
STOILKA TERZIJSKA-IGNATOVA*

NEWLY FOUND BONE FIGURINES AT TELL YUNATSITE, PAZARDZHIC REGION, BULGARIA

Abstract: Tell-ul de la Yunatsite (regiunea Pazardzhik) se află în partea de vest a Traciei. Săpăturile arheologice au debutat în 1939 sub conducerea lui V. Mikov și au continuat până în anul 1976. Stratigrafia are 9 m și cuprinde depuneri aparținând: eneoliticului, bronzului timpuriu, epoca fierului, perioada romană și epocă medievală. În ultimele trei campanii arheologice din acest sit, echipa de cercetare greco-bulgară a continuat cercetarea nivelului I, aparținând eneoliticului final din Bulgaria. Tell-ul de la Yunatsite se află în zona de contact dintre complexul cultural Krivodol – Sălcuța – Bubani și complexul Kodjadermen – Gumelnița – Karanovo VI. În timpul acestor săpături au fost descoperite 8 figurine de os, care fac obiectul prezentului articol. Din punct de vedere tipologic, acestea aparțin celor trei tipuri de figurine cunoscute: prismatice, plate și convexe. Doar una dintre acestea este întreagă, restul fiind fragmentare.

Keywords: eneolithic, Krivodol-Sălcuța-Bubani complex, Kodjadermen-Gumelnița-Karanovo VI complex, bone figurines.

Tell Yunatsite is situated in the western part of Upper Thrace, near the village of Yunatsite, Pazardzhik region. It is a multi layer settlement and was inhabited during several millennia – from the Chalcolithic till the Late Middle ages. The tell was first excavated in 1939 by V. Mikov (Миков 1940) and since 1976 regular archaeological excavations were made there¹. The thickness of the layers is about 9 m and until now layer A (Iron age, Roman and Mediaeval periods) (Катинчаров, Мернепт и др. 1995), layer B (17 Early Bronze age I-III levels) were excavated. The excavation of layer B (Chalcolithic) is in process.

In the recent 3 seasons the Bulgarian-Greek team excavating at the tell², continued the investigations at level I (dated to phase 3 of the Late Chalcolithic in Bulgaria) in the SE sector of the site, and in the NE sector started the excavation of level II, which was reached in the previous seasons (Бояджиев, Асланис, Терзийска-Игнатова, Мацанова 2004). Among the numerous finds the recent excavations yielded new bone figurines which enriched the collection of bone finds from the tell (Терзийска- Игнатова 2000; Terzijska-Ignatova 2003)

I am motivated to publish a preliminary report on these new finds on one the hand for the reason that they provide new data on the matter – we recorded a new type of flat bone figurine from Tell Yunatsite, we still follow elements, which were part of the local tradition, and we have grounds to revise statements related to the bone figurines existing in the literature. On the other hand, the observations on the bone figurines compliment the various influence on pottery, clay figurines and the rest of level I and level II finds, which have been already noticed by the

* Regional Museum of History, Pazardzhik, Bulgaria. e-mail ignatovaton@yahoo.com.

excavators. These observations made on the material excavated at Tell Yunatsite, a site which is situated in the contact zone between the Chalcolithic assemblages Krivodol – Sălcutsa – Bubani (KSB) and Kodzhadermen – Gumelnitsa – Karanovo VI (KGKVI), are of special importance for the cultural interrelations between the two assemblages.

The bone figurines are among the most common finds yielded by the Chalcolithic sites along the Lower Danube River. A number of Bulgarian and Romanian archaeologists have published bone figurines from various sites or general studies on the anthropomorphic figurines including classifications of the bone figurines (Чилингиров 1908; Миков 1934; Dumitrescu 1938; Петков 1950; Comşa 1975; Comşa 1979; Георгиев 1978; Тодорова 1980; Попов 1992; Andreescu 2002; Бояджиев in print).

All the three types of bone figurines have been found at Tell Yunatsite – three edged, flat and convex (Терзийска-Игнатова 2000). The new find includes 2 three edged and 6 flat figurines, only one of them is complete and the rest are fragmented.

The three edged figurines were made in the traditional way – the head was shaped by three intersected surfaces, a parietal and two facial ones. There is a short incised horizontal line on one of the figurines representing the mouth (Fig.1). It is 4.3 cm high and was found in a house area from level 1. The second figurine is a bigger one, its height is 8 cm and its surface is polished (Fig.1). It is important to notice that the latter comes from the grave of a 7 years old child. Among the published three edged bone figurines it is the first one which is probably a grave good.

Among the newly found flat bone figurines (FBF) there are two almost complete pieces (Fig.1/ 2); one figurine with a head and torso preserved (Fig.1/ 4) and two figurines with the lower part preserved (Fig.1/3, 5). A fragment which is difficult to define is preserved from the last figurine found; horizontal lines are incised on the lower part of the fragment (Fig.1/ 7).

Figurine N 1 and N 2 belong to the unornamented (or unfinished) flat figurines (subtype I.1 after Boyadzhiev, without any signs) (Бояджиев, in print). Figurine N 1 was found in a house area of level II and figurine N 2 - in a house of level I. Y. Boyadzhiev comments that some specialists regard this type as the latest (Чилингиров 1908: 34) but others consider it the earliest (Миков 1934: 207; Петков 1950: 29; Тодорова 1981: 62). The author thinks that this type of figurines appeared at the end of the Middle Chalcolithic and existed during the entire period of the Late Chalcolithic. However, P. Georgiev regards all unornamented flat figurines unfinished and that they should not be united in a separate type (Георгиев 1978). This opinion is reasonably questioned by N. Popov who notices that only a part of the unornamented figurines was in a process of making (Попов 1992: 21). In my opinion the finds from Tell Yunatsite support this statement (Терзийска-Игнатова 2000: 267). Among them there are figurines with unfinished decoration (Terzijska-Ignatova 2003: tab. 1 2) as well as ones with a precisely shaped body with no other signs or ornaments on them but with holes made – i. e. they had already been prepared to be worn on a string around the neck (Terzijska-Ignatova 2003: tab. 1 1; tab. 2 1). Another group of the figurines are irregularly shaped, unskillfully made, clumsily decorated and with incisions on the spots where small holes or depressions were usually made (Terzijska-Ignatova 2003: 128). Actually, there is such incision on the haunch of figurine N 2. My

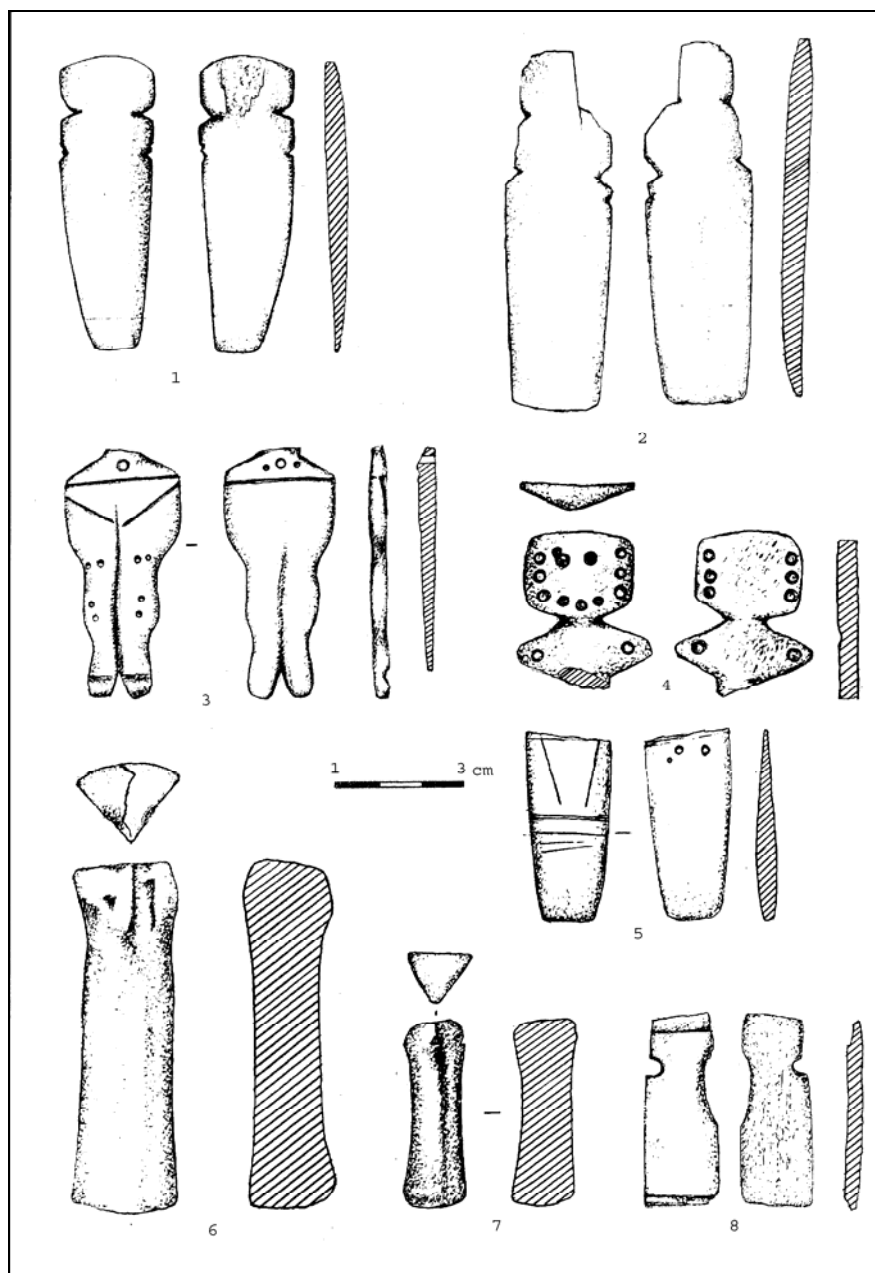


Fig.1 Bone figurines found at tell Yunatsite.

explanation related to these figurines is that they also were in use but were not made by a specialist. As H. Todorova has already pointed out the figurines from Golyamo Delchevo are highly artistic pieces, made by talented sculptors and they existed together with very schematic effigies which could have been made by any inhabitant of the village (Тодорова 1975: 104). Because of their restricted skills,

the people who made these figurines used simple ways to make them (e. g. incisions instead of holes) though they stuck to the general rule of making the effigy.

Main classification principle used by all authors who studied FBF, is the shape and the decoration on the lower part of the figurine. For that reason figurine N 4 could not be related to any of the main types. However, it should be pointed out that figurines having similar way of shaping the head and the torso have been found in many sites from the region of KGKVI assemblage and Varna culture – Bikovo, Strashimirovo, Varna, Balbunar, Ruse, Djadovo, Smyadovo, Hotnitsa, Cascioarele, Sultana, Vidra, etc.

The preserved parts of the last two figurines published in this paper are the best illustration of the fact that there are figurines belonging to two different types, yielded by two different levels of Tell Yunatsite. Figurine N 5 was found in a level 1 house and belongs to type IV 1 after Boyadzhiev³ – it is ornamented by incised lines, the legs are not separated but the genitals are marked. The lumbar depressions and shallow horizontal incisions are marked on the back. The decoration consisting of incised horizontal and oblique lines is usually found on figurines having leaf-shaped lower part (Gnilyane, Racheva mogila, Ruen, Krivodol, Kapitan Dimitriev, Gradeshnitsa)(Бояджиев in print). It is typical for the figurines from Yunatsite that this ornament is found on figurines with leaf-shaped as well as on figurines with trapezoid lower part and also on figurines with and without marked genitals (Terzijska-Ignatova 2003: Tab. 1 9; Tab. 1 5, 7, 8). The statement that most of the figurines, which came from level 1, display characteristic features typical for Krivodol culture is being confirmed (Terzijska-Ignatova 2003: 128). The fact that figurines with incised decoration have been found in other sites within the region of KGKVI assemblage confirms cultural interrelations between them.

Figurine N 3 was found in a house area of level 2. It belongs to type III 3 after Boyadzhiev. It is a very important find because it is the first one found at Tell Yunatsite with very well shaped separated legs and a decoration consisting of shallow depressions (Terzijska-Ignatova 2003). FBF of this type are very common and typical for the last phase of the Late Chalcolithic. They are common for the region of KGKVI assemblage (mainly in North Bulgaria but they have been found in Thrace as well) (Бояджиев in print). In some cases there is an attempt for a more realistic representation of the feet of the figurine (Chekendin, Ruse, Lovets, Hotnitsa) as it is the case with the Yunatsite figurine.

As I have already mentioned, the preliminary observations on levels I and II pottery and the finds, the excavators at Tell Yunatsite recorded features typical for the two Late Chalcolithic assemblages – KGKVI and KSBH. Since the site is situated in the contact zone between them such situation is quite logical. However, I have to mention that elements typical for Krivodol culture prevail in the final level I. Bowls with two vertical handles, knobbed handles and red and yellow painted decoration similar to the ones in Krivodol culture are found in level 2 pottery but the main bulk of the pottery is typical for Karanovo VI culture. Various types of dishes and bowls are most common. The decoration consists of channeling, graphite painting and various combinations of those two. The number of the large grain storage vessels increases compared to level I and incised decoration forming metopes comes to use together with the rusticated surface (Бояджиев, Асланис, Терзийска-Игнатова 2003). These observations are supported by others related to the anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines (Terzijska-Ignatova 2004) and also

by the newly found FBF. They refute the opinion that one and the same level of the sites having well-defined sequence has not yielded various types of FBF (Петков 1950: 27). Such situation has been observed not only at Tel Yunatsite but also at Hotnitsa, Sadievo, etc. (Еленски 1997: таб. III; Кънчев, Кънчева- Русева 1993: таб. I).

Notes

1. From 1976 to 1982 the Project directors of the excavations were R. Katincharov and V. Matsanova. In 1982-2000 a Bulgarian-Russian team, headed by Prof. N. Y. Merpert (the Russian part of the team) was doing excavations.
2. Y. Boyadzhiev, I. Aslanis, S. Terzijska-Ignatova and V. Matsanova are team leaders of the Bulgarian-Greek team.
3. In his classification Boyadzhiev divides FBF to four types with several subtypes: type I – FBF without marking (unfinished); type II – FBF whose lower part is marked at the place of the genitals (they could be with legs that are separated or not separated); type III – FBF whose lower part bears markings of anatomic features other than the genitals (they have compact lower part with separated and well formed legs); type IV – FBF with significance of the ornament of the lower body – the ornament consisting of incised lines possibly representing clothing (some of those have the genitals marked) (Boyadzhiev in print).

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