

Large Scale Clay Sculpture from Arcadia

Georgios I. Terzis

Size, technique and mainly the concept of the work as an *ἄγαλμα* are the criteria we need in order to study large scale clay sculpture. In this paper we are dealing with such works found in Arcadia. More specifically, a centre for production of clay sculpture was located in Arcadia in the 6th century B.C., working probably under the influence of the workshops of Olympia, which were very active at that time. More local products of clay sculpture appeared also later in the region, at the beginning of the 4th century B.C., but now the influence came from the contemporary, large-scale sculpture in stone, which was intended to decorate the temples in Tegea and Bassai. Local clay sculpture offers us in general another insight to Arcadia's artistic production, which is not yet so well known.

The aim of this paper is to present together the works of large scale clay sculpture from Arcadia; these are scattered in the bibliography, superficially published or not published at all.¹

Before dealing with the works, it is useful to define the term 'Large Scale Clay Sculpture', in order to facilitate the identification of the artifacts which belong to this group. These artifacts, which often reach dimensions of natural size,² differ from the small clay figurines; but size is not always a decisive criterion, since figurines can also be very large, some times coming close to 1/3 natural size,³ and some clay sculptures have the dimensions of figurines.⁴ One

1. I would like to thank the Norwegian Institute and its former director, professor Erik Østby, for doing me the honour to let me present this paper at the conference. The subject was suggested to me by my teacher, professor Yanis Pikoulas, to whom I owe infinitely more than my thanks.

2. Moustaka 1993, 57, regarding works from Etruria. See also Weinberg 1957, 304-17, regarding Corinthian clay statues.

3. Müller 1996, 332, regarding a figurine of 75 cm height.

4. Moustaka 1993, 146, regarding works of ca. 20 cm height.

useful distinguishing factor is the manufacturing technique. Clay sculptures are handmade and the artist used two kinds of clay, one for the hollow model of the figure, with inclusions so that it could be well fired, and another one of high quality for the surface of the model, on which the image of the figure was formed in every detail.⁵ Clay figurines, on the contrary, when handmade, are very small and solid; when they are larger, they are totally constructed with moulds and they are usually hollow; in any case, the clay used is of only one type.⁶ These differences, however, are not decisive when it comes to recognizing clay sculptures, since these are also sometimes made of only one type of clay – either coarse clay for the entire work⁷ or fine clay for specific, solid parts.⁸ Besides, moulds are also used for clay sculpture, but only for some parts and not for the whole artifact.⁹ Therefore, size and manufacturing technique, when considered together, are significant factors for defining ‘Large Scale Clay Sculpture’, but they are not always reliable. The decisive criterion is the concept of the work, its function and purpose. Large-scale clay sculptures are unique artistic creations, made for decoration; their aim is to capture the attention of people, they are *ἀγάλματα*. Technique and size serve this purpose. This is also the reason why these works are used as architectural decoration of temples, as statues of gods in sanctuaries and also as dedications in such holy places.¹⁰ Clay figurines, on the contrary, serve religious and burial customs; they are used as offerings in sanctuaries or graves.¹¹ That is why they are made in great quantities, and their technique serves the mass production. To conclude, size, technique and conception, all considered together, are the criteria for the determination of ‘Large Scale Clay Sculpture’.

The first work of this category to be discussed is the upper torso of a female figure of almost natural size, which was perhaps found in Asea and is now exhibited at the west wall of the “Room of Arcadian Sanctuaries” in the Tripolis museum. The work is made of light-brown clay in two layers; the inner layer contains inclusions, while the outer one is clean. The surface is coarse, which implies that it was covered by some kind of coating, traces of which are not visible any more. The figure stretches her left arm forward and towards her right side; a part of the dress, probably a chiton, can be seen near her elbow. On her left shoulder there is a snake-like curl from her hair. On the body of the dressed female

5. Moustaka 1993, 4-7, and Weinberg 1957, 293-301.

6. Higgins 1967, 1-5.

7. Moustaka 1993, 118-22.

8. Moustaka 1993, 4-7.

9. Weinberg 1957, 298.

10. Weinberg 1957, 303, and Moustaka 1993, 4-7.

11. Higgins 1967, 1-5.

the attention is drawn to the curved, thick lines in high relief, which meander over the breast and reach the waist, where three holes are aligned and normally spaced, probably for the attachment of a metallic part. The figure is moving towards its right (left for the spectator), as indicated by the turn of the left hand towards this side. Posture and dress date the statue to the second half of the 6th century B.C., reminding us of the Nike statues from Olympia, where of course the work is more careful and the result more luxuriant.¹² The fact that the nipples of the breasts are emphasized, does not indicate nudity, but it is an archaizing element, since it is used for female figures with Daedalic dress of the end of the 7th century B.C.¹³ The interpretation of the figure is problematic; in my opinion, the curved lines on the body cannot be anything else than snakes. If this is correct, the figure might well be a Gorgo, since this is the snake-daemon *par excellence*. She is dressed in a chiton as she normally is in the related iconography of the second half of the 6th century B.C.¹⁴ The presumed metal attachment at the waist might be the bronze belt of the creature, which would also have depicted snakes. Such a representation of Gorgo is not found elsewhere in the published material. I should mention, however, a Corinthian figure-vase of the first half of the 6th century B.C., which shows Gorgo on horse-back, with snakes covering her body in a way similar to the Gorgo in the Tripolis museum. Unlike the latter, however, the first Gorgo holds the snakes with her hands attached to the body.¹⁵

Another clay Gorgo, found in Sparta and published by Eleni Kourinou, also seems to hold the snakes on her body.¹⁶ The representation of Gorgo was very common in archaic Greek art¹⁷ and it must have been very popular especially in Arcadia: Pausanias says that a tentacle of Medusa was the amulet of Tegea,¹⁸ and in his description of the sanctuaries of the cities of Thelphousa,¹⁹ Lykosoura²⁰

12. Moustaka 1993, 64-97, especially 81-2, F46 (inv. no. K 181, Tc 1071), pl. 79.

13. Blome 1990, no. 169 (inv. no. Bo 96).

14. *ABV* 600 (London, British Museum 281), 271 (München 1555) and Carpenter 1989, 210 (Paris, Louvre G180).

15. Karagiorga 1970, 63, pl. 9 b (National Museum of Athens 52244).

16. Kourinou Pikoula 1987-88, 475-7, fig. 2 (museum of Sparta, inv. nos. 6887, 6888). Similar is the representation of the Gorgo in a plastic vase (Basel, Antikenmuseum Lu80), which depicts the daemon squatting and holding with her hands on the breast the snakes that meander on the body (*LIMC* IV, s.v. Gorgo, no. 262). See also a clay perirrhanterion (Metaponto, Mus. Arch. 125064), where the figure is depicted standing and holding the snakes, which are meandering on her body (*LIMC* IV, s.v. Gorgo, no. 255).

17. Goldberg 1982, 196-201.

18. Paus. 8.47.5.

19. Paus. 8.25.

20. Paus. 8.37.

and Phigalia,²¹ he hesitates to state the secret name of Despoina, a goddess of nature, daughter of Poseidon *Hippios* and Demeter. The representation of a riding Gorgo, as mentioned above,²² and also of a *Potnia Theron* Gorgo on an archaic pinakion from Rhodes,²³ makes the identification of Despoina as Gorgo quite probable. Gorgo is a goddess of fertility, closely connected with the earth as demonstrated by the dominant role of the snake.²⁴ The representations of her with daemonic elements in archaic Greek art are connected, of course, with influences from the East,²⁵ but this does not contradict her character, which is well known in Greece and reminds us of the cult of the Mother Goddess in the Minoan and Mycenaean period. The 'conservative' inhabitants of Arcadia²⁶ worshipped in their sanctuaries a goddess of similar character. Thus it is very probable that this goddess was depicted in the archaic period as Gorgo, with many snakes and emphasized nipples, elements strongly suggesting nature and fertility, as we can see in the case of the Gorgo in the Tripolis museum. Unfortunately, the unknown provenance and fragmentary character of this statue leave us only with assumptions about its original form and function. In any case, it seems to be the work of a local Arcadian workshop.

In consideration of this material, it is to be expected that the central acroterion of the temple of Poseidon *Hippios* at Mantinike should depict a Gorgoneion. The disc acroterion with a centrally placed gorgoneion is exposed at the north wall of the "Room of Arcadian Sanctuaries" in the Tripolis museum.²⁷ The disc acroteria are of Laconian inspiration, from the second half of the 7th century B.C. and onwards, and they are found mostly in mainland Greece.²⁸ However, no such acroterion found in Laconia has a gorgoneion in the centre. But clay gorgoneia are widely used in the architectural decorations of the temples of Southern Italy and Sicily from the beginning of the 6th century B.C. onwards,²⁹ and that is probably the origin of gorgoneia in the decorations of the Arcadian temples,³⁰ transmitted by western Greece and especially Olympia.³¹ The gorgoneion in the Tripolis museum has a diameter of ca. 20 cm, it is almost

21. Paus. 8.42.

22. See *supra* n. 15.

23. Phinney 1971, 446, and Karagiorga 1970, 77, pl. 6 a (London, British Museum A748).

24. Christou 1968, 136-47.

25. Marinatos 2000, 46-51, on the depiction of the Gorgo with snakes.

26. Burkert 1985, 47.

27. Spyropoulos and Spyropoulos 1996, 42, and *eid.* 2000, 33.

28. Winter 1993, 101, and Goldberg 1982, 201-3.

29. Goldberg 1982, 208.

30. Orlandos 1967-68, 111-5.

31. Van Buren 1926, 136-8, and Moustaka 1993, 149.

hemispherical and has two holes, one at each side, so that it can be fixed to the centre of the acroterion. The clay is brown, and clean. The face of Gorgo is covered by dark brown paint with superposed white dots, which emphasize the leonine character of the figure. Eyes and teeth are white, and the tongue is brownish red. The gorgoneion has the familiar form of countless depictions in ancient Greek art, especially on vases.³² In the example in the Tripolis museum we should notice the wavy curls of the hair on the forehead, the rather humanized nose, the omission of the incisor teeth and of the beard under the mouth, and the totally schematized rendering of the ears. In general, the gorgoneion seems humanized, and this together with its specific characteristics brings it closer to the Corinthian pattern.³³ To conclude, keeping in mind that the disc acroteria are in use mainly in the first half of the 6th century B.C.,³⁴ the gorgoneion in the Tripolis museum should also be dated to this period. In the *Archeologikon Deltion* of 1891 it is reported that a thin, clay disc decorated with a gorgoneion was discovered among other material from a temple excavation in the village Divritsa,³⁵ near Kontovazaina.³⁶ Unfortunately we do not know anything else about this object, which might have been similar to the acroterion in the Tripolis museum decorated with the gorgoneion that we have just studied.

In the same region, Chr. Kardara has excavated the so-called sanctuary of "Aphrodite Erykina" on Mount Aphrodision, near Kontovazaina. Among the finds, published by her, we can pick out a clay female head.³⁷ The clay is buff, fine on the outside and with inclusions inside. A creamy coating covers the face, while traces of brown and red color can also be seen. The excavator believes that the head once belonged to a statue of a sphinx that decorated the roof of the "Telesterion", and dates it to the beginning of the 6th century B.C. Its resemblance to the head D1 from Olympia is, in my opinion, obvious not only regarding the eyes and lips but also the general modelling of the face.³⁸ The head from Olympia is dated to the last third of the 6th century B.C. and consequently it seems that the head from the "Aphrodite sanctuary" must also be brought down at least to the third quarter of the century. It is probably the work of a local workshop, strongly influenced by the workshops of Olympia, which were extremely active in the 6th century B.C.

Chr. Kardara has also published some more works of large scale clay sculptu-

32. Floren and Herfort 1983, 26-7.

33. Karagiorga 1964, 118-9, and Payne 1931, 82.

34. Goldberg 1982, 199.

35. Pikoulas 2001, no. 993; the old toponym was Divritsa, the new one is Dimitra.

36. Leonardos 1891, 99.

37. Kardara 1988, 140, no. 7, pl. 54.

38. Moustaka 1993, 46-52, D1, pl. 40.

re from the same sanctuary. One of them is more specifically a part of the upper torso of a female figure, dressed in a thin and wide fabric.³⁹ Judging by the drapery folds, the figure is probably depicted during an intense movement, in a style recalling the sculptures from the temple of Apollo at Bassai, near Phigaleia. The clay is buff and the surface is covered by a creamy coating. A part of a female head probably belongs to this figure.⁴⁰ In the same sanctuary, fragments have also been found of female drapery, of the hair of female heads, and also from the ear of a boar. All are made of the same clay, sometimes coarser and sometimes finer, and they have a creamy coating on their surface. The excavator dates them to the beginning of the 4th century B.C. and believes that they were parts of a pediment decoration.⁴¹ The clay is the same as the material used for the archaic head from the same sanctuary;⁴² it is obviously local, used by the workshops of the region. Nevertheless, since the production of clay statues in Olympia stops at the end of the 5th and the beginning of the 4th century B.C., the influence on the workshop of the "Aphrodite Sanctuary" could not have come from there, as was the case for the archaic head. The influence could have come at this period from Athens⁴³ or Corinth,⁴⁴ which were still active production centres of clay statues in the 5th and 4th centuries B.C.

Nevertheless, Arcadia can also offer some more works of large scale clay sculpture from this period, besides the ones from Mount Aphrodision. A drapery fragment, probably of a female dress, comes from the area of Asea.⁴⁵ The piece is too small for any conclusions concerning the entire figure to be drawn, but the resemblance to the drapery folds of the female torso from the "Aphrodite sanctuary" deserves attention.⁴⁶ A part of a female leg, of almost natural size, has been found in the village Zarakova, the ancient city Mainalos⁴⁷ near Tripolis. It is exhibited in a showcase at the east wall of the "Room of Arcadian Sanctuaries" in the Tripolis museum.⁴⁸ The statue was part of the architectural decoration of the temple of Athena. The piece is made of two layers of clay: the inner layer is pinkish and contains inclusions, while the outer one is red and clean. The surface is probably polished. The preserved part of the leg extends from the lower end of

39. Kardara 1988, 151-2, no. 11, pl. 64.

40. Kardara 1988, 152, pl. 64 b.

41. Kardara 1988, 153-4, nos. 13, 16, 17, 19, 34, 35, 110, 113, 140, 244, 185, 186, pls. 66-72.

42. See above, with n. 37.

43. Nicholls 1970.

44. Bookidis 1982, 239-47.

45. Pikoulas 1988, 56, pl. 6.9.

46. See *supra* n. 39.

47. Pikoulas 1999, 121 and 127.

48. Pikoulas 1999, 120, n. 20.

the thigh to the heel, where there are traces of a sandal. The figure wears a chiton and over it a thin peplos, both leaving the ankles naked. It can be identified as the right leg of a female, moving towards the right. Stylistically the Arcadian work can be placed between a Roman copy of Leto, from Attaleia, whose prototype dates around the middle of the 5th century B.C.,⁴⁹ and a marble Gorgo from Limyra in the Near East, which dates to the first half of the 4th century B.C.⁵⁰ The female figure of the Tripolis museum is characterized by the lively rendering of the body, which can be discerned quite clearly even under the relatively heavy dress, in a style recalling the sculptures from the temple of Apollo at Bassai. As mentioned above, the intense movement of the female torso from Kontovazaina also reminds us of the Phigaleia sculptures.⁵¹

To conclude, it seems that Arcadia was quite active in the first half of the 4th century B.C. as far as the production of clay statues is concerned. The local workshops would inevitably have been influenced by the large sculptural programs that were undertaken in the same period in the temples of Apollo at Bassai and of Athena at Tegea, and they would have served the needs of the smaller sanctuaries, which were located far from the larger habitation centers.

This general presentation of the works of large scale clay sculpture from Arcadia further illuminates the contribution of this region to ancient Greek art. Indeed, Arcadia has a lot more to offer to our knowledge of antiquity.

Giorgios I. Terzis
Karaiskaki 21
GR – 15 341 Agia Paraskevi, Athens
Greece

49. Gulaki 1981, 100 (Burdur Museum, 7827), fig. 49.

50. Danner 1989, 27, no. 164 (Antalya Museum A 3429, A 3438), pl. 29.

51. See *supra* n. 39.

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