Public Abstract

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Title: Dedications in Clay: Terracotta Figurines in Early Iron Age Greece (c. 1100-700 BCE)

This dissertation explores early Greek religion and society through a contextual analysis of the ritual use of terracotta votive figurines in the Early Iron Age, c. 1100-700 BCE. Due to the lack of texts and paucity of the archaeological record, many aspects of Early Iron Age Greece remain unknown. This study contributes to our understanding of this formative period in Greek history. I have compiled the major deposits of terracotta figurines (both zoomorphic and anthropomorphic) from sanctuaries in the Peloponnesos and East Greece, creating a broad typology and chronology applicable to all Geometric terracotta figurines that allows for an in-depth analysis of the use, distribution, and symbolism of this category of votive offering. Terracotta figurines are among the earliest and most abundant figural symbols used in early Greece and offer insight into the evolving religious beliefs and social changes of the period. My diachronic approach to the Early Iron Age highlights the relationship of Geometric ritual to Mycenaean and Archaic traditions and contributes to the ongoing research in Greek religion, sculpture, figurine studies, and gender studies. I conclude my dissertation with a consideration of the relationship between votive, deity, and worshipper, exploring how gender construction and evolving social hierarchies in the Geometric period are reflected in the rituals practiced. My study highlights the elite concerns of figurines and their growing use throughout the Geometric period for encoding social roles in a changing society.