course, in Makriyalos, disposal deposits with a greater amount of figurines in parallel with a greater amount of all the other classes of artefacts (Nanoglou and Pappa, forthcoming). Another important point is that, so far, stone and clay figures seem to be found in the same types of contexts (Nanoglou and Pappa, forthcoming). Nevertheless, Makriyalos cannot count as a representative site, for so little is known from other contemporary ones. So, there is little besides the figures themselves on which to base any arguments regarding their use. The earlier-mentioned difference between flat and pointed bases for clay and stone figures respectively might point to a different staging or handling for the two groups and a reiteration of previous traditions. On the other hand the difference in disposing the figures (individually rather than collectively as in the earlier Neolithic) may suggest a break with these traditions parallel to the break in the iconography (from active to static figures).

There is no way of knowing what kind of qualities people would have granted to these materials, or what kind of connotations would have been bestowed upon the different substances. We could speculate on aspects such as the hardness, the texture or the colour of the materials (Cummings, 2002; Jones and MacGregor, 2002), or the coolness of the stone as opposed to the fire-processed clay (see MacGregor, 1999: 265). The combination of stone and clay in acroliths speaks perhaps against a possible incommensurability of the two materials and of their qualities. That does not mean that the two classes were interchangeable, rather that they could be invoked in the same discursive field. All in all, acroliths represent the additive process we encountered in clay figures; they are made out of at least two combined parts. Yet, acroliths introduce a radical differentiation between the head and the rest of the body (see also Talalay, 2004, for wider attitudes towards the head in Neolithic Greece). In eastern Thessaly, the clay body of the acroliths was poorly fired, and this is a further trait that distinguishes acroliths from the clay figures. Moreover, it contrasts with the sporadic decoration of the stone heads. Perhaps, the poor firing was a way to protect the head from the heat that would destroy the painted motives, but the issue is that, whatever the

'practical cause', leaving the body like this would have made tangible a distinction between a friable body that was sensitive to deterioration, and a hard and solid head and between a poorly fired acrolith and a well-fired all-clay figure. In western Macedonia the bodies of the acroliths were well fired, yet the distinction between head and body was no less pronounced. Nevertheless, we could say that there it was not an issue of durability versus fragility and that the bodies of the acroliths were indeed closer to the bodies of the all-clay figures. In both cases, if, as the previous discussion suggests, the head was the most important part of the body (see also Nanoglou, 2005: 151 and Talalay, 2004), it is significant that this was the part made of stone.

The combination and contradistinction of clay and stone both in different figures and within a single one could suggest many things. On a general level the concern with the material of the figures could have been projected on actual people too; that is, people might have been preoccupied with the substances they were themselves made of. For the moment, there is not much contextual evidence to situate the two traditions more firmly in space and time. But it is striking that at the time when the proliferation of stone figures took place there is evidence of wider changes in the Neolithic communities in Greece. This was the time when 'pseudo-tells' appeared (i.e. settlements situated on hills in order to imitate tells, Nanoglou, 2008b) and a new relation between the inhabitants of these communities and their past emerged (Kotsakis, 1999; Nanoglou, 2001, 2008b). This relation, both in Greece and the Balkans, has been the subject of an impressive array of articles over the past years (e.g. Chapman, 1989, 1997; Bailey, 1990; Kotsakis, 1999; Halstead, 1999) and need not be rehearsed here. What is relevant is that in the later Neolithic and especially the later part (Late Neolithic II and Final Neolithic) there seems to be a change towards a deliberate manipulation of the past on a collective level in certain settlements. This is not evident in every single settlement we know and indeed, throughout its existence, Makriyalos was an extended settlement, not a tell (Pappa and Besios, 1999). Yet there are differences between the Late Neolithic I and the Late Neolithic II in Makriyalos as well. Makriyalos II, where stone figures proliferate, was more compact than its predecessor (Pappa and Besios, 1999: 182–3).

It is not clear how these changes resonate with the changes in representational practices. A concern with people's substances, as imposed or evoked by the figures, and a concern with the past, as argued earlier in this article, could suggest a preoccupation with descent or origins, although the specific approach to these origins is hard to establish (see Ingold, 2000: 132–51, for different conceptualizations of ancestry and the past). It is perhaps interesting that in tells, where the preoccupation with the past is easier to substantiate, the recurring reconstruction of the buildings at the same spot and with the same form (Bailey, 1990; Kotsakis,

1999) would project a permanently unchanging present, a regime reminiscent of the totemic epistemology already mentioned (Ingold, 2000: 113).

In this context, clay and stone figures made up a 'landscape' of images that governed the identification processes of their users. These images would have constituted and sustained a powerful discourse upon which people would have to draw, in order to go on with their lives. The constitution of subjects, the very materialization of people's bodies would have been powerfully, yet partially, determined by the discourse that these figures sustained (see Nanoglou, 2006: 171). Even if figures were not constantly in sight as physical objects, their image would have been present in memory (Küchler, 2002). In the earlier Neolithic, clay figures and stone pendants probably made up two distinct ontological categories and so were invoked and implicated differently in the various social encounters. In the later Neolithic, clay and stone figures came closer to each other and their form was probably co-extensive with their material. If in the earlier Neolithic there were 'active-clay-figures' and 'part-of-the-bodies-that-wear-them-stone-pendants' (in a manner similar to 'stone-tools' discussed earlier, see Henare et al., 2007), in the later Neolithic there seem to emerge entities such as 'clay-figures' and 'stone-figures', which were irreducible to their 'constituent parts'.¹¹ Within such a framework, people would have been urged to reconsider their own ontology in a manner relevant to the figures. I would suggest that a preoccupation with substances and origins would have been stimulated through the inhabitation of this kind of landscape, namely one where entities were conceptualized and understood via their substance. People's materiality, their mode of being in a material world would have made sense through recourse to their own substance and their own origins. In the various scenes of engagement with other people and with other entities in general, later Neolithic figures would have reiterated and thus empowered a discourse that enabled understanding and socialization through the invocation of what one was made of.

There are missing links between the two periods I have described and thus partially reified, but it seems that the process from a materialization as subjects that need to act, in order to situate themselves in the world, to a materialization as subjects that could be described and constituted through recourse to their substance (and their origin) would have been made gradually through the reiteration and continuous rearticulation of practices that were intelligible and socially sanctioned. Perhaps we can imagine the increasing invocation of stone pendants in contexts where clay figures were used too, allowing in a way their coming closer descriptively and ontologically. This could have triggered encounters that would have merged and rearranged categories and boundaries between different fields. This rearticulation of the iconographic 'landscape' would have evoked relevant categorizations on the people using the figures and thus

I suggest that we can attest a major reconfiguration of subjectivities in the later Neolithic. Thus, in each and every occasion that the lives of people and things converged, the materialization of clay, stone or human bodies was a constant negotiation of human qualities.

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Notes

1. This is of course a highly schematic distinction, one that is based on a fairly recent discussion and one that should not be necessarily considered a wider trend.
2. I take 'articulatory' here to mean 'to unite by forming a joint or joints', rather than 'to enunciate' (see Laclau and Mouffe, 2001: 113).
3. Two anthropomorphic bone pendants have been found in Dispilio (Kastoria, western Macedonia), but they date to the later Neolithic (Yfantidis, 2006, nos. K0228 and K0229). There are also two shell figures from Thessaly (Gallis and Orphanidis, 1996: 408–9, nos. 357 and 358), but they are surface finds.
4. A recent resurgence of Gimbutas' view that certain clay faces represent masks (Gimbutas, 1989; Talalay, 2004: 150; Bailey, 2005: 147–8) cannot be substantiated for the moment. The application of a clay lump onto the neck is a common way of modelling the head in earlier Neolithic Thessaly and there is no indication that these parts were movable. Actually, Gimbutas is quite consistent in applying this interpretation, for she considers several examples to be masks, by virtue of this trait, that the other authors do not (e.g. Gimbutas, 1989: pl. 7.16, no. 177; compare Bailey, 2005: 214, note 3).
5. Even if pendants were not hanging from bodies, but from something else (e.g. installations, walls or posts), their connotations would have been different from the clay figures.
6. This is not to suggest that these parts were meaningful on their own (as Talalay, 1987 and Chapman, 2000 do). See Nanoglou (2005: 143–4) on this matter.
7. Regarding holes in general, most of the figures that have holes on the head are vessel parts, particularly handles in the shape of a human head (see for instance the one in Kyparissi-Apostolika, 2001: table 2, no. 18, which she interprets as a pendant; it dates to the Late Neolithic II period, but there are examples from Late Neolithic I too). This is an indication that many of the holes would have been points *from* which something was hanged, rather than the other way around.
8. This kind of combination is the only one that has survived (see Wace and Thompson, 1912: 43). It is possible that other materials have been combined in similar figures (e.g. wood and stone, or bone and clay), but none has survived.
9. These figures do not have a secure context and cannot be dated (e.g. Wace and Thompson, 1912: fig. 115; Papathanassopoulos, 1996: 311, no. 230; there is an example from Paliambela too). Stylistically they seem to be of earlier

Neolithic date. Even if this is the case, they do provide evidence that the important thing was to follow the iconographic trend rather than the raw material properties.

10. The figures from Makriyalos are still under study by M. Pappa and myself and thus cannot yet substantiate any definite argument.
11. They remain of course 'constituent parts' for us who study them.

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