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GINA SALAPATA

Tokens of piety

Inexpensive dedications as functional and symbolic objects

Abstract

This article engages with some methods and theories of disciplines outside the traditional sphere of Classics to open up new perspectives on the interrelationship between material culture, religion and society. It focuses on dedicatory practices and, in particular, on modest offerings and the multiple ways these were valued in Greek society. It concludes that, even though small inexpensive offerings were affordable by poorer people, their dedicators likely came from various socio-economic backgrounds. Dedications of low economic value and modest appearance may have had high symbolic value because they embodied social and religious ideas or the desires and identities of the dedicator; or they could derive their value from the function they performed in ritual. If the messages carried by such offerings were of primary concern and their value symbolic and emotional rather than material, the choice of a small or inexpensive offering would not necessarily reflect lower socio-economic status. Moreover, if the main concern of gift giving were communication and reciprocity, the act of giving would have been more important than the offering's monetary value.*

Keywords: piety, Greek dedications, economic value, symbolic value, material culture, inexpensive offerings, reciprocity, socio-economic status

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Introduction

The dedication of personal offerings as a way to honour and influence the gods was a customary act of worship in the Greek world.[1] This tangible manifestation of personal piety, which encompassed religious acts and sentiments, recognized the power of the gods and mortals' dependence on them.[2] The offerings aimed to attract the gods' attention; they accompanied and reinforced prayers for assistance or expressions of gratitude for some divine favour, or were offered simply to honour the gods and garner favour.

This article engages with some methods and theories of disciplines outside the traditional sphere of Classics, such as anthropology, to achieve new insights and open up new perspectives on the interrelationship between material culture, religion and society, and in particular on dedicatory practices. It focuses on individual religiosity, which is of growing scholarly interest in Classical archaeology and religious studies,[3] and on the various forms of agency exercised by both dedicants and dedications. It also engages with recent theoretical literature on value and valuation to move beyond old orthodoxies and incorrect assumptions about the correlation of modest dedications with socio-economic status.

Recent scholarship has moved away from the idea that dedications were a sort of payment for services rendered or requested. It is instead emphasized that the basis for these continually renewed acts of communication[4] was mutual esteem or preference; and that the aim was to build an enduring relationship of favour between the two parties and render the divinities benevolent so that they would respond out of reciprocal good will (*charis*).[5] Thus, worshippers rendered *timē* to the gods through the ritual medium of offerings in the hope the gods would reciprocate and show their *timē* by helping hu-

* An earlier version of this article was presented at the international conference 'Popular Religion and Ritual in the East Mediterranean from the 3rd Millennium BC to the 5th Century AD', organized by the Faculty of History and Archaeology of the University of Athens, Greece in December 2013. I would like to thank the two reviewers, Caitlín Barrett and Ioanna Patera, for their insightful comments and suggestions that greatly improved this text.

[1] van Straten 1981; 1992; Grottanelli 1989–1990; Snodgrass 1989–1990; Osborne 2004; Parker 2004.
[2] van Baal 1976, 170.
[3] Barrett 2016.
[4] Mylonopoulos 2006, 84–92.
[5] Pl. *Euthphr*. 15a. See Yunis 1988, 100–111; Grottanelli 1989–1990; Bremer 1998; Seaford 1998; Parker 2005; Day 2010, 240–241; Patera 2012, 65–83; Klebinder-Gauss 2015, 112–113.

mans.[6] There was no guarantee, however, that this counter-gift would be granted immediately or even at all, nor that it would be of equivalent economic value. Therefore, because it is both unequal and uncertain, this interdependence and reciprocity is far from being a commercial transaction or contract ("*do ut des*").[7] Instead, it should be considered "open reciprocity",[8] where the relationship exists between the two parties making the exchange, not between the goods and services exchanged.[9] It is reciprocal in a qualitative sense, not quantitatively as in the case of commodity exchanges.[10]

Dedicatory offerings ranged from grand artistic or architectural dedications of superb quality and sophistication to small, inexpensive and often mass-produced objects, frequently lacking artistic elaboration and aesthetic charm. These modest offerings have the potential to nuance recent debates in the study of Greek religion by contributing insights to the broad spectrum of religious attitudes and practices of individuals—what Kindt defines as "personal religion". Recent reassessments of the "*polis* religion" model,[11] which privileges official and communal cult activities organized by and on behalf of the *polis* and its institutions, have examined the variety of ways individuals engage with the supernatural without involving the *polis*. Small, modest offerings dedicated in sanctuaries blur the boundary between the private and the public sphere because they represent an individual's initiative to engage with the divine and a private discourse but in a public or official setting.[12] Even though personal choice and agency might have been constrained (as we will see), there was a lot of scope for individual expressions of religiosity.[13]

Modestly priced offerings and socio-economic status

Small items of little intrinsic value, such as figurines in terracotta, bronze or lead, or miniature or flimsy representations of objects of value,[14] and miniature armour and pottery (see below), are often considered to be dedications of the lower socio-economic strata.[15] For example, clay has been called "a poor man's bronze",[16] and miniatures and imitations of actual offerings (for example, animal figurines) are sometimes considered substitutes for sacrificial animals.[17] They have also even been considered offerings of the "less devout".[18] However, this moral judgement is open to criticism; and even if the interpretation of figurines of cocks, rams and bulls as mementos or substitutes of sacrifice were correct,[19] it would not apply to horse figurines, which instead embody a male aristocratic ideal and could indicate a warrior, hunter, breeder or athlete dedicant.[20]

Were modestly priced offerings indeed a poor man's dedications? Were they simply cheap substitutes for life-sized or more expensive prototypes? And, did dedications made from cheaper materials, like wood or clay, or miniatures indicate less concern or piety? Although in some instances low-cost offerings would indeed have been offered by poorer worshippers who could not afford more extravagant gifts,[21] they need not have been restricted to the lower socio-economic strata. Some scholars have argued persuasively against the idea that inexpensive dedications necessarily reflect the socio-economic status of their dedicants[22] and I intend here to add my dissenting voice to theirs. At the same time, I will argue for a more complex understanding of the multiple sources of value of these offerings.

Value of modest offerings

The value of offerings has both an economic and a social dimension. However, value is a complex concept, difficult to define because it is not an absolute and inherent property of objects; instead, it is relative, multifaceted and dynamic. The value of an object is a judgement that cannot be separated from the socio-cultural context and can vary even within the same community because people can value different things.[23] While economic value is generated at the intersection "between the

[6] Mikalson 1991, 183–191, 196–202; Patera 2012, 65–96.
[7] Graeber 2001, 225; Patera 2012, 53–98.
[8] Graeber 2001, 220.
[9] Ullucci 2011, 57–74.
[10] Cf. Graeber 2001, 32, 36.
[11] E.g. Kindt 2012.
[12] Kindt 2015, 43–44.
[13] Cf. Barrett 2015, 124.
[14] E.g. tripods: Pilz 2011, 19–22; Luce 2011, 65.
[15] E.g. Kyrieleis 1988; Klebinder-Gauss 2015, 114; and further refs. in Schattner & Zuchtriegel 2013, 259.
[16] Morgan 1990, 45.
[17] van Straten 1981, 87–88; Parker 2013; Patera 2015.
[18] Foxhall & Stears 2000, 8.
[19] In some cases, small offerings (like larger ones) could indeed stand in for "real" sacrifices; see Pausanias (10.18.5) on the offering of Orneatai at Delphi: instead of the daily sacrifice they had vowed to make, they offered a set of bronze figures representing a sacrifice and a procession (I owe this reference to Caitlín Barrett).
[20] Salapata 2014, 195–197.
[21] Baumbach 2004, 5; Salapata 2014, esp. 226–228.
[22] E.g. Aleshire 1992, 91; von Hesberg 2007; Karoglou 2010, 49–50. See also below note 40.
[23] van Wijngaarden 1999, 2–5; Bailey 1998, 2–3; Papadopoulos & Urton 2012, 30–39. On applying the concepts of value and valuation within Mediterranean archaeology, see also Bevan 2007; Barrett 2009.

desirability of an object and the difficulty of accessing it",[24] social value depends more on personal motives and cultural context; for example, on what is appropriate in every case, not just on monetary worth (such as raw material and labour). Thus, a dedication of low economic value may nevertheless have high symbolic value because it embodies social and religious ideas or human qualities like the desires and identities of the dedicant.[25] Meaning could reside in type and form, rather than size, raw material or technical elaboration. Thus, an élite male message could be broadcast just as effectively by a horse figurine or miniature tripod as by a monumental offering.

Some dedications might have carried strong emotional value by expressing the dedicants' individuality and identity. For example, offerings of a lock of hair as a transition rite[26] shared part of one's self;[27] and intimately owned objects, such as toys, jewellery, tools of the trade, or something representing the dedicant's skill,[28] carried the dedicants' individual stories.[29] Interestingly, some cases of personal offerings, such as belts, bear traces of use,[30] and inventories (for example, of Delos) list some offerings as broken, worn out or half-finished.[31] While some of these offerings may have suffered damage in the sanctuary, worn-out or half-finished items, such as tools and garments, would have represented very personal items closely connected with an individual and dedicated on a special occasion. We know, for example, that the garments dedicated at Brauron had been worn by women during important phases in their lives, such as pregnancy and childbirth.[32] Similarly, heirlooms—and some of the worn-out dedications could indeed have been handed down through generations—would have carried emotional value because of their histories.

Homemade dedications, like crude handmade figurines, could simply be an inexpensive alternative to a commercial item but could also indicate greater personal effort and involvement, with dedicants leaving their personal mark. Finally, the choice of extraordinary natural objects (for example, stalactites, coral, and hippopotamus teeth)[33] may have depended on their exceptional characteristics and the difficulty of their acquisition, which made them worthy of the gods and distinguished the offerer from the crowd.

Flexible offerings

Manufacturing techniques and iconographic types, especially of mould-made terracotta objects, allowed small generic offerings to be used in varied ways[34] and even to make a social statement. Thus, Alexandra Sofroniew contends that the large number of loom weights dedicated in sanctuaries (even those of male gods), some of which were inscribed or decorated before firing, symbolize female skill and pride in their work as weavers;[35] and we have seen that horse figurines may have connoted the aristocratic status or aspirations of the dedicant.

I have recently argued that additional flexibility in creating meaning would have been provided when individual generic offerings were grouped to produce specific narratives related to the personal circumstances of the dedicant.[36] For example, the Geneleos family portrait group from Samos, depicting a reclining father, an enthroned mother, and standing daughters and son, has corresponding types among terracotta figurines,[37] suggesting these types of figurines often represented mortals rather than gods and were depicted conventionally, according to their social role.[38] I believe that in some cases votaries could choose generic types like these to purchase and dedicate together, in order to construct their own individual family portrait to place under divine protection and even reflect their social position.

Miniatures as symbolic offerings

When considering the size of dedications, miniature offerings such as vessels and armour come first to mind; these have attracted considerable scholarly attention lately.[39] Are miniature dedications simply low-cost substitutes dedicated by those who could not afford normal-sized or valuable objects? Several scholars have challenged this view of miniatures as indicators of low economic and thus social status.[40] For example,

[24] van Wijngaarden 1999, 3. Graeber argues that value is not created but simply recognized (2001, 76–77); and links value with creative energies and actions, not objects because it implies comparison and evaluation (2001, 44–45, 49–89).
[25] Cf. Graeber 2001, 211.
[26] Eur. *Hipp.*, 1425–1427; van Straten 1981, 90; Dillon 2002, 215; Parker 2004, 279.
[27] Luce 2011, 65.
[28] *Anth. Pal.* 6.4; van Straten 1981, 93; Boardman *et al.* 2004, 308–310; von Hesberg 2007, 296–297; Klebinder-Gauss 2015, 113–114.
[29] Hughes 2017.
[30] Klebinder-Gauss 2015, 109 & n. 25.
[31] Prêtre 2009, 9. Cf. Hughes 2017, 187–188 for earlier use of offerings in epigrams of the *Greek Anthology*.
[32] Lee 2012; Parker 2004, 279.
[33] For which see Boardman *et al.* 2004, 315–316; Tassignon 2005.
[34] Salapata forthcoming; see also Barfoed 2013, 97–100.
[35] Sofroniew 2011.
[36] Salapata 2011; 2015.
[37] Muller 2009, 91–92.
[38] Huysecom-Haxhi & Muller 2007, 241–242; Muller 2009, 91–92.
[39] E.g. Ekroth 2003; Luce 2011, esp. 57–59; Schattner & Zuchtriegel 2013.
[40] Bouma 1996, 187; Ekroth 2003; Hammond 2005, 417, 422; Pilz 2011; Schattner & Zuchtriegel 2013; Alexandridou forthcoming; Patera 2015, 182–183, 194.

some miniature vase shapes were significant in their own right since they lack corresponding normal-sized models or were imported.[41] Moreover, some specific vase shapes are associated with particular cults,[42] like the miniature *hydriae* in the "North Sacrificial Area" at Eretria[43] and the miniature kraters at the Agamemnoneion of Mycenae.[44] Finally, some of these miniatures could still function as containers if only for a few drops or grains.[45]

Several scholars who reject the "cheap substitute" role of miniature offerings instead highlight their symbolic connotations and argue that their reduced size selectively reproduces and thus emphasizes the most important aspects of the object; namely, those that best communicate the message.[46] Thus, miniaturization does not affect the role of the offering as a device of communication, nor does it decrease its religious significance.

Miniatures are heterogeneous. In some cases, size was indeed likely influenced by economic reasons, but another possibility is that some miniatures may have been linked to childhood, dedicated by or on behalf of children (by their parents), perhaps to mark their transition from childhood.[47] Might some have symbolized specific rituals in which large-size counterparts were used? Or, might others have been small because they were used only once during a ritual and subsequently deposited or even ritually broken?[48] Might they simply have been entry fees[49] or something one just left behind in a sacred place?

Miniatures, of course, do not cater to ostentatious public display but may indicate a more personal offering. Small size also facilitates transport and allows mass dedications, as indicated by miniature vases dedicated in stacks[50] and by Oibalos' offering of one hundred clay tripods, presumably miniatures since he carried them in his bag (Paus. 4.12.7–9). In some cases, the number, more than the size or intrinsic value, may have contributed to the efficacy of the offering.[51] Might the accumulation of offerings, even inexpensive ones like miniatures and figurines, have been a mark of the cult's popularity, reputation and grandeur? Or, conversely, was small size a matter of convenience—a way to avoid crowding the sanctuary?

[41] Ekroth 2003, 35; Hammond 2005, 417, 422.
[42] Gimatzidis 2011, 83–84 and n. 57. The same holds for other types of offerings, e.g. terracotta plaques in Lakonian and Messenian hero sanctuaries: Salapata 2014.
[43] Huber 2003, 53–58, 116–120, pls. 79–80.
[44] Cook 1953, 40, figs. 14–15.
[45] See, e.g. Bouma 1996, 106, 267; Stissi 2003, 78; Kiernan 2009, 168.
[46] See above note 40.
[47] Luce 2011, 61–62.
[48] As shown by Alexandridou forthcoming.
[49] Alroth 1988, 203.
[50] Alexandridou forthcoming.
[51] Cf. Antonaccio 2005, 110–111; Alexandridou forthcoming.

The act of giving

If the main concern of gift giving was communication and reciprocity, what counted in the eyes of the gods would have been the gesture and its recurrence, not the cost of the gift.[52] Moreover, if offerings were used in a ceremony before being deposited, the momentary ritual action, like the wearing of a mask[53] or the pouring of liquid in the case of pottery, would have been more important than the conveyor. Thus the value of such modest offerings would derive from the function they performed in ritual (see also below). Inscriptions on simple 7th-century BC cups from Mt Hymettos might have been part of a ritual. Adding graffiti before using the cup in a ceremony and dedicating it to the god afterwards, often after having broken it, would have been a private action expressing a personal relation between dedicant and god, contrary to élite ideologies of consumption and display since the inscriptions were not meant to be read in the future.[54]

Even though dedications were more permanent expressions of piety than transitory sacrifices and libations, inexpensive offerings may have been exhibited very briefly, if at all, in which case the act of giving mattered more than the gift's monetary value. This is supported by the mould-made terracotta plaques found at the Sanctuary of Agamemnon and Alexandra/Kassandra at Amyklai, several of which have been perforated once or twice.[55] The positioning of the holes at the top centre indicates that the plaques were intended to hang from a string or thong, either free or against a wall. However, only one plaque out of hundreds shows traces of wear in a hole from a string.[56] Moreover, the provision of holes varies depending on the scene depicted and the mould series,[57] and is inconsistent even within the same series. Thus, no plaque from those depicting the subject of standing figures has holes but all plaques of series SEA 1/9 of the seated figures subject (where the upper edge is preserved) have holes. In series SEA 1/160, a second-generation example has no holes while another has

[52] Patera 2012, 77, 83, 119; cf. Graeber 2001, 44–47.
[53] E.g. at Orthia: Carter 1987.
[54] de Polignac 2005, esp. 23–24.
[55] Salapata 2002, 27–31; 2014, 56–57. The plaques date from the 6th through to the 4th century BC.
[56] Salapata 2014, pl. 7b.
[57] Hundreds of plaques could be produced from a single positive, known as the prototype, with the total output constituting a "mould series". All moulds taken directly from the prototype are considered "first-generation moulds", and the plaques made in them "first-generation plaques". The period of production of the same type of plaque could be further extended by using derivative moulds. First-generation plaques were used as prototypes for the production of new moulds; because of the shrinkage of clay during drying and firing, the new pieces formed in these moulds—plaques of the second generation—were smaller. The process of using plaques of earlier generations as new prototypes could be repeated several times (Salapata 2014, 50–53 with references).

two (*Fig. 1*); and plaques of the third, fourth and fifth generations have no holes. Size must also be relevant, since no plaque smaller than 9 cm high is perforated.[58] It is interesting, however, that most plaques lack suspension holes. This is true not only for the smaller plaques but also for several larger plaques, even where others from the same series have holes. Therefore, it seems these plaques were regularly positioned on or against a surface or simply left on the ground. Still, the lack of holes implies that most plaques were meant to be exhibited only briefly or not at all, and even plaques with holes would not be guaranteed display if there was no space in the sanctuary; thus, the offerings would not have to remain on display for a certain period in order to be effective.

Similarly, at least some of the painted Penteskouphia plaques are unlikely to have been displayed because they were painted on both sides but with scenes in a different orientation. In one example, Poseidon is placed vertically on one side (*Fig. 2*), while the craftsman scene on the other side is placed horizontally (*Fig. 3*).[59] If the plaque was ever displayed, the more important side would have been that of the god because this is the side where the two holes were positioned correctly, on the top edge above his head. The implication is again that the act of giving counted for much more than how long the offering remained in the sanctuary.

Occasions for offerings

It is also likely that the type of some offerings was determined by the occasion, depending on whether the favour asked was small or big. When life was good and without major worries, simple rites would be enough to keep open the lines of communication with the divine world.[60] Thus, "routine" piety, such as a casual visit to a sanctuary or presentation of a portion of earnings, like first fruits,[61] would have called for frequent simple tokens of respect offered by both poor and rich individuals.[62] For example, Ioanna Patera suggested that within the Sanctuary of Demeter on Acrocorinth, simple offerings were used as a type of entry fee from one area to another.[63] Conversely, moments of crisis or special occasions may have called for richer offerings from those who could afford them. Thus, wealthier people could have dedicated both expensive and token offerings depending on the occasion.

Fig. 1. Terracotta plaques from the sanctuary of Agamemnon and Alexandra/Kassandra at Amyklai; second generation replicas. Sparta Museum nos. 6229/1 and 6229/5. After Salapata 2014, web pl. 1.278

The concept of "routine" piety can help nuance the debate in Greek religion concerning the relationship of personal religion to civic cult.[64] Regular visits to sanctuaries accompanied by small, token offerings must have been as common as the lighting of a candle during visits to churches in modern Greece. This customary ritual action represents a form of individual religiosity but manifested in the wider public context of civic religion insofar as it takes place in a public setting. The value of the token offering lies in the way it embodies the importance of the relationship.

Such personal engagements with the supernatural were supplemented by collective ritual practices. In a society where piety was largely expressed through rituals, the great number of low-cost offerings in a sanctuary, especially if they are of the same type, may denote a cultic activity repeated regularly and emphasizing large-scale participation. These might have been offered during single dedication events by large crowds (for example, in life-stage rituals), indicating social integration in group religion.[65] Thus, offerings such as the distinctive small lead figurines found in their thousands and mostly in Lakonian sanctuaries,[66] could have been dedicated by each person, poor or wealthy, as a sign of participation in a collective ceremony.[67] Similarly, at Bitalemi in Sicily, a series of undecorated *kylikes* were found upturned and placed in a semicircle, illustrating a local ritual that probably took place during the Thesmophoria festival.[68]

[58] Salapata 2014, pl. 11.
[59] Salapata 2002, 28; Rayet 1880, 104–105, no. 1; Cuomo di Caprio 1984, 77–78, no. 1.
[60] van Baal 1976, 168–172.
[61] Parker 2004, 275.
[62] Antonaccio 2005, 110.
[63] Patera 2012, 133–139.
[64] For which see Kindt 2015.
[65] von Hesberg 2007, esp. 306–309.
[66] Boss 2000, esp. 195–199.
[67] Antonaccio 2005, 104–111; cf. Lippolis 2009, 153.
[68] La Genière 2008, 14, fig. 2; Patera 2012, 216–217.

Fig. 2. Painted plaque from Penteskouphia representing Poseidon. Louvre Museum no. MNB 2856. Published with the Museum's permission. http://cartelfr.louvre.fr/cartelfr/visite?srv=obj_view_obj&objet=cartel_6719_8597_g018685j.001.jpg_obj.html&flag=true.

Fig. 3. Reverse side of the plaque depicted in Fig. 2: firing a potter's kiln. Louvre Museum no. MNB 2856. Published with the Museum's permission. http://cartelfr.louvre.fr/cartelfr/visite?srv=obj_view_obj&objet=cartel_6719_29030_g018685j.002.jpg_obj.html&flag=false.

Linking offerings to rituals

Sometimes, local rituals may have determined what objects were dedicated in a sanctuary. Cheap cultic vessels specifically made for a particular sanctuary, like the Brauron *krateriskoi*, miniature *louteria* at Agrigento,[69] and *kernoi* or *likna* at Demeter sanctuaries,[70] convey specific cultic messages and imply large-scale participation. Such specialized types could have been produced on site or nearby but there is little evidence for workshops associated with or near sanctuaries.[71] Since offerings would generally not have been produced exclusively for the needs of specific cults, it is more likely that certain offerings were brought in and sold at particular sanctuaries, in which case dedicants' choice of offerings would have been influenced by what was available at the sanctuary.[72] Thus, preference for specific offerings could have been determined by practical considerations, for example, manufacturing and economic factors (like availability of raw materials and artisans, specialization of workshops, or technical constraints).[73] More likely, though, demand for specific objects by consumers and their supply by workshops were interconnected. On the other hand, offerings in the form of personal belongings repurposed for dedication may have been based on their easier availability, or the choice may have been a spontaneous gesture that represented greater agency on the part of the dedicant.[74]

[69] Portale 2012, 174–175.
[70] Boardman *et al.* 2004, 306; La Genière 2008, 14–20.
[71] For metal offerings, see e.g. Felsch 1983 (Kalapodi); Kilian 1983 (Philia); Voyatzis 1998, 135–136 (Tegea). For terracotta offerings, see Muller 2014, 78–79.
[72] Aleshire 1992, 91.
[73] For some discussion on production issues, see Salapata forthcoming.
[74] Hughes 2017, 194–195.

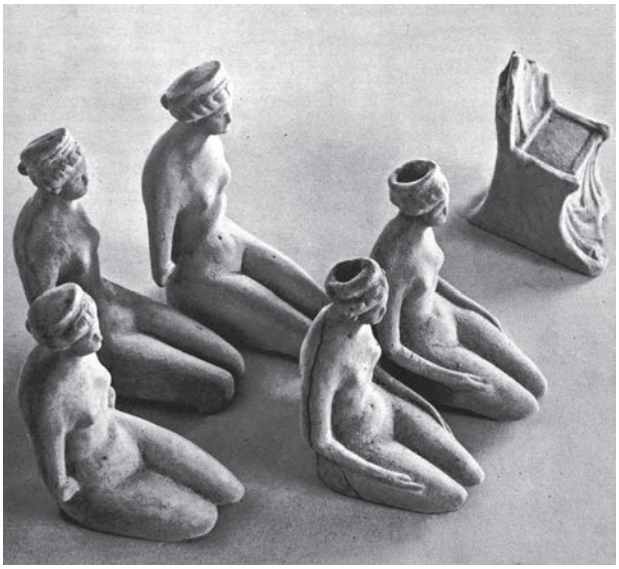

Fig. 4. Female terracotta figurines and throne from Grotta Caruso. After Costabile 1991, 116, fig. 191.

Fig. 5. Reconstruction of positioning of terracotta figurines from Grotta Caruso. Based on Costabile 1991, 116, fig. 191.

Dedications found in connection with altars or offering pits and bearing traces of fire,[75] or others found near altars (for example, on offering tables), show that these objects played a ritual role in the ceremony.[76] This is nicely illustrated by a terracotta shrine model from the Corinthian potters' quarter showing three figurines lying on two "altar-tables";[77] there are two standing figures on the left-hand table and a horse-and-rider figurine on the right, which is similar to actual figurines found in the area.[78]

Figurines could also play a primary role in the ritual and even be interacted with. An unusual type of female figurine, very likely used in a prenuptial ritual, comes from Grotta Caruso, a large cave near Lokroi dedicated to the Nymphs.[79] Inside the cave and accessed through a staircase was a large basin that could be filled with 30–40 cm of water, fed from a spring outside. This would have caused a large block in the basin to be submerged, while a stone altar nearby remained above water.[80]

During the ritual activity at the cave sanctuary, it is assumed that nubile young women (individually or collectively) went down the stairs to the water, sat on the submerged rock and poured water over themselves. Prenuptial ritual bathing for purification and fecundatory purposes was common in cults dedicated to nymphs.[81] It would find a parallel in a fragment of Kallimachos (Callim. *Aet.* 66.1–9) where, in addressing the water nymph Amymone of Argos, he mentions that the honour of weaving the ritual garment for Hera would be given to maidens only after they had sat down on a rock in the fountain and poured water over themselves.[82]

Among the many finds in the cave was a series of terracotta figurines of naked seated women wearing a *polos*, with hands along thighs and no legs below the knees (*Fig. 4*). A few terracotta thrones were found in the cave, though very few fit the size of the figurines,[83] and James Redfield has assumed that the naked seated figures were placed on a stand or shelf or on wooden thrones with added garments to conceal their truncated legs.[84]

However, though this reconstruction is possible, with the pose evoking the bridal ceremony of the *anakalypteria*,[85] I think another reconstruction is more likely. These figurines could have been left in the basin water (*Fig. 5*), with their legs giving the impression of extending down through the surface. Their unusual construction with truncated legs could thus be explained for practical reasons, since this would facilitate their positioning on any flat surface and in large numbers behind and next to each other, without the need to seat them at an edge over which legs could hang. Francesca Pizzi has also

[75] Alroth 1988, 201–203; Patera 2012, 216–217.
[76] Bocher 2015, esp. 53–55.
[77] Stillwell 1952, 208, no. XXXIII.1, pl. 45.
[78] Stillwell 1952, nos. XXIII, 18 & 20.
[79] Costabile 1991; MacLachlan 2009; Pizzi 2012. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that these specialized types were produced locally.
[80] Costabile 1991, 8–10, figs. 6, 9.
[81] Pizzi 2012, 225–227.
[82] MacLachlan 2009, 207.
[83] Costabile 1991, 114–122.
[84] Redfield 2003, 313.
[85] Redfield 2003, 314–315.

suggested that the figurines represent the dedicant emerging from the water, an interpretation she extends to the *protomes* of nude females also found in the cave.[86] Submerged offerings to the Nymphs are indeed mentioned in an epigram of Leonidas of Taras (*Anth. Pal.* 9.326), who says that in the waters of a spring for the Nymphs there were "these little ornaments of yours, maidens, thousands of them, drenched".[87]

These figurines, therefore, would be offerings of young women in a prenuptial ritual to the Nymphs who oversaw their passage from *parthenos* to *nymphe*; they would be appropriate gifts to the Nymphs from mortal *nymphai*, as brides were called.[88] I suggest that the Lokrian maidens entered the sacred water taking along a figurine and possibly sat on the submerged rock. The figurines, which would represent both the Nymphs and the Lokrian women involved in the rite,[89] would perhaps have been placed on the same rock as perpetual reminders of their prenuptial ritual during which they identified with the divine maidens.[90] Perhaps part of the same ritual was later to place these same figurines on thrones, with garments concealing the lack of legs; this would have represented their future status as married women. This ritual would have been performed by all maidens regardless of social status, and the figurines would have been dedicated by each person as a sign of participation in a cultic ceremony that had important local, social significance.[91] Their peculiar form was influenced both by their role in the ritual act and by practical considerations.

Offerings depicting narrative scenes might also have been dedicated in memory of a ceremony in which the dedicant participated: for example, the plaques from the Manella sanctuary at Lokroi depicting three dancing maidens approaching a seated goddess, most likely Kore-Persephone.[92] On other plaques, four maidens led by a priestess carry a ceremonial garment, most likely an offering to the goddess.[93]

Local dedicatory practices

Dedications can visually define a cult through religious iconography and repetition of religious forms and symbols. They thus allow dedicants to position themselves within an established tradition but also to interact with other offerings and even actively influence ideas and shape the cult in which they participated. For example, Carla Antonaccio has shown that through their dedicatory behaviour, offerers of miniature lead figurines at the sanctuary of Helen and Menelaos at Therapne emphasized certain aspects of the cult by dedicating additional figures of divinities; thus, by choosing Artemis and other female divinities, "they may have acted collectively to construct the nature of Helen".[94]

Larger, more imposing offerings provide a framework for smaller, ordinary ones and can thus shape local regional patterns in ritual behaviour and possibly workshop products.[95] At the Amyklai Sanctuary (see above), an iconographic model for the large group of mould-made plaques, ranging from large, detailed images to small and simplified versions (*Fig. 6*), was established through the dedication of two large terracotta reliefs, which in turn followed the iconographic type of the more expensive stone reliefs (*Fig. 7*) found throughout Lakonia.[96] However, the religious function of all these dedicatory types must have been the same;[97] as long as the type of offering was appropriate, material, size and quality of execution were probably secondary: symbolic value mattered most.

The nature of the cult or customary dedicatory practices in a region, a particular sanctuary, or a type of sanctuary could have dictated the type of offering: for example, the wooden ship models offered at the Samian Heraion, the ithyphallic and the female figurines with exposed genitals from the sanctuary of Zeus Messapeus in Lakonia, and anatomical offerings for healing divinities throughout the Greek world.[98] Terracotta plaques depicting seated figures often accompanied by snakes are a peculiarly Lakonian type of offering found only in this region and in neighbouring Messenia, an area strongly influenced by Sparta. These inexpensive plaques must have been considered appropriate dedications to heroes because they are found only in hero shrines.[99]

Conclusion

Small, inexpensive dedications are an important manifestation of materiality in ritual practices. They offer several insights on popular tastes and the dedicatory behaviour of the average individual, especially identity, personal choice and agency. This article has examined the evidence for modest offerings

[86] Pizzi 2012, 227–228.
[87] MacLachlan 2009, 206.
[88] Costabile 1991, 103; Redfield 2003, 313–315; MacLachlan 2009, 209–210.
[89] Cf. Redfield 2003, 315.
[90] Costabile 1991, 114–127.
[91] Redfield 2003, 265–266; Pizzi 2012, 230.
[92] Lissi Caronna *et al*. 1996–2007, 3, type 10/13, pl. CCII.b, fig. 65.
[93] Lissi Caronna *et al*. 1996–2007, 2, 247–248.
[94] Antonaccio 2005, 110–111 (with quote on p. 111).
[95] Salapata forthcoming.
[96] Salapata 2014, esp. 63–175.
[97] Cf. Kyrieleis 1988, esp. 215.
[98] Ship models: Baumbach 2009, 215–216. Ithyphallic and female figurines: Catling 2002. Anatomical offerings: van Straten 1981, 100–151. See also above the truncated naked figurines from Grotta Caruso.
[99] Salapata 2014, 217–228.

Fig. 6. Terracotta plaques from the sanctuary of Agamemnon and Alexandra/Kassandra at Amyklai. Sparta Museum nos. 6230/1 and 6039/48. After Salapata 2014, web pls. 1.17 and 1.23.

Fig. 7. Stone relief from Chrysapha. Sparta Museum no. 505. After Salapata 2014, web pl. 7.10.

mostly from the perspective of consumption. It has discussed the multiple ways people might have valued modest offerings and how these were related to their lives. Even though small inexpensive offerings were affordable by poorer people, their dedicators likely came from all walks of life. Various factors may have influenced the choice of modest objects as dedications. People were sometimes driven by personal concerns or the circumstances of their visit, and by the occasion of the offering. They could have been been influenced by the nature and character of the recipient deity or type of sanctuary, by specific rituals practised in the sanctuary, or by regional dedicatory practices and preexisting offerings. The selection of offerings might have been limited by practical considerations that included not just cost but also portability or availability of types at local workshops and sanctuaries.

In general, as with larger or costlier offerings, the potential of modest offerings to communicate was significant. If the message carried by such offerings was of primary concern and their value symbolic and emotional rather than material, the choice of a small or inexpensive offering would not necessarily reflect lower socio-economic status. In a religious sense, the act of giving, or the messages inherent in the form of the offering, would have been more important than the gift's monetary value and, in some cases, it could have signalled participation in a cultic activity. Of course, no one could stop wealthier worshippers from dedicating additional, more expensive offerings.

GINA SALAPATA
School of Humanities
PN 242 Massey University
Priv. Bag 11.222
Palmerston North 4442
New Zealand
g.salapata@massey.ac.nz

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