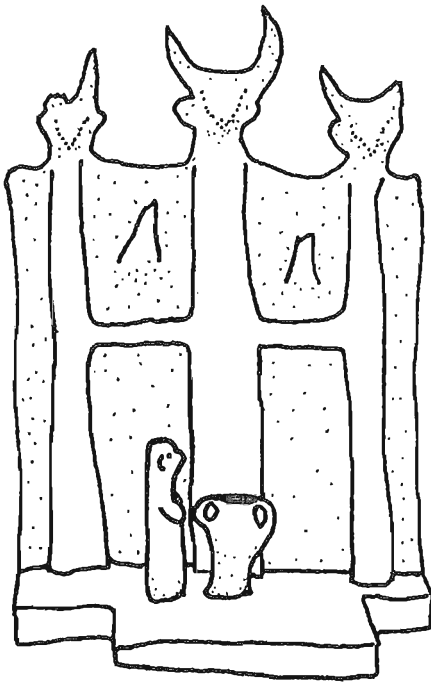


CYPRIOT SHRINE MODELS AND DECORATED TOMBS

DAVID FRANKEL and ANGELA TAMVAKI

The study of social and religious activities during the Early and Middle Bronze Age in Cyprus is facilitated by the presence of several genre models. In this note we attempt to link some of these models, of a clearly religious character, with other evidence, and to reinterpret the scenes portrayed.



Dr. Karageorghis has recently published¹ two shrine models from Kotchati and has shown their similarity to one from Kalopsidha as well as their relationship to part of the model of a sacred enclosure from Vounous.² The essential element of these shrines is a set of three vertical panels (fig. 1).

Fig. 1. Shrine Model A from Kotchati: Cyprus Museum Inv. No. 1970/V-28/1. After Karageorghis, *RDAC* 1970, Plate I.

1. V. Karageorghis, "Two religious documents of the Early Cypriote Bronze Age", *RDAC*, 1970, pp. 10-13.
2. Vounous T22, No. 26: P. Dikaios, "The excavations at Vounous-Bellapais in Cyprus, 1931-2" *Archaeologia* 88, 1940, pls. VII, VIII.

Karageorghis suggests³ that the shrines represent three plank shaped idols fixed against a wall as in the Vounous model. Considering the extreme stylisation of plank idols, the features of the Vounous model do show enough anthropomorphic characteristics to be interpreted in this way; however the other models do not, and Karageorghis' other suggestion that they may consist simply of wooden planks or poles is preferable.

The Vounous model is usually considered to be a representation of a sacred enclosure otherwise unknown in the Early and Middle Cypriot periods. However, a correlation with a field monument is possible, and the vertical panels may represent the same feature as the raised panels carved on the walls of the dromoi of Tombs 6 and 2 in the Palaealona cemetery at Karmi⁴.

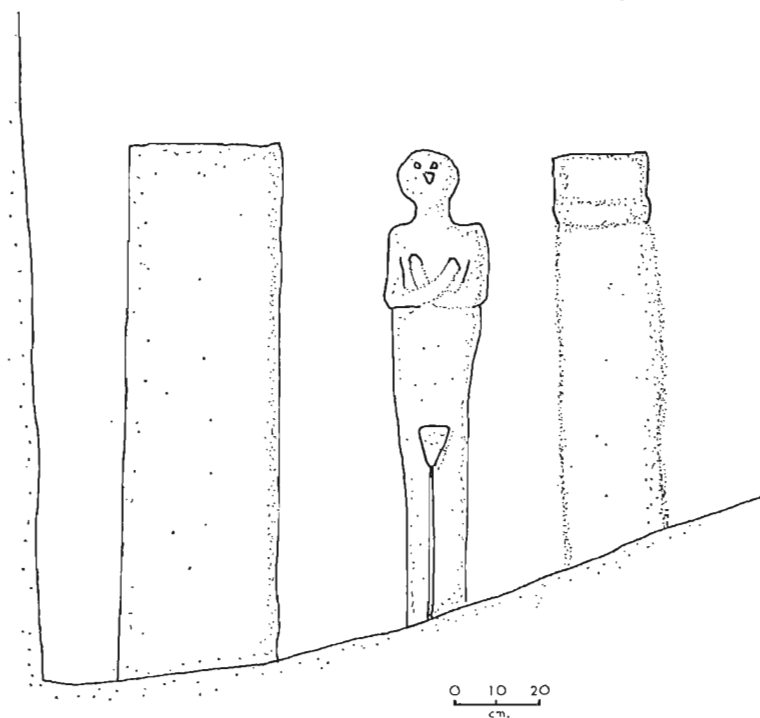


Fig. 2. Carved features on the right hand side wall of the sloping entrance to Tomb 6, Palaealona; showing the probable position of the arms.

3. Karageorghis, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
4. A plan of the cemetery has been published together with the discussion of Tomb 11 in J. R. Stewart, "The Tomb of the Seafarer at Karmi in Cyprus", *Op. Ath.* IV, 1962, p. 197-204.

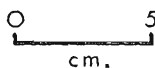
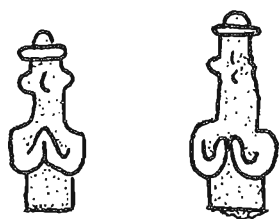


Fig. 3. The bodies of two of the figures, originally seated around the rim of a White Painted Ware Bowl, from Politico: Cyprus Museum Inv. No. 1941/1-18/1.

The dromos of Tomb 6 has on the back (N-W) wall three raised rectangular panels joined at the top by a cross-bar with a single zig-zag groove. On the left hand (S-W) side wall there are again three raised panels, although the easternmost is very poorly preserved. Of greater interest is the right hand (N-E) side wall where there is a carved bas-relief male figure flanked by two vertical panels⁵ (fig. 2). Although not well preserved the main features are clear. The figure stands with legs together and with the arms folded or crossed over the chest toward the shoulders⁶. No other features are indicated besides the eyes, nose and genitalia. The figure is generally considered to be female⁷ with the moulding on the chest, which we have interpreted as crossed arms, taken to be breasts. The rendering of the other sexual feature should be seen as a penis rather than a female pubic triangle, especially when compared with the male figures of the Vounous model.

As all known plank idols are female, the identification of the Karmi figure as female could indicate that it was intended to represent a large idol, as has been suggested with regard to the Vounous model. However, if it is male then it may rather be

5. K. Nicolaou, *Ancient Monuments of Cyprus*, Nicosia, 1969, pl. V; J. R. Stewart, *op. cit.*, p. 197; V. Karageorghis, "Chronique des fouilles a Chypre en 1961", *B.C.H.* 86, 1962, p. 394.
6. Compare the figures on the Vounous model. A better parallel for the arm position is found on at least two of the figures from the rim of a White Painted Ware bowl from Politico *Lambertis* (Cyprus Museum Inv. No. 1941/I-18/1 and 1941/III-6/1). See also the M. C. figures in P. Aström, *The Middle Cypriot Bronze Age*, Lund, 1957, fig. 16.
7. Nicolaou, *op. cit.*, p. 16; Karageorghis, "Ten Years of Archaeology in Cyprus", *Arch. Anz.*, 1967, p. 510; P. Dikaios, "Archaeology in Cyprus 1959-61", *Arch. Reports*, 1961-2, p. 33; *Annual Report of the Director of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus*, 1961, Nicosia, 1962, p. 14.

a representation of the deceased, somewhat after the Egyptian manner⁸.

The dromos of Palaealona Tomb 2 has some decoration on the N-W wall above the entrance to the chamber, and on the right hand (N-E) side wall vertical niches divide the wall into three. Here we do not have the same clear emphasis on a set of three panels, but the general impression is similar.

This tripartite division is reflected in the 'handles' of some cult-vessels from Lapithos⁹ (fig. 3). The zig-zag decoration common to these objects and the tombs¹⁰ may be no more than the expression of a common artistic tradition.

We would like to suggest that the shrine models and the panelled dromoi are closely related to one another and probably all represent copies of some religious structures. Although such shrines need not have been purely funerary, if the original structures were normally wooden then there is no reason why they should not have been common in dromoi and not preserved or noted in excavation.

The presence of shrine models in tombs is less significant than it would be if there were settlement evidence for comparison, but may indicate (as Karageorghis suggests¹¹) a chthonic cult. If they do relate to panelled dromoi then one may see a continuation of offerings to the dead at the tomb¹² and the standing female figures on the Kotchati models could be making offerings to, or bringing gifts for, the dead. An extension of this idea would interpret the Vounous sacred enclosure model as representing a burial scene; with the small enclosure around the three panels indicating the dromos of a tomb (perhaps that of the large seated man¹³). The presence of oxen within the enclosure could be connected to the well attested practice of placing offerings of food within the tombs.

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8. cf. Karageorghis, *B.C.H.*, 1962, p. 394; *Arch. Anz.*, 1967, p. 510. Unfortunately there were no skeletal remains in Tomb 6 (J. B. Hennessy, *pers comm.*).
 9. Lapithos Tomb 201 (Cyprus Museum Inv. No. 1935, A62), J. L. Myres, "Excavations in Cyprus, 1913", *B.S.A.* XLI, 1940-45, pp. 81-84, fig. 5 bottom row, third from left), pl. 26 (top row, third from right); Lapithos, 1931, Tomb 6, No. 42, V. Grace. "A Cypriote Tomb and Minoan evidence for its date", *A.J.A.* 44, 1940, pl. I B.
 10. Compare also the tombs at Lapatsa: J. R. Stewart, "Decorated Tomb Facades in Cyprus", *Antiquity* XIII, 1939, p. 463.
 11. Karageorghis, *RDAC*, 1970, p. 13.
 12. J. R. Stewart, *The Early Bronze Age in Cyprus*, S.C.E. IV 1 a, Stockholm, 1962, p. 295.
 13. P. Dikaios, *Archaeologia* 88, 1940, p. 124-5; R. Dussaud, *Syria* XIII, p. 225.

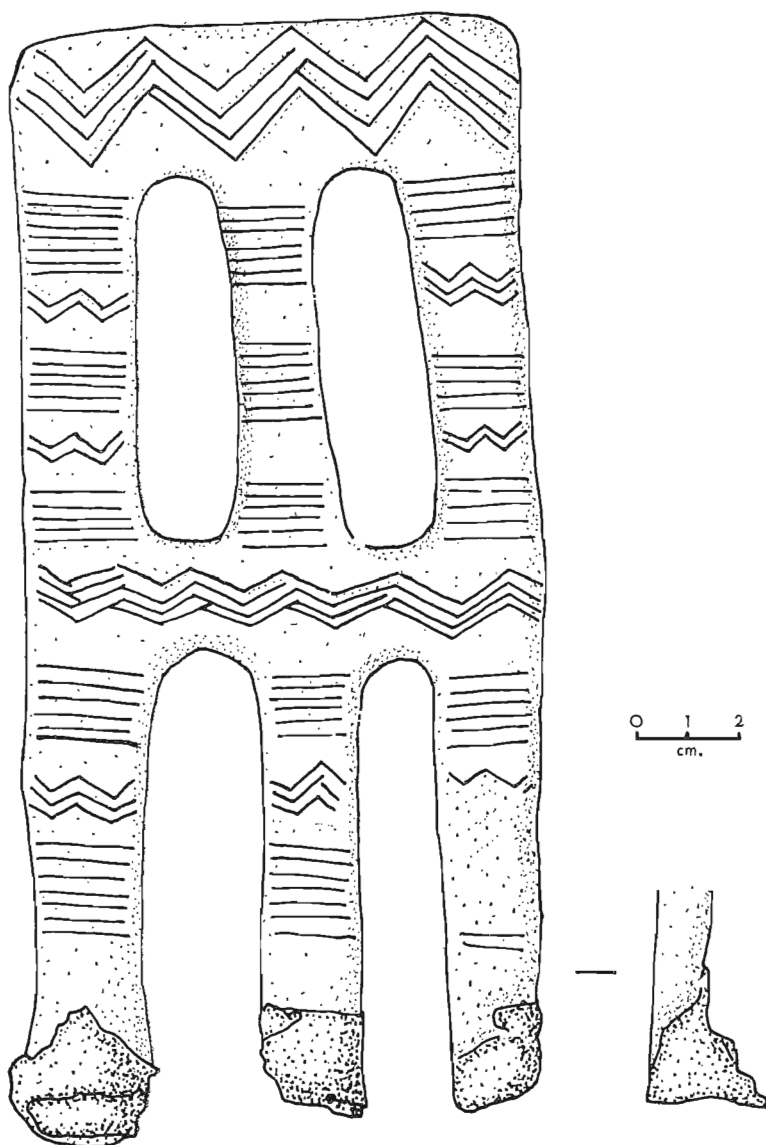


Fig. 4. The 'handle' of a cult vessel from Lapithos Tomb 201: Cyprus Museum Inv. No. 1935 A62). Compare the general appearance with the shrine model (fig. 1).

Although the model from Vounous has generally been taken to represent an open, walled sacred enclosure distinct from a cemetery¹⁴ and Sjöqvist has related it to the Late Bronze Age sanctuary at Ayios Iakovos¹⁵ there is some evidence for cemeteries surrounded by walls¹⁶ which would favour our suggestion of the interpretation of the Vounous model as a burial scene.

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14. P. Dikaios, *Archaeologia* 88, 1940, p. 119f.; J. R. Stewart, S.C.E. IV 1 a, p. 293.
 15. E. Sjöqvist, *Problems of the Late Cypriote Bronze Age*, Lund, 1940, 1940, p. 41.
 16. E. Gjerstad, *Studies on prehistoric Cyprus*, Stockholm, 1926, pp. 5, 50; P. Aström, *Excavations at Kalopsidha and Ayios Iakovos in Cyprus, S.I.M.A. II*, Lund, 1966, p. 146-7.