

# ARTICULATED FIGURINES IN ANCIENT GREECE AND BEYOND

## Archaeological and Regional Contexts

23-24 June, 2023

University of Fribourg



Samos Archaeological Museum. Photo H. Milas

Presence

Maison Kairos, Rue Guillaume-Techtermann 8a

Remote

Please subscribe: [locusludi@unifr.ch](mailto:locusludi@unifr.ch)

Organisation/contact

Véronique Dasen and Pauline Maillard

[Veronique.Dasen@unifr.ch](mailto:Veronique.Dasen@unifr.ch)

[Pauline.Maillard2@unifr.ch](mailto:Pauline.Maillard2@unifr.ch)

This conference is supported by the SNF project

*Greek and Roman Articulated Dolls (10th cent. BC- 7th cent. AD): Archaeological and Anthropological Approaches*

## Friday June 23<sup>rd</sup>

**09:15 OPENING - Véronique Dasen, Pauline Maillard**

**9:30 Pauline Maillard, Fribourg**

*Chronology of the classical articulated figurines according to the athenian Agora's deposits*

**10:15 Victoria Sabetai, Athens**

*Boeotian articulated figurines: women and the toys of the oikos*

**11:00** Coffee Break

**11:30 Anthi Aggeli, Preveza and Artha (remote)**

*Terracotta and bone dolls from children's graves in Ambracia*

Lunch

**14:00 Claudia Lambrugo, Milan**

*In search of 'dolls' in Greek Sicily*

**14:45 Maya Muratov, New York**

*Dancing for Artemis? Thoughts on a type of South Italian articulated terracotta figurines*

15:30 Coffee Break

**16:00 Stephanie M. Langin-Hooper, Dallas (remote)**

*Female figurines with articulated arms from hellenistic Babylonia*

**16:45 Susan Langdon, Columbia (remote)**

*Pyrrhic dancers in Corinth*

17:30 Visit of the Bible und Orient Museum

 **BIBEL+ORIENT MUSEUM**  
**MUSÉE BIBLE+ORIENT**

 Amulettes →	 Sceaux-cylindres →	 Scarabées →	 Numismatique →
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Divers récipients en céramique, lampes à huile, statuettes en bronze et en ivoire, objets en bois, tablettes d'argile avec écriture cunéiforme, reliefs sculptés des divinités proche-orientales et égyptiennes sont venus enrichir cette collection au fil du temps.

 Céramiques →	 Statuettes en bronze →	 Statuettes en ivoire →	 Objets en bois →
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## Saturday June 24<sup>th</sup>

**09:15 Aurora Rivera-Hernández, Granada/Barcelona, Adriano Orsingher, Barcelona**  
*“Toys’ stories». playing with dolls in the Phoenician/Punic Mediterranean and beyond*

**10:00 Chiara Bianchi, Fribourg, Ada Nifosi, Kent**  
*Cultural syncretism in doll-making: the new case study of a Romano-Egyptian bone doll from the British Museum*

**10:45** Coffee Break

**11:15 Astrid Fendt, Stuttgart (remote)**  
*Male noble ideal with model character: a late archaic warrior doll made of bronze in the State Collections of Antiquities*

**11:45 Maria Chidioglou, Athens (remote)**  
*Terracotta dolls in the National Archaeological Museum, Athens. An overview of types with generic or special features*

Lunch

**14:15 Elsa Bergès, Poitiers**  
*Les poupées de Cyrène*

**15:00 Véronique Dasen, Fribourg, Chiara Bianchi, Fribourg**  
*Une surprise à Tarente*

15:30 Coffee Break

**16:00 Kyriaki Katsarelia, Fribourg**  
*Classical and Hellenistic dolls in Euboea*

**How to find us: Maison Kairos (aumônerie, Université de Fribourg) Rue Guillaume-Techtermann 8a Gare > avenue de Pérolles > rue Hans Fries**



## Abstracts

### ***Clay and bone dolls from children's graves in Ambracia***

The excavations in Ambracia in North-western Greece have yielded several children's toys such as rattles, knucklebones and an assortment of dolls. Most of them come from child graves, which date from the Archaic to the Hellenistic periods. In the conference there will be presented dolls with movable parts and especially some made of bone and some depicting males, which are of particular interest, since they are not very common finds in excavations. Issues such as their date, function and manufacture techniques will be discussed, presenting them in the context of their grave group.

### **Elsa Bergès**

#### ***Cyrenian articulated dolls***

The purpose of this presentation is to expose a preliminary study of the articulated dolls coming from Cyrene and more largely Cyrenaica. Most of the known material is nowadays curated in European museums : the Louvre, the British Museum and the Museo Arqueologico nacional in Madrid. The discovery contexts remain unknown due to the lack of sources, so we will start by looking at museums catalogues and resources so as to have a clear starting point for our following analysis : how many do we have, which types are represented and what can we deduce from their materiality ? We will then dispute the links to other artefacts from the region such as funerary goddesses or sarcophagus. Based on recent work of French and Italian teams' members we will try to draw out some hypotheses about the customs and tradition surrounding the articulated figurines from Cyrene.

### **Chiara Bianchi, Ada Nifosi**

#### ***Cultural syncretism in doll-making: the new case study of a Romano-Egyptian bone doll from the British Museum***

This contribution will bring attention to a unique bone doll currently housed at the British Museum, whose iconography features distinctive elements of Romano-Egyptian syncretism. In the first part of our presentation, we will focus on the typology of the doll, made from the diaphysis of the tubular bone, and we will offer possible parallels with the manufacturing techniques of bone female figurines in the Eastern part of the Roman Empire. In the second part, we will deal with the question of typological and iconographic syncretism, and we will compare the doll with several figurines and articulated dolls from Egypt and the Eastern Roman Empire. We will argue that the doll has elements in common with Roman dolls and also with bone figurines from the Eastern Empire, but many characteristics (gilding, hairstyle, body decorations) strongly suggest an Egyptian influence as well.

### **Maria Chidioglou**

#### ***Terracotta dolls in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens: A contextual overview of types***

A number of terracotta dolls of Archaic to early Hellenistic times, found in various sites in Greece, are housed in the National Archaeological Museum, in Athens. A number of these come from systematic or salvage excavations undertaken in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, in ancient cemeteries and other sites in Attica, Boeotia, Euboea, Corinth and other Greek regions. After a brief presentation of a number of current theories on the function(s) of this material, this paper aims at an overview of representative types of terracotta dolls, from graves or other sites, housed in the National Archaeological Museum. Special or not common types, such as Classical seated male dolls and dolls with preserved colors or traces of use will be investigated, together with archaeological information and comparisons with data from modern research and recent excavations. Early excavation and archival data on the finds in the National Museum, in cases these data are preserved, will be supplied, together with relevant literary and inscriptional sources or other comparanda. The purpose of this paper is to present an updated catalogue of various terracotta doll types, mainly of the 5<sup>th</sup> and

4<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE, found in the early excavations in Greece, per context, together with short commentary on their possible function(s).

### **Véronique Dasen, Chiara Bianchi**

#### *A surprise in Taranto*

This contribution is a preliminary report about a newly found terracotta articulated object from Taranto of a special type. We will present its find context, style and typology, and suggest parallels that can explain its ergonomics and function for the living and in the tomb.

### **Astrid Fendt**

#### *Male noble ideal with model character: a late archaic warrior doll made of bronze in the State Collections of Antiquities in Munich*

The Late Archaic bronze 'warrior doll' with movable limbs, dating from around 540 BC (Staatliche Antikensammlungen Munich, nv. NI 4361), is special because of its sex and material. The 17-centimetre-high figure embodies an aristocratic soldier with breastplate, helmet and probably also a sword. The handle once present on the back and the movable limbs imply that the figure could once be presented and handled 'like a doll'. The place of discovery and origin is unknown.

In my case study, in addition to clarifying technical and stylistic details, I explore the question of what purpose(s) it once served. Was the figurine a boy's toy, a consecration gift or a grave offering for a boy who died before or during puberty? A comparison with the much more common female clay figurines implies that the 'doll' primarily had an educational and sociocultural purpose, namely to prepare the child handling it for its gender role in adulthood.

### **Kyriaki Katsarelia**

#### *Classical and Hellenistic dolls in Euboea*

This paper will be dedicated to female figurines with jointed arms and legs found in Euboea in central Greece, all dating to the classical and hellenistic period. Some of the so-called "dolls" belong to private collections, their exact provenance therefore remains unclear. Others, still unpublished, were excavated in Eretria, Aliveri and Karystos. Most of them are terracottas, but one piece in bone, found in a funerary context in Chalcis and another one in lead said to be from Karystos will also be discussed. The function of those objects remains obscure, but an analysis of both archaeological finds and other sources such as Greek texts and funerary stelai depicting dolls, may offer a better understanding of their symbolic value.

### **Claudia Lambrugo**

#### *In search of 'dolls' in Greek Sicily*

It is well known that Greek jointed dolls, intended as female articulated figurines either dressed in chiton or naked, standing or in a sitting position, have been found in a variety of contexts in Greece, mainly in Corinth and Athens and their areas of influence. On the contrary, these terracotta articulated figurines are usually reported as rare in Greek Sicily.

This paper aims to verify whether this assessment is to be held true or instead is due to a basic knowledge of archaeological contexts in Greek Sicily, some crucial of whom have remained unpublished or are known merely in preliminary reports. As the present Author has started scrutinizing storerooms and museums in search of 'dolls' in Sicily, the paper wishes to present the first results of the ongoing research.

### **Susan Langdon**

### *Corinthian pyrrhic dancer dolls*

Among the thousands of terracotta figurines found at the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Corinth are over 900 Classical to Hellenistic dolls and some 60 of the earlier Archaizing versions that preceded the nude types. Extensive studies in recent years have linked the jointed terracotta figurines with the social context of maturation, *proteleia* rituals, and the preparation of young girls for their future lives as wives and mothers. These observations are well supported by the finding of such figures in sanctuaries of kourotrophic goddesses and in young female graves. While some jointed dolls holding *krotala* suggest the general context of dancing, more specific connections of dolls to rituals are elusive. One particular series from the Demeter Sanctuary, however, offers a more specific reference: dolls representing females wearing a *polos* and body armor. A pyrrhic or weapons dance was usually performed by men as military training, funerary offering, victory celebration, or a rite of integration for young warriors. Although rare, Athenian pottery shows a female dancing with weapons as symposium entertainment, with a girl in training as a favorite motif. Pyrrhic dances by females have also been documented in honor of Artemis, Athena, and Bendis. Nothing to date has linked pyrrhic dancing with Corinth. This investigation of pyrrhic dolls through their formal details, distribution, and iconographic parallels presents the evidence of a previously unknown ritual of female pyrrhic dancing in Corinth.

### **Stephanie Langin-Hooper**

#### *Female figurines with articulated arms from hellenistic Babylonia*

This paper will discuss female figurines with articulated arms excavated from several major cities in Seleucid and Parthian Babylonia (c. 323 BCE – 224 CE). Although these objects share several features with children's toys, this paper will argue that the form and function of these figurines was derived from Greek anatomical votives used by girls and young women. The jointed arms encouraged user interaction with the figurine, but the stiffness of the shoulder joints restricted play and focused attention on the divine status of the figurine and the ideal of sexual attraction that she embodied. The crescent crowns worn by the most expensive and elite versions of these figurines specified her identity as the goddess Ishtar-Aphrodite, linking these figurines to the Babylonian temples and Hellenistic astrology. Finally, the burial contexts of many of these figurines suggests that they played a role in helping the deceased – most particularly girls and women – reach a pleasant afterlife. Overall, this paper seeks to expand the definition of “doll” by examining figurines that were not intended primarily as playthings, but which nevertheless have interaction and mobility as crucial aspects of their function.

### **Pauline Maillard**

#### *Chronology of the classical articulated figurines according to the athenian Agora's deposits*

This communication will propose a fresh look at the typology of articulated figurines from Central Greece, especially from Attica and Boeotia. Particular attention will be paid to the corpus of Classical and Hellenistic Athens, carefully studied by Dorothy Burr Thompson in the first half of the XX<sup>th</sup> century. Since then, Susan Rotroff's detailed examination of the closed deposits in the Athenian Agora has made it possible to refine considerably the chronological sequence of appearance of the different types of articulated figurines. While they are always proposed in a continuous sequence, this paper will reconsider the production date of certain types, but also their cohabitation within the cultural and craft practices of the Athenians.

### **Maya Muratov**

#### *Dancing for Artemis? Thoughts on a type of south italian articulated terracotta figurines*

Articulated terracotta figurines – ubiquitous in Antiquity – were produced around the Mediterranean from at least mid-10<sup>th</sup> century BCE onwards. It is often the case that a specific iconographic type (or its origin) is associated with a particular geographic area and thus manifests

and preserves local ritual customs and beliefs. This paper deals with a late Classical -- early Hellenistic type of terracottas that seems to originate in Taranto. Figurines depict young women in short chitoniskos – either with a polos-like headdress or without; their arms and legs are articulated. An odd and rare belt-like element of clothing validates iconographic and, one would argue, thematic connections with very particular representations of Artemis and of the Amazons found only in South Italy.

**Aurora Rivera-Hernández, Adriano Orsingher**

*“Toys’ Stories”. Playing with dolls in the Phoenician/Punic Mediterranean and beyond*

During the last decade or so, the investigation of games and playthings in the ancient Mediterranean has attracted special attention. Several studies have shown that games were a daily activity as common in antiquity as it is nowadays. Play and playthings were present at every stage of life – from childhood to adulthood – and in all everyday spaces. Accordingly, one would expect that the functions and meanings of the game and the objects used to play would have varied based on the age, gender roles and social status of the individuals, but also according to the circumstances and space – public or private – where this activity would have taken place. At the same time, play was not limited to the playful dimension, but had an important educational, sociocultural, political, and religious role in ancient daily life.

Despite this renewed interest, play, games, and playthings in the Phoenician/Punic Mediterranean still constitute a relatively unexplored field of study. Accordingly, this paper will first introduce the Phoenician/Punic repertoire of playthings and play activities, and – consequently – set dolls into a wider framework. Secondly, it will assemble the dataset of articulated dolls from the Phoenician/Punic Mediterranean by addressing their specific biographies. Given the current paucity of examples, a comparative and long-term approach will be adopted to fill present-day gaps in the archaeological record by considering coeval evidence from nearby regions such as the Levant and Cyprus, as well as possible ethnographic parallels. In doing so, this paper will attempt at answering questions about the articulated dolls’ users, audience and context of use, as well as how different play traditions and types of dolls could have interacted and, at times, coexisted in such a wide geographical and chronological arena.

**Vicky Sabetai**

*Boeotian articulated figurines: women and the toys of the oikos*

The paper surveys the evidence regarding articulated figurines, so-called “dolls”, from Boeotia in the time span from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> c. BC. These artifacts occur in rather small numbers in the region and are unearthed from tombs and sanctuaries. A small series is kept in the National Archaeological Museum at Athens. The articulation of the limbs varies across time. In the 7<sup>th</sup> c. BC the figurines are fashioned with movable legs only; in the 5<sup>th</sup> c. all four limbs are articulated; and in the fourth the seated type with movable arms only prevails. Notably ‘dolls’ can also be caricatured.

The funerary context and associated co-finds offer clues to understanding the seated “dolls” as brides in the 4<sup>th</sup> c. BC. The evidence is less clear regarding previous time periods, when such figurines may appear wearing a polos, holding musical instruments or with dances decorating their dress. Still, subject-matter with music and dance can be inscribed in the semantic realm of maidenhood and the activities of the *parthenos*. In the paper is argued that the primary significance of “dolls” is not of a deity protecting the deceased in the afterlife. On the contrary, these artifacts function as an index regarding the identity of the deceased according to age-class and social *persona*.