

DIE TONOBJEKTE VON NEVALI ÇORI: NEUE PERSPEKTIVEN IN DER FIGÜRLICHEN PLASTIK DES AKERAMISCHEN NEOLITHIKUMS

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New Perspectives in the Figurine Art in the Pre-Pottery Neolithic

Abstract:

The site of Nevali Çori (Province Şanlıurfa, Southeast Turkey) is located in the Taurus foothills in a small valley near the River Euphrates. It was excavated in eight seasons from 1983-87 by the Institut für Ur- und Frühgeschichte, Heidelberg, under the direction of Prof. H. Hauptmann. Five layers of the pre-Pottery Neolithic B (PPNB) from the ninth millennium BC have been unearthed.

The excavations have unearthed 1289 clay objects, consisting of figurines (52%), beads and pendants (7%), miniature vessels (3%), geometric objects (8%) and other backed clay items (30%). All of the objects have been fired by temperatures between 600° and 750°C.

The 670 figurines are divided into four groups: female figurines (151 items, 22.5%), male figurines (179 items, 26.7%), abstract figurines (39 items, 5.8%), zoomorphic figurines (30 items, 4.4%) and non-classifiable varia like single heads, torsos or legs which also belong to one of the other groups (271 items; 40%).

Particular for the material is the occurrence of the large number of male figurines, faced by nearly the same large number of female figurines, all made in the same scheme using a composite modeling technique. The male figurines are always standing upright while the females are seated. All of them seem to be naked, only some of the male figurines have a "belt-shaped" application around the waist. These male figurines represent a new figurine type that is only known in the PPNB of the Taurus foothills by the evidence from Nevali Çori and Cafer Höyük (only one item!). Another particularity is the very low percentage of animal figurines - only six items could be really classified, the rest are "horns" that could also be modeling waste. This feature could be significant for Early and Middle PPNB industries.

The figurines from Nevali Çori seem to be part of a certain iconography in the figurine art of the PPNB in the Taurus foothills. It is very particular that female and male figurines are represented in large but also equal numbers and animal figurines are nearly absent. This means a new perspective in the figurine art of the PPNB and the interpretation of social and religious ideas of early Neolithic societies which they figurines may represent.