Images of Woman and Child from the Bronze Age

This book is a study of the woman-and-child motif – known as the kourotrophos – as it appeared in the Bronze Age eastern Mediterranean. Stephanie Lynn Budin argues that, contrary to many current beliefs, the image was not a universal symbol of maternity or a depiction of a mother goddess. In most of the ancient world, kourotrophic iconography was relatively rare in comparison to other images of women and served a number of different symbolic functions, ranging from honoring the king of Egypt to adding strength to magical spells to depicting scenes of daily life. This work provides an in-depth examination of ancient kourotrophoi and engages with a variety of debates that they have spawned, including their role in the rise of patriarchy and what they say about ancient constructions of gender.

Stephanie Lynn Budin teaches at Rutgers University, Camden. She is the author of The Myth of Sacred Prostitution in Antiquity (Cambridge University Press, 2008) and numerous articles on ancient religion and iconography.
Images of Woman and Child from the Bronze Age

Reconsidering Fertility, Maternity, and Gender in the Ancient World

Stephanie Lynn Budin

Rutgers University, Camden
Images of woman and child from the Bronze Age: reconsidering fertility, maternity, and gender in the ancient world

Stephanie Lynn Budin

Contents

Acknowledgments

1. Images of Woman and Child in the Bronze Age

2. The Image of the Woman in Early Bronze Age Art

3. Has the Child Become a Maternal Symbol?

4. Conclusions

Appendix: The Bronze Age:

Bibliography

Index

Cambridge University Press
32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.
It furthers the University’s mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of
education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107660328

© Stephanie Lynn Budin 2011

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without the written
permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2011
Reprinted 2012
First paperback edition 2014
Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data

Budin, Stephanie Lynn, 1969–
Images of woman and child from the Bronze age : reconsidering fertility, maternity, and gender
in the ancient world / Stephanie Lynn Budin.
  p. cm
Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-19304-7 (hardback)
5. Mother goddesses – Mediterranean Region. 6. Mother and child in art.
7. Mediterranean Region – Antiquities. 8. Title.

GN778.25.B83 2011
930.1'5 – dc22 2010044866

ISBN 978-0-521-19304-7 Hardcover

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of
URLs for external or third-party Internet Web sites referred to in this publication
and does not guarantee that any content on such Web sites is, or will remain, accurate
or appropriate.
Contents

List of Illustrations  page vii
Acknowledgments  ix

1 Introduction – Kourotrophic Iconography in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean: Origins and Meanings  1
  Theorizing the Kourotrophos: Where Sex Meets Gender  4
  Dealing with Figurines  25
  A Few Words on the Term “Kourotrophos”  29
  Inverse  32

2 Egypt  35
  Egyptian Decorum  36
  The Divine Wet Nurse  38
  Parents and Nurses and Tutors  89
  Potency Figurines  117
  Ostraca and Wall Paintings: Die Wochenlaube  135
  Flasks  142
  Straddling the Gender Divide: Male Kourotrophi  147

3 The Levant and Anatolia  149
  The Levant  149
  Anatolia  173
## Contents

4 **Mesopotamia and Iran**
   - Mesopotamia 184
   - Iran 214

5 **Cyprus**
   - Maternity in the Cypriot Iconographic Record 221
   - The Bronze Age Kourotrophoi of Cyprus 229

6 **The Aegean**
   - Minoan Crete 269
   - Mycenaean Greece 299

7 **Conclusions**
   - Rare, Uncommon, Atypical 327
   - The Ambiguity of Status 329
   - The Matter of Gender 333
   - Summary 346

*Bibliography* 349

*Index* 379
List of Illustrations

1. Sahure and Nekhbet
2. Queen Ahmes and the Infant Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri
3. Seti and Mut, from the Seti Temple at Abydos
4. Ivory Figurine
5. Barge Scene
6. Ankhnes-Meryre II
7. Sobeknakht
8. Senenmut and Neferure
9. Akhnaten and Family (Altar)
10. Type Six Potency Figurine
11. Ostracon
12. Flask
13. Byblos Bronze
14. Ugarit Ivory Panel
15. Beth Shean Figurine
16. Revadim Plaque
17. Lead from Alishar
18. Bronze from Horoztepe
19. Gold Pendant from the Schimmel Collection
20. Uqnitum Seal
21. Zamena Seal
List of Illustrations

22. Akkadian Seal, Boehmer 555 189
23. Akkadian Seal, Boehmer 558 190
24. Akkadian Seal, Boehmer 557 191
25. Ninhursag Plaque 201
26. Babylonian Plaque: Nude 207
27. Babylonian Plaque: Clothed 209
28. Archaic Iranian Plaque 215
29. Iranian Plaque 218
30. Iranian Bronze Figurine 219
31. Cypriot Plank Figurine 231
32. Kourotrophos from Alaminos 231
33. Kourotrophos from Alambra 233
34. Cypriot Trough Scene 235
35. Cypriot “Hermaphrodite” 241
36. Vounous Bowl 253
37. Bird-Faced Kourotrophos 263
38. Monastiraki Plaque 271
39. Ivory Triad from Mycenae 285
40. Mavrospelio “Kourotrophos” 289
41. Mycenaean Phi Kourotrophos 303
42. Mycenaean Tau Kourotrophos 304
43. Mycenaean Psi Kourotrophos 305
44. Aidonia Kourotrophos 307
45. Voula Enthroned Kourotrophos 313
I cannot thank enough all of the people who offered time, patience, and constructive criticism while I was writing this book. I must begin offering oblations to the Brooklyn Museum for quick and kind responses by Edward Bleiberg and Ruth Janson to requests for information and photographs, to its library for allowing me to borrow R. Unger’s 1957 dissertation in spite of the fact that it is the only known copy on the North American continent.

Several scholars kept me from making a total idiot of myself while trying to cover huge swaths of the ancient world in one book, and were extremely helpful with bibliography. Heartfelt thanks go out to Julia Assante, Kelly Barnard, Elizabeth Beck, Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati, Christine Morris, Gay Robins, Catherine Roehrig, Jeremy Rutter, Gabor Toth, Melissa Vetter, Jennifer Webb, Jennifer Houser Wegner, Steve Wiggins, and John Younger.

Many thanks, as ever, go to the interlibrary loan librarians at Robeson Library at Rutgers University, Camden.

As I was completing this book, Mary Beard wrote a post on her blog “A Don’s Life” complaining about how difficult it can be to get images to illustrate history books. She was guilty of understatement, as though suggesting that the Pacific Ocean can get damp in the rain. Several people helped me to get the images I needed for this book (several also hindered to the best of their ability; Beard certainly got that part right . . .). I thank those helpful individuals who allowed scholarship to
Acknowledgments

I thank Beatrice Rehl at Cambridge University Press for believing in this book even when it was in the stream-of-consciousness phase. I thank William H. Stoddard for all his help editing and being far more adept with the English language than I am.

I most of all thank my husband Paul C. Butler for support, patience, and a LOT of artwork (see above, Mary Beard . . . ).