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AMULETS, GAMING PIECES, TOYS OR OFFERINGS? THOUGHTS ON ANIMAL FIGURINES AND FUNERARY PRACTICES IN THE LATE BRONZE AGE AEGEAN

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Abstract. The assemblage of four cones (ivory, stone) and an astragalus marked with dots from Katsambas in Crete is so far the best evidence of gaming pieces uncovered in an Aegean tomb of the Late Bronze Age. A small faience animal associated with the same burial, that of a child, attracted however little attention, and raises the question whether it may be added as a possible game piece to this set. Although this holed piece was certainly used as a personal ornament or amulet, this paper gives the opportunity to review the functions of small faience, stone and ivory animal figurines in the Aegean, especially the couchant ones. It also introduces the notion of chance and fate linked to playing on the basis of cross-cultural comparisons in the Eastern Mediterranean. Additionally, the hypothesis that small standing terracotta quadrupeds may have initially served as toys before having functioned as votive or funerary offerings in Aegean cult places and tombs is further explored. Special interest is shown on Mycenaean funerary assemblages from Prosymna in the Argolid and Perati in Attica featuring small terracotta animals and cone shells, inasmuch as these objects may be seen as potential toys and gaming pieces.

Grave goods, jewellery, Minoan Crete, Mycenaean Greece, Late Cypriot

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Περίληψη. Το σύνολο τεσσάρων κώνων (ελεφαντοστό, λίθος) και ενός αστραγάλου με στιγμές από τον Κατσαμπά στην Κρήτη αποτελεί μέχρι στιγμής το καλύτερο τεκμήριο αντικειμένων προωρισμένων για το παιχνίδι που βρέθηκε σε τάφο της Ύστερης Εποχής του Χαλκού στο Αιγαίο. Ωστόσο, ένα μικρό ειδώλιο ζώου από φαγεντιανή που σχετίζεται με την ίδια ταφή, αυτήν ενός παιδιού, έχει προσελκύσει ελάχιστη προσοχή και εγείρει το ερώτημα αν μπορεί να προστεθεί ως πιθανός πεσσός σε αυτό το σύνολο. Παρόλο που αυτό το αντικείμενο με οπή χρησιμοποιήθηκε σίγουρα ως προσωπικό κόσμημα ή φυλαχτό, στο παρόν άρθρο αναθεωρούνται οι λειτουργίες των μικρών ειδωλίων ζώων από φαγεντιανή, λίθο και ελεφαντοστό στο Αιγαίο, ιδίως όσων αναπαριστώνται σε οκλάζουσα στάση. Εισάγεται επίσης, η έννοια της τυχαιότητας και της μοίρας που συνδέεται με το παιχνίδι βάσει διαπολιτισμικών συγκρίσεων στην Ανατολική Μεσόγειο. Επιπλέον, διερευνάται περαιτέρω η υπόθεση ότι τα μικρά όρθια πήλινα τετράποδα μπορεί αρχικά να χρησίμευαν ως παιχνίδια πριν χρησιμοποιηθούν ως αναθήματα ή κτερίσματα σε λατρευτικούς χώρους και τάφους στο Αιγαίο. Ιδιαίτερο ενδιαφέρον επιδεικνύεται σε μυκηναϊκά ταφικά σύνολα από την Πρόσυμνα στην Αργολίδα και την Περατή στην Αττική, που περιλαμβάνουν μικρά πήλινα ζώα και κωνικά όστρεα, εφόσον τα αντικείμενα αυτά μπορούν να εκληφθούν ως πιθανά παιχνίδια και πεσσοί.

Κτερίσματα, κοσμήματα, μινωική Κρήτη, μυκηναϊκή Ελλάδα, Υστεροκυπριακό

Riassunto. Il nucleo di manufatti composto da quattro coni (in avorio e pietra) e da un astragalo contrassegnato da fori proveniente da Katsambas (Creta) costituisce attualmente una delle testimonianze meglio note per quanto riguarda strumenti di gioco associati a contesti funerari della tarda Età del Bronzo nell'area egea. Ha attirato, invece, scarsa attenzione una piccola figurina in *faience* in forma di animale proveniente dalla stessa sepoltura, attribuita ad un bambino, e la questione se essa possa essere inclusa in questo set come possibile strumento di gioco rimane tuttora aperta. Oltre a considerare l'ipotesi che tale manufatto, forato, sia stato usato come ornamento personale o amuleto, il contributo riesamina le varie possibili funzioni delle figurine di animali in *faience*, pietra e avorio dall'Egeo, soprattutto quelle in posizione araldica. Sulla base di confronti interculturali individuati nel

Mediterraneo orientale, vengono discussi i concetti di casualità e sorte legati al gioco. Inoltre, viene ulteriormente esplorata l'ipotesi che i piccoli quadrupedi stanti di terracotta possano aver svolto la funzione di giocattoli prima di costituire offerte votive o funerarie nei luoghi di culto e nelle tombe dell'Egeo. Di particolare interesse sono i corredi funerari micenei di Prosymna nell'Argolide e Perati in Attica, contenenti piccoli animali di terracotta e conchiglie coniche, potenzialmente interpretabili come giocattoli e strumenti di gioco.

Corredo funerario, monili, Creta minoica, Grecia micenea, Tardo Cipriota

Introduction

Since the discovery of an outstanding game board in the palace of Knossos in 1901,[1] the debate has mainly focused on the criteria for identifying Minoan game boards and pieces, that is, on slabs with depressions, astragali, seashells and other small objects, as discussed by Niklas Hillbom in his seminal publication on *Minoan game markers, pieces and dices*.[2] Other scholars have analysed the use and function of small Mycenaean terracotta figurines, including animal ones, assuming or rejecting the idea that they may have served as toys according to their find-context.[3] However, the relationship between game pieces and toys in the Late Bronze Age Aegean remains little explored.

This paper will first focus on the gaming pieces from Katsambas in Minoan Crete.[4] Special interest will then be shown on the small faience animal that likely belongs to the same burial. This will be the starting point of my reflection on the function of animal figurines in the Aegean. The debate will concentrate on materials, specific features and contexts of small

[1] EVANS 1921, 387, 472-476. This board, termed as The Royal Draught-board by Evans, as the Knossos game board (Kgb) by N. HILLBOM (2005, 201-202, 211), is made of rock crystal, ivory, silver, glass paste and gold (ca. 95 x 55 cm).

[2] HILLBOM 2005. Reviewed by SCHÄDLER 2008. Like N. CUCUZZA (2010, 135), I use in this paper the neutral term "slabs with depressions" instead of "cup-holes" (cf. HILLBOM 2005, 45-200; HILLBOM 2003).

[3] TZONOU-HERBST 2002, 68-77; MORRIS 2017, 674; POMADÈRE 2018, 65. Against the idea of classifying (anthropomorphic) "minor figurines" as toys at Tiryns: KILIAN 1988, 148; for animal terracottas as votives: VETTERS 2015.

[4] ALEXIOU 1967, 39, 57-58; HOOD 1971, 123.

zoomorphic figurines, with the aim of a better understanding of their use as potential amulets, gaming pieces, toys and offerings. I will eventually turn attention to terracotta animal figurines found together with seashells in Mycenaean funerary contexts, looking for possible traces of gaming practices and cultural transfers in the Eastern Mediterranean.

1.The astragalus and cones from Katsambas

An astragalus marked with one to four holes on each of its sides, two ivory cones and two chlorite ones were clearly identified as gaming pieces when first published by Stylianos Alexiou in 1967 (Fig. 1).[5] These five objects, which correspond to an astragalus-die and four cone-shaped game pieces,[6] come from one of the seven chamber tombs (Tomb H) excavated at Katsambas, near Knossos, that have been assigned to the Late Minoan II and III A1 period (ca. 1450-1370 BC).[7]

Because of the series of holes on its sides, the Katsambas astragalus (L. 3.5 cm) is so far a unique piece in the Late Bronze Age Aegean. Other astragali discovered in the palace of Phaistos and the settlement of Khania are not worked but, according to N. Hillbom, they were likely used for playing.[8] However, the astragali from Phaistos were found either as a single item in a room, or as twelve bones in an uncertain context under the Central Court. This is insufficient to conclude that they may have constituted a game set. The playful dimension of the astragali from Khania may also be questioned, two of them were found in pair in the same context, the third one in a destruction level. The ivory cubic die from this settlement comes from another context.[9]

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[5] ALEXIOU 1967, 39, 57-58, no. 36, pl. 28α (bottom left and right), no. 47, pl. 36γ.

[6] HOOD 1971, 123; HILLBOM 2005, 295, 313-314, fig. 18, 328-329. REESE 2000, 398: "Four lateromedial holes and two dorsoplantar holes"; holes going probably through the bone (probably *Ovis/Capra*). I thank David Reese for his invaluable comments and for sharing his data on seashells and astragali.

[7] ALEXIOU 1967, 26-40, for the date, p. 1.

[8] HILLBOM 2005, 312-313, 329; Phaistos: LEVI 1976 I:1, 217, fig. 336, 218, n. 12, 276; Khania: [Hallager - Hallager] GSE VI (LM I) forthcoming, 68-B 2, B3, unpublished, 84-Misc 125.

[9] Building 1, Room A - however, probably post-Minoan (D.S. Reese, personal communication, 2019) - see HALLAGER – HALLAGER 2003, 70, 268, no. 70-B 4, pls. 148, 156a:9; HILLBOM 2005, 314-316, fig. 19. For a cubic seal ivory as a possible pictorial proto-die, with the Egyptian game board sign (men) from Ayia Triada (Tholos tomb A, Early Minoan III, ca. 2300/2200-2100/00 BC): EVANS 1935, 521; HILLBOM 2005, 317-318.



Figure 1: Astragalus and cones from Katsambas (Tomb H) at the Heraklion Archaeological Museum (© Heraklion Archaeological Museum, 349, 347, 348, 2891, 2892).

Various scholars have already stressed the multiple use, meanings and values of astragali.[10] The material, size and number of the astragali, the evidence of wear or repair on them, as well as their context, exact find-spot and association with other elements are fundamental variables that should be considered before assuming that the astragali have been used for playing.[11] The same holds true for astragali from Tiryns (Argolid),[12] Lindos (Rhodes),[13] and Kition (Cyprus) – among them a holed and lead-filled

[10] On the use of astragali in oracular practices: AMANDRY 1984, 377. On astragali for games of chance or skill: SCHÄDLER 1996b; also, MAY 1991. On astragali as possible divination tools, see GILMOUR 1997, 272. On the apotropaic value of the astragali: CARÈ 2017, 185, n. 74. On bronze astragali and astragaloid lingots, natural astragali filled with lead, as well as astragli used as weight or monetary symbols in various regions of the Mediterranean from the Archaic to the Roman imperial period: CARÈ 2019 and DOYEN 2021.

[11] On similar fundamental variables for interpretating the value of shells: CARÈ 2018, 148.

[12] Settlement: RAHMSTORF 2008, 212-214, pl. 82, 98.8.9.

[13] Tomb 2, late 12th-early 11th century BC: VRATSALI – FARMAKIDOU 2012, 789.

example, but devoid of a series of dots – and further astragali from various Late Cypriote sites (settlements, cult places and tombs).[14] In funerary contexts, astragali have been traditionally regarded as toys and child specific material.[15] However, astragali have been found in burials of adults too, as was the case in South Italy from the 6th to the 4th century BC, and may alternatively refer to social qualities and convivial practices.[16]

The best example of an astragalus found in a Late Bronze Age burial context most likely used for playing during lifetime comes from Tomb 23 at Hala Sultan Tekke in Cyprus (LC IIIA, ca. 1200-1100 BC),[17] because of its specific positioning in the tomb and association with other objects probably linked to game practices. This astragalus was found close to the remains of an ivory box, and may have fallen from it, as did the three spool-shaped (or "pulley-shaped") faience objects lying south-east of and below this box. All these pieces constitute a coherent game set.

As regards the Katsambas cones, the two ivory pieces are no higher than 2 cm with a diameter of 1 cm (max. diam. 1 cm; H. 2 cm). They are thus similar in shape but clearly smaller than the ivory cones from the palace of Knossos (H. 6.7-8.2 cm; diam. 6.1-8.2 cm) which are the same size as the lower medallions of the famous game board uncovered in another room of the palace.[18] The chamber tombs at Katsambas did not provide any kind of game board, but the hypothesis of an unpreserved wooden game board is not ruled out by the excavator.[19] The deposition of game boards in Late Minoan tombs is uncertain. It has been suggested that the inlays (ivory, faience, glass, shell and stone) from Tomb 2 of the Isopata cemetery may have belonged to a game board by comparison with similar pieces from various rooms of the palace at Knossos, those of the "Draughtboard"

[14] REESE 1985, 382-385; GILMOUR 1997, 169; REESE – LERNAU 2018, 523-524.

[15] CARÈ 2017, 176-178. On astragali correlated to a prenuptial status of the dead, and the inappropriate hypotheses of astragali accompanying adult deceased involved in astragalomanteia or in ritual activities: CARÈ 2017, 183.

[16] CARÈ 2017, 187-188.

[17] NIKLASSON 1983, 171-172, N1380, fig. 435, also p. 185, n. 13a. *Ovis/Capra* astragalus (D.S. Reese). For the shells from this tomb, see below.

[18] HILLBOM 2005, 203-204, fig. 1, 228-230, fig. 9-10; see EVANS 1901-1902, 14, n. 1; EVANS 1921, 477-479, fig. 342a, b. This good match led scholars to identify this board as a game board, see discussion in SCHÄDLER 1996a, 9; HILLBOM 2005, 264. However, it has been challenged that the rosettes from Tylissos and Mycenae belonged to game boards: HILLBOM 2005, 23, 242-245.

[19] ALEXIOU 1967, 39.

included,[20] whereas thirty-two clay "counters" (eighteen cylindrical, slightly concave, and fourteen pyramidal) possibly used for playing come from the same cemetery (Isopata, T. 6, LM II/IIIA1, ca. 1450-1370 BC, thus contemporary with the tombs of Katsambas).[21] The fact that the inlays and "counters" were uncovered in two different tombs do not allow us to consider them a conclusive evidence of a gaming set.

The best counterparts for the Katsambas cone-shaped gaming pieces probably come from Cyprus. Tomb 14 at Kalavasos-*Ayios Dhimitrios* provided five faience cones together with six glass squares (Late Cypriot IIB, ca. 1375-1325 BC).[22] The squares may have originally been applied on an unpreserved game board, possibly a box,[23] "for the game of twenty rather than senet".[24] According to Alison South (personal communication, 2018), bones and grave goods, the faience cones and three of the glass squares, were scattered on the floor of this tomb, while three other glass squares lay on the bench of this chamber. Although these finds (gaming pieces and glass squares) cannot be associated with a specific burial, it must be stressed that the remains of two men and a juvenile of 3-7 years old have been identified in this tomb.[25]

It may be argued that the gaming pieces in Tomb 14 at Kalavasos, a Cypriot centre of trade and circulation of goods with a community receptive to various cultural interactions and influences, may reflect social practices transferred from the Levant, where boards and boxes for *senet* and game of twenty likely functioned as greeting or exchange gifts in the Late Bronze

[20] PRESTON 2007, 270-271, 308-312, fig. 35-37; for the shells (*Thylacodes arenarius*): KARALI 1999, 130 (*Lementina arenaria*).

[21] PRESTON 2007, 292, 305-306 ("identification hypothetical"), inv. 1672.1-18 and 19-32, fig. 34.

[22] HILLBOM 2005, 296; see SOUTH 1997, 167; SOUTH 2000, 354. I thank Alison South very much for sharing new information on Tomb 14 at Kalavasos, and a picture of the glass and faience pieces (three pinched cones, two normal cones). For the grave goods from this tomb: SOUTH 2006, 139. Final publication forthcoming.

[23] SOUTH 1997, 165-167; SOUTH 2000, 353-354.

[24] CRIST – DUNN-VATURI – DE VOOGT 2016, 76; for a LBA double-sided ivory game box (*senet* and 20-squares) from Thebes (Egypt): 88-90, fig. 4.5; FINKEL 2008, 152-153. This box is decorated with animals in lying (rather than in a "flying gallop"), crouching and kneeling positions. For an ivory box from Enkomi: DIKAIOS 1969/71, 638, pl. 30:2, 128:66, 129, 156:49.

[25] There is only one metatarsal bone preserved from the juvenile (A.K. South, personal communication, 2018).

Age.[26] The display of valuables such as *exotica* at the funeral could explain the offering of a foreign game set to the tomb. This would also be true for the burial of a wealthy adult male at Hala Sultan Tekke (Tomb 23, LC IIIA) that contained three spool-shaped gaming pieces of faience similar to Egyptian ones, as well as remains of an ivory box, perhaps for board games.[27] The same line of reasoning may be applied for the gaming pieces from Katsambas.

2. The small faience animal from Katsambas

According to the excavator, the game set from Tomb H at Katsambas was probably associated with the child sarcophagus (larnax 2) located in the south-west corner of the chamber and the child's phalanx bone found close to its entrance.[28] However, the exact positioning of the astragalus and cone-shaped pieces in the tomb remain unknown. By contrast, other finds from this tomb were clearly related to the child's larnax 2, among them a small faience animal and a glass paste rosette.[29]

The faience animal is small (L. 2.5, H. 1 cm) and described as "couchant [or crouching] and turning its head to the left with two holes"[30] (Fig. 2). These two holes are pierced through its body. In this respect, this piece has been rightly regarded as a pendant in the form of a lying or couchant animal.[31] More precisely, the figurine is a bovine animal, even if the lateral parts of its head (where the ears and horns should be) are not preserved, because of its large muzzle, the position of its head and legs. A lion in a

[26] Two games of respective Egyptian and Near Eastern origins. CRIST – DUNN-VATURI – DE VOOGT 2016, 73, 101 (also in Cyprus, as heirlooms between the 16th and 12th century BC). For ancient Mesopotamian games: DRAFFKORN KILMER 1993. For a frit monkey figurine from Mycenae as a hypothetical game piece: CLINE 1991, 41. For seated monkey shaped pendants "as exotica or of an exotic inspiration" in the Aegean: SGOURITSA 2012: 542-543.

[27] NIKLASSON 1983, 175-176, 180, N1357, N1360, N1362, N1230, fig. 448a-c, 450.

[28] ALEXIOU 1967, 39, also 35 (phalanx bone).

[29] On the exact location of the finds from Tomb H, see ALEXIOU 1967, 31-32: two ceramic vases (8, 17) close to the south-west corner; a small faience animal (7) and a glass paste rosette (48) close to the larnax 2; a small hollow part of a bronze utensil under the larnax 2, and a small bronze pin at the south-west corner.

[30] ALEXIOU 1967, 55, pl. 36α, no. 7 (350): "Ζώδιον ἐκ φαγεντιανῆς, μῆκους 0.025 μ. καὶ ὕψους 0.01 μ, παριστάμενον ὀκλάζον, καὶ στρέφον τὴν κεφαλὴν ἀριστερὰ μετὰ δύο ὀπῶν διαμπερῶν (πίν. 36α). Πβ. ΑΕ 1888, πίν. 8 ἀριθ. 13, πίν. 9 ἀριθ. 17".

[31] EFFINGER 1996, 186.

couchant position would be characterized by its head with a mane and large paws usually directed forwards.[32]



Figure 2: Faience animal (pendant) from Katsambas (Tomb H) at the Heraklion Archaeological Museum (© Heraklion Archaeological Museum, 350).

It has already been pointed out that "faience figurines of animals have been infrequently recovered" in the Aegean Bronze Age,[33] among them a fragment of a bull head[34] and that of a bull leg[35] from the palace of Knossos (ca. 1700-1500 BC) and only a part of a possible horn from Tomb 2 at Isopata (not earlier than 1450 BC).[36] There is no accurate parallel for the Katsambas faience animal in Minoan Crete. Some distant parallels come from the mainland (ca. 1600-1200 BC): Tomb 82 at Mycenae-*Kalkani* (Argolid) yielded two similar small compact faience bulls or cows in a recumbent position, both perforated by two holes, and for this reason

[32] See below, the ivory lion of Mycenae: KRZYSZKOWSKA 2007, 20-23, pl. 3-4. For animals in a resting position represented on seals: CROWLEY 2013, 53, 103 (T13, I81, pairs of couchant bulls), 106 (I87, couchant lion, with paws forwards, and sejant one).

[33] FOSTER 1979, 78. My article focuses on quadrupeds; for bird shaped beads: SGOURITSA 2012, 542.

[34] FOSTER 1979, 79, fig. 12. MM IIIA Ivory Deposit.

[35] FOSTER 1979, 79-80. Vestibule of the Jewel Fresco, MM III/LM IA ?

[36] PRESTON 2007, 271, 308, inv. 1672.48.

classified as beads (Fig. 3).[37] A similar compact and perforated recumbent bull/cow was uncovered in Tiryns, whereas a (glass/faience) bead in the shape of a holed lion, whose head is missing, also from Tiryns, looks perhaps closer in shape to the Katsambas bull.[38] The compact shape of these bovine animals raises the question whether their resemblance with knucklebones (astragali) is accidental or intentional.[39] A fourth example from Thebes in Boeotia, found in a Late Helladic IIIB floor deposit (Pavloyiannopoulou plot), can be added to this review.[40]



Figure 3: Faience bulls or cows (beads/pendants) from Mycenae-*Kalkani* (Tomb 82) at the National Archaeological Museum of Athens (© National Archaeological Museum of Athens, Φ 3124).

Pierced gold items in the shape of recumbent bulls were also uncovered in Mycenae, including two animals in a compact form similar to the

[37] XENAKI-SAKELLARIOU 1985, 233, no. Φ 3124, pl. 111, and II; with two parallels in gold (T. 58), p. 181, no. X 2868, pl. 76.

[38] RAHMSTORF 2008, 228-229, pl. 86; 96.1a.b-2. a. b, no. 2030 (bull), 1747 (lion).

[39] I thank Ulrich Schädler for this observation at the XXI BGS Colloquium.

[40] SPYROPOULOS 1971, 209, pl. 183ς'; RAHMSTORF 2008, p. 228. Archaeological Museum of Thebes (Boeotia): "Glass model of a sedent heifer".

aforementioned faience beads/pendants.[41] As regards gold pieces, small couchant animals found in the Aegean were usually pierced and unambiguously identified as pieces of jewellery (beads or pendants), for instance a lying calf coming from Knossos (deposit near the Temple Tomb, Late Minoan IA),[42] a couchant lion from Ayia Triada (Tomb 5, probably Late Minoan I, ca. 1700/1600-1470/1450 BC) and a similar one from Mycenae (Shaft Grave III),[43] and another lion from Mycenae (chamber tomb, Late Helladic).[44] It is also worth noting a stone mould from the workshops at Poros, near Knossos, carrying the hollow shape of a couchant quadruped with its head turned backward, together with three other motifs, including that of a seashell (likely a scallop).[45] The fastening of small animals on gold vessels was an uncommon feature in the Aegean and the gold couchant lion from Mycenae that adorned the handle of a lost vessel appears to be an isolated case.[46]

In addition, there are a few well known small couchant animal figurines of stone in the Aegean. One may refer to five small dogs from the Mount Juktas (steatite and chlorite, L. from 1.63 to 3.5 cm, peak sanctuary, MM II-LM IB)[47] and one dog from Malia (L. 2.6, *Quartier Mu*, MM II)[48] in Crete,

[41] For two gold beads in the shape of bovine animals from Mycenae (T. 58), see n. 37. For a gold bull in a less compact shape (Tomb 68): XENAKI-SAKELLARIOU 1985, 194, X 2947, pl. 84; PAPADIMITRIOU 2015, 120.

[42] EFFINGER 1996, 221, KnT 3i, pl. 8.c, L. 2.3 cm.

[43] A. Triada, Tomb 5 (LM IIIA-IIIB), but possibly older than its use: EFFINGER 1996, 184, HT 9c, pl. 2.o, L. 3 cm. For parallels from Mycenae and Naxos: PAPAEFTHYMIOU 1973, 380-391; from A. Triada and Mycenae also POURSAT 2008, 244, fig. 341-342 (A. Triada: pendentif, L. 2.7 cm; Mycenae, Grave Circle A, T. III, L. 3.6, LH I); THOMAS 2004, 194, no. 5, fig. 9.29 "recumbent", also a gold over silver pendant in the shape of a couchant lion, see p. 197, no. 21, fig. 9.35; RAHMSTORF 2008, 229.

[44] XENAKI-SAKELLARIOU 1985, 214-215, no. X 2949, pl. 98.

[45] EVELY 2000, 412-413, Type 2c, no. 12, HM 2540, prob. LM IIIA1, cf. Papaefthymiou, Kr Kh 25 (1973) 375ff, pls. IB'-IΔ' [PAPAEFTHYMIOU 1973; with a close parallel in gold sheet from Thebes (Boeotia), p. 381, pl. IE'].

[46] KARO 1911, 258, fig. 10. Inv. No. 991.

[47] KARETSOU – KOEHL 2014. Together with a sixth couchant dog made of gold and a seventh one, maybe leaping, made of ivory, all puppies or young dogs with dangling ears and large paws. Same position as the couchant lions: EFFINGER 1996, 127: "Dog/Lion". For a couchant dog on a gold discoid seen as guard dog (Tomb at Poros, MM III-LM IA): DIMOPOULOU 2010. For adult dogs with large head and paws on seals: CROWLEY 2013, 138, E 18, *CMS* V Supp. 1B, 58, 146, E 33, *CMS* II 3, Nr. 52.

[48] DETOURNAY – POURSAT – VANDENABEELE 1980, 109-110, no. 154, fig. 149. This figurine is not holed.

and one animal from the sanctuary at Phylakopi on Melos (West Shrine, LH IIIC, ca. 1130-1120 BC).[49] The animal from Phylakopi, longitudinally perforated, has certainly been worn as a pendant or amulet, but the steatite dog from Mount Juktas with "two holes drilled on its flat underside" was probably "attached to the lid of a small box".[50] They were deposited as votive objects in these cult places. By comparison, carnelian small figurines from the settlement of Enkomi, among them a sphinx and a couchant lion (LC II or III), as well as a cone shell skeuomorph (LC III), have also been interpreted as pendants or amulets (Fig. 4).[51]

Therefore, the examples provided so far leave little doubt about the function of the small pierced faience bull from Katsambas: it was used as a personal ornament, not as a gaming piece. Moreover, the idea that items of jewellery in the shape of couchant animals may have been used as protective amulets in the Aegean needs to be further explored, in particular with regard to the question of a magical power possibly inspired by foreign symbolic values, or perhaps by religious concepts.



Figure 4: Carnelian sphinx, couchant lion and cone shell skeuomorph (pendants) from the settlement at Enkomi. After COURTOIS 1984, pl. XVI. 9, 12, 20.

[49] With its head lacking, see RENFREW 1985, 346 (SF 2008), fig. 8.12, pl. 61.b, also p. 349 (MLb East layer 13, 2b), 82, table 3.2 (date, 2b).

[50] KARETSOU – KOEHL 2014, 335, pl. XCVII. The holes do not go through its body.

[51] COURTOIS – LAGARCE 1986, 114 ("de type égyptien, sauf peut-être celui [...] appelé 'cône' "), pl. XX.21, 24, 25. See COURTOIS 1984, 146-147, fig. 45.13, 16, 25 (longitudinally perforated), pl. XVI.9, 12, 20. A miniature (unpierced?) crouching lion is now exhibited at the Museum of Heraklion. For an earlier small pierced faience astragalus from Tomb 258 at Megiddo (MB II, 18th century BC): GUY 1938, pl. 115.24.

3. A note on Egyptian ivory couchant lions

Egyptian ivory couchant lions, such as the ivory lions from the tomb of Zer (Djer) at Abydos (1st Dynasty),[52] are usually regarded as gaming pieces or counters related to the *mehen* game, which was in use during the Early Dynastic period, and thus belong to a much older cultural context than the Late Bronze Age animal figurines mentioned so far, including the Katsambas faience animal. Some of these Egyptian animal figurines are perforated.[53] The holes may have served for hanging the lions, perhaps for storage purposes,[54] or for symbolic or amuletic uses, as votive objects.[55] In Egypt, the *mehen* game went out of use after the Old Kingdom period.[56] Traces of this game survived in Cyprus in the Late Cypriot period, as attested by stone boards with depressions in spiral patterns found in later contexts on this island.[57] To date, there is no clear evidence of *mehen* game boards uncovered in the Aegean. In this respect, it is difficult to confirm that the stone with depressions arranged in a spiral design found in Kato Zakro in Eastern Crete was used for playing and not for ritual purposes only.[58]

In addition, it must be stressed that Egyptian faience gaming pieces of the 2nd and 1st millennium BC are mostly pinched cone-shaped or spool-shaped,[59] rarely in the shape of animal heads.[60] In the Aegean, by comparison, only two animal figurines, both made of ivory, are regarded as counters for a board game by N. Hillbom, in line with Doro Levi's opinion[61]

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[52] PETRIE 1901, 23, no. 3-4, pl. VI; PETRIE 1903, 24, no. 23-29, pl. III; also HILLBOM 2005, 302; KENDALL 2007, 34, n. 12. See online Tomb of Djer, EA35529, British Museum.

[53] Ivory Game Pieces in the shape of a holed lion: British Museum, EA35529 (Tomb of Djer, 3050 BC) and EA64093.

[54] As it may be the case of *mehen* and men boards, see CRIST – DUNN-VATURI – DE VOOGT 2016, 38.

[55] Without boards, the function of the lions can be challenged, see CRIST – DUNN-VATURI – DE VOOGT 2016, 26.

[56] ROTHÖHLER 1999, 19, also p. 164.

[57] LC IA, ca. 1550 BC: SWINY 1986, 59, cited by JACOBSSON 1987, 179; MALISZEWSKI 2012, 172. CRIST – DUNN-VATURI – DE VOOGT 2016, 36.

[58] CRIST – DUNN-VATURI – DE VOOGT 2016, 37. See HILLBOM 2005, 108; SWINY 1986, 59 (Zakros, Room H, 1900-1700 BC), fig. 42.g, see *Ergon* 1973, 107, fig. 102. For the discovery (no reference to Egyptian contacts): PLATON 1971, 240.

[59] *Senet* or 30-Squares Game Box 1400-1200 BC, British Museum EA66669. Set with wooden game box, Metropolitan Museum 12.182.72a, b.

[60] HILLBOM 2005, 302; CRIST – DUNN-VATURI – DE VOOGT 2016, 64-65, fig. 3.6. See FINKEL *et alii* 1991, 144-147, fig 132-133.

[61] LEVI 1952-54, 408 (room LI, 2nd phase); LEVI 1976, I:1, 218; HILLBOM 2005, 302, 328, D. ca. 1-1.5 cm. See also HOOD 1971, 123.

(Fig. 5). These are a lion's head and a bull's leg found together with a bone disc marked with a moon crescent on one side and dots on the other[62] in a ceramic goblet in Room LI of the palace of Phaistos (Middle Minoan II, ca. 1800-1700 BC).



Figure 5: Ivory lion's head and bull's leg found in a goblet at Phaistos (Room LI), a holed steatite quadruped (pendant) and an astragalus from the same room (various scales). After LEVI 1952-54, 412, fig. 32, 414, fig. 36; LEVI 1976, 217, fig. 336.

The function of these pieces as counters for board games has been challenged, on the assumption of an accidental grouping in a goblet. The fact that the ivory bull's leg as well as the disc are both holed goes against the idea that these objects may have functioned together as gaming pieces, but supports the view that the leg may have been a part of a bull figurine and the disc used as a bead.[63] Moreover, a small steatite pendant in the shape of a quadruped, possibly a bull, also comes from another part of this room.[64] The discovery of an astragalus in the same room[65] may rekindle

[62] LEVI 1952-54, 412, fig. 32 (goblet), 414, fig. 36 (bone, ivory and stone objects, including the lion's head and bull's leg); LEVI 1976, I:1, 218, pl. 181.c, d, f.

[63] SCHÄDLER 1996a, 9.

[64] LEVI 1952-54, 412, 414, fig. 36.

[65] LEVI 1976, I:1, 217, fig. 336.

discussions in favour of a gaming function for these pieces, though it was not found in the goblet. Nevertheless, one astragal in itself is not necessarily an indication for play, and its association with the other pieces from this room cannot be proven.

As regards *senet* games, it is worth noting that the stone *senet* board from Athens – now recognized as a piece from an Egyptian collection – features a couchant lion with quite flat sides, carved on its top; a board that however cannot be dated precisely between the early 12th century and the late 7th century BC,[66] between the destruction of Ugarit and the battle of Megiddo in the Levant. By comparison, the upper part of a Late Bronze Age ivory game of fifty holes from Megiddo features two lions confronting on one side, two goats on the other.[67] These standing animals carved in relief on the top of the holed side of the board do not correspond to free-standing figurines. In this respect, one may wonder whether a glazed lion from Enkomi on Cyprus (11.8 cm, LBA, ca. 1450-1200 BC)[68] might have been fixed on a game board. However, this lion is neither carved or moulded in the continuity of a board nor found in the same context as a game board, and could thus have decorated any box or furniture. There is also no concrete reason to believe that the ivory pairs of couchant animals, perhaps bovine ones, from Late Helladic tombs at Mycenae[69] adorned game boards rather than boxes used for other purposes.[70]

Eventually, the famous couchant ivory lion from the Late Helladic III shrine of Mycenae (Room 31, LH IIIB1, ca. 1320-1250 BC) has never been regarded as a possible game piece or decorative part of a game board. Found with a male ivory head, the couchant ivory lion may have served either as a part of a cult image or as "a votive offering [...] made for that

[66] DUNN-VATURI – CRIST – DE VOOGT 2017, 1, fig. 1, see p. 7 (date): "between the Ramesside and Late Period."

[67] LOUD 1939, pl. 47; DUNN-VATURI – CRIST – DE VOOGT 2017, 6. On possible bulls adorning Assyrian stone boards for the game of fifty-eight holes: DUNN-VATURI – CRIST – DE VOOGT 2017, 6-7; see GADD 1934, 50; DRAFFKORN KILMER 1993, 360.

[68] British Museum, no. 1216 from T. 88 (CREWE – CATLING – KIELY 2009, 88.13): MURRAY – SMITH – WALTERS 1900, P34, fig. 62; COURTOIS – LAGARCE 1986, 139.

[69] XENAKI-SAKELLARIOU 1985, 97-98, E 2466, pl. 27 (T. 27), 154, pl. 54 (excavation 1887/88).

[70] For a cylindrical ivory pyxis with two pairs of lug-like handles formed by crouching animals (a lion and a fawn): IMMERWAHR 1971, 166, I-16, pl. 32.

purpose", according to Olga Krzyszkowska,[71] who does not exclude a secondary use for both of them in this cult place. Even if its initial function and meaning remain an open question,[72] it is unlikely that this ivory lion has been used as a game piece because of its large size (L. 17.7 cm[73]). It is also implausible that it might have topped a game board, since no *senet* board has been so far uncovered on the Greek mainland or the Aegean islands.[74] The lion was possibly fixed through its hollow underside on a box, a piece of furniture or a stand.

4. Votive and other uses of couchant animal figurines in the Aegean

Back to the small faience animal from Katsambas, it must be added that this piece was certainly not used as a seal, since no incised or engraved pattern has been observed underneath its surface base, in contrast to an Early Minoan ivory seal in the form of crouching lion[75] and another ivory seal in the shape of a lying animal, perhaps a bovine one.[76] Nonetheless, the motif of recumbent bovines is encountered in the Aegean glyptic. Hard stone seals decorated with such a motif were uncovered in a few Late Bronze Age tombs in Crete and on the Greek mainland; some of them have been identified as warrior burials due to the weapons present in the grave assemblages (LM II/LH IIB-IIIA1, ca. 1450-1370 BC).[77] Seals of this class found in wealthy burials on the Greek mainland may have been acquired in LH IIIA1, along with other objects of possible Cretan origins, and may have functioned as high status emblems of a small group of individuals involved in "Cretan affairs".[78]

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[71] KRZYSZKOWSKA 2007, 20-25, pl. 3-4. For a cult object: PAPADIMITRIOU 2015, 288-289. For lying lions attacking or devouring a prey on Archaic ivory offerings from the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia in Sparta: MARANGOU 1969, 112-124.

[72] KRZYSZKOWSKA 2007, 24.

[73] POURSAT 2014, 214, fig. 297.

[74] DUNN-VATURI – CRIST – DE VOOGT 2017, 1-2.

[75] EVANS 1935, 486, fig. 407, also two Middle Minoan stone seals (steatite, amethyst) in the form of compact couchant lions, fig. 415-416. See also *CMS* V Suppl. 1B, Nr. 336 (carnelian).

[76] DIMOPOULOU-RETHEMIOTAKI 2005, 65, with two lions on the base surface of the seal. On an EM series of animal-shaped seals and Egyptian seal-amulets carved in the form of animals, see WEINGARTEN 2005, 761, pl. CXCII.b-e and CXCIII.

[77] DRAKAKI 2005-2006, 81-82, 86. More precisely, the motif is a pair of side-to-side recumbent bovines.

[78] DRAKAKI 2005-2006, 81, 91-93.



Figure 6: Bronze couchant animals (weights) from Building III at Kalavasos-*Ayios Dhimitrios*. After SOUTH – RUSSELL – SCHUSTER KESWANI 1989, K-AD 441-454, plate facing the contents.

Moreover, there is no reason to believe that the Katsambas faience piece may have served as a weight, since weights in the form of couchant or recumbent animals, including bovine ones, are produced in bronze in the Eastern Mediterranean. A set of such figurative weights – some of them filled with lead – were for instance uncovered in a building at Kalavasos-*Ayios Dhimitrios* on Cyprus[79] (Late Cypriot IIC, ca. 1325-1225 BC) (Fig. 6). The Kalavasos bronze figurines may be compared to the weights in the shape of animals from the Uluburun shipwreck,[80] to the Megiddo hollowed ones,[81] and to some Egyptian inscribed bronze weights in the form of animals.[82] There are only a very few Minoan parallels, such as two or three small lying bronze animals, including a cow (probably 14th century BC),

[79] SOUTH 1983, 103; COURTOIS 1983; SOUTH – RUSSELL – SCHUSTER KESWANI 1989, 23, 26, fig. 24, pl. IX; paper of M. Siennicka in the 24th EAA Annual Meeting, 2018. For a weight in the shape of a couchant bull from Enkomi (LC II): COURTOIS 1984, 43, fig. 15.36, pl. III; COURTOIS – LAGARCE 1986, 26, 64, pl. XVIII.14.

[80] YALÇIN – PULAK – SLOTTA 2005, vol. 3, 616, no. 156; ARUZ – BENZEL – EVANS 2008, 369, no. 235a-f.

[81] GUY 1938, pl. 128.12-14, MB II or LB II. For a bronze weight with lead ballast in the shape of a couchant bovine from Ras Shamra (Ugarit, LB, 13th century BC): CHAVANE 1987: 367-372.

[82] Tell el-Amarna, 18th dyn. (ca. 1353-1336 BC): PENDLEBURY 1951, 290, no. 250, see p. 125, no. 280, pl. LXXVII. For bronze animal figurines associated with a reconstructed balance from Tell el-Amarna, New Kingdom (the Science Museum London): MICHAILIDOU 2008, fig. III.27.

from Ayia Triada, which have been identified as possible weights by Angeliki Pilali-Papasteriou.[83] In contrast, this author prefers to underline the votive character of two other bronze lying wild goats from Ayia Triada, discovered with human figurines in attitude of worship (or adorants) in a room (Middle Minoan III-Late Minoan I, late 17th-16th century BC).[84]

It must be stressed that couchant animals are uncommon in Minoan Crete. The large majority of bronze and terracotta animal figurines are standing, and like the anthropomorphic ones, have been found in cult places (peak sanctuaries or sacred caves, urban sanctuaries).[85] The votive character of these figurines, like those from Ayia Triada, is obvious. It has been suggested that animal figurines were most likely brought in cult places with the purpose of attracting divine protection for the livestock, rather than be used as substitutes for real sacrifices of animals.[86]

On the Greek mainland, terracotta animal figurines have been frequently discovered in cult places, for instance, in a large quantity at Methana-*Ayios Konstantinos* in the Argolid,[87] and in a lesser extent at Amykles in Laconia.[88] However, couchant animals are virtually absent from the Late Helladic votive deposits. The small handmade and very stylized Mycenaean terracotta figurines of bovine animals have short upright legs (ca. 1400-1100).[89] Moreover, it is worth noting a clear functional distinction between these small plain animal figurines and larger hollow animal figures, the first

[83] PILALI-PAPASTERIOU 1985, 95, pl. 23, and 100, pl. 26 for lying bronze animals of the 7th and 6th century BC.

[84] PILALI-PAPASTERIOU 1985, 2-3, pl. 22.

[85] POURSAT 2008, 214. Mount Juktas: ZEIMBEKI 2004. Proto-palatial Petsophas sanctuary: DIMOPOULOU-RETHEMIOTAKI 2005, 96-97.

[86] POURSAT 2008, 125; citing PLATON 1951 [p. 157 for sacrifices]. However, hollow terracotta bulls that previously served as rhyta (cult vessels) have perhaps functioned as substitutes in LM IIIB-IIIC: KOUROU – KARETSOU 1997, 113-115. On the use of hollowed animal figures as cult vessels: GUGGISBERG 1996, 343; associated with hunting and sacrificial rituals in LM/LH III cult places, see GUGGISBERG 2009. For EBA plain zoomorphic figurines seen as "victims": MARANGOU 1992, 210.

[87] KONSOLAKI 2002, esp. 28, fig. 3; TZONOU-HERBST 2002, 171-172: up to 150 figurines, most of them are animals. For a religious interpretation: KONSOLAKI-YANNOPOULOU 2016.

[88] DEMAKOPOULOU 2012; VLACHOU 2017, esp. 14. About 150 figurines, at least 40 of them are quadruped or bird figurines.

[89] FRENCH 1971, 151-164; POURSAT 2014, 205-206.

being regarded as votive offerings, the second as cult vessels in Mycenaean Greece.[90]

5. Terracotta animal figurines in Mycenaean funerary contexts

5.1 *Assemblages with female anthropomorphic figurines and chariot models*

According to Ioulia Tzonou-Herbst, zoomorphic terracotta figurines have been frequently uncovered in Late Helladic III tombs, but in a lesser quantity than in cult places and settlements of this period on the Greek mainland (ca. 1420/00-1100).[91] Small terracotta animal figurines and miniature models like carts and chariots may have reflected daily values and realities (rider, cattle owner),[92] but they have perhaps also been used as substitutes of prestigious objects.[93] In the case of children's burials, chariot models may have symbolized unfulfilled social expectations and parental aspiration.[94] It has also been argued that the terracotta female figurines had a magical power[95] that ensured the deceased a divine protection in the afterlife or for their journey to the Underworld.

The question arises whether the small terracotta animal figurines may have been initially used as toys or were purpose-made offerings. Traces of wear or repair would be a good indication for objects used for play during lifetime.[96] About miniature ceramic vessels and figurines found in Iron Age sanctuaries, scholars like Jean-Marc Luce have suggested that these objects may have been toys consecrated by children or their parents to the deity, or by young people at the transition to the adult age.[97] The polysemic nature of the ancient terracotta figurines and models has been underlined by

[90] RENFREW 1985, 239; TZONOU-HERBST 2002, 70; GUGGISBERG 1996, 331, 343, as possible cult images, p. 330, and perhaps, in funerary contexts, as substitutes for sacrifice, p. 301-303.

[91] TZONOU-HERBST 2002, 268, table 3: for instance, from Mycenae, 33 items recorded on a total of 362 animal figurines.

[92] POMADÈRE 2018, 64.

[93] For models of furniture: POLYCHRONAKOU-SGOURITSA 2003, 309. For bovid terracotta votives: VETTERS 2016, 42.

[94] THALER – VETTERS 2018, 491.

[95] For the discussion: FRENCH 1971, 108; TZONOU-HERBST 2002, 90-91.

[96] On identification of toys: DASEN 2012, 11. On a particular die, "damaged perhaps by use-life", from an Archaic tomb in Boeotia, that also provided a small terracotta quadruped, see in this volume the paper of V. Sabetai.

[97] LUCE 2011, 61-62. See also POMADÈRE 2018, 66.

various scholars.[98] This is also a quality attributed to the Mycenaean figurines according to the diversity of their find-contexts (cultic, funerary, household).[99]

The assemblages from Tomb XXII at Prosymna (ca. 1370-1250 BC) led Carl W. Blegen to consider, already in 1937, terracotta chariot groups as possible toys.[100] Two deposits from this tomb may have belonged to children, each of them including one or two "feeding bottles" among other small-sized vessels, as well as four or five animal figurines and a chariot model (Fig. 7).[101] No children's bones have been identified in this tomb, but the excavator did not rule out the possibility that the skeleton of a child had disintegrated.[102]

The analysis of other funerary assemblages from the cemetery of chamber tombs at Prosymna in the Argolid (ca. 1600-1200 BC) allows us to question the function of terracotta animal figurines and other grave goods in relation to childhood (ca. 1400-1200 BC).[103] Eight collective chamber tombs of this cemetery of more than fifty tombs provided 26 figurines of horned quadrupeds.[104] The association of terracotta animal figurines and "feeding bottles" in the same deposits is rarely observed (T. XXII and III),[105] just as that of terracotta animal figurines and female anthropomorphic figurines (T. XXIX, XXXVIII, III).[106] If some terracotta animals may be

[98] DASEN 2011, for animal figurines, p. 55. For female figurines of the 1st millennium BC: HUYSECOM-HAXHI – MULLER 2015, spec. 424, 437; POMADÈRE 2018, 67-68.

[99] FRENCH 1971, 107; TZONOU-HERBST 2002, 89-90, see NILSSON 1950, 308. On terracottas as grave goods in children's burials: POLYCHRONAKOU-SGOURITSA 1987, 23. On a symbolic and religious interpretation, see PILALI-PAPASTERIOU 1998, 30-31.

[100] BLEGEN 1937, 256; cited by TZONOU-HERBST 2002, 74. SHELTON 1996, 53-56 (LH IIIA2-IIIB1). For a chariot model seen as a toy from Ras Shamra (T. LXXXI): PILALI-PAPASTERIOU 1998, 40. Chariot models "as items conferring prestige rather than simple toys": VETTERS 2016, 45.

[101] BLEGEN 1937, 66-67, 365-366. The chariot models, marked by a ribbon handle passing over the back of the two horses and joining the front side of the box, were designed without wheels.

[102] BLEGEN 1937, 66-67, fig. 132-133, 617-618.

[103] The large number of children's burials in LH IIIB1 (ca. 1320-1250 BC) may also be due to the fact that some of them have been identified on the basis of the grave goods (figurines and miniatures vases): SHELTON 1996, 290.

[104] BLEGEN 1937, 361.

[105] BLEGEN 1937, 66 (T. XXII), 184 (T. III). For female anthropomorphic figurines and feeding bottles from the same deposits: T. XII, W-I, XXVII, XXXIII, III.

[106] BLEGEN 1937, 361, T. XXIX: 78, 80, fig. 155, T. XXXVIII-2 deposits: 130-131, fig. 308, T. III-heap: 183-185, fig. 457.

assigned to children's burials (T. XXIX, perhaps XXXVIII),[107] most of them cannot be related to a specific individual (T. XIX, XXXVII, XXXVIII, III, IV, XLVI),[108] since primary burials have been frequently disturbed through new interments, and skeletal remains were consequently found in heaps or pushed to the side without having been analysed.

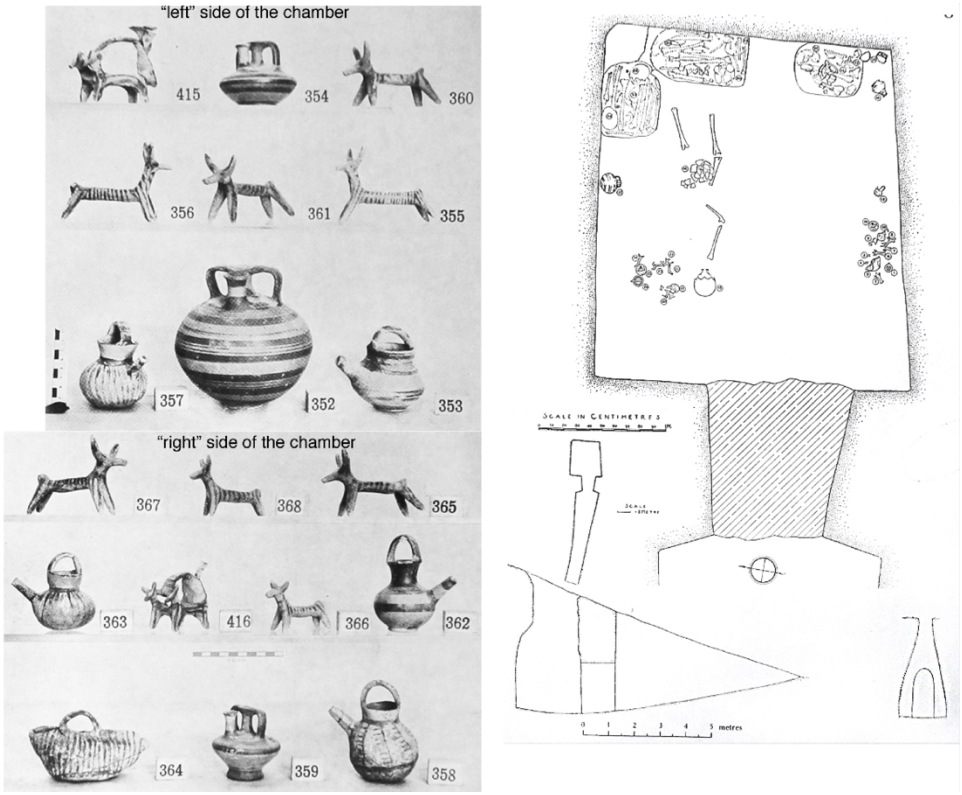


Figure 7: Terracotta animal figurines, chariot models and pottery from Prosymna (Tomb XXII). After BLEGEN 1937, fig. 131, 133, pl. 8.

Zoomorphic figurines have been predominantly but not exclusively deposited with children's burials at Prosymna, since a fragment of animal figurine was discovered next to a skeleton in contracted position, which

[107] BLEGEN 1937, T. XIX: 78, 80, fig. 155, T. XXXVIII-remains of skull: 129-130, fig. 308.

[108] BLEGEN 1937, T. XIX: 60-61, fig. 114, T. XXXVII: 127-128, fig. 297, T. XXXVIII-heap of bones: 130-131, fig. 308, T. III-heap: 183-185, fig. 457, T. IV: 191-193, fig. 491 and 616, T. XLVI: 222-223, fig. 565 and 613.

apparently was not that of a child , near the back of the chamber of Tomb III.[109] A Late Helladic funerary deposit from Argos may support this observation, since six terracotta figurines (zoomorphic and female anthropomorphic ones) have been unearthed in the sepulchral chamber of a woman (T. XXVII, anthropological analysis by R.P. Charles).[110] In these cases, the animal figurines, perhaps deposited as offerings, may allude to daily values or to the wealth of the deceased.

Unlike the previous examples, at Perati in Attica, a Post-palatial cemetery of 219 tombs (Late Helladic IIIC, ca. 1200-1100 BC), small terracotta quadrupeds and female anthropomorphic figurines did not come from the same tombs.[111] Terracotta quadrupeds (bovine and other animals), discovered in eight tombs of Perati,[112] have been assigned by the excavator to children's burials (T. 21, 25, 37, 56, 59, 147, 155; but without bones found in T. Σ57-chamber). Conversely, quadrupeds have been found here in conjunction with other objects possibly related to childhood.[113] In particular, the burials of two adults at least and a child (T. 25) provided two quadrupeds, a terracotta chair model and two feeding bottles, as well as some cone shells.[114] This assemblage raises the question whether miniatures (the chair model) and shells can be interpreted as game pieces.

5.2 *Assemblages with seashells*

According to scholars like N. Hillbom, seashells may be regarded as potential markers or counters, especially ground down and/or lead-filled cone shells.[115] The function and use of a large group of cone shells discovered in Building Θ in Mycenae are discussed in this volume by

[109] BLEGEN 1937, T. III-skeleton: 182, 185, fig. 457.

[110] DESHAYES 1966, 83-85; noted in POMADÈRE 2018, 65. In the 1st millennium BC, chariot models in adult's burials may also represent the Ekphora rite or agricultural labour: DASEN 2012, 14.

[111] IAKOVIDIS 1969-1970; IAKOVIDIS 1980.

[112] IAKOVIDIS 1969-1970, A, T. 155: 41-42, 44, T. 147: 118-119, 121, T. 59: 186-187, T. 56: 190-191, T. 37: 324, T. 21: 332, 335-336, T. 25: 337-339, T. Σ57: 448; B, 268-269, Γ, pl. 11γ, 35γ, 54στ, 56α, 99ε, 102β, 103δ, 133α; a figurine of a bird in T. Σ23α.

[113] As reminded by B. Carè (2017, 178, n. 34, with previous references), "the actual purpose and symbolic meaning of other 'toys' and 'playthings' have become recently widely debated".

[114] IAKOVIDIS 1969-1970, A, 337-338, B, 269, Γ, pl. 103δ.

[115] HILLBOM 2005, 279-281. Shells from Perati and Knossos (Unexplored Mansion): IAKOVIDIS 1970, B, 365; IAKOVIDIS 1980, 98 and REESE 1983, 353, 356; EVELY 1984, 297, n. 168.

Vassiliki Pliatsika.[116] The filling with lead is a technical feature also observed on some astragali. In Cyprus, seashells and astragali have both been found in the same Late Bronze Age burial places and sanctuaries,[117] as well as in Greek and Cypriot sanctuaries and tombs of the 1st millennium BC.[118] It has been suggested that astragali from sacred areas in Late Bronze Age Cyprus may have served in divination practices.[119] Weighted and worked cone shells from cult contexts may have been used for the same purpose, "in some sort of game".[120] As pointed out by Pierre Amandry for the use of astragali in oracular practices, "de l'idée de chance au jeu, on passe aisément à celle de faveur du sort".[121]

According to D.S. Reese, "both the holed and unmodified [cone] shells might have been used as gaming pieces or toys [...]" or, as regards holed examples only, as "personal ornaments or some form of fishing or garment weight".[122] Seashells are often found in children's burials ranging from the Late Bronze Age to the Classical times and thus considered "to be appropriate grave gifts for children, having served perhaps as toys in actual life".[123] Conversely, shells have also been deposited with adult individuals, as evidenced in burials of South Italy dating from the Archaic to the Hellenistic period.[124] This does not preclude a playful destination of the shells, in particular the small ones, but the possibility that shells were used for symbolic purposes should also be considered.[125]

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[116] REESE 2013, 478-479.

[117] REESE 1985, 352-353 (shells), 382-385 (astragali).

[118] AMANDRY 1984, 378-379. For shells and astragali in Iron Age tombs at Amathus and Kition (Cyprus): REESE 1992; REESE 2014.

[119] REESE 1985, 353, 389; also, GILMOUR 1997, 272.

[120] REESE 1985, 353; also 346 (cone shell filled with lead, from below floor III of Temple 2 at Kition).

[121] AMANDRY 1984, 377.

[122] REESE 1983, 357. Shells as ornaments (Cyprus): REESE – LERNAU 2018, 543. As regards the shells from Tomb 23 at Hala Sultan Tekke (D.S. Reese), the murex (*Bolinus*) found on the chest of the adult male was certainly worn as a personal ornament, but the function of a *Semicassis* lip remains enigmatic (gaming piece?).

[123] GATES 1992, 166, partly quoting IMMERWAHR 1971, 109-110, 208. See STROSZECK 2012, 62, n. 18.

[124] CARÈ 2018, 149.

[125] On apotropaic purposes, i.e., to protect the deceased in their last trip: CARÈ 2018, 150. As reminded by this author, shells may have been used as food (accompanying the dead, or consumed in ritual meals), or functioned as ornamental objects, possibly linked to concepts such as fertility and rebirth or having the value of a pre-monetary sign.

At Prosymna, seashells and terracotta animal figurines were recovered in five chamber tombs (*Conus*: T. XXXVIII, III, IV, XIX; "*Fasciolaria*": T. XXXVII),[126] whereas another tomb contained cone shells and terracotta female anthropomorphic figurines (T. XXXV),[127] on a total of eleven tombs that produced seashells (see further, *Conus*: T. I, XXVI, XXXIV, oyster: T. XLIV, *Spondylus*: T. XXV).[128] However, seashells and terracottas from these tombs were not found together in the same deposits, and none of the deposits that yielded seashells seems to be associated with a child's burial. This lack of associations may challenge the idea that seashells were used for playing, without excluding the possibility that adults may also have played with seashells. The 38 seashells found in heap on the chamber floor of Tomb XXVI were probably accumulated as a sign of a certain social status, especially as the finds from this tomb include arrowheads.[129] In addition, most of the cone shells were holed, a feature that may indicate that these shells were worn as ornaments; some of them were also ground down, but none was lead-filled.[130]

By contrast, in the cemetery of Perati in Attica, three of the seashells were lead-filled cones. These shells and others showing a rubbed flat side may have been used for playing.[131] It must be noted that twenty-six tombs at Perati have provided more than 400 seashells, mostly cone ones, found in association with children's burials in about half of the cases, according to Spýros E. Iakovidis.[132] In five of these tombs (T. 21, 25, 37, 56, Σ57), the same deposits yielded also terracotta quadrupeds (Fig. 8).[133] These tombs contained children's bones, except in T. Σ57, as seen above. This raises the

[126] BLEGEN 1937, 465, T. XIX: 61, T. XXXVIII: 130, T. III: fig. 463, IV: fig. 492; also T. XXXVII: 127-128, with a feeding bottle. The "*Fasciolaria*" from Tomb XXXVII is in fact a *Hexaplex* and the "clam" from Tomb XXV a *Spondylus* (D.S. Reese).

[127] BLEGEN 1937, 465, Cist III: 119, for another figurine: Cist II.

[128] BLEGEN 1937, 465, T. I: 72, T. XXVI: 94, 97, fig. 212, T. XXXIV: 113, 116, fig. 263, T. XXXV: 119; T. XLIV: 214; T. XXV: 88; also feeding bottles in T. I and XXV, as well as in T. XXXIV-Cist IV, and a head of female figurine in the dromos of T. XLIV.

[129] BLEGEN 1937, 94, 98.

[130] REESE 1983, 357, table 1.

[131] IAKOVIDIS 1970, B, 365, 461-462.

[132] IAKOVIDIS 1970, B, 365; IAKOVIDIS 1980, 98. T. 7, 12, 21, 25, 33a, 36, 37, 46α, 54, 56, 74, 78, 100, 104, 109, 113, 116, 119, 131, 133, 134, 143, Σ3, Σ23α, Σ24, Σ57; two deposits in T. 100 and Σ3. For cones: REESE 1983, 356: "over 338 are present from fourteen tombs". For the children's burials: POMADÈRE 2018, 69, n. 43.

[133] IAKOVIDIS 1969, A, T. 21: 332, T. 25: 337, T. 37: 324, T. 56: 190-191, T. Σ57: 448; IAKOVIDIS 1970, B, 268-269.

question whether new gaming practices and funerary beliefs have emerged on the southern Greek mainland between the Palatial period, when chamber tombs were in use at Prosymna, and the Post-palatial period, in the era of the cemetery of Perati.

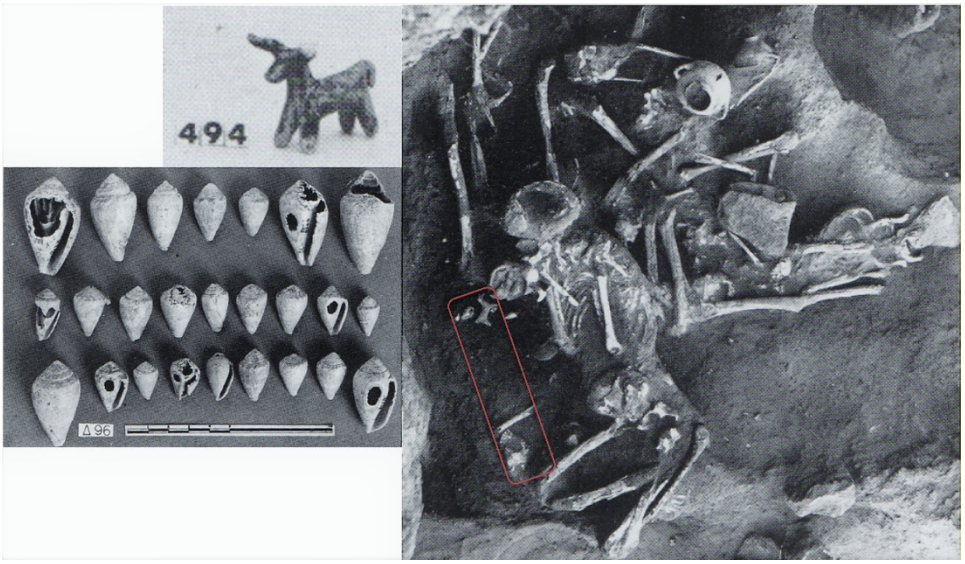


Figure 8: Terracotta animal figurine and cone shells from Perati (Tomb 56, burial marked by a rectangular frame). After IAKOVIDIS 1969, Γ, pl. 55β, 56α, β.

Despite the lack of bones, Tomb Σ57 yielded a noteworthy assemblage of objects plausibly related to childhood, including a cone shell, a feeding bottle and a small jug (Σ57α-niche),[134] as well as fragments of an animal figurine (Σ57α-chamber). Another relevant assemblage from Perati (Tomb 25), where at least two burials (adult and child) have been revealed, would give a perfect picture of toys and game markers gathered for the burial of a child (quadrupeds, chair model, feeding bottles, shells).[135]

However, even in this cemetery, seashells were not exclusively found in tombs that contained objects related to childhood or burials of children (T. 12: bronze sword and knife; T. Σ24: bronze cleaver; both tombs without skeletal remains of children identified).[136] Moreover, it has been ruled out

[134] IAKOVIDIS 1969, A, 447-448, Γ, pl. 133α.
[135] IAKOVIDIS 1969 A, 337-338, Γ, pl. 103δ.
[136] IAKOVIDIS 1969 A, 305-307, 369-370, Γ, pl. 94β, 95β-γ, 110β-γ.

that these shells, possibly used as beads or buttons, have functioned as amulets because of their high number observed in some tombs of this cemetery.[137] One may wonder why 152 holed but not lead-filled cone shells, perhaps all belonging to the deceased, have been deposited in Tomb 131 at Perati (ca. 1200-1100 BC), a tomb that also yielded lead fragments regarded as net weights by S.E. Iakovidis.[138]

The point here is not to provide an extensive review of seashells found in Late Helladic tombs,[139] but to note the diversity of the funerary assemblages that included seashells and/or terracotta animal figurines, and the resulting range of plausible interpretations. For instance, in the cemetery of Kolonaki at Thebes (Boeotia), one chamber tomb contained a terracotta quadruped and a lead-filled shell, another one also a quadruped together with female anthropomorphic figurines and throne models.[140] No conclusive evidence about their function can be drawn from these assemblages, but I would not exclude the possibility that these objects were initially used for playing before having been deposited in the tombs. As pointed out above, it would be interesting to find traces of wear or repair on these objects, as one may expect with toys. The question remains open in the case of Chalkis-*Vromousa* (Euboea), where about twenty seashells but no terracotta animal figurines have been brought to light.[141]

Conclusion

To sum up, it must be assumed that the function and use of animal figurines varied significantly according to their material, shape and specific features. Small pierced faience, stone or gold animals in a couchant position, such as the faience bovine animal from Katsambas (Tomb H), have certainly been worn as beads or pendants. These small animals were valuable goods, as were the gaming pieces (ivory and stone cones, astragalus) from the same burial of a child at Katsambas. Despite the trade contacts with Egypt attested through the presence of imported stone vases in the

[137] IAKOVIDIS 1970, B, 364-365; KARALI 1999, 42.

[138] IAKOVIDIS 1969-1970, A, 453, 455, B, 364-365, 460-461, Γ, pl. 135.

[139] For cone shells from various LBA contexts: KARALI 1999, 61-62. For a Thessalian example (Dimini, Tomb 1, LH IIB-IIIA1): ADRYMI-SISMANI 2014, 314, 767.

[140] KERAMOPOULLOS 1917, T. 21: 182-183, fig. 130, T. 25: 190, fig. 135.

[141] HANKEY 1952, 87, 95.

cemetery of Katsamba (ca. 1450-1370 BC),[142] the idea that the dot-marked astragalus and cone-shaped gaming pieces from Tomb H would have embodied beliefs related to gaming practices similar to the Egyptian funerary ones is however only conjectural.[143] Furthermore, it is impossible to demonstrate that the Katsambas gaming pieces have been used in a ritualized game performed at the funeral, due to the lack of other game pieces and boards in Aegean funerary contexts.[144] While stone slabs with depressions in Cyprus have been found in various sites and contexts,[145] the identification of such slabs as game boards in the Aegean is another much-debated issue. This identification has been seriously challenged and often refuted, since the number of holes/depressions and design on stone slabs do not correspond to the patterns of well-known games in Egypt, Cyprus and the Levant.[146]

In the Aegean Bronze Age, the small couchant animals of faience, gold or stone may have been deposited as votive offerings in cult places, used as pendants or amulets, or perhaps fixed on boxes. There is no evidence that these boxes may have been game boards or that these animals were used as "counters". It is so far impossible to connect the small pierced couchant quadrupeds of the Aegean Late Bronze Age, made in various materials, to

[142] ALEXIOU 1967, 46, pl. 10-11α (Tomb B); PHILLIPS 2008, II, 67-69 (Tombs B and H). For (traded or made in the Aegean) blue frit used to decorate Tomb H: PANAGIOTAKI 2008: 48; see ALEXIOU 1967, 35-36.

[143] On Egyptian funerary beliefs, passage and netherworld related to gaming practices in the Bronze Age, see CRIST – DUNN-VATURI – DE VOOGT 2016, 15, 31, 33, 66, 52, 54-55, 120; WHITTAKER 2002, 80-81; CUCUZZA 2010, 136. The situation is different as regards Egyptian ritualized playing of agonistic sports and ceremonial performances depicted on the walls of Bronze Age mortuary monuments, "in the context of the rejuvenation and deification of the king", see MORGAN 2018, esp. 223.

[144] The architectural stone of the Royal Tomb at Isopata, marked with a 3x10 design similar to the *senet* game, was likely reused as a vertically inserted block in the construction of the tomb: HILLBOM 2005, 104-109, for ritualized games, p. 122-123. On the ritual function of the stones with depressions found in Minoan funerary contexts: WHITTAKER 2002, 77-79.

[145] CRIST – DUNN-VATURI – DE VOOGT 2016, 74-77.

[146] For plausible Minoan game boards: HILLBOM 2005, 109; reviewed by SCHÄDLER 2008, 293-294. For a lack of evidence, but with doubt at Zakros and Knossos-Isopata (*mehen*, *senet*): CRIST – DUNN-VATURI – DE VOOGT 2016, 36-37; DUNN-VATURI – CRIST – DE VOOGT 2017, 2. For a ritual use of the *kernoi* on Mount Juktas (Minoan): KARETSOU 2012, 89 and fig. 10.12. Hence, the pebbles found in the same layer of kernos 1 have not been used for playing. At Dimini (Thessaly), room of *Megaron B*: ADRYMI-SISMANI 2014, 202; discussion in CUCUZZA 2010, 142.

Egyptian ivory lions used as gaming pieces of the Old Kingdom period. The Aegean pierced examples were obviously intended to be worn. The question then is whether personal ornaments in the shape of animals may have functioned as amulets with symbolic values linked to gaming practices in the Aegean.

Bulls were animals extensively represented in the Aegean iconographic repertoire throughout the Bronze Age, and their images were largely diffused in the Levant and Cyprus as well. The representation of recumbent bulls in the Eastern Mediterranean may be interpreted as the result of more entangled cultural traditions. Adapted and reinvented in the Late Bronze Age, their representation was an integral part of the "International Style", as illustrated by the famous ivory game board of 20-squares from Tomb 58 of Enkomi.[147] Thus, the discovery of beads in the form of compact recumbent bovine animals of faience or gold in two Late Helladic chamber tombs at Mycenae (see above), together with gold and faience ornaments in the shape of biconical seashells (*Πορφύρα/Stramonita haemastoma*),[148] was certainly no mere coincidence. It has been argued in this article that seashells and their images, in particular cone shells, may also have been linked to the notion of chance and fate in Cypriot and Aegean contexts. This interpretation is in line with the development of intense intercultural contacts in the Eastern Mediterranean. As valuable goods, these pieces of jewellery were associated with the burials of the elites.

In Mycenaean contexts (ca. 1400-1100 BC), however, the zoomorphic figurines found in the same tombs as cone shells are usually terracotta standing quadrupeds and not couchant ones. Terracotta standing animals may have reflected daily realities or the wealth of a family, and thus values different from the couchant animals, except perhaps in the case of perforated items used as amulets.[149] In cult places, terracotta animals may

[147] COURTOIS – LAGARCE 1986, 137-138; see MURRAY – SMITH – WALTERS 1900, 12-14, fig. 19, p. 31, pl. l. British Museum. POURSAT 2014, 198, fig. 160a.

[148] XENAKI-SAKELLARIOU 1985, 179 (small glass squares, some with shells *Πορφύρα* [*Hexaplex trunculus*] in relief), 180-181 (faience and gold shells, gold animal), pls. 74, 76 (T. 58), and 233 (glass shell, faience animals), pls. 110, 111 (T. 82), for the shell motifs, p. 307. For a stone mould from Poros (Crete) with a couchant quadruped and a seashell (*Στρείδι/Ostrea edulis*), see n. 45.

[149] For an unusual pierced terracotta quadruped, very different in shape from the unpierced ones, and real cone shells from tombs 1 and 3 in Mycenae-*Asprochomatos-Agrisykias*: XENAKI-SAKELLARIOU 1985, 53, 58, pl. 1 and 3.

have been brought as votive offerings with the purpose of attracting divine protection for the livestock. When found in children's burials, small standing bovine animals and chariot models may have represented unfulfilled social and family expectations. It is not impossible that terracotta animals were used as toys during lifetime, although only traces of wear or repair could confirm this hypothesis, especially when they are associated with other objects related to childhood, as was the case in the cemeteries of Prosymna and Perati. This association is however too rarely observed in Late Bronze Age funerary contexts for providing a definitive and global answer on this issue.

Abbreviations

CMS = *Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel*

CMS II 3 = Platon N. – Pini I. 1984. *Iraklion Archäologisches Museum*. Teil 3. *Die Siegel der Neupalastzeit*, Berlin.

CMS V Suppl. 1B = Pini I. *et alii* 1993. *Kleinere griechische Sammlungen.* Supplementum 1B. *Lamia – Zakynthos und weitere Länder des Ostmittelmeerraums*, Berlin.

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