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The use of miniature pottery in Archaic–Hellenistic Greek sanctuaries

Considerations on terminology and ritual practice

Abstract

Miniature pottery is a widely encountered group of archaeological material that has been found in domestic, funerary, and predominantly in ritual contexts. Despite the ubiquitous presence of these small vessels, this group is generally understudied and interpretations of its meaning are lacking. Scholarship in the past perceived miniature pottery as cheap, non-functional and unimportant and therefore this pottery was often neglected or sometimes not even published. Interpretations have been sparse and by default it is believed that miniatures were the cheapest dedications the worshipper could buy. Within the last decade(s) the perceptions among scholars have changed somewhat and when miniature pottery and other votives appear together in an excavation it is often interpreted as a votive deposit stemming from a ritual context, such as a temple, shrine or sanctuary. Below a tentative terminology of miniature pottery will be presented and it will be argued that there is more to be learned about Greek ritual practice from this understudied group of archaeological material, for instance, how miniatures were used in rituals.*

Keywords: Miniature pottery, votives, miniaturization, ritual practice, terminology, Archaic–Hellenistic periods

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Introduction

Miniature pottery has been found in funerary, domestic and ritual contexts throughout Greece, but its definition, terminology and ritual use are still understudied aspects of Greek archaeology. The aim of this article is to consider the terminology and definition of miniature pottery and to address how miniature pottery was used in religious rituals in Ancient Greek sanctuaries from the Archaic to the Hellenistic period. The popularity of miniature pottery increases in the 7th century BC, and in the 6th century BC Corinthian miniatures in particular begin to be exported to the rest of the Greek world. In this paper I will therefore primarily discuss miniatures from this pivotal period through to the

Hellenistic period.¹ I will mostly confine my discussion to evidence from the Greek Mainland, although I will, for the purpose of comparison, draw some parallels to miniatures found in Italy.

Research history

Literary sources and iconographic references are completely silent when it comes to mentioning miniature pottery. Instead we must rely on the archaeological material, which is abundantly found in ritual contexts. Miniature pottery is also to a lesser extent found in funerary and domestic contexts, which will not be treated here.² From the earliest excavations in Greece miniature pottery was found in large numbers, and it did not gain flattering scrutiny back then. The American scholars who worked at the Argive Heraion published the

* This article is based on a paper delivered in the Athens Greek Religion Seminar Series held by the Swedish Institute at Athens. I thank the organizer Dr Jenny Wallsten and the attendees for a fruitful discussion and input on this paper, which is based on my unpublished Ph.D. dissertation. I am also grateful to the reviewers and editors of *Opuscula* for their extremely useful feedback.

¹ The use of miniature pottery before the 7th century BC in Greece deserves a paper on its own, but for some aspects of votives in this period, see Gimatzidis 2011.

² Miniature pottery is, for instance, found in funerary contexts from Corinth, see Corinth XIII, 169–300; the Kerameikos in Athens, see Kerameikos XVII, 101–123; or outside Greece, at Metaponto, see Carter *et al.* 1998, 592–730. A few sites have, so far, yielded miniature pottery from domestic contexts: for Chalkis in Aitolia, see Houby-Nielsen forthcoming; for Olynthus, see Cahill 2002, 85–93; for Halieis, see Ault 2005, 20, 31, 46–47, 55, 122; Swinford 2006, table 3; and for the Athenian Agora, see Lynch 2011, 164–165; Rotroff 2013, 17–35; for Lucania, Italy, see Horsnæs 2001. Miniature pottery from Egypt, the Near East, Asia Minor, the Greek Islands, or the prehistoric period in Greece will not be treated here, nor will miniatures in stone or metal.

excavations and finds at the beginning of the 20th century.³ In these publications the miniature pottery was described as “rough and small” pots, and the interpretation offered was that the miniatures were the cheapest the devotees visiting the shrine could buy.⁴ Joseph C. Hoppin, who published some of the pottery from the Argive Heraion, described an odd little miniature, a two-handled vase with no opening at the top, and stated in the publication, “I have been unable to find any example similar to this vase. It must be regarded as a mere freak of the potters’ art, with no *raison d'être*.⁵ This specific miniature vessel is, however, a rare example of what can be called a “token” miniature, and below I will return to this type of miniature pottery’s *raison d'être*.

Around the same time the first publications of the British work in Lakonia were published, and here we encounter the term “miniature pottery” for the first time.⁶ Since they had come across miniature pottery at several excavations of what they believed to be hero shrines, Alan J.B. Wace and Frederick W. Hasluck understood miniature pottery to be a typical dedication to heroes.⁷ Looking outside Lakonia to the Corinthia, the Opheltes Shrine (Herōon) at the Sanctuary of Zeus at Nemea yielded miniature pottery too: about 50% of the pottery assemblage amounted to miniatures.⁸ However, in Sparta the same type of miniature pottery is found in the Artemis Orthia Sanctuary and the Apollo/Hyacinthos Sanctuary at Amyklai, so the idea of connecting heroes and miniatures must be questioned. Since Wace’s and Hasluck’s publication miniature pottery has been found in sanctuaries to all kinds of deities throughout Greece spanning the Archaic-Hellenistic periods, and the idea that miniature pottery was exclusively connected to hero shrines has since been abandoned.⁹

In 1962 the second Perachora publication appeared and for the first time in a large publication series the miniature pottery received a chapter of its own.¹⁰ However, the chapter contained very brief descriptions and only few measurements were offered. Tom J. Dunbabin mentioned that, “the vases included in this chapter vary from small toys to small but well-made examples of the standard shapes.”¹¹ It was not until 1970 that a definition of miniature pottery was suggested

by Elizabeth G. Pemberton in her publication of the Vrysoula deposit from Corinth; she stated that, “miniatures are vases which reproduce a shape in reduced size without the original function, to serve as votive or funerary offerings.”¹² However, this great definition was casually hiding in a footnote and was never truly established or thoroughly discussed. Below I will suggest a refined terminology that builds on Pemberton’s excellent definition.

As more publications came out from the excavations of the Athenian Agora and Corinth, miniature pottery began to be included in publications and started to be treated more seriously.¹³ This led to articles published in the 1990s and 2000s that not only published miniatures, but also presented some interpretations.¹⁴ In order to move forward from this point, this group of archaeological material must first and foremost be published with the same attentiveness as other archaeological objects, and secondly, it is important to attempt to make interpretations concerning miniature pottery’s ritual usage. The question “what constitutes miniature pottery” will be discussed in order to organize the ideas behind the tentative terminology.

What constitutes miniature pottery?

Leslie A. Hammond, who has done extensive work on miniature pottery based on material from Tegea in Arkadia, suggests two criteria for determining what constitutes a miniature vessel.¹⁵ The first is that miniatures are, “vessels that are modelled from other vessels but on a reduced scale”, and, secondly, “other vessels which do not have corresponding larger ‘models’ are also considered miniatures ... as a consequence of their small size, equal or less than 10 cm”.¹⁶ Hammond accurately includes in her criteria the observation that some miniature vessels are not shaped on regular-sized vessels, an important point to which we will return. Another equally important point to consider when contemplating what constitutes miniature pottery is whether size is a determining factor. In order to comprehend how scholars have approached working with this group of pottery, it is useful to review the publications of the American excavations in ancient Corinth as an example.

³ AH I was published in 1902, AH II in 1905.

⁴ AH II, 96.

⁵ AH II, 101, fig. 41.

⁶ Wace & Hasluck 1904/1905; Wace *et al.* 1904/1905.

⁷ Wace & Hasluck 1904/1905, 89. Miniature pottery was also found in the Menelaion in Sparta, see Catling 1992.

⁸ J.J. Bravo pers. comm. J.J. Bravo’s publication of the Opheltes Shrine (Nemea IV) was just published prior to the final editing of this article, and could therefore unfortunately not be consulted.

⁹ Dawkins 1929; Calligas 1992. For Dark Age miniature pottery from Amyklai and Sparta, see Coulson 1985.

¹⁰ Perachora II, 290–313.

¹¹ Perachora II, 290.

¹² Pemberton 1970, 293, n. 49.

¹³ Miniature pottery got chapters of its own in, for instance, Agora XII from 1970; Agora XXIX from 1997; Corinth XV.3 from 1982; Corinth XVIII.1 from 1989.

¹⁴ Gebhard 1998, 104–105; Brumfield 1997; Jordan & Rotroff 1999; Horsnæs 2001; Edlund-Berry 2001; Wells 2002; Ekroth 2003; Arafat 2003; Smith 2007; Gimatzidis 2011; Pilz 2011; 2012; Ekroth 2013; Rotroff 2013.

¹⁵ Hammond 1998; 2005; 2014.

¹⁶ Hammond 1998, 14–18.

Various scholars working with pottery at Corinth have applied different “terminologies” for miniature pottery. The definitions of miniatures vary from publication to publication and none of the authors explicitly attempt to provide a standard terminology. In the publication of the pottery from the Potters’ Quarter from 1984 the authors operated with the term “miniature” for the *kotylai* below the height of 4.5 cm.¹⁷ Five years later, in the publication of the pottery from the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore, the exact criteria for the miniature pottery is not mentioned, but all the miniature *kotylai* presented in the catalogue are less than 4.6 cm high.¹⁸ In the most recent of the three publications mentioned here, Martha K. Risser divides the *kotylai* into three groups based on height: miniature, regular, and large *kotylai*.¹⁹ The cut off for when a *kotyle* is a miniature seems rather subjective, however, based on the publications from Corinth, the miniatures (what I propose to call Diminutives, see below) are less than 5 cm tall. *Table 1* summarizes the categorizations in the different Corinth publications.²⁰

MINIATURIZATION AND SCALE

The phenomenon of miniaturization presents a useful framework for approaching miniature pottery. Humans have experimented with scale for a long time, and the miniaturization of objects in different materials has taken place throughout prehistory up to the present day.²¹ Scale is highly relevant when discussing miniatures: a regular-sized *pithos* (a large storage jar) is normally up to 1 m, or even several metres tall, hence, can a *pithos* therefore be called a miniature when it is, for instance, 40 cm tall? Most would answer in the negative, because the small *pithoi* are measured in comparison to our bodies.²² Carl Knappett underlines that a miniature *pithos* of 14 cm height (containing 0.7 l of liquid) certainly did not

	<i>Based on height</i>	<i>Based on base diameter</i>
<i>Corinth XV.3</i>		
<i>Miniature</i>	1.2–4.5 cm	n/a
<i>Regular</i>	4.6–12.8 cm	n/a
<i>Corinth XVIII.1</i>		
<i>Miniature</i>	2.6–4.6 cm	1.8–3.7 cm
<i>Regular</i>	7.4–13.7 cm	2.6–9.0 cm
<i>Corinth VII.5</i>		
<i>Miniature</i>	1.2–3.6 cm	2.0–4.5 cm
<i>Regular</i>	3.7–7.9 cm	3.3–8.0 cm
<i>Large</i>	8.0–16.0 cm	12.1 cm

Table 1. Corinthian standards of *kotylai*. Based on the *kotylai* in Corinth VII.5, Corinth XV.3, and Corinth XVIII.1. In Corinth XV.3 the only measurement available is height. Not all entries had bases preserved, thus, the figures in the right-hand column are not based on as high a number of vessels as the example in the left-hand column.

have the same storage capacity as a regular-sized *pithos*.²³ That may be correct, but when found alongside other *pithoi* in a context that has been interpreted as a storage room, it is possible that the miniature *pithos* was used as a storage vessel for, for instance, precious wine or expensive olive oil (or perhaps even dried goods?).

Douglass Bailey, when discussing Neolithic figurines as miniatures, suggested two ways to think about miniaturization. The first is in the form of scale: he stated that a miniature was “an object that has been reduced in proportion to an original” i.e. a scaled reproduction at, for instance, the scale of 1:2 or 1:5 compared with the original. Bailey’s second method to think of miniaturization involves using the body as a reference point. Bailey argued that in this way of thinking, there is only one scale relationship: the “human body-to object” relationship. He stated that if we operate with the “human body-to object” relationship then only three significant size categories exist: life-size, smaller than life-size, and larger than life-size.²⁴ His distinctions can be applied to figurines (miniaturized figures of humans, animals and objects), but also miniature pottery (miniaturized pottery). This idea is also exemplified in marble and terracotta sculpture with examples that are larger than life-size, life-size, and also miniaturized into objects that are smaller than life-size. Bailey argues that miniaturization enlarges and thus empowers the viewer because it allows physical control over the object, and intellectually facilitates an enhanced understanding.²⁵ Bailey goes on to state that by creating a world in miniature where scale matters most and dic-

¹⁷ Corinth XV.3, 309.

¹⁸ Corinth XVIII.1, 174–175.

¹⁹ Corinth VII.5, 54–70.

²⁰ Similar analyses could be done on the miniatures published in the Athenian Agora excavation volumes: in Agora XXIX, on Hellenistic pottery from the Athenian Agora, in chapter 12 under the heading ‘Votives and other vessels for religious use’, Rotroff applies the following sub-headings for the pottery: ‘large ritual vessels’, ‘small ritual vessels’, ‘thyamiterion’, and ‘vessels from ritual pyres’. The black-glazed *skyphoi* vary in height from 4.2–8.2 cm, and are grouped with ‘small ritual vessels’. The group ‘miniature votives’, a sub-group under ‘small ritual vessels’, does not contain any *skyphoi*, but two-handled cups and *krateriskoi* are most common, see e.g. nos. 1403 and 1407, Agora XXIX, 208–209, pl. 107–108. This example concerns Hellenistic pottery, and a fuller examination can be done in the future when the revised version of Agora XII (containing the Archaic–Classical Attic pottery) will be published by K.M. Lynch (K.M. Lynch, pers. comm.).

²¹ Foxhall 2015, 1.

²² Christakis 1999, fig. 2.

²³ Knappett 2012, 93–96.

²⁴ Bailey 2005, 28–29.

²⁵ Bailey 2005, 33.



Fig. 1. *Kotylai* from Corinth. Corinth VII.5, 60, 71, nos. 128 (height: 8 cm) and 209 (height: 2.8 cm), fig. 7, pls. 10, 14.

tates all spatial relationships, miniaturization both reassures and liberates the spectator.²⁶ Additionally, the small size of the miniaturized objects increases the viewer's intimacy with the object. An object reduced in size demands closer physical scrutiny where the viewer has to be close to see the small thing properly, which will lead to an increased experience and understanding of the often elaborate details of, in this case, the miniature pottery (which is often carefully decorated).²⁷

Additionally, Knappett discussed the "frequency" of miniatures. He notes that the frequency of how often certain vessels were scaled down may vary considerably; for instance, jugs are frequently miniaturized, compared to other shapes or types that rarely appear in miniature versions, e.g. cooking pots.²⁸ This idea of "frequency" corresponds to the distribution of miniature pottery from the Greek Mainland in the Archaic and Classical periods: there is a strong predominance of cup types (especially *kotylai* and *skyphoi*) and only few examples of cooking ware miniature pottery exists.²⁹

²⁶ Bailey 2005, 33.

²⁷ Bailey 2005, 38.

²⁸ Knappett 2012, 92.

²⁹ E.g. miniature tripod cooking pots from Sparta, see Antonaccio 2005, 103; Stibbe 2000, pl. 13.6. For a few miniature *chytridia* from a spring shrine at Nemea, see Barfoed 2017a, nos. 97–98, 122, 707 (figs. 41–42),



Fig. 2. *Krateriskoi* from the *Asklepieion*, Corinth. Corinth XIV, 139, nos. 48 (height: c. 3 cm) and 49 (height: c. 2.5 cm), pl. 49.

Although it might not be possible to answer why or how the phenomenon of miniaturization became so widespread, it was an integral part of Ancient Greek society, perhaps due to equal measures of convenience (ease of transporting the objects) and fascination (the technical skill needed to make very small detailed objects that were required to invoke its regular-sized counterpart). Most relevant for this paper is that miniaturization somehow became expressed, more or less latently, in the blooming production industry of votives during the Archaic and Classical periods in Greece. During the 6th century BC the production of miniatures in Corinth increased substantially, and Corinthian miniatures are now found within a very large geographical area.³⁰ For instance, Corinthian miniature pottery is found in some of the Greek colonies or trading points in the west. Possibly, the earliest imported Greek miniature vessels in Southern Italy are the common Corinthian decorated miniature *kotyle* with bands and a zigzag pattern in the handle zone (the so-called "Conventionalizing Style") dating from the late 6th to the early 5th century BC. Fragments of this type of Corinthian miniature *kotylai* were found at Leuca, at the very tip of the Salento Heel, a possible first stop for Greek merchants and/or colonists.³¹ Corinthian miniature pottery has been imported as far away as Berezan in modern day Ukraine.³² Especially popular is the miniature *kotyle* with figured decoration, and linear decoration.³³ Other miniature shapes were also found in small number.³⁴ That Corinthian miniature pottery was exported as far as the Black Sea area, the very outskirts of the Ancient Greek world, attests

717 (fig. 55). For about 40 miniature tripod cooking pots with one handle from Tiryns, see Frickenhaus 1912, no. 206, 102, fig. 39. For Hellenistic *chytridia* from the Athenian Agora found in pyres, see Agora XXIX, 213; Rotroff 2013, 80–85. There is also a single unpublished miniature cooking-ware *kantharos* from Kombothekra, see Barfoed 2015a, no. KO9, 252, pl. 17. For shapes preferences, see Barfoed 2015a, 51–54.

³⁰ Regarding regular-sized pottery Shanks mentions that by the mid-7th century BC Corinthian pottery reached more than 100 sites around the Mediterranean, see Shanks 1995, 208. See also Morgan 1988.

³¹ Rouveret 1978, 95, no. A24, pl. 52; for the Corinthian "Conventionalizing Style," see Corinth VII.5.

³² Bukina 2010.

³³ Bukina 2010, 103–112.

³⁴ For instance, a miniature bowl no. 150, and miniature *oinochoai*, nos. 207–213, Bukina 2010, 134–135.

to it being an object of trade, or perhaps it was brought there by an individual. It may also speak of its importance, and suitability in rituals in the Greek colonies. However, it must be kept in mind that the occurrence of Corinthian pottery does not mean that Corinthians circulated the pottery, but instead suggests activity connected with Corinthians in one way or another.³⁵ Additionally, export and import of miniature pottery also occurred within Greece: in Phlius on the Peloponnese, a locally produced miniature cup, travelled both to the Argive Heraion and to Perachora, which indicates that perhaps the Phliasians dedicated their pottery outside Phlius.³⁶

The section on miniaturization and scale above summarizes previous approaches to miniaturization and miniature pottery within the field of archaeology. However, the approaches presented above do not appear sufficiently applicable to Greek miniature pottery. Nevertheless, the terminology that I present was fashioned with these ideas of miniaturization mentioned above in mind, thus suggesting that vessels can be miniature when they are about 10 cm tall or less (thus small *pithoi* could also be called miniature). Due to the nature of the miniature pottery assemblages and this group's representative publication history, the terminology presented below has therefore been called "tentative".

A tentative terminology

I suggest a terminology which reflects the distinction that exists between miniature and diminutive. The term Model Miniatures is proposed for the miniatures that are scaled-down replicas of regular-sized vessels, such as the examples of the Corinthian *kotylai* presented below. Diminutives can be models, but examples that are not modelled on regular-sized vessels exist. Below I suggest that the solid miniatures (i.e. the solid *pyxides*, *hydriai* and the example from the Argive Heraion mentioned below) could be called Token Miniatures (see Table 2).

It must be underlined that it is difficult to make a firm terminology and the cut off for the sizes of the miniatures can be debated. For some types of vessels, for examples, cups and other open shapes, the rim and base diameter are better criteria than height, but many miniature vessels have unfortunately not been published with these measurements (see e.g. Table 1).

The ideas for a tentative terminology presented here are based both on size and function.³⁷ "Tentative" is added here because optimistically when more contexts and more mini-

Term	Function	Measurement
Model Miniature	Active use	c. 5–10 cm height
Diminutive	Active use	c. 5 cm height or less
Token Miniature	Passive use	c. 10 cm height or less

Table 2. Miniature pottery terminology.

ature pottery will be published, a clearer picture of this group will emerge. Below is introduced the different types of miniature pottery, dubbed: Model Miniatures, Diminutives and Token Miniatures (Table 2).

MODEL MINIATURES

Miniature pottery is found in all shapes, most commonly scaled-down versions of regular-sized shapes, which can be called Model Miniatures (c. 5–10 cm in height, Table 2). Most popular are two-handled drinking cups such as the *kotyle*, *skyphos*, and *kantharos*, but the miniature *hydria* is also a very popular shape. In fact, all shapes could be scaled down although not all were. Some Model Miniatures are very close copies of regular-sized shapes, for instance Corinthian *kotylai*, *krateriskoi* and *hydriai*. The regular-sized *kotylai* also often carry the same decoration as seen in these examples from the North Cemetery (8 cm tall), and east of the Theatre in Corinth (2.8 cm tall, Fig. 1). *Krateriskoi* and miniature *hydriai* from Corinth are often black glazed like their regular-sized counterparts (Fig. 2). An interesting assemblage comes from the Artemis Limnatis Sanctuary at Kombothekra in Elis. It contains, for instance, published Elian black-glazed *lekythoi*, terracotta figurines and unpublished loom weights and miniature pottery.³⁸ There are a few imported miniature vessels from Corinth,³⁹ but the predominant part of the assemblage contains miniature pottery of a local or regional production.⁴⁰ The *krateriskoi* especially are remarkable, because they exist as models of regular-sized bell-, volute-, column- and Lakonian kraters.⁴¹

Other miniatures are only partly accurate models, such as a *krateriskos* with a solid tall foot from Kalydon in Aitolia.⁴² It looks like a regular scaled-down krater except for the foot, which is not just solid, but also quite tall compared to its size (Fig. 3). This type of *krateriskos* is found both at the central acropolis in Kalydon in a deposit from an Archaic shrine,

³⁵ Gimatzidis 2011, 76.

³⁶ Ekroth 2003, 36.

³⁷ Most of the ideas for this terminology sprung from the research done for my Ph.D. dissertation, see Barfoed 2015a.

³⁸ Müller 1908; Sinn 1978; 1981; Gregarek 1998; Barfoed 2015a, 75–118.

³⁹ Barfoed 2015a, 273–276, nos. KO71–KO77, pls. 41–42.

⁴⁰ Barfoed 2015a, 101–111. I am very grateful to Jürgen Schilbach for discussing the miniature pottery from Kombothekra with me and providing essential information on their fabric.

⁴¹ Barfoed 2015a, 263–266, nos. KO37–KO48, pls. 28–33.

⁴² Dietz & Stavropoulou-Gatsi 2011, nos. 282, 284.



Fig. 3. Krateriskos from Kalydon. Dietz & Stavropoulou-Gatsi 2011, 473, no. 284 (height: 2.3 cm), fig. 256.

possibly to a female deity, and in the 1920s excavations of the Artemis Laphria Sanctuary, Kalydon's main sanctuary.⁴³ Thus, this curious shape could be a local type produced in, or in the region of, Kalydon.

DIMINUTIVES

Miniature votive vessels that are smaller than Model Miniatures can be called Diminutives (0–5 cm in height, *Table 2*). Diminutives are also often modelled on full-scale vessels, and could still have held an offering whether that was liquid or solids; examples are the miniature *kotylai* and *krateriskoi* in *Figs. 1* and *2*. This type of miniature vessel is very common and is found in sanctuary, funerary, and domestic contexts throughout Greece and beyond.⁴⁴ Both Model Miniatures and Diminutives were made locally and regionally throughout Greece in the Archaic–Hellenistic period and were exported and imported within but also beyond Greece.⁴⁵

Diminutives that are not scaled-down models also exist, as Hammond also pointed out. An example is the small handmade bowls with lines on both the interior and exterior known from the Argolid.⁴⁶ This class of miniatures is rarer than the Model Miniatures. It is a curious phenomenon and one may wonder: how do you produce miniature vessels that are not modelled on a regular size? Are they created from a completely imaginary idea; or do they imitate something, an



Fig. 4. "Facsimile" miniature vessel from Monte Papalucio, Oria. D'Andria 1990, 294, no. 223 (height: 3.8 cm).

object perhaps in perishable material that is unfamiliar to us because it has not been preserved in the archaeological record?

TOKEN MINIATURES

Token Miniatures are distinguished from Model Miniatures and Diminutives by being solid and their size varies within the spectrum of miniature vessels (below 10 cm in height). Token Miniatures are the only category of miniature vessels that can truly be called "non-functional" given that they are solid, and could not have held any liquids, foodstuff, or other offerings.

At Eutresis in Boeotia, solid black-glazed miniature *hydriai* are found which must indicate a specific ritual meaning, since the solidity of the shape did not allow them to contain anything.⁴⁷ Another type of miniature which was dubbed "facsimile" are from Oria, a possible Demeter sanctuary at Monte Papalucio, in South Italy. It is a small odd cup, with almost no room for contents, but sometimes with a very small lug handle, and it is difficult to understand its function (*Fig. 4*).⁴⁸

An additional example of Token Miniature vessels comes from the Artemis Hemera Sanctuary at Lousoi where locally produced miniature *pyxides* with attached lids that cannot be removed were found (the so-called "Closed Pyxides", *Fig. 5*).⁴⁹ Christa Schauer stated that since the lid of the vessels cannot be removed their function must be ritual and not practical.⁵⁰ Some examples are pierced through at the top and could perhaps have been hung in trees or in the sanctuary. Folkert van

⁴³ The author is currently in the process of studying the pottery and terracotta figurines from the 1920–1930s excavations of the Artemis Laphria Sanctuary in Kalydon for publication. For the different cults in Kalydon, see Barfoed 2017b.

⁴⁴ See Barfoed 2015a for examples and case studies of miniature pottery.

⁴⁵ Most miniatures were made in fineware clay, although examples exist of miniatures in other fabrics, see the cooking ware examples above. Chemical analyses are not commonly done on miniature pottery but have been done on 20 miniature *hydriai* from Eretria, revealing a variety of fabric groups, see Charalambidou 2017, 136.

⁴⁶ Ekrøth 2003, 36, pl. 5.1; Frickenhaus 1912, 99, nos. 187–189, fig. 31.

⁴⁷ A loose date of late 6th to the early 3rd century BC was provided for these vessels, see Goldman 1931, 262, fig. 319.

⁴⁸ D'Andria 1990, 294.

⁴⁹ Schauer 2001, 158. The pottery from Lousoi has not been published in a volume of its own yet, but so far, some pottery has been published in article form, see e.g. Mitsopoulos-Leon 2014; Schauer 2001. I am very grateful to Christa Schauer for providing additional information about the closed *pyxides*.

⁵⁰ Schauer 2001, 156.

Straten discussed the placement and arrangement of votive offerings and mentioned that votive reliefs and statues often were placed up high, either on pedestals, nailed to the wall, or even hung from trees.⁵¹ The miniature bowls from the Argolid mentioned above often have two holes at the rim, possibly in order for them to be suspended as Gunnar Ekroth also has suggested.⁵² Evidence from iconographical representations on vase paintings supports this idea,⁵³ and it is possible that the Closed *Pyxides*, the Argive bowls, and other miniatures were used in this way. There is also a single example of a Token Miniature from the Argive Heraion publications: a two-handled vessel without an opening at the top, to which Joseph C. Hoppin, who published the pottery, could not find any parallel.⁵⁴

ACTIVE AND PASSIVE USE

Miniature pottery is often in publications described as “non-functional”. It is assumed that the small size of the miniatures means that they could not have been used for anything other than for dedication *per se*.⁵⁵ However, it is plausible that both Model Miniatures and Diminutives could have served other functions than purely dedicatory ones. An additional distinction, when addressing the functionality of miniature pottery, should be between a “passive” and an “active” use (Table 2). These two aspects can be understood in the following manner:

“Active use” is perhaps the more obvious of the two: the miniature (Model Miniature or Diminutive) could contain an offering, such as liquid for a “mini” libation, or a piece of wool, hair, grain, or other foodstuff, and was as such in this way used as an implement—an active tool—in the ritual performance. Very few examples of this practice exist: in the rural shrine at San Nicola di Albanella near Paestum miniature carbonized seeds of the bitter vetch plant were found inside miniature vases that were placed around the interior boundary of the enclosure.⁵⁶ Another example, albeit less explicit, comes from the Demeter and Kore Sanctuary at Acrocorinth where miniature unpainted *kalathoi* have been found in a sacrificial pit (Pit B). The *kalathoi* were found mixed with the charred bones of young pigs, cooking ware pottery and terracotta figurines.⁵⁷ The square 1 metre-deep sacrificial pit was discovered in a corner of a room with tiles placed on top of it to seal it off.



Fig. 5. Closed Pyxides from Lousoi dating to the late 8th–7th centuries BC. Schauer 2001, 156–157, nos. K 2/97 (height 10.4 cm) and K 14/96 (height: 9.8 cm), pl. 18.1.

It is a possibility that some of the miniature *kalathoi* were used actively in the sacrificial rituals that took place here.⁵⁸

The “passive” use relates to the solid Token Miniatures, which most often do not seem to have had a function other than as a votive. Certainly, if they were solid they could not contain any offerings. This kind of dedication of Token Miniatures probably had a specific meaning that is difficult to decipher, but the dedication of the vessels was, in itself, a “symbolic” action, and must have been an important part of the ritual practice. Perhaps the Token Miniature was simply used as a “give and go” dedication.⁵⁹ I would argue that the “active” use was more “practical minded” compared to the “passive” use, which was more “symbolic”, but this distinction is difficult, if not impossible, to prove. Both “passive” and “active” uses must have had equally important significance. Miniature pottery was used for a reason and therefore it is important to study find contexts, so that our understanding of past ritual practices can be improved.

Miniature pottery in situ

Having speculated that miniature pottery was used actively in the rituals, there are fortunately some preserved examples of miniature pottery found *in situ*, which can cast further light on past practices. In the Sanctuary of Apollo at Abai near Kalapodi in Phokis, the excavators found a stone votive bench on which votive offerings were found *in situ* covered with ash from a ritual fire; the objects were a small bronze *kouros*

⁵¹ van Straten 2000, 192; Patera & Polignac 2009, 355; White 2007, 270–271.

⁵² Ekroth 2003, 36.

⁵³ Karoglou 2010, 14, figs. 4–10.

⁵⁴ AH II, 101, fig. 41.

⁵⁵ E.g. Perachora II, 290; Foley 1988, 76; Sparkes 1991, 78.

⁵⁶ This plant could feed both animals and humans: Cipriani 1989, 25.

⁵⁷ Stroud 1965, 8–10; Bookidis *et al.* 1999, 42–43.

⁵⁸ Stroud 1965, 10.

⁵⁹ Stissi 2003, 77.

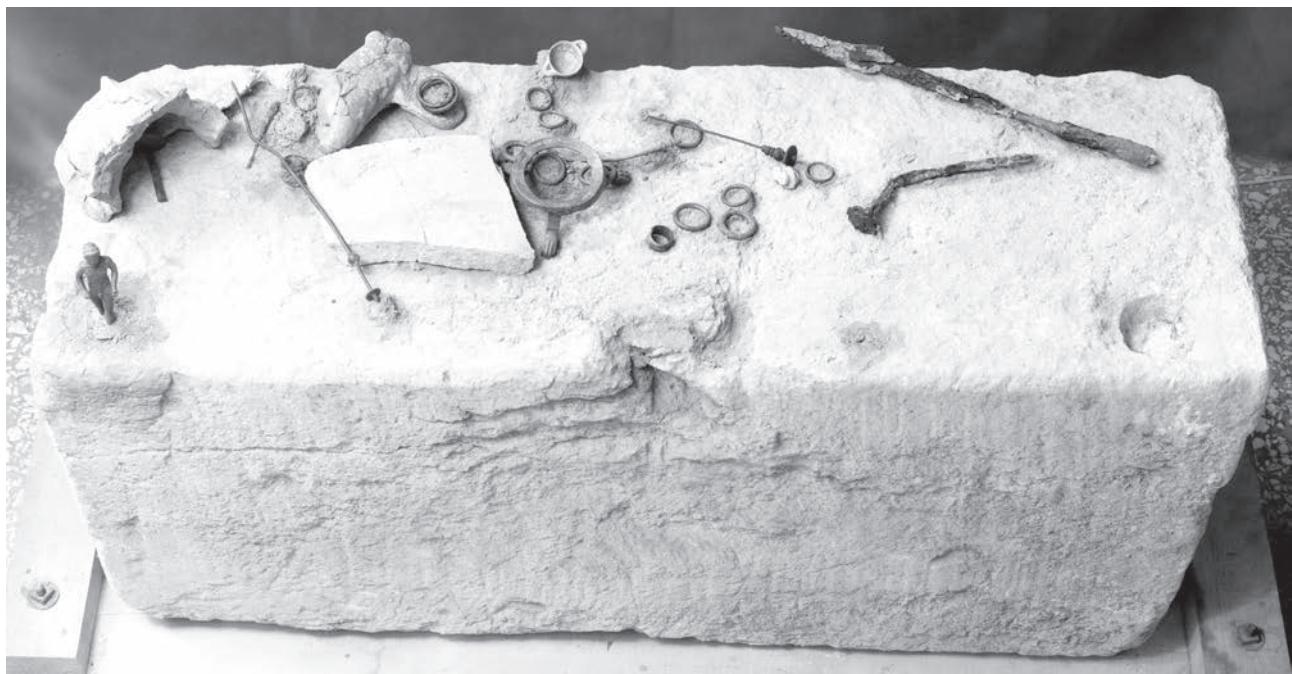


Fig. 6. Stone bench from Kalapodi with votives in situ. The miniature *kotyle* is 2.0 cm tall. Copyright D-DAI-ATH-1978-0722. Photo: G. Hellner.

statuette, a terracotta mask, a terracotta rooster, a Corinthian miniature *kotyle* (Diminutive)⁶⁰, bronze pins, and other metal objects (Fig. 6).⁶¹ A small silver *obol*, minted by Phokis and dating to 457–446 BC was found in the ashes, providing a possible date for the deposition of the objects on the bench.⁶² The situation at Kalapodi is an excellent example of the importance of miniature pottery, where it was clearly used in rituals, either for display or as an active implement in the rituals at the altar. In some cases, votive offerings are found on or close to altars within sanctuaries, for instance, as seen in the Sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia, where votives, including Corinthian miniature *kotylai*, are found at, around, and in a blackish layer surrounding the Artemis Altar in the south-eastern part of the sanctuary.⁶³ Similarly, at Nemea, two miniature pots, a *kotyle*, and a *krateriskos*, were found in layers alongside the Great Altar of Zeus.⁶⁴ Another example comes from Arkadia at the Mt Lykaion Sanctuary to Zeus, where various kinds of miniature

pottery has been found in the layers of the ash altar.⁶⁵ From what has been published so far, more than 700 fragments of miniature pottery have been found, and the shapes are cups, *krateriskoi*, jugs, bowls, and oil-vessels.⁶⁶ Five thousand miniature vessels of different kinds have been reported from the now-submerged Apollo Temple at Halieis. They were found in the innermost chamber of the temple, interpreted as a storage area.⁶⁷ Perhaps these miniatures were stored there for later use on the nearby Altar of Apollo.⁶⁸

These contexts of use show that miniature votives were used in rituals at the altar proper in the Archaic and Classical periods, and a thorough search through relevant contexts is likely to reveal more examples.⁶⁹ It should be said that examples like these are not the most common; all kinds of miniature pottery are more often found in votive deposits or mixed in with other pottery assemblages.

⁶⁰ Braun 1996, 264, no. 210, pl. 57.

⁶¹ Felsch *et al.* 1980.

⁶² Felsch *et al.* 1980, 90.

⁶³ Heiden 2012. Joachim Heiden from the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut is in the process of publishing the Artemis Altar, J. Heiden, pers. comm. Until then, further classification of the miniature pottery must wait.

⁶⁴ Both miniatures, P 54 and P 55, are said to be *skyphoi*, but one is a typical Corinthian pattern *kotyle* and the other is a black-glazed miniature krater, see Nemea I, 26, fig. 35. Parallels to the Corinthian miniature *kotyle* provide a date at the late 6th–early 5th century BC. The miniatures

are not published with measurements and the photo in Fig. 35 does not have a scale, but they appear to belong to the class of Diminutives.

⁶⁵ Romano & Voyatzis 2014.

⁶⁶ Leslie Hammond is currently working on publishing the miniature pottery: L. Hammond, pers. comm.

⁶⁷ Jameson 1974, 117.

⁶⁸ The Apollo Temple and its finds remain to be fully published.

⁶⁹ Not included here is the altar structure excavated in 2006 at Azoria, Crete. The excavations in Azoria have been published in preliminary reports so far, see e.g. Stefanakis *et al.* 2007; Haggis *et al.* 2011.

Some interpretations concerning ritual practice

OFFERINGS IN SETS

An overlooked aspect within the topic of dedication is the idea that small votives could have been purchased and dedicated in sets or groups.⁷⁰ One example of such practice is known from *obeloi*, iron spits, which were used as cult implements for roasting meat; often, they were dedicated in sets of six.⁷¹ Another example is Lakonian and Messenian terracotta plaques, some according to Gina Salapata depicted a triad of worshippers, and could have been placed next to plaques depicting a seated hero, in that way creating a scene where worshippers and deity appear together.⁷² She suggests that it might have been done in order to enhance the worth or symbolic value of the offering.⁷³ Additionally, it has been suggested by Kyriaki Karoglou, who published Attic *pinakes* (votive terracotta plaques), that the display of *pinakes* in close proximity with cult statues and altars enhanced their effectiveness.⁷⁴ Knappett argued that when figurines functioned as part of an assemblage, perhaps together with miniature vessels and/or a temple model, the objects would create a shrine “microcosm”; in this way, the figurines (and other votives) contributed to the evocation of the deity.⁷⁵

A few examples of what can be called Multiple Cups, Cup Tower or Stacked Cups found in sanctuary contexts might reflect the developed idea of this type of thinking.⁷⁶ In Eretria, on the island of Samos, at Naukratis, and at Mt Hymettos in Attica a specific type of cup is found which represents a stack of cups, but is in fact made in one piece.⁷⁷ From the Heraion at Samos comes both five- and six-storeyed *skyphoi* dating to the second and third quarters of the 7th century BC.⁷⁸ It is clear that this type of special vase required much skill to manufac-



Fig. 7. “Cup Tower” from Samos. Walter 1957, fig. 70.2 (height: 14.5 cm). Copyright D-DAI-ATH-Samos-HW-101-8. Photo: E. Homann-Wedekind.

ture (Fig. 7).⁷⁹ However, it might have been less costly to manufacture the Multiple Cup, compared to buying several/many Miniature/Diminutive cups.⁸⁰ Perhaps the Multiple Cup type implied that people dedicated in sets and perhaps those sets consisted of stacked cups. It is hard to understand whether the dedication of votives in sets intensified the meaning of the dedication or request made, or whether it was simply believed that more was better. Perhaps it was also related to how much you thought you had received from the gods already. Aegistus in the *Odyssey* made many offerings, both animal sacrifices and votive gifts, because of what he had achieved.⁸¹ There must have been a certain flexibility in the manner and/or tradition related to dedicatory practices, which is difficult to understand today. Quantity may have mattered and was expressed either by dedicating in sets, Multiple Cups, or by making dedications in large number, of, for instance, miniature pottery.

⁷⁰ Salapata 2015; 2011; 2002.

⁷¹ Salapata 2011, 3.

⁷² Salapata 2015, 186.

⁷³ Salapata 2015, 189.

⁷⁴ Karoglou 2010, 63.

⁷⁵ Knappett 2017, 174. A wonderful example of a possible temple model with miniature vessels inside excavated in 1982 comes from Sellada, Santorini. It has an inscription in the local dialect mentioning both the maker and owner, is painted elaborately, and dates to the third quarter of the 6th century BC. The model and its miniatures still remain to be fully published: Zafeiropoulos 1982; Schattner 1990, 89–91, 213–217, pl. 24. A similar Neolithic arrangement or “microcosm” is found in Ovcharovo in north-eastern Bulgaria: Bailey 2005, 26–28.

⁷⁶ Brijder 1997, 4. Some examples have also been found in funerary and domestic contexts in Attica, see Simantoni-Bournia 2011, 974–976.

⁷⁷ Eretria XIV, 34, no. V30, pl. 102; Walter 1957, 48, fig. 70.2; Boardman 1999, 132, fig. 153; Langdon 1976, no. 273, pl. 22; Simantoni-Bournia 2011. For a catalogue and discussion of multi-storeyed vases in the Geometric period, see Simantoni-Bournia 2011.

⁷⁸ Walter 1957, 48; Vierneisel 1961, 25.

⁷⁹ Brijder 1997, 4–5.

⁸⁰ Salapata 2011, 3; Stissi 2003, 78.

⁸¹ “And many thigh-pieces he burned upon the holy altars of the gods, and many offerings he hung up, woven stuffs and gold, since he had accomplished a mighty deed beyond all his heart had hoped ...”, Hom. *Od.* 3.273–3.275.



Fig. 8. Corinthian miniature hydriae from Nemea. The Rawson Deposit, inv. nos. P1057 (height: 4.0 cm) and P1000 (height: 3.6 cm). These hydriae are unpublished, but for the same types, see Barfoed 2017a, 691–692, nos. 54–55, fig. 22. See also Barfoed 2009, 139, 141, nos. 130, 138.

“MINI” LIBATIONS

Miniature vases did not necessarily keep the original function of the regular-sized vessel they duplicated but could have been used in many other ways (Model Miniatures and Diminutives). Miniature cups could have held liquid for a “mini” dedication or libation, but miniature *hydriae* did not necessarily contain water.⁸² The small opening of the miniature *hydriae* made them very suitable for holding precious liquids, such as perfumed oil. This suggestion seems especially valid in contexts where oil vessels are absent, for instance, in an Archaic votive deposit from Nemea (Fig. 8). The deposit contained more than 1,000 vessels, but no *aryballois*, *alabastra*, or other oil-vessels were found: however 77 miniature *hydriae* were present.⁸³ Miniature jugs could similarly have served the same function with their small opening.⁸⁴ Karim Arafat mentioned that the handmade miniature plainware jugs from Isthmia were not so small “as to be wholly impractical” and could have been used for dipping into large vessels, for instance, kraters.⁸⁵ Arafat also stated that it is possible that they were used in dining activities, not rituals.⁸⁶ Conversely, it might be possible that the small jugs were used in a combination of ritual and

feasting activities, which took place in the sanctuary. A possibility that is not commonly discussed, perhaps because it is very hard to prove, is that it could be that the miniature vessel was used for ritual dining first, and later in the vessel’s life cycle changed function to become used in the rituals instead.

THYMIATERIA

It is also possible that miniature pottery could have been used as lamps or *thymiateria* for scented wood in the rituals (Model Miniatures and Diminutives). The “facsimile” miniature cups mentioned above from Monte Papalucio indicates such ritual usage. Out of the six published examples, two showed signs of burning.⁸⁷ The idea of using miniatures as *thymiateria* finds parallels both at Nemea and Asine in the north-east Peloponnese. Curiously cut flaring *kalathiskoi* are found both at the Opheltes Shrine and in a deposit from a spring shrine outside the temenos of the Nemean Zeus Sanctuary; one example shows traces of burning.⁸⁸ Similarly, at the Acropolis of Asine, 70 *kalathiskoi* with deliberately cut walls were found, and at Tiryns more than 20 examples were found (Fig. 9).⁸⁹

⁸² Barfoed 2015b, 174. A large amount of locally produced miniature *hydriae* and miniature high-neck jugs are found in Eretria dating from the Geometric through the Archaic period, which could have had similar functions in rituals: Eretria XIV, 48–63, pls. 66–99.

⁸³ Barfoed 2017a.

⁸⁴ Barfoed 2015a, fig. 2.

⁸⁵ Arafat 2003, 28.

⁸⁶ Arafat 2003, 28.

⁸⁷ D’Andria 1990, nos. 222–223, 294. These examples date to 4th–mid 3rd century BC.

⁸⁸ Bravo 2006, 263–264, no. 1598, figs. 179–180 (Bravo’s full publication of the Opheltes Shrine has very recently been published as Nemea IV); Barfoed 2017a, 686, no. 39, fig. 18.

⁸⁹ For the two Archaic–Classical deposits in Asine, see Wells 2002, nos. 51–57, 121–122, figs. 24–25. For Tiryns, the miniatures were tentatively dated to the 6th–5th centuries BC, see Frickenhaus 1912, 95–97, nos. 172, 174, 177, 179, figs. 29–30. Perforated *kalathiskoi* are also found at

The flaring opening of these small vessels and the preserved traces of burning on some vessels (Nemea and Orië) could indicate that they were used as *thymiatheria* holding incense at the altar, or on a table/shelf within a shrine. *Kalathiskoi* are miniature models of the *kalathos*, a basket used for storing raw wool, and wool processed into yarn.⁹⁰ Inventory lists from the Artemis Brauron Sanctuary at the Acropolis in Athens recorded numerous *kalathiskoi* filled with wool.⁹¹ Perhaps both the perforated and non-perforated *kalathiskoi* were used for dedicating a small amount of wool. When wool was displayed in the perforated *kalathiskoi* it would have been visible through the perforations. It may be a possibility in some instances that after placing the perforated *kalathiskoi* containing wool on the altar, the wool inside was set on fire and in this manner sent a message to the deity.⁹² This would explain the traces of burning on the *kalathiskoi* mentioned above.

COMMEMORATIVE RITUALS

Just as statues, grave *stelai*, or a specific ritual could be commemorative, especially in the funerary sphere, so could miniature pottery when representing regular pottery in various types of rituals.⁹³ Miniature pottery as commemorative dedications can be recognized as a ritual to honour, or remember a myth, or to epitomize a ritual action in regular size.⁹⁴ In the Demeter and Kore Sanctuary at Acrocorinth there is an example of commemorative miniature dedications as argued by Pemberton: the so-called Miniature Offering Tray.⁹⁵ They are small plates, some empty and others with small *kalathiskoi* (or other vessels) inside, and this shape group is the second-largest group found in this sanctuary. The tray could have held grains or other foodstuffs, and the containers inside the tray, despite their sometimes very small size, could have held small amounts of liquids or foodstuff. However, sometimes the tray and its containers are so small that it could not have held anything, and could be considered non-functional, thus, some



Fig. 9. Thymiateria from Nemea and Asine. Barfoed 2017a, 686, no. 39 (preserved height: 3.6 cm), fig. 18; Wells 2002, 119, nos. 51–52 (height for both: 4.0 cm), fig. 24.

miniature offering trays (but not all) can be defined as Token Miniatures. A unique example of a handmade terracotta figurine comes from Phlius and depicts a person carrying a tray on its head with various fruit offerings inside.⁹⁶ Additionally, processions of women carrying trays on figure-decorated pottery might support the interpretation of the miniature offering trays being commemorative offerings.⁹⁷

Ekroth has discussed an interesting shape, which might also have had a commemorative function.⁹⁸ It is a miniature stemmed *krateriskos* decorated with female protomes dating to the 6th century BC, which clearly was inspired by the famous large metal cauldrons found in many sanctuaries, especially in the 7th century BC.⁹⁹ This specific shape (belonging to either the class of Diminutives or Token Miniatures) appears in a limited range of sites at the Peloponnese, especially at and around the Argive Heraion, and might have had a specific Argive meaning and function, and it is possible, as Ekroth suggested, that a single workshop produced this rare type of miniature shape perhaps located in the Berbati Valley.¹⁰⁰ The fact that the shape because of the protomes was difficult to drink from supports the interpretation that this specific shape served a symbolic, or commemorative function evoking ritual dining in sanctuaries during the Archaic period in the north-eastern Peloponnese.¹⁰¹

Conclusions

The 7th century BC marks a considerable change in the use of miniature pottery. From this period onwards, miniatures were dedicated on a larger scale in Greek sanctuaries, and the introduction of miniature pottery as votive offering was the most substantial change in the material culture of the early Greek

the Demeter and Kore Sanctuary at Acrocorinth, see Corinth XVIII.1, 170–171, nos. 520–524, pl. 51; Stroud 1965, 16, pl. 4c, 4e.

⁹⁰ Trinkl 2014, 190–192.

⁹¹ ThesCRA V, 2.b., Cult Instruments no. 715 (Schipporeit); Trinkl 2014, 194.

⁹² Naiden 2013, 111–113.

⁹³ Kurtz & Boardman 1971; Morris 1989; Connelly 2007, 93; Alcock 2002, 146–152.

⁹⁴ Barfoed 2015a, 56–59.

⁹⁵ Corinth XVIII.7. Another miniature shape that can also be called commemorative is the *liknon*, a miniature winnowing fan carrying foodstuff, also from the Demeter and Kore Sanctuary at Acrocorinth: Brumfield 1997.

⁹⁶ Biers 1971, 419, no. 82, pl. 93.

⁹⁷ Corinth XVIII.7, 127–130.

⁹⁸ Ekroth 2013.

⁹⁹ Ekroth likewise mentions a miniature *dinos* with bovine head protomes: Ekroth 2013, 71–73, fig. 7.

¹⁰⁰ Ekroth 2013, 73–74.

¹⁰¹ Ekroth 2013, 75.

sanctuaries during the Archaic period.¹⁰² It has been suggested that this change was caused by the fact that the rights of dedicating in the sanctuaries had been handed down from the aristocracy to the common people, and that the sanctuaries thus experienced a growth in clientele.¹⁰³ The production of miniature votives increases greatly during this period (e.g. in Corinth) in order to satisfy the greater demand for votives, and these small objects were imported and exported to sites throughout and beyond Greece.¹⁰⁴ The abundant miniature pottery from the Archaic period onwards thus reflects an substantial participation in the rituals.¹⁰⁵ That the gods accepted miniature vessels and figurines and the suitability of miniatures can be deduced by miniature pottery's popularity and widespread presence.

Miniature pottery is an important group of archaeological material that provides important contributions to our understanding of ancient Greek dedicatory practices and ritual behaviour. It is possible to tentatively conclude that a miniature vessel does not have to be a scaled-down model in order to be a miniature, and Model Miniatures, Diminutives, and Token Miniatures had specific functions in various rituals, whether it was a practical function serving as an implement, or a symbolic function, acting as a commemorative offering.

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¹⁰² Gimatzidis 2011, 81; Foley 1988, 69.

¹⁰³ Morris 1989; 1997.

¹⁰⁴ Gimatzidis 2011, 86.

¹⁰⁵ Gimatzidis 2011, 85–86. Pottery votives appear to peak between the frequency of dedicating small bronzes (pre-Archaic period) and terra-cotta figurines (Classical period): Stissi 2003, 79.

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