

Goce NAUMOV

Neolithic Bodies: Intramural Burials and Anthropomorphic Representations in the Republic of Macedonia

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Museum of Macedonia
gocenaumov@gmail.com

Abstract: *The human body was frequently engaged in social reality and symbolic processes of the Neolithic communities in the Balkans. It was the main mechanism in the establishment of relationships with individuals, objects and society in general, but also had a significant effect in the cognitive determination of environment, items and actions. Both the organic and represented bodies were crucial components in the comprehension of roles and expectations, and consequently were incorporated as agents in the modes of identity and rituals. The biological body was concerned with issues of diseases and death, and therefore involved in the rites, while the embodied images mirrored the ideas of otherworldly and human agency. Due to a number of thorough excavations, several archaeological sites provided significant data on burials and human representations which elaborated how the body was understood and projected as a symbol in the Neolithic. Therefore, this paper will join the recent knowledge on intramural burials and figurines in order to assert the dynamic role of organic and ceramic bodies among the first agricultural societies in the Republic of Macedonia. A general overview of funerary practices and human representation will be offered and then confronted with the exact data from particular case studies.*

Key words: *intramural burials, figurines, anthropomorphic house models, gender, Neolithic*

The body is one of the most significant mechanisms engaged in the construction of social principles, but also it is a compelling metaphor in the embodiment of crucial community precepts. The body has been included in a series of complex processes during the Neolithic, regarding the symbolic definition of households and it was a basis for the established interface between individuals and the objects they produced. Such incorporation of the body in Neolithic societies was deployed in two directions, one related to sacred ceremonies and the other realized in the domain of imagery representations. In the first case, some of the deceased community members were buried inside a settlement, while in the second, different characters were represented

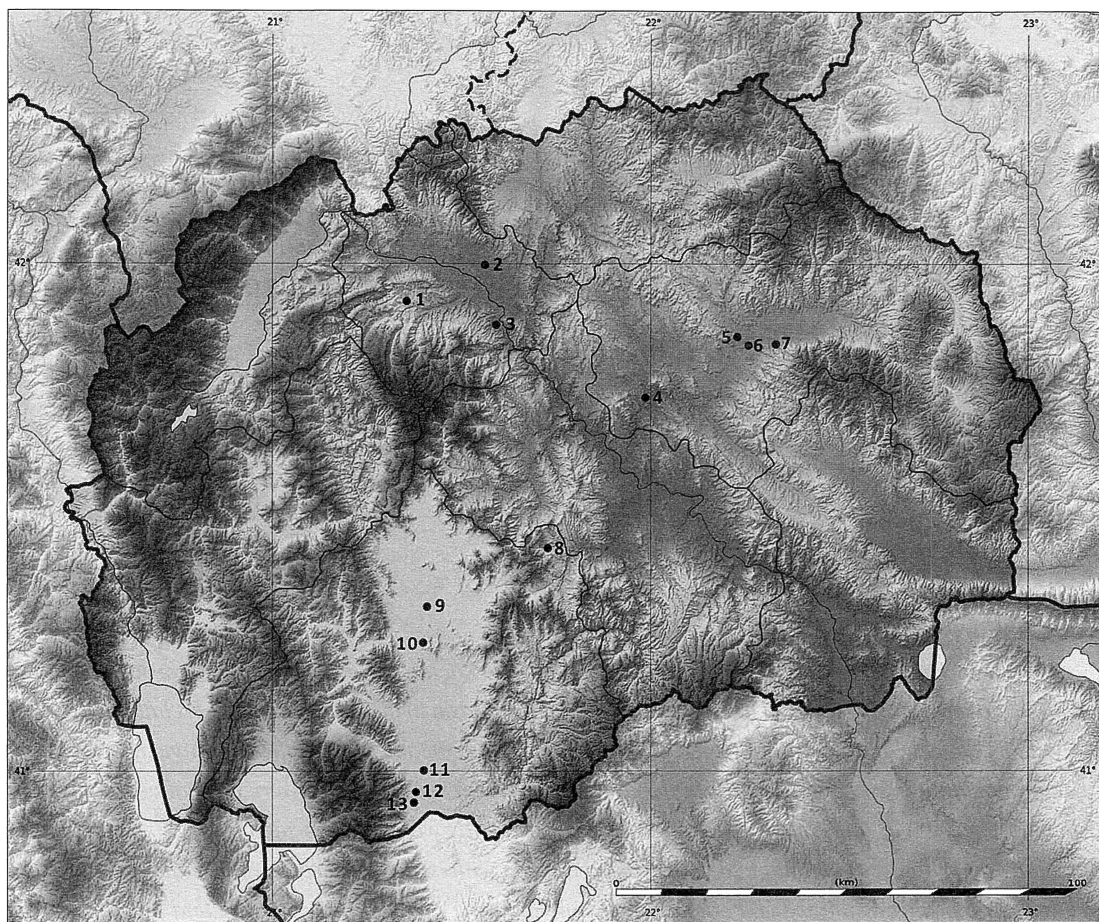


Fig. 1. Map of the Republic of Macedonia with Neolithic sites mentioned in the text:

1. Govrlevo; 2. Madjari ; 3. Zelenikovo; 4. Novo Selo; 5. Gorobinci; 6. Amzabegovo;
7. Tarinci; 8. Rakle; 9. Slavej; 10. Topolčani; 11. Optičari; 12. Porodin; 13. Veluška Tumba.

by the figurines or other ceramic objects.¹ Additionally, burials were more than an automatic reflection of death, but neither were the anthropomorphic images merely a depiction of particular individuals. On the contrary, the funerary rites and the visual forms of corporeality were equally engaged in a series of symbolic components which mirrored the verified social *habitus* and the cognitive explication of space and the objects which were used. The deceased were not randomly placed underneath or beside the buildings, while the human body was not only depicted in figurines, but also represented as a hybrid metaphor associated with house, vessel, oven or ‘altars’.² The provident observation of these ritual and visual elements indicates that purposeful preference has been established for those buried inside a settlement, as well as for the constructions and objects set in a symbolic relationship with the human body.

¹ M. Parker Pearson, *The Archaeology of Death and Burial*. Stroud 1999. Sutton; D. Bailey, *Prehistoric Figurines: Representation and Corporeality in the Neolithic*. London 2005. Routledge.

² G. Naumov, *Patterns and Corporeality: Neolithic Visual Culture from the Republic of Macedonia*. British Archaeological Reports, International Series 1910. Oxford 2009a. Archaeopress.

Numerous archaeological contexts and anthropomorphic artifacts in the Balkans confirms deliberately and consistently the implementation of ritual customs and visual tenets. Therefore in this paper, the data and Neolithic findings provided by the excavations in the Republic of Macedonia will be used in order to assert the preferred standards in the domain of funerary rituals and embodied material culture (Fig. 1). They will be set in a series of ratios specifying various local features which digresses the previous overview on the level of Neolithic cultural groups.³ Additional examples of the wider Balkan area will be applied in order to demonstrate the existence of similar ritual and visual practices based on identical symbolic constraints, but independently realized throughout regional features. In that direction, several case studies will elaborate the significance and authenticity of micro-regional practices in spite of the generalized standardization of the symbolic involvement of the human body.

The paper will be focused on two key directions of corporeality (burials and human representation), but also on several ritual and visual subcategories which accents the aspects of selection and priorities in the Neolithic societies. Therefore the funerary context, sex and age of individuals, as well as the main imagery principles of miniaturism and hybridism of particular communities will be specified. Such division of rituals and visual practices intends to confirm that they are unified throughout the concept of anthropomorphism which considers the human body as a crucial semiotic component for the illustration of compound social and symbolic processes in various Neolithic settlements.⁴ These settlements in particular demonstrate that such a dominant concept was differently engaged and autonomously manifested throughout several elements of corporeality. While the majority of communities preferred a particular gender or medium within human representations, others were more focused on the modeling of sexless and abbreviated bodies in clay. The production patterns of figurines or anthropomorphic house models in some settlements indicate a relationship with intramural burials of specific age or sex groups. Therefore this paper will present the current stage of research and broad-spectrum explication of visual and ritual features related to the human body in the Balkans and simultaneously proposes particular case studies in order to assert the local principles and practices.

The practice of intramural burials

The Neolithic burials are mostly confirmed inside settlements and therefore various observations are suggested regarding its significance as active space for placing the

³ M. Garašanin, Centralno - balkanska zona. In A. Benac (ed.), *Praistorija jugoslavenskih zemalja II – neolit*. Sarajevo 1979. Academy of Science and Art of Bosnia and Hercegovina, pp. 79 – 212; V. Sanev, Mlado kameno vreme. In (no eds.) *Arheološka karta na Repblika Makedonija - Tom I*. Skopje 1994. Makedonska akademija na naukite i umetnostite, pp. 26 – 42.

⁴ G. Naumov, Neolithic Anthropocentrism: imagery principles and symbolic manifestation of corporeality in the Balkans. *Documenta Praehistorica* XXXVII (2010a), pp. 227 – 238.

deceased.⁵ Besides the symbolic component of this distinct and continuous ritual tradition, it also consists of several segments of social practices. Alongside the symbolic features the social aspects embedded in burials are also examined thus manifesting the individuality, identity, status or gender among community members.⁶ These ritual traditions were maintained as a micro-regional feature or generalized in the wider area in order to be affirmed as universal symbolic concepts. Particularly, burials elaborated in this paper indicate that a universal Neolithic understanding of death contained ritual global standards and authentic local affinities as well. The burials in relation to anthropomorphic representations confirm that the human body is a convenient agent between absorption of these generally accepted concepts and their modification in the frames of single a Neolithic community.

Currently, the Amzabegovo site enables a thorough approach into Neolithic rituals and social inclinations within a particular community. The site has been excavated by several different teams confirming its continuity from Early to Late Neolithic, as well as a phase of the Roman period.⁷ According to the chronological analysis and calibration of samples, the initial occupation of the site is approximately between 6510 (95.4%) and 6230 CalBC sigma 2 range, which asserts Amzabegovo as one of the earliest Neolithic settlements in the Republic of Macedonia so far.⁸ The settlement has the common features of the first Neolithic villages in the Balkans and contains Early Neolithic elements familiar for Thessaly and Anatolia.⁹ This confirms the firm linkage with these distant regions and demonstrates the inhabitation in the earliest Neolithic phases.

⁵ W. Cavanagh and C. Mee, *A private place: death in prehistoric greece*. Jonsered 1998. Paul Åström Förlag.; K. Bačvarov, *Neolitni pogrebalni obredi*. Sofia 2003. Bard; D. Borić and S. Stefanović, Birth and death: Infant burials from Vlasac and Lepenski Vir. *Antiquity* 78 (2004), pp. 526 – 546; G. Naumov, Housing the Dead: Burials Inside Houses and Vessels from Neolithic Balkans. In C. Malone and D. Barrowclough (eds.), *Cult in Context*. Oxford 2007. Oxbow, pp. 255 – 265.

⁶ C. Carr, Mortuary practices: their social, political-religious, circumstantial, and physical determinants. *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 2 /2 (1995), pp. 105 – 200; M. Parker Pearson 1999, op. cit.; C. Fowler, *The Archaeology of Personhood: An Anthropological Approach*. London 2004. Routledge; T. Insoll, *Archaeology, Ritual, Religion*. London 2005. Routledge.

⁷ P. Korošec and J. Korošec, *Predistoriska naselba Barutnica*. Prilep 1973. Arheološko društvo na Makedonija; M. Gimbutas, *Neolithic Macedonia: As Reflected by Excavation at Anza, Southeast Yugoslavia*. Los Angeles 1976a. The Regents of the University of California; V. Sanev (ed.), *Anzabegovo: Naselba od raniot i sredniot neolit vo Makedonija*. Štip 2009. Nacionalna ustanova za zaštita na spomenicite na kulturata i muzej – Štip.

⁸ A. Reingruber and L. Thissen, Aegean Catchment (E. Greece, S. Balkans and W. Turkey) 10 000 - 5 500 cal BC. 2005 (on line), <http://www.canew.org/data.html>; A. Whittle, L. Bartosiewicz, D. Borić, P. Pettit, M. Richards, New Radiocarbon Dates for the Early Neolithic in Northern Serbia and South-East Hungary: Some Omission and Corrections. *Antaeus* 28 (2005), pp. 347 – 355.

⁹ G. Naumov 2009a, op. cit.; G. Naumov, Symmetry analysis of Neolithic painted pottery from Republic of Macedonia. In T. Biro – Katalin (ed.), *Data Management and Mathematical Methods in Archaeology. Archaeologia e Calcolatori* 21 (2010b). Roma: Dipartimento Patrimonio Culturale, pp. 255 – 274.

| Amzabegovo | Total | Sex | | | Age | | |
|------------------------------|-------|--------|------|-----------|----------------------|--------|-----------|
| | | female | male | undefined | children + juveniles | adults | undefined |
| I Early Neolithic | 25 | 13 | 7 | 5 | 16 | 8 | 1 |
| II - III Middle Neolithic | 8 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 4 | / |
| IV Late Neolithic | 1 | 1 | / | / | 1 | / | / |
| Total | 34 | 20 | 8 | 6 | 21 | 12 | 1 |

Fig. 2. Statistical outline of the Neolithic intramural burials in Amzabegovo. Table by G. Naumov.

In this context, the Anatolian and Thessalian features were embedded in houses and ceramics in Macedonia, but also the intramural burials were common. The total number of unearthed burials in Amzabegovo is 34 and even 25 are associated with its earliest levels.¹⁰ This quantity significantly declines in the Middle Neolithic with only 8 confirmed individuals while it is completely reduced to a single skeletal find in the Late Neolithic. Despite the partial insight into the spatial and stratigraphical presence of buried individuals, the available data confirms that this ritual practice was mainly common for the initial stages of a site (Fig.2). Such concentration of the population on the selection of individuals buried inside a settlement in these earliest levels is also confirmed by the change of social and symbolic tenets in the later phases. In this context, the preference of selection in Early Neolithic is also reflected in other segments of the burials. According to the anthropological analysis, the largest number of burials belongs to infants, children and juveniles, while in the domain of gender the more numerous are female individuals.¹¹ Nevertheless, it cannot be ignored that also dead male and adult individuals were buried, but probably more often outside the settlement, in an area not examined by the archaeologists so far. Regarding the settlement size and population density in Amzabegovo,¹² the number of deceased was surely higher, so the majority was buried out of the village, while only particular individuals were placed underneath or beside the dwellings. Surely, the high proportion of the young and female individuals within intramural burials can be a result of the frequent mortality among such groups. When the potential male and adult death rate is considered, then the quantity of their bodies should be much higher if the process of selection was not engaged in particular settlements. The preference of exact age and sex in intramural burials is also common for other regions in the Neolithic, although this data is based on sites excavated mainly with one or just a few trenches.

¹⁰ J. Nemeskéri and L. Lengyel, Neolithic Skeletal Finds. In M. Gimbutas (ed.), *Neolithic Macedonia: As Reflected by Excavation at Anza, Southeast Yugoslavia*. Los Angeles 1976. The Regents of the University of California, pp. 375 – 410.

¹¹ Ibidem.

¹² M. Gimbutas 1976a, op.cit.

| Site | Total | Sex | | | Age | | |
|------------|-------|--------|------|-----------|----------------------|--------|-----------|
| | | female | male | undefined | children + juveniles | adults | undefined |
| Amzabegovo | 34 | 20 | 8 | 6 | 21 | 12 | 1 |
| Tarinci | 1 | / | / | 1 | / | / | 1 |
| Grnčarica | 1 | / | 1 | / | / | 1 | / |
| Novo Selo | 2 | 2 | / | / | / | 2 | / |
| Govrlevo | 2 | / | 2 | / | / | 1 | 1 |
| Madjari | 2 | 1 | / | 1 | 1 | 1 | / |
| Optičari | 2 | 1 | / | 1 | 1 | 1 | / |
| Total | 44 | 24 | 11 | 9 | 23 | 18 | 3 |

Fig. 3. Statistical data of the Neolithic intramural burials in the Republic of Macedonia.
Table by G. Naumov.

It could be considered that there was intentional selection of the age and sex of buried individuals within the settlement because similar ritual practices are also confirmed on other Neolithic sites in Macedonia and the Balkans in general (Fig.3). The rest of the examined burials, smaller number are confirmed in Novo Selo, Madjari and Optičari where infants and females were placed beside or underneath the dwellings.¹³ The only male exceptions are the deposited mandible of a young individual and a cut skeleton below the house in Govrlevo, as well as the remains of another male in Grnčarica.¹⁴ The fondness for infant and female intramural burials is verified in other Neolithic sites in the Balkans, such as the funerary rituals at Bosnia and Serbia where mainly the infant bodies are placed in particular contexts within buildings or villages. The choice of an exact building area for burying 40 infants in Lepenski Vir, as well as placing 11 children in the innermost area of the settlement in Obre, confirms the aspect of selection both in the domain of the age of the buried individuals and the space for their placement.¹⁵ In Macedonia, Bulgaria, Albania and Greece there are no similar practices so far, although males and adults are outnumbered by females and infants in some of the settlements in these regions.

¹³ F. Veljanovska, *Antropološki karakteristiki na naselenieto na Makedonija od neolit do Sreden Vek*. Skopje 2000. Republički zavod za zaštita na spomenicite na kulturata; F. Veljanovska, *Neolitski skeletni naodi od Pista – Novo Selo, Macedoniae Acta Archaeologica* 17 (2006), pp. 341 – 350.

¹⁴ Lj. Fidanoski, *Cerje-Govrlevo and Miloš Bilbija*. Skopje 2012. Museum of Skopje; G. Naumov 2009a, op. cit.; D. Stojanovski, *Grncharica Pottery Typology: Contribution to the Early Neolithic Puzzle on the Balkans*. Unpublished MA thesis. Ferrara 2012.

¹⁵ R. Zlatunić, *Neolitički pogrebni ukopi na prostoru istočne jadranske obale i njezinu širem zaledu (prijelazna zona), tipološka analiza. Vjesnik arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu* 36/3 (2003), pp. 29 – 95; D. Borić and S. Stefanović 2004, op. cit.; S. Stefanović and D. Borić, *The newborn infant burials from Lepenski Vir: In pursuit of contextual meanings*. In C. Bonsall, V. Boroneant and I. Radovanović (eds), *The Iron Gates in Prehistory: New Perspectives*. Oxford 2008. Archaeopress: BAR International Series 1893, pp. 131–169.

The research in Southwest Bulgaria and Thrace confirms a more frequent presence of child burials than in the region of Sofia where the adults were more in favor. On a more local level, in Kovačevo or in the second phase of Karanovo, merely infants and children are unearthed, despite the practices in Slatina where only adult individuals are recorded.¹⁶ Regarding this ritual in Greece, in almost every Neolithic phase of Franchti, most of the determined bone remains belong to infants and females which are more frequent in the initial levels of the site.¹⁷ The case of Nea Nikomedeia is similar, which on the level of chronology, architecture and pottery is closely related to the aforementioned Amzabegovo.¹⁸ Here as well the infant, children and juveniles outnumber the adults, and also the female burials are more often than those of males. The similar intramural funerary rites are also witnessed among several Neolithic sites in Cyprus, Anatolia and other parts of the Near East.¹⁹ It can be concluded that the process of Neolithization, from Anatolia towards the Balkan Peninsula, also commenced with these specific intramural burials. Some of the sites in the Balkans affirm that these traditions, although similar, were further modified and partially incorporated into micro-regional social and symbolic tenets.

As it was already stated, the intramural burials in the Neolithic Balkans were not uniform and frequently mirror the local understanding of death which differ in the initial stages and ideas launched in the early phase of the period. They are established on several fundamental ritual practices: inhumation, cremation and body parts deposition and these are the central point for tracing the regional divergences and variations common to the particular population. In the Republic of Macedonia only inhumation is confirmed so far, while in Greece and Bulgaria cremation was also performed even since the Early Neolithic.²⁰ The exception of these ritual standards in Macedonia is witnessed in Madjari and Govrlevo where a mandible was deposited close to a building and inside a pot in a later case.²¹ Despite 34 individuals in Amzabegovo, not a single burial of a mandible is determined, but employment of vessels in the burials is one of the most specific in the region (Fig. 4), due to the deliberate breakage of the vessels'

¹⁶ K. Bacvarov 2003, op. cit.

¹⁷ W. Cavanagh and C. Mee 1998, op. cit.; S. Triantaphyllou, *A Bioarchaeological Approach to Prehistoric Cemetery Populations from Central and Western Greek Macedonia*. BAR International Series 976. Oxford 2001. Archaeopress.

¹⁸ G. Pyke, Structures and Architecture. In K. A. Wardle (ed.), *Nea Nikomedeia I: The excavation of an Early Neolithic village in northern Greece 1961 – 1964*. London 1996. The British School at Athens, pp. 39 – 54; G. Naumov 2010b, op. cit.

¹⁹ K. O. Lorentz, Cultures of Physical Modifications: Child Burials in Ancient Cyprus. *Stanford Journal of Archaeology* 2 (2003), pp. 1 – 17; M. Özdoğan, Çayönü. In M. Özdoğan (ed.), *Neolithic in Turkey*. Istanbul 1999. Arkeoloji Sanat Yayinlari, pp. 35 – 63; A. M. T. Moore, G. C. Hillman and A. J. Legge, *Village on the Euphrates: From Foraging to Farming at Abu Hureyra*. Oxford 2000. Oxford University Press.

²⁰ W. Cavanagh and C. Mee 1998, op. cit.; K. Bacvarov 2003, op. cit.

²¹ G. Naumov 2009a, op. cit.; E. Stojanova Kanzurova, Arhitektonski nedvižni objekti od Tumba-Madjari. *Macedoniae Acta Archaeologica* 20 (2011), pp. 35 – 52.

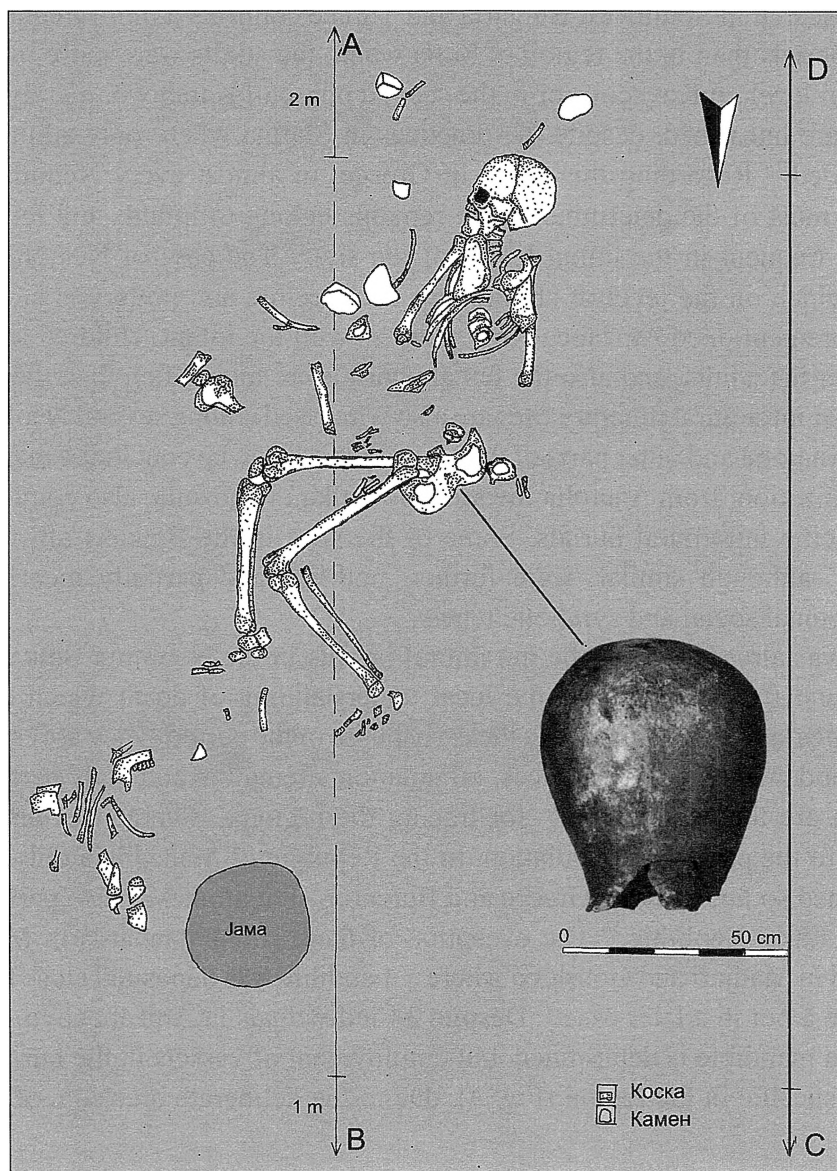


Fig. 4. The reconstruction of the three burials in Amzabegovo according to the disposition of skeletal remain 9 (infant deposited in vessel), 7 and 8 (design by G. Naumov after V. Sanev 2009, drawing 6 and fig. 9).

handles and bottom and the placing of a 6 month old infant in its interior.²² The burial of infants in vessels is uncommon in the Neolithic Balkans, but it is confirmed in Bulgaria, Greece and various sites in the Near East and even in the later Prehistoric periods when adult individuals were considered as well.²³ The symbolic facets of

²² J. Nemeskéri and L. Lengyel 1976, op. cit.

²³ K. Bacvarov, *Babies Reborn: Infant/Child Burials in Pre- and Protohistory*. BAR International Series 1832. Oxford 2008. Archaeopress.; M. Georgiadis, Child Burials in Mesolithic and Neolithic Southern Greece: A Synthesis. *Childhood in the Past* 4 (2011), pp. 31 – 45.

the burials were merely asserted through such ritual practices as well involving the manifestation of embodiment and anthropomorphism onto artifacts.²⁴

When considered, the intramural burials in Macedonia and Balkans assert that such a rite is not just a ceremonial valediction with the relatives. The frequent presence of infants, girls and women in graves below or next to houses, as well as the inclusion of infant bodies and separate bones of the mature in pots, additionally confirms that they were set in an exceptionally compound symbolic practice which concerns compelling association between the living and dead and the space in which they resided. In such a complex semiotic process human representations also were involved which concerns both the anthropomorphic hybrids and miniature representations. The following proposed outline of their iconography and contextual data enables thorough insight in the Neolithic corporeality and provides more detailed understanding of the incorporation of the human body in these symbolic practices.

Corporeality made of clay

The figurines were recurrently part of the discussions regarding their classification and explanation.²⁵ Their typology and chronological features are already defined, but there are no unified concordances on their significance, use or depicted characters. Despite the issues related to burials, the ambiguity of figurine explication generated bipolar division among archaeologists who proposed several directions for their interpretation. On one hand there was a group claiming that figurines are miniature ceramic goddesses', while the other tried to explain them as represented individuals.²⁶ Nevertheless, in this case the represented characters will not be discussed, but the major focus will be on their iconography and frequency in settlements concerning the processes associated with the social and symbolic aspects of corporeality. In that

²⁴ G. Naumov 2010a, op. cit.; G. Naumov, Embodied houses: social and symbolic agency of Neolithic architecture in the Republic of Macedonia. In D. Hoffman and J. Smyth (eds.), *Tracking the Neolithic house in Europe - sedentism, architecture and practice*. New York 2013. Springer, pp. 65 – 94.

²⁵ D. Bailey 2005, op. cit.; S. Hansen, *Bilder vom Menschen der Steinzeit: Untersuchungen zur Anthropomorphen Plastik der Jungsteinzeit und Kupfzeit in Südosteuropa I und II*. Mainz 2007. Verlag Philipp von Zabern; R. G. Lesure, *Interpreting Ancient Figurines: Context, Comparison and Prehistoric Art*. Cambridge 2011. Cambridge University Press.

²⁶ P. Ucko, The Interpretation of Prehistoric Anthropomorphic Figurines. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 92 (1962), pp. 38 – 54; P. O. James, *The Cult of the Mother Goddess: An Archaeological and Documentary Study*. London 1959. Thames and Hudson.; M. Gimbutas, *The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe*. London 1982. Thames and Hudson; D. Bailey, The Representation of Gender: Homology or Propaganda. *Journal of European Archaeology* 2/2 (1994), pp. 215 – 227; L. E. Talalay, A Feminist Boomerang: The Great Goddess of Greek Prehistory. *Gender and History* 6/2 (1994), pp. 165 – 183; L. Meskell, Goddesses, Gimbutas and 'New Age' Archaeology. *Antiquity* 69 (1995), pp. 74 – 86; P. Biehl, Symbolic communication systems: Symbols of the Neolithic and Chalcolithic from South-Eastern Europe. *Journal of European Archaeology* 4 (1996), pp. 153 – 176; R. G. Lesure, The Goddess Diffracted: Thinking about the Figurines of Early Villages. *Current Anthropology* 43/4 (2002), pp. 587 – 610; A. Golan, *Prehistoric Religion*. Jerusalem 2003. Golan.

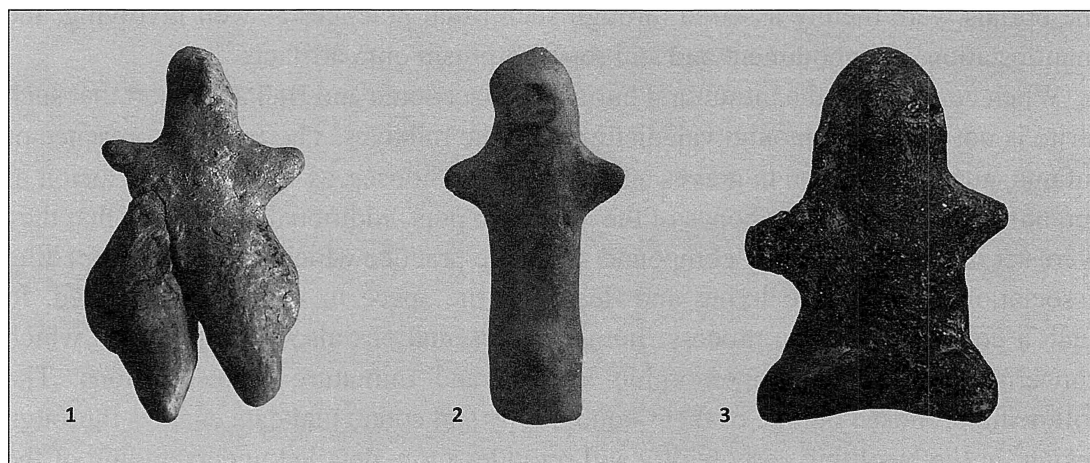


Fig. 5. Neolithic figurines: 1. Govrlevo (h-6.7cm); 2. Zelenikovo (h-4.8cm); 3. Slavej (h-6.8cm). Photos by G. Naumov.

context, not only the figurines, but also other artifacts associated with the human body will be regarded, such as models representing both houses and people.

Miniaturism, actual representation, stylization and hybridism are the major iconographical components embedded within Neolithic anthropomorphic representations. The first three components are related to figurines (Fig. 5), their size and the accentuation or neglect of particular corporeal features, while the fourth is specific to the artifacts setting the human body in a relation to a house, pottery, tablets, ovens or stamps.²⁷ This will be explicated throughout figurines and anthropomorphic models found in the Republic of Macedonia as they provide an initial regional perspective of the priorities emphasized through represented bodies. There are 289 Neolithic figurines published from this region so far, although on this occasion those not presented in monographs and reports will also be considered, and were recently included in the archaeological analyses.²⁸ Only the figurines from several settlements will be comprehensively examined due to the quantity and visual ratio inducing imagery preferences and the employment of favored features. Also, micro-regional features will be concerned as they are mainly embedded within gender and body accentuations among the miniature human representations (figurines) and hybrid artifacts such as anthropomorphic models, vessels and ‘altars’.

There are a variety of discussions on the figurine gender which produced the divergence in their interpretation. One side constantly accents the female aspects of the figurines, additionally affirming the Neolithic societies as matriarchal and the

²⁷ G. Naumov, Neolithic visual culture and rituals. In G. Naumov, Lj. Fidanoski, I. Tolevski, A. Ivkovska, *Neolithic Communities in the Republic of Macedonia*. Skopje 2009b. Dante, pp. 87 – 135; G. Naumov, Figuring Out the Figurines: Towards the Interpretation of Neolithic Corporeality. *Journal of Flinders Society* 2/1 (2014a). Adelaide, pp. 49 – 60.

²⁸ G. Naumov, *Neolitski antropomorfni figurini vo Makedonija*. Skopje 2015. Magor.

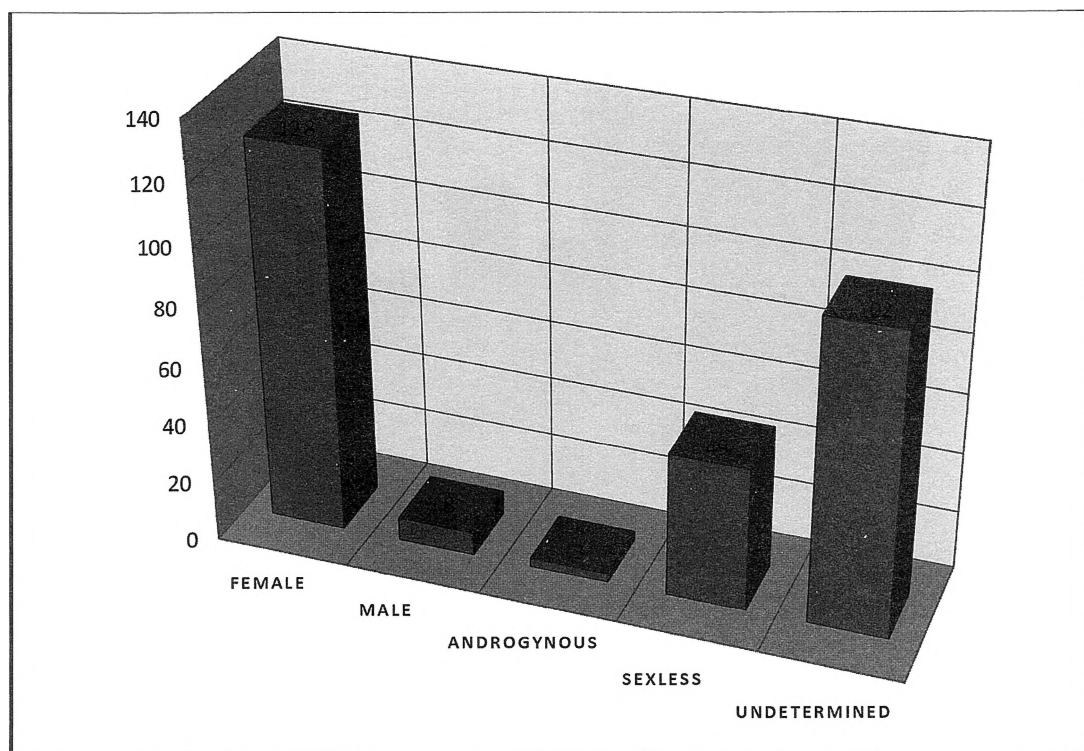


Fig. 6. Statistical ratio of gender among Neolithic figurines in the Republic of Macedonia.
Diagram by G. Naumov.

figurines as its religious substitute.²⁹ As a response to these interpretations a new generation of archaeologists emerged and more carefully approached the definition of the figurine gender. They question the frequency of female representation and assert the prevalence of figurines without a depicted sex.³⁰ Notwithstanding, the recent statistics reconsidering figurines' gender features in Macedonia verifies that most numerous are female representations among those with elements of sex.³¹ This is confirmed by the most apparent elements on the figurines' body i.e. the presence of

²⁹ P.O. James 1959, op. cit.; M. Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess*. London 1989. Thames and Hudson.; A. Golan 2003, op. cit.

³⁰ D. Bailey, Interpreting Figurines: the emergence of illusion and new ways of seeing. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 6/2 (1996), pp. 291 – 295; L. Talalay, Heady Business: Skulls, Heads and Decapitation in Neolithic Anatolia and Greece. *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 17/2 (2004), pp. 139 – 163; S. Nanoglou, Representation of Humans and Animals in Greece and the Balkans during the Earlier Neolithic. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 18 (2008), pp. 1 – 13; C. Nakamura and L. Meskell, Articulate Bodies: Forms and Figures at Çatalhöyük. *Journal of Archaeological method and Theory* 16 (2009), pp. 205 – 230.

³¹ G. Naumov 2009a, op. cit.; G. Naumov and N. Čhausidis, *Neolitskite antropomorfni predmeti vo Republika Makedonija*. Skopje 2011. Magor; G. Naumov 2014a, op. cit.; G. Naumov, 2014b. Together We Stand-Divided We Fall: Fragmentation of Neolithic Figurines in Republic of Macedonia. In C. Ursu and S. Terna (eds.), *Anthropomorphism and symbolic behaviour in the Neolithic and Copper Age communities of South-Eastern Europe* (2014b). Suceava: Muzeul Bucovinei, pp. 161–186; G. Naumov 2015, op. cit.

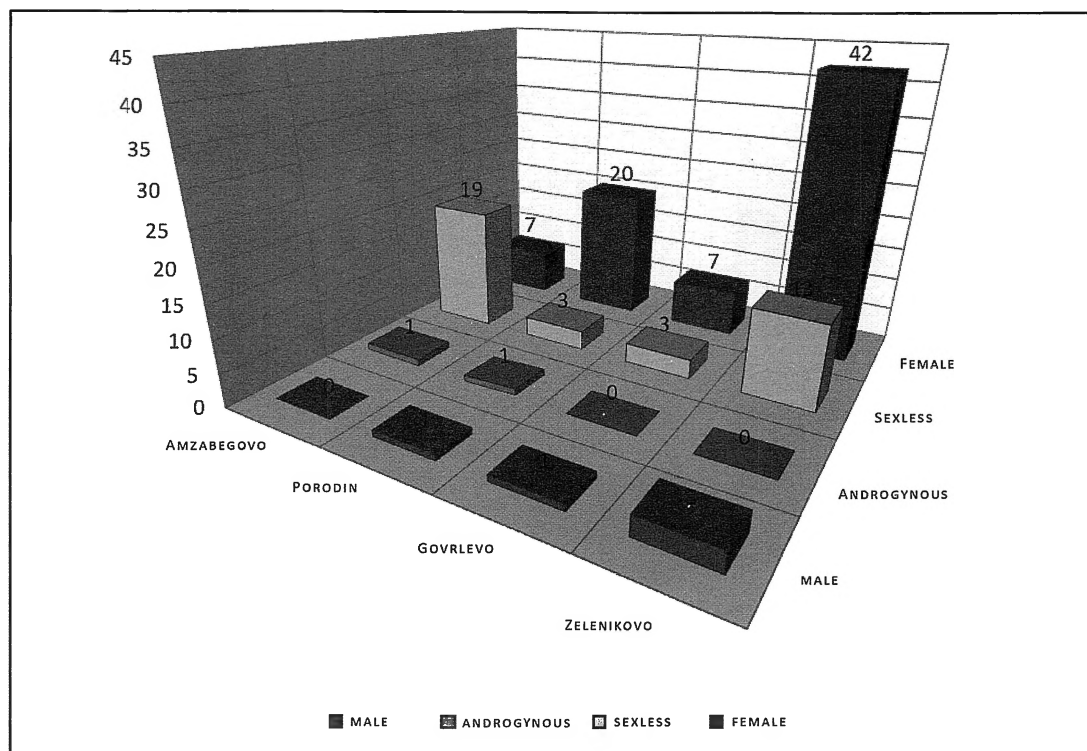


Fig. 7. Statistical ratio of gender among Neolithic figurines in Amzabegovo, Porodin, Govrlevo and Zelenikovo. Diagram by G. Naumov.

primary (genitalia) and secondary sex features (breasts, buttocks, hand position and modes of deliberate fragmentation). Consequently, there are only 8 figurines with male genitalia among 289 anthropomorphic miniatures included in publications. In spite of that, the represented pubis, breasts, accented thighs, hands placed on the torso and purposeful fragmentation of the legs and head which are considered female attributes are present in 128 figurines. Other miniatures providing elements of gender belongs to sexless (49) and androgynous (3) representations while many other fragments are hard to determine. Such generalized statistics indicate that the most numerous are female and sexless figurines while only a few bear apparent male or androgynous features (Fig. 6). The high frequency of female figurines in the archaeological reports, monographs and exhibition catalogues is also due to the authors' decision to include the most impressive anthropomorphic objects as illustrations. However, the figurines unearthed in other parts of the Balkans and published so far, confirm a partially similar statistical ratio although their number should be further tested in order to consider such a delicate generalized review based on reports or monographs.³²

³² D. Srejšović, Neolitska plastika Centralnog Balkana. In L. Trifunović (ed.), *Neolit Centralnog Balkana*. Beograd 1968. Narodni muzej, pp. 177 – 270; M. Mina, Carving Out Gender in Prehistoric Aegean: Anthropomorphic Figurines of the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age. *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 21/2 (2008), pp. 213–239; V. Becker, Anthropomorphe Plastiken Westbulgariens und ihre Stellung im südosteuropäischen Frühneolithikum. *Studia Praehistorica* 13 (2010), pp. 23 – 40.

In spite of that, when the figurines from some sites are individually documented and processed the opposite ratio is displayed concerning the represented gender and body features. This is witnessed by two Neolithic sites in Macedonia which are the only one presented in monographs so far. One is located in the Ovče Pole region (Amzabegovo), while the other is in the Pelagonia plain (Porodin) and both provide the most detailed understanding of figurine production and disposition.³³ In Amzabegovo particularly, 54 figurines are elaborated in total, of which 7 are female, none is male or androgynous, while 19 are sexless, and there are also many small parts to be considered for gender analysis (Fig. 7). The female figurines are rare and just 2 have genitalia, on 4 breasts are applied, 1 has a represented stomach, 6 of them are with accented thighs, while there are none with hands. It can be concluded that the major focus of Amzabegovo figurines has been an intentional neglect of sex resulting with a lack of represented body features. Despite the Amzabegovo case, among 32 published figurines from the Porodin excavations 20 are female, 1 male, 1 bisexual and only 3 are sexless, while the other fragments are hard to be determined (Fig. 7). On 13 figurines there are applied breasts, 10 have accented thighs, on 7 the arms position is associated with the torso, the stomach is visible on 4 and only 1 has represented genitalia. This clearly demonstrates that the female attributes were more important in Porodin, involving breasts, thighs, arms position and deliberate fragmentation.

This examination of figurines from two sites in different Macedonian geographical areas illustrates that Neolithic communities were not sharing the same iconographic principles when the human body was represented. This is confirmed on an even more local level when the figurines from neighboring settlements in one region are set in a particular ratio.³⁴ The case studies regarding figurines from five Neolithic sites in Macedonia even verify the different technical practices employed among neighboring communities.³⁵ Regarding the human body representations in Govrlevo

³³ M. Gimbutas, *Figurines*. In M. Gimbutas (ed.) *Anza, Neolithic Macedonia: As reflected by Excavation at Anza, Southeast Yugoslavia*. Los Angeles 1976b. The Regents of the University of California, pp. 198 – 241; P. Korošec and J. Korošec 1973, op. cit.; M. Grbić, P. Mačkić, Š. Nadj, D. Simoska and B. Stalio, *Porodin: kasno-neolitsko naselje na Tumbi kod Bitolja*. Bitolj 1960. Narodni muzej Bitolj i Arheološki institut – Beograd.

³⁴ G. Naumov 2014b, op. cit.; G. Naumov 2015, op. cit.

³⁵ R. Galović, *Neue Funde der Starcevo - Kultur in Mittelserbien und Makedonien. Bericht der Romisch - Germanischen Kommission* (1962 – 1963). Berlin 1964. Walter De Gruyter & Co., pp. 43 – 44; M. Garašanin and Bilbija, M. Bilbija, Kuća 1 vo Zelenikovo. *Macedonia Acta Archaeologica* 9. Skopje 1988, pp. 31 – 41; M. Bilbija, Cerje, neolitsko naselje. *Arheološki Pregled* 1985 (1986), pp. 35 – 36; Lj. Fidanoski, Arheološki iskopavanja na neolitskata naselba Cerje-Govrlevo vo 2004 godina. *Macedonia Acta Archaeologica* 20 (2011), pp. 53 – 76; B. Kitanoski, D. Simoska and J. Todorović, Novi arheološki istraživanja na naselbata Čukaj vo Topolčani kaj Prilep. *Macedonia Acta Archaeologica* 6 (1983), pp. 9 – 20; B. Kitanoski, D. Simoska and B. Jovanović, Der kultplatz auf der fundstatte Vrbjanska Cuka bei Prilep. In D. Srejić and N. Tasić (eds.), *Vinča and its World. International Symposium The Danubian Region from 6000-3000 BC*. Beograd 1990. Serbian Academy of Science and Arts, Centre for Archaeological Research, Faculty of Philosophy. Beograd. Bigz, pp. 107 – 112; A. Mitkoski, Sadova keramika od Vrbjanska Čuka. *Macedoniae Acta Archaeologica* 16. (2005), pp. 29 – 53; D. Temelkoski and A. Mitkoski, Neolitski antropomorfni statuetki vo predistoriskata zbirka na Zavod i muzej Prilep.

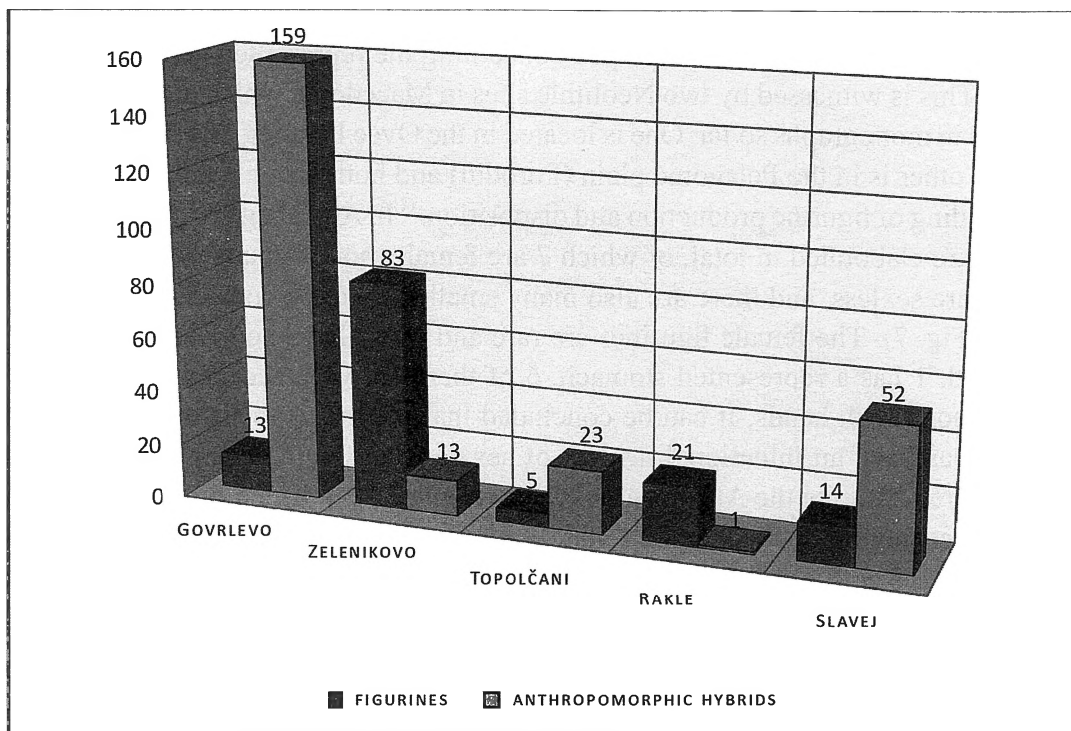


Fig. 8. Statistical ratio of Neolithic figurines and anthropomorphic hybrids in Govrlevo, Zelenikovo, Topolčani, Rakle and Slavej. Diagram by G. Naumov.

and Zelenikovo in the Skopje region (Fig. 8), it is evident that there are 13 figurines and 159 anthropomorphic objects (models, vessels and stamps) in the first case, while the latter confirms 83 figurines and only 12 fragments of embodied models and vessels.³⁶ The uncommon preference of miniatures or anthropomorphic hybrids is also present in Pelagonia (Fig. 8), so that in Rakle the main focus is on figurines (21) while the anthropomorphic vessels are almost disregarded (1), in spite of Slavej and Topolčani where the house models with human features are more present (52 i.e. 23) than figurines (14 i.e. 5). If the same statistical approach is applied to Ovče Pole it is evident that publications regarding Amzabegovo, Tarinci and Gorobinci confirm the major focus on figurines rather than on anthropomorphic vessels or models.³⁷ Namely, there are 12 figurines published from Tarinci and only 1 anthropomorphic vessel, as well as in Gorobinci where the number of figurines is also 12 while there are just 2 fragments that resemble the cylinder and cube of house models.³⁸ As it was stated

Makedonsko nasledstvo 17 (2001), pp. 53 – 69; D. Temelkoski and A. Mitkoski, *Docnoneolitska naselba na lokalitetot Kutline kaj selo Rakle. Macedoniae Acta Archaeologica* 18 (2008), pp. 93 – 108.

³⁶ G. Naumov and N. Chausidis 2011, op. cit.; G. Naumov 2014b, op. cit.

³⁷ G. Naumov 2015, op. cit.

³⁸ M. Garašanin and D. Garašanin, *Iskopavnja u Tarincima, na lokalitetu 'Vršnik'. Zbornik na štipski ot naroden muzej* I. Štip 1961, pp. 61 – 65; V. Sanev 1975. *Neolitska naselba Rug Bair kaj s. Gorobinci. Zbornik na štipski ot naroden muzej* IV-V. Štip 1975, pp. 203 – 245.

before, there are 52 published figurines from Amzabegovo, but only 6 fragments of anthropomorphic vessels/models.³⁹

If these sites are still considered the preference towards gender features is also evident, with the majority representing female and sexless individuals and barely five depicting a penis (Fig. 7). Regarding the anthropomorphic models (Fig. 9), their gender features are scarce and only few comprise female features (genitalia, breasts and the stomach in a state of pregnancy) in spite of male representations which are not still recorded.⁴⁰ The elements of identity and gender are witnessed on a dozen anthropomorphic house models depicting various types of hairstyles and massive hands placed on the thighs i.e. cube (a female posture also specific for figurines).⁴¹ In addition to the micro-regional iconographical affinities associated with these artifacts it should be stressed that in the Skopje region an entire visual concentration is on the upper anthropomorphic cylinders and especially on their stylized faces, hair, breasts, abdomens or hands, while the house is modeled as a cube with round or rectangular openings. In spite of that, the anthropomorphic hybrids in Pelagonia are rich with architectonic details on house models and the cylinders bear no hand, but depict individual faces (Fig. 9: 2). The Neolithic communities in Pelagonia were largely focused on symbolic significance of the dwellings, so besides the anthropomorphic house models 'altars' resembling buildings were often also produced.⁴² It could be considered that such an intensive symbolic relationship between a community and their dwellings is much more frequent in Pelagonia than elsewhere in Macedonia due to the scarcity of these 'altars' and house representations on anthropomorphic models. This is also a result of the quantity and modes of establishing and maintaining the settlements (tells) which implies a construction of new buildings on the foundations of earlier dwellings.⁴³

³⁹ M. Gimbutas, *Neolithic Macedonia: As Reflected by Excavation at Anza, Southeast Yugoslavia*. Los Angeles 1976a. The Regents of the University of California.

⁴⁰ G. Naumov 2009a, op. cit.; G. Naumov 2009b, op. cit.; N. Chausidis, Neolithic Ceramic Figurines in the Shape of a Woman - House from the Republic of Macedonia. In D. Gheorghiu and A. Cyphers (eds.), *Anthropomorphic and Zoomorphic miniature figures in Eurasia, Africa and Meso-America: morphology, materiality, technology, function and context*. Oxford 2010. Archaeopress, BAR International Series, pp. 25 – 35.

⁴¹ N. Čausidis, *Neolitski antropomorfni modeli na kući*. In G. Naumov and N. Čausidis, *Neolitski antropomorfni predmeti vo Republika Makedonija*. Skopje 2011. Magor, pp. 11 – 20; N. Chausidis, *Mythical Representations of 'Mother Earth' in Pictorial Media*. In T. G. Meaden (ed.), *An Archaeology of Mother Earth Sites and Sanctuaries through the Ages: Rethinking symbols and images, art and artifacts from history and prehistory*. Oxford 2012. Archaeopress: BAR International Series 2389, pp. 5 – 19; G. Naumov 2014a, op. cit.; A. Tomaž, *Depiction of Hairstyle, Reflection of Identity? Some considerations concerning Neolithic hairstyle depictions in Anzabegovo - Vršnik and Velušina - Porodin cultural milieu*. In D. Borić and P. Miracle (eds.), *Identities of the Early Neolithic Balkans*. Oxford 2015 in print. Oxbow Books.

⁴² G. Naumov, Visual and conceptual dynamism of the Neolithic altars in the Republic of Macedonia. In V. Nikolov, K. Bacvarov & H. Popov (eds.), *Interdisziplinäre Forschungen zum Kulturerbe auf der Balkanhalbinsel*. Sofia 2011. Nice, pp. 89 – 129.

⁴³ G. Naumov, Embodied houses: social and symbolic agency of Neolithic architecture in the Republic of Macedonia. In D. Hoffman and J. Smyth (eds.), *Tracking the Neolithic house in Europe - sedentism, architecture and practice*. New York 2013. Springer, pp. 65 – 94.

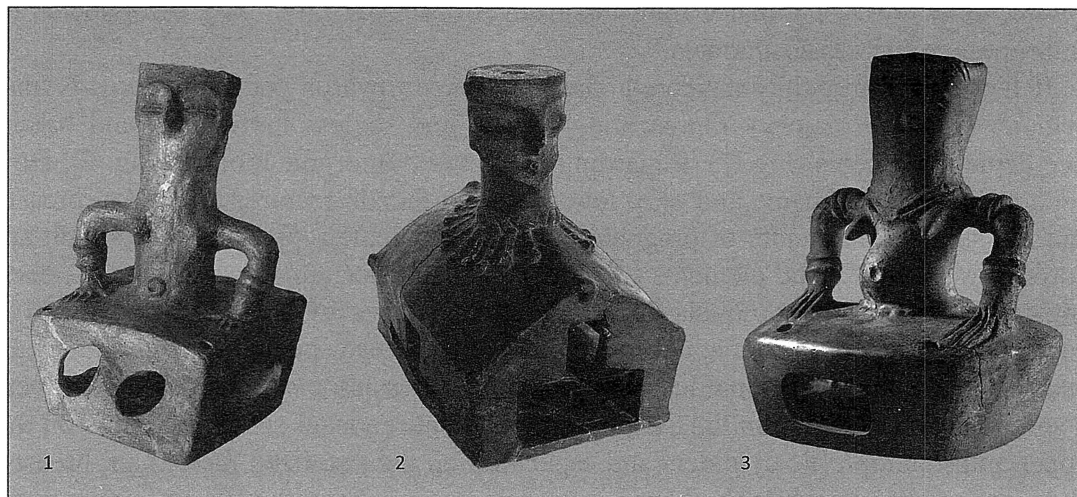


Fig. 9. Anthropomorphic house models from: 1. Madjari – h. 39.0cm (Kolištrkoska Nasteva 2005, Fig. 42); 2. Porodin – h. 25.5cm (Kolištrkoska Nasteva 2005, Fig. 43); 3. Govrlevo – h. 35.0cm (Chausidis 1995, Fig. 6).

The similar local varieties are apparent on the female genitalia representations of figurines, so those produced by the Pelagonian communities from the Velušina-Porodin cultural group usually consists of round applications with or without two punctures (Fig.10). The pubis representations on figurines from the Amzabegovo-Vršnik cultural group are regularly incised as triangles or *V* lines. Therefore it is apparent that there were local preferences in the selection of body parts applied on anthropomorphic artifacts and they initially or gradually gained their own regional alternatives. This is also associated with the character of ceramic artifacts where the human body will be represented, thus some Neolithic villages preferred to depict its miniature 'portrayal', regardless of others which were mainly focused on the hybrid relationship between the body and house models, vessels, 'altars' or stamps. A comprehensive insight into the ritual and representative treatment of the human body could significantly provide a more thorough understanding and explication of these preferences associated with the represented and buried bodies.

The intentional selection among buried and represented bodies

The elaborated overview of intramural burials in Macedonia and the micro-regional practices in anthropomorphic artifacts production asserts several spheres where the human body is an agent for affirmation of social components and semiotic principles. It is still hard to determine how the body was actively incorporated in these complex Neolithic symbolic spheres, but the repetition of funerary rituals and the continuous traditions of figurine modeling enable the understanding of corporeality of the deceased and those represented. The proposed overview of burials, figurines and









| TYPES OF FEMALE GENITALIA | AMZABEGOVO – VRŠNIK GROUP | | | | | | | VELUŠINA – PORODIN GROUP | | | | | | | |
|--|---------------------------|---------|---------|------|---------|-------|-----------|--------------------------|-----|----------|---------|--------|---------|--------|--------|
| | PALČIŠTE | ANGELCI | MADJARI | AMZA | DAMIJAN | ČAŠKA | KATLANOVO | SENOKOS | TRN | OHRIDATI | PORODIN | MOGILA | VELUŠKA | PRILEP | GURGUR |
|  | 1 | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | |
|  | | | 2 | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | |
|  | | 2 | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
|  | | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | 1 | |
|  | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | |
|  | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 2 | | |
|  | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 2 | | | 1 |

Fig. 10. Regional preference of genitalia representations among Neolithic figurines in the Republic of Macedonia. Table by G. Naumov.

anthropomorphic house models in Macedonia clearly indicates the modification of universal visual and ritual concepts into micro-regional practices, especially of those inherited from Levantine or Anatolian traditions.

If the majority of Neolithic sites in the Balkans and Anatolia are considered it can be determined that Amzabegovo shows uncommon practices regarding the deliberate selection of individuals buried inside settlements which mainly concerns children and female individuals. They apparently had a different status than that of adults and males, which was not established on the level of social authority, but was related with their actual and symbolic involvement in the community upholding and continuity. Recently there is much more lively research on the children in the past and their role in prehistoric societies has been more accented.⁴⁴ The early decease of children indicates the potential risk for the household and the community sustenance and therefore the family becomes more engaged in order to maintain and rouse the birthrate. This also involves symbolic practices especially concerning the intramural funerary rituals

⁴⁴ J. Sofaer Derevenski, *Children and Material Culture*. London 2000. Routledge; J. E. Baxter, *The Archaeology of Childhood: Children, Gender and Material Culture*. Oxford 2005. Altamira Press; S. Crawford and G. Shepherd (eds.), *Children, Childhood and Society*. Oxford 2007. BAR International Series 1696. Archaeopress; L. H. Dommasnes and M. Wrigglesworth (eds.), *Children, Identity and the Past*. Cambridge 2008. Cambridge Scholar Publishing; M. S. Romero, *Childhood and Construction of the Gender Identities through Material Culture. Childhood in the Past 1* (2008), pp. 17 – 37; G. Lillehammer, *Archaeology of Children. Complutum* 21 (2) (2010), pp. 15 – 45.

beside or below dwellings. The selection of buried female individuals in settlements considered significant women in the community as well as those who were exposed to frequent diseases during pregnancy and childbirth. Some of those in Amzabegovo and Nea Nikomedeia were even buried with infants or children,⁴⁵ which indicates that this ritual practice is common only for the settlements where the mortality of children and women was increased or that these persons had a significant role in the community and were identified with particular households (Fig. 4). As a reflection of such ritual practice, these individuals were probably important on a broader symbolic level which could be manifested in various segments of Neolithic societies thus including material culture.

Their inhumation underneath or beside the dwellings could have an effect on the symbolic relationship between living and deceased members which is also maintained by the deposition of the body or its parts inside vessels. The Amzabegovo case furthermore addresses the thorough semiotic liaison between the infant and vessel intentionally modified for the deposition of the baby into a womblike object.⁴⁶ The vessel itself was embodied with an abstract anthropomorphic character in order to effectively contribute to this symbolic process. The anthropomorphisation of vessels and frequency of intramural burials in the Early Neolithic initiated the production of artifacts which incorporated the human body into a hybrid relation with the pottery and dwellings.⁴⁷ But their quantity in the settlements is also not regularly present which points to a variety of regional practices regarding the objects modeled as bodies. The research on several Neolithic case studies in Macedonia evidently asserts a more intensive hybrid relationship between the body and ceramic containers than the necessity to 'portray' the individual as a miniature (Fig. 8). For example, the preference of anthropomorphic house models in Govrlevo is more evident in spite of the high frequency of miniature figurines in Zelenikovo.⁴⁸ The case studies of models and figurines in Topolčani and Slavej (Pelagonia) are comparable and there the hybridized models outnumber the figurines as well. The studies on Zelenikovo, Rakle or Amzabegovo human representations confirms that the communities inhabiting these Neolithic villages preferred the miniatures more in contrast to hybrid artifacts.⁴⁹

The varieties of micro-regional preferences are also vivid in the domain of figurine production. The figurines common for the Pelagonian communities were asserting their gender much more than those modeled in Ovče Pole, so that the miniatures in Porodin

⁴⁵ V. Sanev (ed.), *Amzabegovo: naselba od raniot i sredniot neolit vo Makedonija*. Štip 2009. Nacionalna ustanova za zaštita na spomenicite na kulturata i muzej – Štip; C. Perlés, *The Early Neolithic in Greece. The first farming communities in Europe*. Cambridge 2001. Cambridge University Press.

⁴⁶ J. Nemeskéri and L. Lengyel 1976, op. cit.; G. Naumov 2007, op. cit.

⁴⁷ G. Naumov, *The Vessel as a Human Body: Neolithic anthropomorphic vessels and their reflection in later periods*. In Berg, I. (ed.), *Breaking the Mould: challenging the past through pottery*. Oxford 2008. British Archaeological Reports, pp. 93 – 101.; G. Naumov 2013, op. cit.

⁴⁸ G. Naumov and Čausidis 2011, op. cit.; G. Naumov 2014b, op. cit.

⁴⁹ G. Naumov 2015, op. cit.

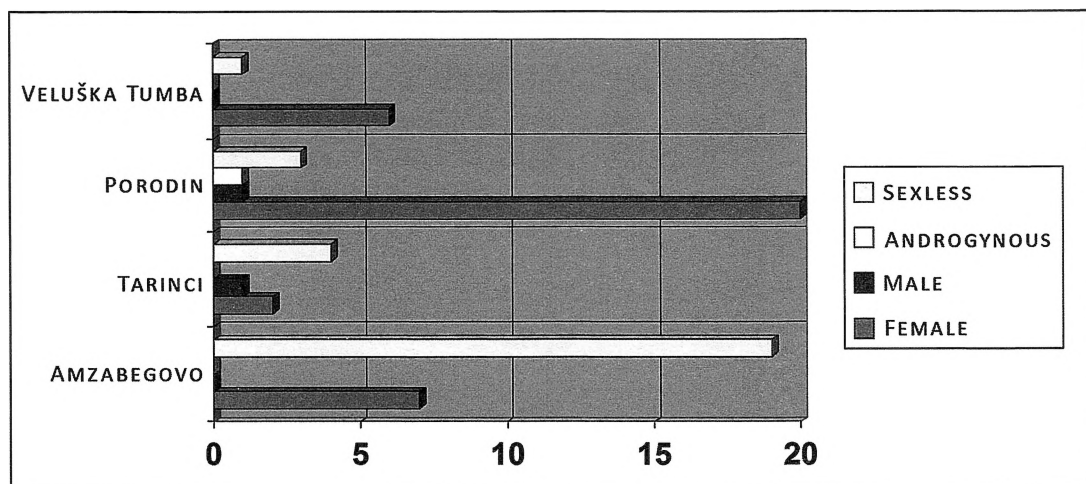


Fig. 11. Ratio of gender representations among Neolithic figurines in Veluška Tumba, Porodin, Tarinci and Amzabegovo. Diagram by G. Naumov.

and Veluška Tumba often depict the female's primary and secondary sex features while the representations in Amzabegovo and Tarinci are mainly sexless (Fig. 11). It is evident that on these sites the representation of gender is intentionally omitted, so that the discussion remains whether their gender was merely understood or they were perceived as androgynous individuals. The case of Amzabegovo could provide one possible explication of this phenomena and especially if the relationship between frequent infant/child burials and the large production of sexless figurines is considered (Fig. 2; Fig. 12). The number of sexless figurines increased as the infant burials decreases within a settlement which could be deemed as a symbolic substitution.⁵⁰ Also some of the sexless figurines were deposited (buried) in pits and inside houses along with prestigious finds, such as painted pots, marble figurine, axes or animal paws.⁵¹ It is still hard to be verified, but it is worth it to propose that children were represented on such figurines as there are many archaic and tribal societies where children are not regarded as socially or gender-defined individuals prior to their initiation. On the other hand, the frequent intramural burials of female individuals, the prevalence of *anthropomorphic artifacts with female features* (vessels, models, 'altars' etc.) on other sites and the deliberate fragmentation of particularly female figurines should be also observed.

Although such ritual and imagery concentration towards the female body opens numerous new discussions,⁵² they will not be elaborated in this paper due to the previous considerations of these issues regarding Neolithic figurines in Macedonia and

⁵⁰ Ibidem.

⁵¹ M. Gimbutas 1976, op. cit.

⁵² R. Lesure 2002, op. cit.; R. Lesure 2011, op. cit.

| <i>Amzabegovo</i> | <i>Total</i> | <i>Sex</i> | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|---------------|-------------|----------------|
| | | <i>female</i> | <i>male</i> | <i>sexless</i> |
| I Early Neolithic | 2 | / | / | 2 |
| II - III Middle Neolithic | 15 | 2 | / | 13 |
| IV Late Neolithic | 26 | 3 | / | 23 |
| <i>Total</i> | 43 | 5 | / | 38 |

Fig. 12. The statistical outline of figurines in Amzabegovo. Table by G. Naumov.

the Balkans in general.⁵³ Despite the interpretations of the woman as the main metaphor among the Neolithic communities, the case studies from Macedonia indicates that in some regions an apparent accent is on infant/children or sexless representations. In this context also the preference towards diverse anthropomorphic media and body parts should be asserted as divergent affinities among two neighboring settlements. It remains further to be discussed if such production of different anthropomorphic objects was associated with a visual emphasis of regional identities, a practice common for the painted Neolithic vessels and engaged in various social and symbolic processes for the affirmation of autochthonous features.⁵⁴ Considering the practical character of the vessels, their inclusion in these spheres of society is estimated, but it remains unclear if the figurines and models were the similar manifestation of local identities or were just a reflection of the different approach in visual corporeality.

Furthermore, it should not be disregarded that the variations of produced objects and practiced rituals were initiated by the confrontation with diverse incitements that communities in the Neolithic Balkans had. The symbolic engagement of the body in various substantial challenges established its potentials in the embodiment of social reality and symbolic activities. Such compound iconographical and ceremonial body employment generated semiotic representations objectified throughout the miniatures or anthropomorphic hybrids. They had momentous impact in the establishment of community bonds and hierarchies, and were incorporated in the role of death within

⁵³ G. Naumov 2009a, op. cit.; G. Naumov 2014a, op. cit.

⁵⁴ G. Naumov 2009a, op. cit.; G. Naumov, 2010b, op. cit.

society. If the elaborated anthropomorphic figurines, house models and intramural burials are additionally observed on a more local level it will enable a more detailed comprehension of social, symbolic and ritual components of the human bodies and their representations in the Neolithic.

Неолитски тела: Погребувањата во населбите и антропоморфните претстави во Република Македонија

Резиме

Човечкото тело е еден од најважните механизми преку кои се конструираат разни форми на социјални норми но, истовремено, е и силна метафора при обопштувањето на клучни принципи во рамките на заедниците. Во неолитот, телото е често вклучено во низа комплексни процеси кои се однесуваат на симболичкото дефинирање на просторот користен за живеење но, исто така, е и основата каде се воспоставуваат интеракциите меѓу индивидуите и материјалната култура. Ваквото инкорпорирање на телото и телесноста се развива во две насоки: едната е онаа која се однесува на обредите, а другата е реализирана во рамките на ликовните претстави. Во првиот случај, дел од починатите индивидуи се погребуваат во самата населба, веројатно, онаму каде и што живееле, додека во другиот, разни ликови се често прикажани преку фигурини или други видови предмети. Притоа, ниту погребувањата се само автоматска рефлексивна идеја за смртта ниту, пак, антропоморфните претстави се едноставно портретирање на одредени индивидуи. Напротив, погребувањата и визуелните форми на телесноста подеднакво се ангажирани во серија симболички принципи, кои се однесуваат на поставените социјални норми и когнитивното осмислување на просторот и ползуваните предмети. Починатите индивидуи не се само случајно положени под или до куќите, додека човечкото тело, освен преку фигурините, намерно е прикажано и во хибридна релација со куќата, садовите, печките или „жртвениците“. Внимателното разгледување на овие обредни и визуелни форми, покажува дека е вршена промислена селекција на оние кои ќе бидат погребани во рамки на населбата, како и на конструкциите и предметите ставени во симболичка врска со човечкото тело.

Бројни археолошки контексти и антропоморфни предмети од Балканот, особено од Македонија, потврдуваат промислено и доследно применување на обредните норми и визуелните начела. Статистичките анализи за погребаните индивидуи и пронајдените антропоморфни претстави од населбите кај Амзабегово, Породин, Говрлево и Зелениково даваат многу појасна слика за тенденциите кон

симболичкото дефинирање на човечкото тело во неолитот и, воопшто, за конструираните социјални стандарди, кои се манифестирале во обредите и материјалната култура во Македонија. Тие се поставени во низа соодноси преку кои може да се забележат многу силни локални обележја, занемарени при претходните генерализации на неолитски културни групи. Притоа, приложени се и неколку примери од поширокиот балкански простор, со цел, да се укаже на постоењето на слични обредни и ликовни практики кои се темелат на идентични симболички параметри, меѓутоа, независно реализирани во помали регионални форми на материјалната култура.

Иако во трудот се разгледуваат две главни насоки на третманот на човечкото тело, и тоа реализирани преку погребувањата и ликовните претстави, сепак, во нив ќе се следат неколку обредни и визуелни поткатегории кои го акцентираат аспектот на селективноста меѓу неолитските заедници. При погребувањата и обредите е актуелизиран просторот на положување на човечките остатоци, нивниот пол и возраст, како и елементите на депонирање и фрагментирање на коските или артефактите. Во рамки на антропоморфните претстави е укажано на основните ликовни форми (минијатурност и хибридноста) и нивните преферирани обележја, во секој од локалитетите засебно. Ваквото расчленување на обредите и визуелните практики има намера да покаже дека тие се воедначени преку концептот на антропоморфизмот кој, пак, го има човечкото тело како главна метафора за сложените социјални и симболички процеси во неолитските заедници. Токму овие неколку локалитети покажуваат дека ваквиот доминантен концепт е различно применет, притоа, независно манифестиран преку неколку форми на телесноста.

Пошироката регионална перспектива на интрамуралните погребувања на Балканот и локалните традиции при моделирањето антропоморфни предмети во Македонија, покажуваат неколку насоки на користењето на човечкото тело како медиум за афирмирање на социјалните релации и симболичките концепти. Иако денес не сме во можност да знаеме како телото било активно вклучено во овие неолитски процеси, сепак, доследноста во практикувањето на обредите и изработката на фигурините, делумно овозможуваат да се согледа како тие биле регистрирани преку материјалната култура и погребувањата. Увидот во овие обредни форми и артефакти, направен на неколку локалитети во Македонија, уште подстално покажува како главните правци на пошироките идеи за неолитското тело биле локално модифицирани. Така, погребувањето во населбите како глобална појава во неолитот на Блискиот Исток и Југоисточна Европа добива свои микрорегионални форми, исто како и изработката на фигурини кои се вклучени во сосем различни принципи на телесноста.

Разните видови фигурини, модели и садови, како и погребувањата во населбите, потврдуваат дека станува збор за различно разбирање на човечкото тело и неговото инкорпорирање во симболичките категории, кои се однесуваат на индивидуите и антропоморфизацијата на куќата и домаќинството. Овие семиотички концепти, очигледно, биле различно применети и не им се придавала еднаква

важност во сите неолитски заедници. Некои, претежно се фокусирале на едноставното прикажување на телото, додека други имале повеќе мотиви него да го вклучат во многу комплексни хибридни релации со живеалиштата, садовите, печките и т.н. Дури и во овие две ликовни сфери, како што се минијатурноста и хибридноста, имало различен пристап и тоа често во микрорегионални целини, какви што се Пелагонија, Овче Поле или Скопско. Така, дел од заедниците придавале многу повеќе значења на деловите од телото, додека други ги занемарувале. Истото се забележува и во случајот со антропоморфните модели, така што некаде многу поголем акцент бил ставен на куќите, а во некои населби визуелната концентрација била на цилиндарот кој го прикажувал горниот дел од човечкото тело.

Притоа, не треба да се занемари дека ваквите варијации во изработката на овие предмети биле иницирани од разните предизвици со кои требале да се соочат жителите на населбите. Токму динамиката на социјалните релации меѓу членовите на заедницата или проблемот на морталитетот во нејзиното одржување, го поставуваат човечкото тело како централна метафора која придонесувала во нивното објаснување. Ваквото комплексно, визуелно и обредно ангажирање на телото генерирало симболички слики, материјализирани преку фигурините или антропоморфните садови, модели и ‘жртвеници’. Како такви, од нив се очекувало да остварат позитивни ефекти во рамките на формирањето нови социјални врски и статуси или, пак, да придонесат во соочувањето со прераната смрт на одредени членови во заедницата. Натамошното истражување на секоја од овие категории антропоморфни предмети и погребувања во микрорегионален контекст, може да придонесе за уште подлабоко разбирање на овие варијации во прикажувањето и обредниот третман на човечкото тело.