

Introduction

This catalogue, which features a selection of terracottas from South Italy and Sicily now in the collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum, was born from a preliminary study of the coroplastic collection carried out during a graduate internship at the Getty Museum in 1988–89.¹ The assignment of the terracottas to these geographical areas is based on stylistic analysis, on the appearance of the clay, and on information related to the objects' acquisition. The terracottas were for the most part purchased on the art market from the 1970s onward; a few were private donations. Most have never been published, though some have been presented in preliminary and general publications. One group of nine examples comes from the collection of Barbara and Lawrence Fleischman, acquired by the Museum in 1996.²

Only one of the sixty terracottas presented in this publication comes from a certain, datable context (cat. 60), and thus for the most part it is impossible to reconstruct with confidence their potential associations with other materials. Furthermore, this selection intentionally presents significant variations in typology and chronology, spanning many centuries from the Archaic to the Late Hellenistic period. In addition, the intrinsic nature of the collection imposes certain limitations on this catalogue, as one cannot base the interpretative theories on solid foundations that might deepen our understanding of a specific center, region, or cultural context.

Certain aspects of the methods, objectives, and results presented in this catalogue merit attention. The catalogue presents a selection of the most significant typologies of the terracottas in the collection, and includes unique pieces as well more ordinary ones that were acquired as donations. Overall, the Getty's antiquities collection is comprised of over 1000 terracotta statues, statuettes, and other object types, ranging in date from the Neolithic to the Roman period, the great majority of which can be associated with votive deposits in southern and central Italy, especially the areas of Campania, Lucania (Metaponto), and Puglia (Taranto). The decision to organize the catalogue by region and site, even if such identifications are hypothetical, derives from the methodological approach of the study.

The purpose of this work is to present a range of objects of significant iconographic and stylistic interest, in some cases characterized by those qualities of uniqueness that generally reflect the tastes of private collectors. Comparisons with material from excavations and critical discussions helps not only to define those qualities but also to narrow down, as much as possible, the objects' place of manufacture and possible cultural context. In this manner, we have identified the Lakonian colony of Taras (Taranto) and the sites of ancient Canusium (Canosa), Medma (Rosarno), Selinous (Selinunte), Kentoripa (Centuripe), and Morgantina as

possible original centers of production for most of the objects presented in this volume. I considered it to be especially useful to indicate the hypothetical findspot of each object, even if doubtful (in some cases, noted at the time of acquisition), rather than limiting my work to a general typological or stylistic analysis, which would inevitably have relegated the items to the status of decorative pieces.

My approach could hardly overlook certain difficulties. First and foremost is the circulation of molds and statuettes among the various centers of production in Sicily and Magna Graecia, a circumstance that leaves significant margins of doubt as to the exact origins of an object. Moreover, in cases where no scientific analysis of the clay was performed, visual examination can provide only a hypothetical attribution of context. Nonetheless, I feel certain that this study, when made available to a wider audience, can enrich further research in the field and contribute substantially to our understanding of various aspects of the artifacts from the ancient world. In fact, such artifacts, having been handed down through the filter of collectors, sometimes seem to fit poorly within established hermeneutic categories, which too often are excessively codified and conventional. I hope that this catalogue and the accompanying Guide to the Collection of South Italian and Sicilian Terracottas, which indexes over a thousand other statuettes and molds at the Getty, will encourage wider comparison and connections to materials of more certain archaeological contexts.³

Notes

1. The manuscript was mostly completed in 2008 in a new context of cultural and scientific collaboration between the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Italian Ministry of Culture, and the Assessorato Regionale dei Beni Culturali e dell'Identità Siciliana. Prior to final editing, bibliographical references have been updated through 2010 or in selected cases, to 2013; the bibliography for individual objects is current through 2015.
2. Cat. 24, 27, 29–33, 35–36, 44–46, and 58. The collection was published in the catalogue *PASSION FOR ANTIQUITIES* 1994.
3. See the essays by P. Pelagatti and N. Bonacasa in PELAGATTI AND GUZZO 1997, pp. 9–28, and the introduction to the British Museum catalogue BURN AND HIGGINS 2001, pp. 16–17.