

HUMAN ICONOGRAPHY AND IDENTITIES ON CRETE
AT THE VERY BEGINNING OF THE 1ST MILLENIUM BC:
THE SMALL COLUMNAR FIGURINES FROM PRINIÀS

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ABSTRACT

At the beginning of this paper, the Protogeometric Cretan framework of the small anthropomorphic coroplastic is briefly taken into account. The number of figurines, as well as the peculiarities of the archaeological contexts, lead one to reconsider the otherwise widespread interpretation of the fading figurative tradition as the outcome of a shift in ritual practices taking place during the Bronze Age/Iron Age transition. In addition, by looking at the variety of the stylistic features, speculation regarding the existence of at least three major styles possibly reflecting the fragmentation and exuberance of the Cretan societies combined with a mixing of internal trends and exogenous influences ensues.

Subsequently, the attention shifts to the evidence retrieved from the settlement of Priniàs, whose iconographic and contextual analysis seem to underpin the idea of a lively PG horizon and some continuity of a kind regarding the LM ritual value of some of the areas on the Patela. Finally, by pondering the rather homogeneous iconographic and stylistic features of the columnar figurines the possibility of linking their occurrence with two ritual settings is investigated. These settings, which are apparently characterized by a Mycenaean aura, are considered as the expression of a rising aristocratic hierarchy within a social body showing a rather coherent and homogeneous cultural background.