



Sitting female figure

On display

Title/Description: Sitting female figure

Object Type: Figure

Materials: Marble

Technique: Carving, Incising

Measurements: h. 57 x w. 50 x d. 22 mm

Accession Number: 575a

Historic Period: Neolithic (c. 4500-3500 BC)

Production Place: Greece, Thessaly

Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1978

This small figurine depicts a highly stylised naked female sitting down. Arms are outstretched (or folded), the head is conical, with only the nose depicted, and the pelvis is large, with the legs folded under the figure.

The figure resembles one that comes from the tiny Cycladic island of Saliagos, off Paros [1]. That site is dated to 5200-4500 BCE using radiocarbon dating, so it may well be that the present example is of similar date. This is the period of the earliest farming groups in the Cyclades. Our figure might have been made on the Cyclades, although it is said (without evidence) to have been found on the Greek mainland, in a grave with other items.

The kneeling, or possibly cross-legged, pose is interesting, as it is similar to the Saliagos example mentioned. The vulva is shown prominently on the swollen pelvis, and the buttocks are also depicted as large. The position of the arms (which are not differentiated) is also probably the same as the (damaged) Saliagos example. The head is very schematic, but the nose protrudes (it is now damaged). It is not impossible that further details may have originally been added using paint.

Michael Boyd, April 2022

[1] Colin Renfrew, 'The Sculptures of Neolithic Saliagos', in *Early Cycladic Sculpture in Context*, eds. M. Marthari, C. Renfrew and M.J. Boyd (Oxbow, 2017), 24-9.

Further Reading

Tomkins, P., 'Neolithic antecedents', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Bronze Age Aegean*, ed. E. Cline (Oxford University Press, 2012), 31-50.
