

Sanne Hoffmann. *Between Deity and Dedicator: The Life and Agency of Greek Votive Terracotta Figurines* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2023, 347pp, 85 illustr., hbk, ISBN 978-3-11-076887-9)

‘The possibilities of clay were endless!’ asserts Sanne Hoffmann in *Between Deity and Dedicator: The Life and Agency of Greek Votive Terracotta Figurines* (p. 39), and the volume certainly lives up to this assessment: Hoffmann takes the reader on a journey from the conception of terracotta figurines to their production, transportation, and use as votives to their eventual discard and disuse in sanctuary contexts. The multifunctionality of the material and the materiality of the figurines is explored in detail to present a vivid and interesting picture of the life cycle of these somewhat overlooked objects—at least in their cultic aspects—as significant mediators between worshippers and gods.

At its core, this book applies a broad-scale approach to the study of votive terracotta figurines in Greece and the wider Mediterranean, including Magna Graecia and Asia Minor, from the early Archaic to the end of the Hellenistic period. Indeed, it is the first attempt at a broad-scale application of the *chaîne opératoire* method to Greek votive terracotta figurines as an entire class of artefacts (p. 27). Approaches involving such use of object biographies (a principle found in Gosden and Marshall, 1999) have recently enjoyed a growing influence in archaeological studies: as Jessica Hughes argues in relation to single votive objects, this biographical approach shifts our focus from the act of dedication and brings other phases of the objects’ histories—both before and after dedication—into the picture. This enhances our understanding of the significance of these objects and how their meanings might change over time (Hughes, 2016). Hoffmann’s study also effectively tackles the current dearth of scholarship that takes a more holistic approach to votive

offerings by encompassing and integrating their religious, socio-economic, cultural, and political properties.

The introduction to the volume provides some background to the project: aims, previous scholarship, approaches, methods, and theories. The literature here is vast and presents the work of scholars of different nationalities and schools working on a variety of sites and museums. Geoff Bailey’s fifth palimpsest, which is about how objects collect meanings as they move through different social contexts, forms the crux of Hoffmann’s work, which essentially explores the life history of terracotta figurines (Bailey, 2007).

The remaining chapters are organised into these various life stages, as categorised by Hoffmann, which she presents using a wealth of material evidence. The subject of Chapter Two is the production, distribution, and consumption of figurines, which are addressed as both intertwined and separate life stages. The chapter begins with the processes of making and presents a very clear description of the materials and techniques that facilitated their widespread use. The overview of moulds, pigments, temperatures, and evidence of and from workshops used in these processes emphasises cross-craft interaction and flexibility of figurine production. ‘Flexibility’ is a recurring theme throughout the volume.

The second part of the chapter focuses on the transportation of figurines, which, as Hoffmann rightly concludes, plays a significant role in how we understand their transition to votives. There is an important point raised here about the social connections demonstrated by terracotta figurines and how they should be understood in terms of economic and

cultic value. This section might benefit from a longer discussion on the choice between local and imported figurines within sanctuaries and to what extent this choice was part of the construction of identity for the worshippers, the sanctuary, and the deity. Another overarching theme of the volume, which comes to the fore in this chapter, is the relationship between individual and shared identity, or 'Greekness'. It would be particularly rewarding to see engagement with Julia Kindt's work on personal religion here (Kindt, 2015). One small reservation in Chapter Two concerns Hoffmann's estimation of numbers of figurines at Corinth, Lindos, and Thasos based on the preserved evidence. These statistics rely on assumptions, and it is not clear how the percentages have been calculated—moreover, they are perhaps not even necessary for the author's interpretations throughout the chapter still to carry weight.

Chapter Three is an extensive chapter on 'Dedicating and Mediating'. It skilfully asks why, by whom, and for what reasons the figurines were dedicated, and it uses their placement and iconography as starting points for interpretation. Hoffmann makes astute observations from the material, visual, and written evidence which is presented in a helpful catalogue-type list of examples. She puts forward an attractive argument for the close connection between the placement of figurines and the areas of sanctuaries considered to be most sacred. An examination of the iconography of the figurines also allows for an exploration of their local or cult-specific aspects versus universal symbolism. While the figurines represented a sort of universal religion through their iconography, the specific local needs of worshippers resulted in the ritual variation that we observe across sites. Worshippers, too, experienced cult on this macro- and micro-scale. This picks up on an important and widely

discussed aspect of Greek religion: the relationship between the local and the universal, as well as the blurry in-between, which deserves further discussion here, for example, through engagement with Hans Beck on localism (2020). The theme also speaks well to another volume published in the same year as *Between Deity and Dedicator* by Beck and Kindt (2023) specifically on localism within Greek religion.

Other questions that are openly addressed in this chapter are the representation of the figurines as either deity and worshipper, the relationship between deity and worshipper, and the agency of the figurines in shaping cults. The idea of 'flexibility' emerges again, this time in relation to the variations of meaning and function of both figurine and deity, and where the figurines could be displayed within a sanctuary. In terms of the concept of gender, too, Hoffmann proposes that this may have been more fluent and figurative, and that function was more important than gender. She demonstrates that it is not possible to argue either way about primarily female dedicants, and regardless, that the dedication of figurines was not only about the individual dedicant, but also the shared family unit.

A key element in Chapter Four is its exploration of primary, secondary, and tertiary deposits in relation to votive objects, as well as deposits that do not fit neatly into any of these categories, for example, 'coincidental deposits'. Attention is drawn to discarding practices as meaningful transitional moments (as also proposed by Ferland, 2015). Comprehensive descriptions of an impressive nine sites from across the Mediterranean, representing thirteen different cults and archaeological find contexts, leads to the unsurprising observation that there are both similarities and differences in the ways in which terracotta figurines were used and deposited at different sanctuaries. Hoffmann nicely

correlates the history of archaeology with the way we understand deposits today and creates a list of potential identifying features for a votive deposit. There is a tendency here to focus on the commonalities between sites—maybe more focused discussion on the differences would be just as enlightening and enriching for the arguments presented.

The final chapter, Chapter Five, looks at the discontinued use of terracotta figurines as votives. The use of terracotta figurines as votives at each of the sanctuaries eventually comes to an end at different times, in different ways, and for different reasons. In general, this is associated with a possible increased focus on the individual in the Hellenistic period. This understudied ‘extinction’ stage of the terracotta life cycle is tackled in a thorough and thought-provoking way to examine changes in practice and changes in the perceptions of worshippers over time.

Several common threads emerge throughout the volume, for example, the interplay between local and universal religion, the interconnectedness between individual and shared identity, and the diversity and flexibility of the roles of votive offerings. One of my favourite aspects of the book is Hoffmann’s rejection of the assumption that terracotta figurines were simply mass-produced, mass-dedicated, and mass-discarded objects for everyday use. Hoffmann challenges this idea of figurines as the inexpensive and modest option for dedication (contra studies such as Kyrieleis, 1988), instead focusing on their suitability as votives. The large number of figurines is not only about their popularity, but more specifically about a shared set of religious values across Greece. The multifariousness of terracotta figurines, moreover, is central to Greek religion.

Without detracting from the volume’s focus on terracottas, it would be useful to understand better the complete votive

assemblage beyond the figurines at the sites discussed. Although this information is very helpfully presented in tables in the Appendix, a more involved discussion and more contextual analysis and comparison between different case studies might allow for a better understanding of the particular function of the terracotta figurines at each sanctuary in relation to other votive objects—also an important aspect of their biography and materiality. Overall, however, the volume demonstrates how new, exciting, and diverse narratives about the figurines unfold through a close and extensive examination of the archaeological evidence. The volume as a whole demonstrates the advantages of a broad-scale approach to the study of different categories of objects within sanctuaries and also opens a number of further avenues for research relating to the meanings and functions of votives.

The quality of print is excellent and there is a good selection of images (some of which rather beautiful) and site plans, produced in both colour and black and white. Besides some typos throughout, it is well-written and accessible. This volume would appeal to students and academics at all levels, functioning as a deep dive into the role of Greek votive terracotta figurines as well as providing a good overview of Greek religion, material culture studies, and archaeological methodology.

REFERENCES

- Bailey, G.N. 2007. Time Perspectives, Palimpsests and the Archaeology of Time. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology*, 26: 198–223.
- Beck, H. 2020. *Localism and the Ancient Greek City-State*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Beck, H. and Kindt, J. eds. 2023. *The Local Horizon of Ancient Greek Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ferland, L. 2015. Discarding Practices, Transitions, and Object Biographies. *Assemblage*, 15: 37–68.

- Gosden, C. and Marshall, Y. 1999. The Cultural Biography of Objects. *World Archaeology*, 31(2): 169–78.
- Hughes, J. 2016. Fractured narratives: writing the biography of a votive offering. In: I. Weinryb ed. *Ex Voto: Votive Giving Across Cultures*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, pp. 23–48.
- Kindt, J. 2015. Personal Religion: A Productive Category for the Study of Ancient Greek Religion. *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 135: 35–60.
- Kyrieleis, H. 1988. Offerings of the “common man” in the Heraion at Samos. In R. Hägg, N. Marinatos, and G.C. Nordquist eds. *Early Greek Cult Practice: Proceedings of the Fifth International Symposium at the Swedish Institute at Athens, 26–29 June, 1986*. Stockholm, 215–21.

TULSI PARIKH

British School at Athens, Greece

doi:10.1017/ea.2024.16

Fiona Candlin, Toby Butler, and Jake Watts. *Stories from Small Museums* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022, 205 pp., pbk, ISBN 978-1-5261-6688-3).

At a time when the reports of museum closures seem a depressingly regular feature in newspapers, this volume from Fiona Candlin, Toby Butler, and Jake Watts, is both timely and, in so many ways, welcome. The product of the Arts and Humanities Research Council Funded ‘Mapping Museums’ project, *Stories from Small Museums* is based primarily on a series of interviews conducted by Candlin and Butler across the British Isles with Watts joining to provide further in-depth research. As such it stands as a remarkable testament to small museums across Britain at what can best be described as a crossroads. In turns funny, erudite, and moving, it is both sweeping in scope and awash with intimate, carefully researched, and respectfully presented details.

Small or micro-museums have a special place in the heritage landscape. The authors point particularly to the work of the cultural historian Raphael Samuel, whose *Theatres of Memory* published in 1994 shaped much of the debate about the evolving heritage landscape in post-industrial Britain. Samuel mapped out a vibrant and growing heritage world in a post-war

Britain where government, whilst involved, took a backseat to ‘public agitation and voluntary action’ and the definition of what heritage entailed expanded across ‘environments and artefacts which in the past would have been regarded as falling beneath the dignity of history’ (Samuel [1994] 2012: 208–10). For Samuel, the authors note (pp 14–15), the boom in micro-museums was a welcome democratization of the historical narrative with those founders contributing to new and powerful Unofficial Histories as he termed them. Although subsequent research has fleshed out our understanding of the heritage landscape in modern Britain, through regional and temporal case studies, there has been no study of the founding figures of that wave of small museums despite the ‘strong bearing’ such motivations have on how we conceive of those museums. It was this question of personal motives that drove Candlin, Butler and Watts to their project, with Candlin and Butler travelling the country to interview founders and successors in museums across Britain, and Watts contributing follow-up research in detail.