

Marisa Marthari, Colin Renfrew and Michael J. Boyd (eds). *Beyond the Cyclades. Early Cycladic sculpture in context from mainland Greece, the north and east Aegean*. pp. 328, 265 b/w ill., 8 tables. 2019. Oxford: Oxbow Books. ISBN 9-781-58925-063-2, hardback £40.

This is the third in a series produced to publish a sequence of symposia in Athens that started in 2014 with 'Cycladic Sculpture in Context'. Such 'sculpture' consists in all cases of figurines (rarely very large, although a few are more like statuettes or even, very rarely, something like life size). These figurines are almost entirely of stone, generally white marble, and belong to a well-known tradition that had its home in the EBA (Early Bronze Age) Cyclades, of which the 'folded-arm figurine' (FAF) is an internationally recognised type. Until recently, a large proportion of this class of material was represented by holdings in museum and private collections, generally the results of looting and often lacking even a claimed provenance. However, the momentous discoveries in excavations on Keros, a small island south-east of Naxos that was an early reported source of such material, have revolutionised our view of the whole class and the part they played in Cycladic EB culture.¹ The lively debate on their interpretation and significance that followed the new discoveries led to the series of symposia in Athens, that was deliberately focused on the proportion of the material that could be given an archaeological context or at least a secure provenance. Previously published volumes have concerned the finds with provenances in the Cyclades and in Crete; this volume incorporates examples from the Greek mainland, other Aegean islands – mainly the Dodecanese, but there are examples from Skyros and Lesbos – and a solitary find from Miletus, seemingly 'recontextualised' in a phase succeeding the EBA.

A total of 26 contributions deals with each of the different find spots; these include material that was not presented in the original symposium, on new discoveries at Asteria in Attica (near Glyphada) and on Ano Kouphonisi (an island in the same group as Keros), and on a figurine in the collection of the Archaeological Museum on Rhodes, identified as acquired, with a local provenance, during the Italian occupation. There are also two general papers, on the potential links with other traditions of figurine production in the Aegean Neolithic

and in west Anatolia, where a tradition of figurine and vessel production specifically in marble goes back to the Chalcolithic. A final chapter by the editors summarises the contributions, occasionally referring to additional material and briefly considers all the evidence put forward in the symposia, with useful tables that cover the material presented in all three symposia. All papers are well illustrated, and the commendable practice of showing all figurine illustrations at a common scale of 1:2 is continued from the previous volumes.

The contributions vary in coverage: some are concerned solely with the item presented, while others give details on the find spot, may include other material that is certainly or plausibly Cycladic from the same context or site, and may discuss broader themes of the figurines' social role and significance.

Often the inclusion of other material has the beneficial effect of considerably improving knowledge of the site in question, which may well be a relatively recent discovery, only known previously, if at all, from brief reports in *Arkhaiologikon Deltion* or references in academic papers. The information given about graves at Delpriza in the Argive peninsula (close to Franchthi), Asteria near Glyphada in Attica, Nea Styra on Euboea, Vathy on Astypalaia and Asklopis on Kos may particularly be noted in this respect. The reviewer was particularly struck by the material from Nea Styra, which shows very close Cycladic links and includes an exceptionally large head, and from a rich jar burial at Menaria near Asklopis, which contained, apart from several vases and bronze weapons and tools, fragments of a silver sauceboat with incised decoration, a completely unique item (p. 228). The additions to our knowledge about EB material from the Acropolis of Athens, all from old excavations but well-recorded for the time, Asteria, a major new site and cemetery, and Palamari on Skyros, an evidently important node of exchange systems within the Aegean, are also particularly noteworthy. A paper about the latest dated appearance of a figurine fragment, in a LPG grave at Argos, contains a very interesting discussion of 'recontextualisation', with many examples quoted (pp. 135–6).

One strikingly obvious feature, perceptible at once in an overview of the material, is the heavy concentration of finds in Attica and sites in central and south Euboea. The total scatter is wide, extending to Neraiida near Olympia, Proskynas in eastern Locris, and a reported example from Laconia (p. 136), but at present these seem isolated instances except in the Argive peninsula, where there are two

¹ Renfrew et al. 2013 and succeeding volumes.

other occurrences apart from Delpriza. Figurines are conspicuously absent from well-known and important Peloponnesian sites such as Lerna and Tiryns, but there is other evidence of mainland links in the identification in the Keros material of sauceboats that could come from the north Peloponnese and also plausibly from Attica,² and the unique bone 'figurine', that may in fact have been a pin-head, from Thebes (pp. 152–3).

The Attic-Euboean finds include many from cemeteries that contain other Cycladic-looking material and may have Cycladic links in their grave forms. This strongly suggests a level of Cycladic influence also recognisable at Delpriza and at some sites in Crete, notably Ayia Photia, which has prompted suggestions that 'Cycladic colonists' founded or settled at them. When so little is known, relatively, about developments in the earlier part of the EBA this should not be dismissed out of hand, but the frequent evidence for multiple tomb-use in mainland cemeteries thought to have strong Cycladic links, as at Ayios Kosmas, Nea Styra, and Delpriza, does not seem a very Cycladic feature. It might be better to suggest that, for reasons that remain obscure at present, some significant elements of 'Cycladic culture' were adopted or adapted by certain mainland communities. In Attica this seems to have involved the development of a local form of the 'schematic' type of figurine, but there was no local variety of the FAF type, in contrast with Crete, although some figurines may be local imitations of FAFs and other types (including one example of a locally made seated figurine from Manika in Euboea, pp. 293–4). The FAF is not in fact very common among the Attic finds, whereas it is well represented in Euboea; this may well reflect a difference in the date and nature of the Cycladic influence.

Another very striking feature of the material is how often only fragments of figurines are found, clearly preserved and buried as such. Generally these are pieces of FAFs, which at once recalls how prominent this type is in the Keros deposits.³ These consisted largely of figurines and other items that had been deliberately broken before fragments of the broken items were ritually deposited. Places of original breakage have not been found, on Keros or elsewhere, but it seems eminently possible that the fragments that were buried in graves, or were apparently preserved within a settlement, may be other remnants of the 'Keros ritual', perhaps kept

at the place where the breakage was enacted, or, if this did take place somewhere on Keros, taken away as a memorial of the ritual. At least, as the editors point out (p. 292), the data make it likely that the 'Keros ritual' came to be practised beyond Keros, over quite a wide area of the Aegean in fact; however, that it was 'at the heart of the life cycle' of the FAF, as they also suggest, must seem debatable, when some FAFs were not put through this ritual, but were buried intact.

The idea that not only many Cycladic communities but some parts of the mainland that had good access to the Aegean participated in the 'Keros ritual', perhaps in some form of prehistoric confederacy,⁴ is naturally very interesting, but there remain many unanswered questions. Ultimately, the material presented in this volume adds interestingly to the corpus of soundly documented items, but brings us no closer to understanding the central mystery, what the cultural and social significance of the figurines was. The editors do not present any lengthy discussion of this topic, which is surely wise when we are still adapting to the effective transformation of the picture that has followed the discovery of the Keros deposits; but it obviously has a crucial bearing on the motivation behind the apparent adoption of the 'Keros ritual' and other practices in extra-Cycladic communities. Also, the access of new material sheds no light on the decline and final disappearance of the figurine tradition. Examples preserved in later BA contexts, particularly in the Cyclades, may reflect memories of their ritual importance, but these are not very common. Those found in very much later contexts, like the LPG tomb at Argos, are most likely to have been chance discoveries that were, at best, recognised as survivals from a probably mythicised past of which no real memories survived.

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Renfrew, C., Philaniotou, O., Brodie, N., Cavalas, G., and Boyd, M.J. (eds) 2013. *The sanctuary on Keros and the origins of Aegean ritual practice. The excavations of 2006–2008 Vol. I: the settlement at Dhaskalio*. Cambridge: McDonald Institute of Archaeological Research.

Renfrew, C., Philaniotou, O., Brodie, N., Cavalas, G., and Boyd, M.J. (eds) 2015. *The sanctuary on Keros and the origins of Aegean ritual practice. The excavations of 2006–2008 Vol. II: Kavos and the Special*

² Renfrew *et al.* 2018, 552–553.

³ On these see especially Renfrew *et al.* 2015 and Renfrew *et al.* 2018.

⁴ See Renfrew *et al.* 2015, 557–8 and 2018, Ch. 10.