

# A Stone Plank Figure from Politiko-Troullia, Cyprus: Potential Implications for Inferring Bronze Age Communal Behavior

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*Plank figures are hallmark anthropomorphic depictions that illuminate Bronze Age society on Cyprus. The excavation of a rare limestone plank figure from a public space at Politiko-Troullia is interpreted in conjunction with spatial patterning of ceramic plank figures, plant macrofossils, animal bones, ground stone, spindle whorls, and metallurgical evidence to infer communal behavior at this Early/Middle Cypriot-period settlement. The Politiko-Troullia stone plank figure is significant as the sole example from a fully documented excavated context and as part of a growing body of evidence for the creation of social identities in emerging complex society on Cyprus.*

## Bronze Age Cyprus and Politiko-Troullia

Early and Middle Cypriot communities on Cyprus exemplify pre-urban agrarian society during the contemporaneous rise, abandonment, and rebirth of Bronze Age town life on the eastern Mediterranean littoral. Excavations at Politiko-Troullia, in the heart of Cyprus, explore a community of constituent households engaged in arboriculture, mixed animal hunting and husbandry, and copper metallurgy in an increasingly anthropogenic landscape of interacting but apparently autonomous communities (Falconer and Fall 2013). Several lines of evidence, capped by a very unusual stone plank figure unearthed in 2011, illuminate a multifaceted expression of communal behavior and group social identity on Bronze Age Cyprus.

Politiko-Troullia lies in the northern foothills of the Troodos Mountains just south of the fertile Mesaoria Plain and adjacent to the copper-bearing pillow lavas of

the Troodos (Fig. 1). The village, buried in sediments up to 3.5 m deep, sits on an alluvial terrace above the Pediaios River to the east and at the foot of the heavily terraced slopes of Politiko-Koloikremmos to the south. Material culture (potsherds, ground stone, and ceramic roof tiles) spreads over ca. 20 ha across the fields of Troullia and adjacent slopes of Koloikremmos. Concentrated domestic refuse, especially Red Polished Ware ceramics, accompanied by clear signatures of buried architecture revealed by soil resistivity survey, indicate a Bronze Age settlement covering at least 2 ha (Falconer et al. 2005). Widespread surface ceramics associated with extensive agricultural terracing on the slopes of Koloikremmos suggest intensive premodern management of the local agricultural landscape (Fall et al. 2012; Galletti et al. 2013).

Excavation of the eastern portion of Politiko-Troullia ("Troullia East") revealed a room block occupied during a single stratigraphic phase (Phase E1; Fig. 2), with an exterior workspace characterized by crucible fragments, copper slag, copper tongs, and a carved limestone metallurgical mold (Fall et al. 2008). This evidence, in conjunction with high charcoal densities that reflect intensive fuel wood consumption, indicates a household-scale metallurgical workshop (Falconer and Fall 2013). The architecture excavated in western Politiko-Troullia ("Troullia West") features two rectangular courtyards surrounded by partially exposed rooms on the north and west, and a 2 m wide alley to the south (Falconer et al. 2012; Falconer and Fall 2013).

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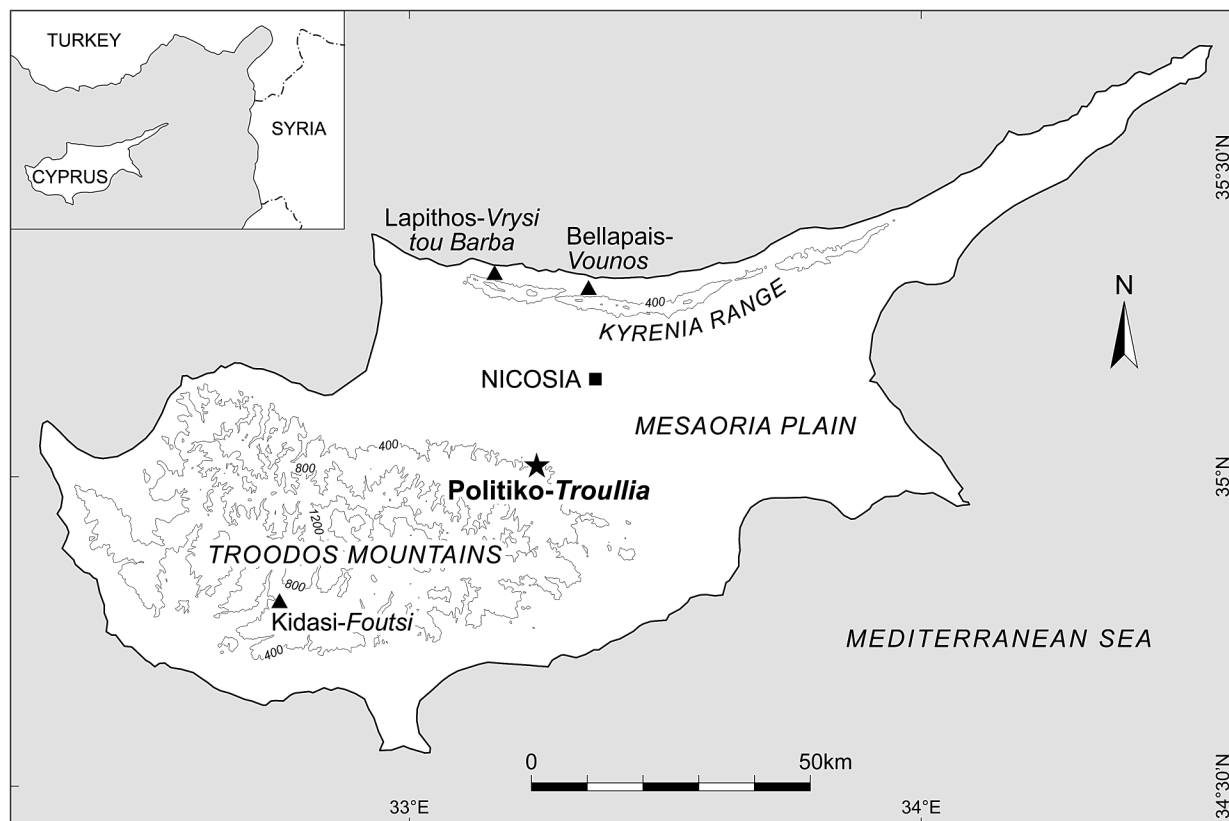


Fig. 1. Map showing the location of Politiko-Troullia in the foothills of the Troodos Mountains and the cemetery sites on Cyprus to which stone plank figures are attributed.

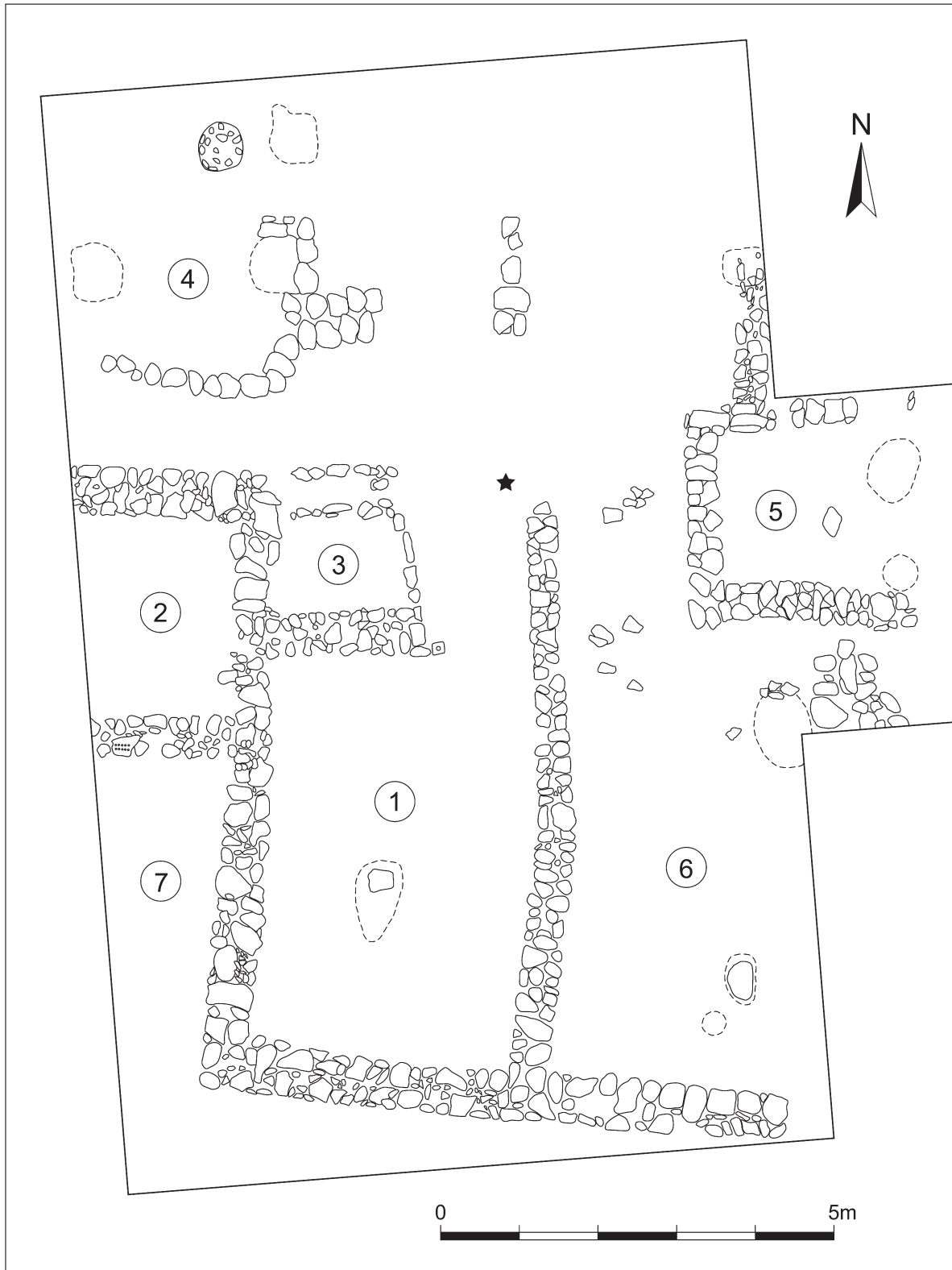
Politiko-Troullia West reveals five phases of architecture stratified in more than 3.0 m of associated sediments (Phases W1–W5, from latest to earliest) (Falconer et al. 2012; Falconer and Fall 2013). The latest two phases (W1 and W2) have been exposed over the entire excavated extent of *Troullia* West (nearly 300 m<sup>2</sup>; Falconer and Fall 2013: fig. 8). Excavations between 2009 and 2013 revealed several portions of Phase W3 and W4 architecture, often directly under Phase W2 walls, over an area of ca. 250 m<sup>2</sup> (Fig. 3). The Phase W3 and W4 courtyards are slightly larger than their successors (the Phase W2 western courtyard walls were moved in about 1 m to the east), but otherwise the architectural plan of two rectangular courtyards bounded by an alley on the south retains its configuration and bounds communal space through time.

The Politiko-Troullia ceramic assemblage is dominated by Red Polished II and III wares, which are characteristic of the prehistoric Bronze Age of Cyprus (especially EC II–MC III; see Coleman et al. 1996; Franke and Webb 2006). Among major ceramic ware types, the sherd counts from the earliest phases at *Troullia* (W4 and W5) include approximately 75% Red Polished Ware,

24% slipped and polished wares (Black Polished, Black Slip, Red Slip), and less than 1% White Painted Ware. By Phase W1, these values shift to approximately 89%, 10%, and 1%, respectively. The Politiko-Troullia East assemblage includes substantially more White Painted Ware (8%), consistent with an MC II phase assignment, slightly later than the latest occupation in *Troullia* West. Nine AMS radiocarbon ages from *Troullia* East and West have calibrated 95% confidence intervals spanning ca. 2198–1771 B.C., which do not differ significantly (Table 1). Thus, despite their subtle ceramic contrasts, the occupations of *Troullia* East (Phase E1) and *Troullia* West (Phases W2 and W1) should be viewed as roughly contemporaneous. The underlying Phase W3–W5 occupations in Politiko-Troullia West may be slightly earlier, in the late third millennium B.C.

### Interpretive Context

Our interpretation of group social behaviors at Politiko-Troullia stems from several lines of evidence. The villagers of *Troullia* clearly engaged in arboriculture and



**Fig. 2.** Plan view of Phase E1 stone architecture in Politiko-Troullia East. Star (★) indicates the location of a White Painted Ware cradle-board figure near entries to Interior Space 1 (with door socket, central posthole, probably roofed) and Metallurgical Workspace 6.

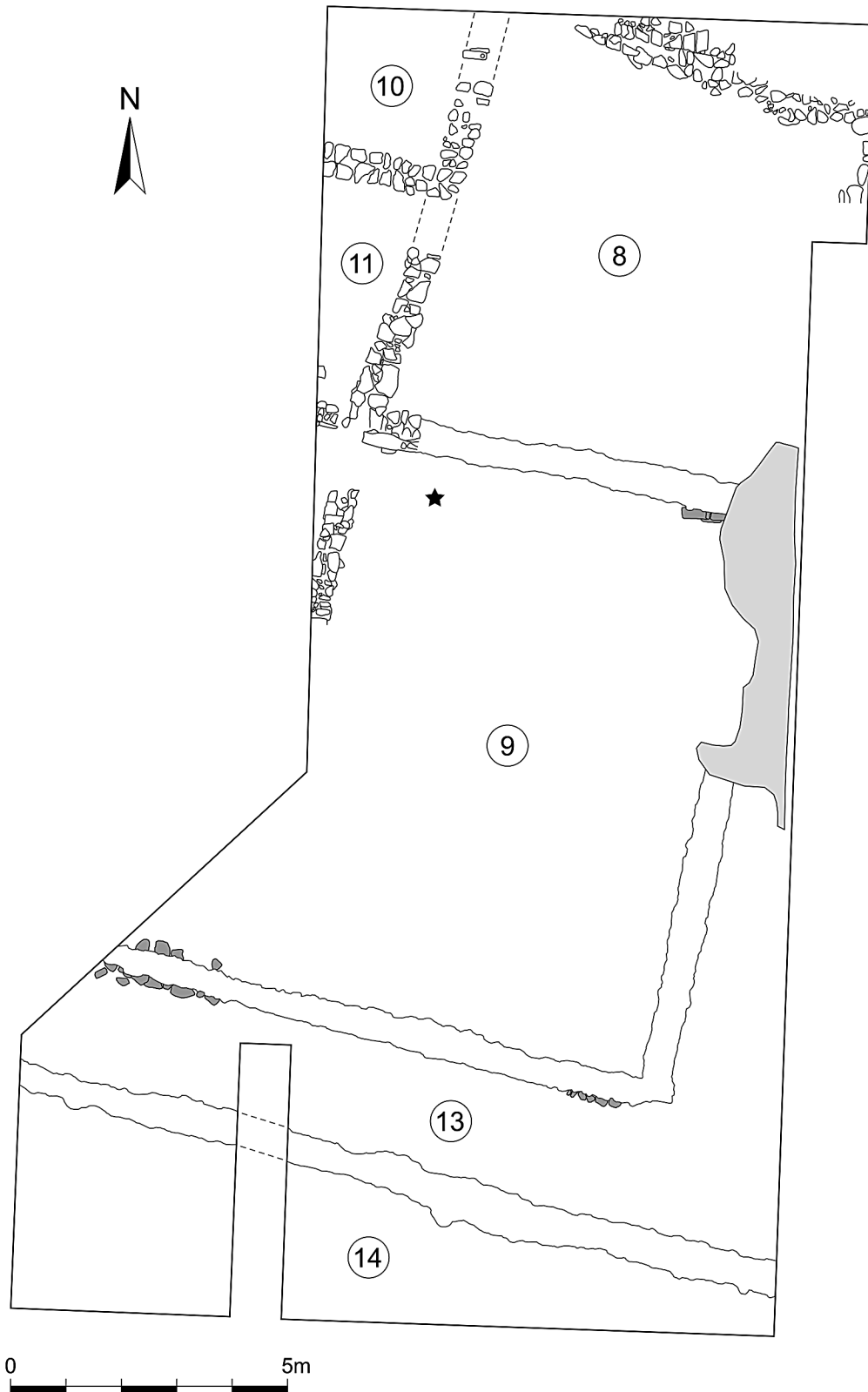


Fig. 3. Plan view of Phase W3 and W4 stone architecture in Politiko-Troullia West. Star (★) indicates the location of the stone plank figure near the entry to the southern courtyard (9). Phase W3–W4 wall stones shown where visible in plan view; solid wall lines indicate Phase W2 walls that directly overlie Phase W3–W4 walls; dashed lines indicate W3 walls obscured by later sediments. The alley (13), southern courtyard (9), and northern courtyard (8) are major enclosed spaces. Shaded area indicates exposed bedrock cut back to accommodate the southern courtyard.



TABLE 1. Chronology for Politiko-Troullia Based on AMS Ages

Lab. No.	Locus	Phase	Material	$\delta^{13}\text{C}$ (‰)	$^{14}\text{C}$ Age Yr B.P.	Age cal B.C. 95%*	Midpoint cal B.C.
AA-101939	A.012.041	E1	<i>Pinus</i> charcoal	-22.5	3562 ± 44	2025-1771	1898
AA-94182	B.013.56	E1	<i>Pinus</i> charcoal	-22.2	3600 ± 37	2121-1831	1976
AA-101940	AF.006.018	E1	<i>Pinus</i> charcoal	-21.5	3661 ± 44	2193-1919	2056
AA-94183	W.006.67	W1	<i>Olea</i> seed	-21.8	3665 ± 38	2191-1940	2066
AA-101943	U.024.154	W2	Seeds	-22.5	3622 ± 44	2134-1885	2010
AA-94184	W.008.76	W2	<i>Olea</i> seed	-21.4	3630 ± 38	2132-1893	2013
AA-101942	W.016.179	W2	4 <i>Olea</i> seeds	-21.8	3632 ± 45	2135-1891	2013
AA-94185	X.016.95	W2	<i>Olea</i> seed	-24.2	3688 ± 38	2198-1959	2079
AA-101941	T.019.176	W3	Seeds	-21.5	3650 ± 44	2140-1902	2021

\*cal BC (95.4%; OxCal 4.2).

fuel wood consumption, as reflected by patterns of charcoal and seeds recovered through flotation (see Klinge and Fall 2010). The major plant taxa include olive (*Olea europea*), grape (*Vitis vinifera*), fig (*Ficus carica*), and pistachio (*Pistacia* sp.). The *Troullia* West alley assemblages reflect household trash deposition, and wood and dung fuel burning, based on the site's highest seed densities and seed-to-charcoal ratios (Falconer and Fall 2013: table 2). Similar trash-filled alleys are reported from *Alambra-Mouttes*, *Sotira-Kaminoudhia*, and *Marki-Alonia* (Coleman et al. 1996; Swiny et al. 2003; Frankel and Webb 2006), indicating that the practice of refuse disposal within an actively inhabited settlement was common during this period. *Troullia* East revealed the site's highest charcoal densities and the lowest seed-to-charcoal ratios, reflecting a preference for burning of wood from nearby forests (e.g., for metallurgy; Forbes 1993; Bamberger and Wincierzt 1990). Animal exploitation at Politiko-*Troullia* emphasized herding of domesticated sheep (*Ovis aries*), goat (*Capra hircus*), cattle (*Bos taurus*), and pig (*Sus scrofa*), and exploitation of Mesopotamian fallow deer (*Dama dama mesopotamica*). Relatively sparse bone deposition in *Troullia* East and the *Troullia* West northern courtyard attests to sheep/goat consumption. However, in both the *Troullia* West alley and southern courtyard, animal bones are particularly abundant and feature the highest frequencies of deer found anywhere at Politiko-*Troullia*. In association with the island's enduring forests, Cypriots hunted Mesopotamian fallow deer "in a controlled, sustainable way within a system of management," culling young males in the same manner as domestic sheep (Croft 2002: 175). The evidence for deer consumption at *Troullia* accords well with the characteristics of communal feasting, based on its distinct spatial concentration, specific food source, and conspicuous patterns of consumption and disposal (Crabtree 1990; Dietler 2001: 89; Steel 2002; 2004).

The abundance of deer bones is paralleled by a concentrated deposition of spindle whorls (20 of 35 total whorls at *Troullia*) and distinct ground stone pattern-

ing in the southern courtyard, both with complementary behavioral implications (Falconer and Fall 2013). Spindle whorls from Bronze Age Cyprus are notable for their intricate incised, often lime-filled ornamentation (Crewe 1998: 15). Affixed on a thin shaft, or spindle, they enable rotation by hand to twist fibers into thread or yarn. At the same time, the Cypriot Bronze Age marked the introduction of the warp-weighted loom (evidenced by the appearance of loom weights), leading to the proposition that spaces with looms often became focal points of community activity (Crewe 1998: 37-38).

Analysis of ground stone deposition patterns similarly suggests areas of group behavior, based on ground stone portability ratios (the number of smaller "handstones" as against the number of larger non-portable tools) (Falconer and Fall 2013). Assemblages with large ground stone objects abandoned as de facto refuse (with correspondingly low portability ratios) often indicate group workspaces (Brooks 1993; Byrd 1994; Webb 2000; Wright 2000; Frankel and Webb 2006: 201; Kadowaki 2008). The *Troullia* West alley generates a very high ratio (17.55), which reflects an abundance of discarded handstones and reinforces an inference of household refuse disposal. *Troullia* East produces a low portability ratio for its exterior workshop (6.27), probably reflecting a focal point for ore processing. The ground stone assemblage in the *Troullia* West southern courtyard reveals a value (6.25) comparable to that of the metallurgical workspace, with a similar implication for situated group behavior (Falconer and Fall 2013).

### Plank Figures at Politiko-*Troullia*

The most striking element of the spatial patterning centered on the southern courtyard pertains to the iconic plank figures of Bronze Age Cyprus. In association with the evidence of floral remains, deer bones, ground stone, and spindle whorls, these figures reinforce the inference of communal behavior at Politiko-*Troullia*.



Fig. 4. White Painted Ware cradleboard figure depicting a human torso and left arm affixed to a flat ceramic plank, excavated from Area B, Locus 014, Bag 74. (a) Front view: the striped painted decoration on the figure may represent clothing. (b) Rear view, with horizontally striped painted decoration similar to that on the figure's front. Scale indicates 2 cm. Photo by Sidney Rempel.

Plank figures (or “figurines”) are characteristic of Early and Middle Cypriot artifact assemblages (Knox 2012: chart 6) and are distinguished by their primarily two-dimensional stylized depictions of the human form and their manufacture from the same wares used for ceramic vessels. They stand in contrast to the cruciform figures of the preceding Chalcolithic period, the absence of anthropomorphic figures or other depictions of the human form in EC I–II (Knox 2012: 127), and the more rounded, less-schematized earring or flathead figures of the Late Bronze Age (Knox 2012: 175–88), which resemble the “Astarte” figures of the Levant (Morris 1985: 122, 166). “Plank figure” terminology refers to a characteristically flat, usually rectangular form, though scholars distinguish several variations within this basic definition (cf. Morris 1985: 142–44; Mogelonsky 1988: 32–36; a Campo 1994: 100–106; Knox 2012: 146–50, fig. 44).

The Politiko-*Troullia* ceramic plank figures are fragmentary and adhere to a standard anthropomorphic form, with a neckless rectangular head on a slightly larger rectangular body and minimal or no appendages (see Falconer and Fall 2013: fig. 11; a Campo 1994: 100–106). As with plank figures generally, the more expressive *Troullia* examples have minimalist facial features and white-filled

incised decoration that may indicate hair, jewelry, clothing, tattoos, or body paint (a Campo 1994: 61). Two plank figures merit special mention, based on their divergence from this regularity. First, the lone ceramic plank figure from *Troullia* East is a White Painted Ware bas-relief with extended arms (Figs. 4, 5; Fall et al. 2008: fig. 21:1), which probably exemplifies a cradleboard figure (Morris 1985: 152, fig. 240; Bergoffen 2009; Knox 2012: 146–49). This figure is noteworthy because of the rarity of this form (Mogelonsky [1988: figs. 177–90] documents only 14 among >400 Early and Middle Bronze anthropomorphic figures) and because of its location near the household doorway and metallurgical workspace in *Troullia* East (see Fig. 2).

Second, a plank figure recovered in 2011 from the southern courtyard in Politiko-*Troullia* West has typically minimalistic features, but stands in contrast to the other *Troullia* ceramic plank figurines by virtue of its greater height (38 cm) and its carved limestone manufacture (Figs. 6, 7). This figure lay face down, with no immediately associated artifacts, on an earthen surface near a possible entryway in the northwest corner of the Phase W4 southern courtyard (see Fig. 3). This courtyard location, as well as the faunal and material culture

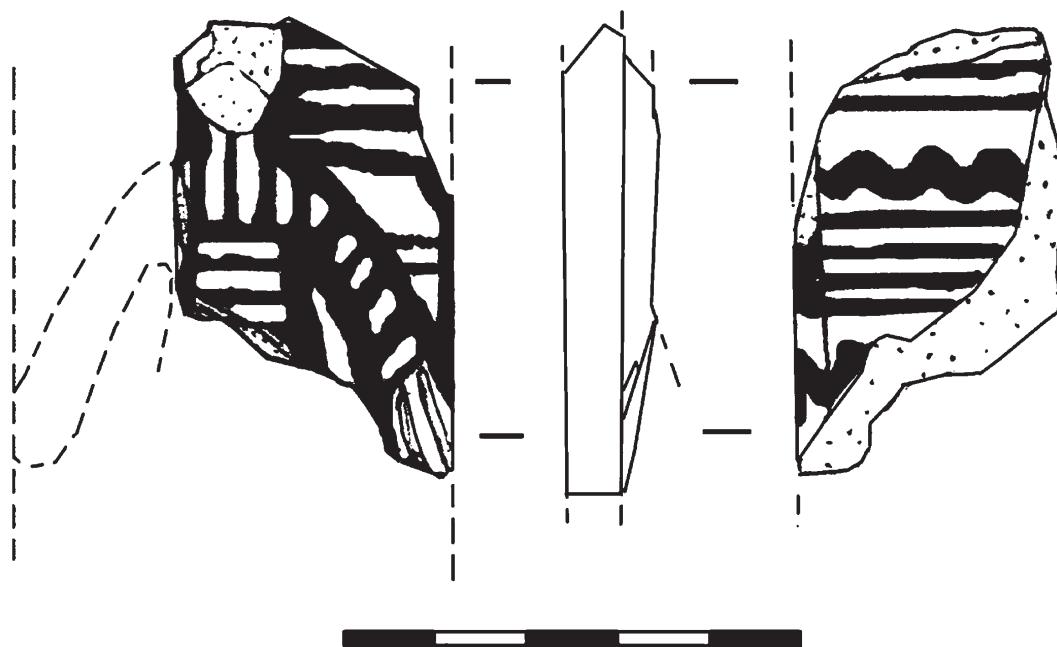


Fig. 5. Drawing of White Painted Ware cradleboard figure from Politiko-*Troullia*, showing front, side, and back views. Scale indicates 5 cm. Drawing by Mara Horowitz.

assemblages in Phase W4, are suggestive of the patterns of communal behavior discussed above. Knox (2012: 251) calculates that Cypriot stone plank figures (including the examples in the Zintilis Collection with questionable provenience) average about 53 cm in height, while the mean height of ceramic figures is much shorter at 22 cm. Although the ceramic examples are incomplete, the *Troullia* stone and ceramic figures generally follow this size dichotomy. The ceramic figurines, if intact, would likely range in height from approximately 15 to 20 cm (assuming a width-to-height ratio consistent with other published ceramic plank figures).

The slightly irregular, but generally flat backside of this figure is formed by the natural surface of a limestone slab (Figs. 6b, 7). This slab has been shaped with two slightly asymmetrical appendages representing arms or shoulders. The front surface (Figs. 6a, 7) has been scraped flat, as indicated by longitudinal striations. A series of horizontal incised lines may form a pubic triangle about 10 cm from the bottom of the figure (although this is not paralleled on other stone plank figures), and punctate marks near the top may indicate eyes.

Prior to the excavation of the Politiko-*Troullia* limestone figure, only 13 stone plank figures had been reported from Cyprus, of which only 4 are associated with established excavation contexts. Two of these came from Tomb 2 at Bellapais-*Vounous* (Dikaios 1940: 5, 137, pl. 32a). Two more were recovered from Tomb 322D at

Lapithos-*Vrysi tou Barba* and subsequently were reported stolen from the excavation storehouse (Merrillees 1994: 39; Lubsen-Admiraal 2009: 160; Knox 2012: 139, map 4). Of the remaining nine unprovenienced stone plank figures, two are held in private collections, and the remaining seven are part of the Zintilis Collection (Lubsen-Admiraal 1994) housed in the Cycladic Museum in Athens. The Zintilis figures are purported to have come from a Bronze Age cemetery at Kidasi-*Foutsis* in the Paphos district of Cyprus. If this geographical attribution is correct, they may represent late examples of a long tradition of stone figure production in southwestern Cyprus dating back to the early Chalcolithic (Goring 1991; 2003; 2006; Knox 2012: 139). However, there are no other recorded finds of plank figures, either in ceramic or stone, from the Paphos district, and only one known example of a ceramic plank figurine from the Limassol district (Limassol Town, Katholiki quarter, Tomb II) (Morris 1985: fig. 215; Karageorghis 1991: 85, pl. 49:1). Thus, there is very little corroborating evidence for a plank figure tradition in southwestern Cyprus. Stone fragments on the surface of the looted cemetery at Kidasi-*Foutsis* have been identified as possible plank figures by Lubsen-Admiraal (1994: 33–34, pls. 10–11), but they lack appendages and bear little stylistic resemblance to the plank figures in the Zintilis Collection. Therefore, the circumstances surrounding all 13 previously reported stone figures leave the Politiko-*Troullia* example as the





Fig. 6. Stone plank figure from Politiko-Troullia, excavated from Area T, Locus 031, Bag 236. (a) Front view showing flattened front surface. Note the abbreviated appendages and horizontal striations toward the bottom. (b) Rear view, showing the unworked back surface. Scale indicates 10 cm.

only fully documented stone plank figure excavated from a Bronze Age settlement on Cyprus.

Among the plank figure types defined by Morris (1985), the “Shoulder Figure” type represents the head and neck together as a relatively small rectangle atop a broader rectangular body, sometimes with small protruding ears (Morris 1985: 137, figs. 176–85). The excavation plans from Lapithos suggest a Shoulder Figure type of plank figurine (Gjerstad et al. 1934: 145, fig. 57.2, pl. 12b), and the two limestone figures from *Vounous* accord with this type but lack ear protrusions (Dikaios 1940: pl. 32a). Among the other stone plank figures, six of the seven figures in the Zintilis Collection conform to the “Slab Figure” type (Morris 1985: 142), as do the other two published unprovenienced figures (Morris 1985: 143, figs. 216–17). Slab Figure types have “arm stumps,” but their head, neck, and body are equal in width, with no differentiation of shoulders. The stone plank figure from Politiko-Troullia is clearly of this type, though more roughly shaped and without the squared-off corners of the Zintilis examples.

Since many early excavations on Cyprus concentrated on tombs, most ceramic plank figures were interpreted

originally as elements in rich burial assemblages, often attributed to emerging social and political elites (Orphanides 1990; Begg 1991: 34–43; Webb 1992: 90; Talalay and Cullen 2002: 190; Bolger 2003: 108; Keswani 2005: 359–62; but cf. Frankel and Webb 2006: 157; Knox 2012: 210–11). Interestingly, the pronounced uniformity of Bronze Age anthropomorphic figures, in contrast to their greater individuality in the Chalcolithic (Goring 1991; 2003; 2006), may reflect the importance of expressing collective group identity amid the increasing social complexity of the Bronze Age (a Campo 1994: 164–72; Frankel 1997; Talalay and Cullen 2002; Bolger 2003: 108; Steel 2013; cf. Knapp and Meskell 1997; Knapp 2009; Bordin 2009: 82–83; Knox 2012: 211–16).

### Social Implications of the Politiko-Troullia Plank Figure

The Politiko-Troullia figure, as the first example of a stone plank figure excavated from a domestic context, opens a variety of interpretive avenues. Based on their recovery from earlier excavations of Bronze Age tombs,



**Fig. 7.** Drawing of the stone plank figure from Politiko-*Troullia*, the front surface on the left and the back surface on the right. Note the longitudinal scrape marks, horizontal striations, and two faint punctate marks (possibly eyes?) on the front surface.

plank figures have been interpreted as religious idols, fertility charms, or substitute entombment figures (e.g., Morris 1985: 166; a Campo 1994: 162; Frankel and Webb 1996: 157; Bolger 1996: 369–72). Reassessment of current data on Bronze Age figurines, however, shows that ceramic plank figures are comparably frequent in mortuary and settlement contexts on Cyprus (Frankel and Webb 2006: 157; Knox 2012: 150). The evidence from Politiko-*Troullia* reinforces the inference that these plank figures denote communal activities and provided a material expression of group identity, or individual identity expressed within the context of group practice.

The discovery of the Politiko-*Troullia* stone plank figure in conjunction with the recovery of ceramic plank figure fragments from the settlements at Alambra-*Mouttes* (Coleman et al. 1996: 202–3), Marki-*Alonia* (Frankel and Webb 2006: 155–57), Ambelikou-*Aletri* (Frankel and Webb 1996: 188), and Politiko-*Troullia* (Falconer and Fall 2013) signals that the social lives of these emblematic objects extended beyond the realm of grave goods. Knox (2012: 150) observes that plank figure midsections often mark the bottom of their decoration and their plane of

breakage, suggesting that they may have stood upright, with their unadorned bottom portions dug into the ground in spaces like the southern courtyard at Politiko-*Troullia*. The locations of the *Troullia* stone plank figure and cradleboard figure hint at their positioning near entries to settings for communal activities. The Bronze Age pottery workshop at Ambelikou-*Aletri* provides another example of a plank figure located at the entry to a group activity area, in this case a pottery workshop (Frankel 2013; Webb and Frankel 2013). An ornate Red Polished Ware jug (no. 22) from Lapithos Tomb 892 provides further corroborating evidence for the social implications of communal behavior. On the shoulder opposite the handle of the jug, two nearly identical miniature plank figures are seated on a bench flanked by a miniature jug and a miniature conical stemmed bowl (Karageorghis 1991: 135, pl. 94:1–3; Morris 1985: fig. 505). Scenic compositions on red polished ceramics are known to depict daily activities, such as pottery making, plowing, child rearing, and bread making (Morris 1985: 264; Karageorghis 1991: 125). This arrangement of vessels and plank figures in conjunction with furnishings is unknown from mortuary contexts, and

so may be reasonably interpreted as depicting the display and use of plank figures within a non-funerary setting for socially significant communal gatherings (for a related discussion based on the *Vounous* Bowl, see Steel 2013).

Plank figures convey particularly intriguing behavioral implications based on their anthropomorphic form, sexual ambiguity, and variable ornamentation. Although some have small, mounded breasts, the gender of most ceramic plank figures is unclear (Talalay and Cullen 2002; Knox 2012: 32–38, 153). All known stone plank figures lack breasts and only hint at gender otherwise. For example, two figures in the Zintilis Collection have groups of vertical incisions on the “belly” (Lubsen-Admiraal 1994). The Politiko-*Troullia* figure’s incised “pubic triangle” may be a variation of these vertical marks, or perhaps a precursor of the pubic triangle found on some Late Bronze Age ceramic figures. On most of the Late Bronze examples, the triangle is outlined by a double line and filled with a geometric pattern possibly representing a garment (e.g., see images in Morris 1985: 167–74; Karageorghis 1991). A curious set of very rounded Middle or Late Bronze Age Plain White Ware figures have plank-figure-like faces and breasts and do clearly display female genitalia in the form of a vertically elongated hole or incised line surrounded with dots or circles (Morris 1985: 160, figs. 243–358). This very overt representation of female reproductive anatomy would seem to reflect an association with fertility and pregnancy (Bolger 1996; cf. Knox 2012: 32–38). However, these very limited hints of gender and the association of plank figures with group endeavors ranging from hunting to weaving to metallurgy encourage inferences of collective rather than gender-specific activities. This patterning stands in contrast to the supposedly gender-defined, possibly ritual behaviors inferred from the *Vounous* Bowl figurines, for example (e.g., Bolger 2003: 40; Steel 2013).

Among their potentially diverse social meanings, stone plank figures, like the one recovered at *Troullia*, also may represent varied identities over the course of their use lives. For example, painted decoration, evidence for which is noted on five of the seven Zintilis figures (Lubsen-Admiraal 1994), could be removed, renewed, or repainted with different motifs. Likewise, a stone figure could be clothed in fabric or other perishable materials, or adorned with jewelry, as is suggested by the incised decoration of ceramic plank figures. The transformational capacity of stone plank figures could allow a single figure to convey multiple social identities, representing different individuals or different phases or events in an individual’s life (cf. Hendrix 2003 for a similar discussion of painted decoration on Cycladic figurines).

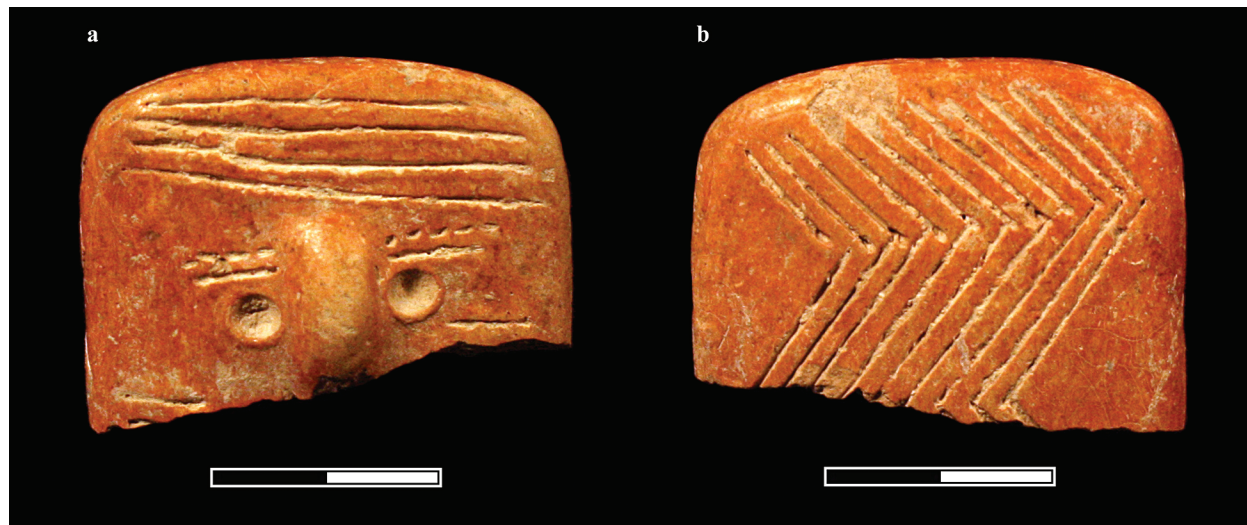
Based on their integration with other patterns of material and ecological evidence, and in light of their

symbolic richness but material uniformity, plank figures provide revealing indications of social group identities. In her comprehensive study of Bronze Age figurines, Knox (2012: 152) argues that the relatively modest number of known plank figures (slightly more than 200) for the 350 years of EC III–MC III reduces the likelihood that these were personal emblems. The potential for plank figures to convey group identity, however, is apparent when considering the spatial patterning of associated evidence at Politiko-*Troullia*. Here plant macrofossil evidence documents the persistence of nearby forests and forest resources through the pre-urban Middle Bronze Age on Cyprus, while many contemporaneous Near Eastern landscapes appear already deforested (Klinge and Fall 2010). At *Troullia*, both fuel wood and Mesopotamian fallow deer were consumed abundantly in locations of group behavior (e.g., communal feasting), as indicated, for example, by patterns of concentrated bone deposition and ground stone portability ratios.

Further indications of social gathering in the southern courtyard stem from pronounced concentrations of fragmentary spindle whorls and ceramic plank figures, now capped by the discovery of an intact stone plank figure, remarkable as an unparalleled example excavated from a clearly public domestic setting. Communal production of textiles is signaled by the aggregation of 65% of Politiko-*Troullia*’s 35 spindle whorls in this well-defined architectural space (Falconer and Fall 2013: table 5). In patterns that parallel those at Politiko-*Troullia*, ceramic plank figures correlate clearly with metal tools in the tomb assemblages of Lapithos-*Vrysi tou Barba* and may be linked to textile manufacture and copper metallurgy on Cyprus generally (Knox 2012: 152–53). These convergent spatial patterns drawn from a variety of sites reinforce the interpretation of the *Troullia*, East workspace and *Troullia* West southern courtyard as focal points for industrial and social group behavior. As one intriguing aspect of spatial patterning, these two settings produced particularly striking anthropomorphic markers: Politiko-*Troullia*’s limestone plank figure and White Painted Ware cradleboard figure.

The spindle whorls at Politiko-*Troullia*, like those from Marki-*Alonia* (Frankel and Webb 2006: 156), for example, display highly variable incised decoration and appear in a range of coarse ceramic fabrics. In contrast, and with clear implications for group identity, ceramic plank figures are strikingly uniform in their composition and depiction of the human form. As cases in point, all of the plank figures from Marki-*Alonia* (n = 10) and Alambra-*Mouttes* (n = 7), and 35 of 36 plank figure fragments from Politiko-*Troullia* appear in highly burnished Red Polished Ware (Coleman et al. 1996: 202–5; Frankel and Webb 2006: 155; Falconer and Fall 2013: table 5), the





**Fig. 8.** Red Polished Ware ceramic plank figure from Politiko-Troullia, excavated from Area Z, Locus 034, Bag 92. (a) Front view, showing horizontal incisions depicting hair, eyelashes, and marks under the eyes; dashed incisions depicting eyebrows; and round punctate eyes. (b) Rear view, showing vertical herringbone incised decoration. Scale indicates 2 cm. Photo by Sidney Rempel.



**Fig. 9.** Red Polished Ware ceramic plank figure from Politiko-Troullia, excavated from Area U, Locus 012, Bag 505. (a) Front view, showing horizontal and diagonal incisions possibly depicting hair and hairband, eyelashes, and marks under eyes; dashed incisions depicting eyebrows; and round punctate eyes surrounded by small indentations. (b) Rear view, showing vertical herringbone incised decoration. Scale indicates 2 cm. Photo by Sidney Rempel.

dominant ceramic ware of the Early/Middle Cypriot era. In a further indication of uniform iconography, facial features are depicted very similarly on ceramic plank figures across Cyprus. For example, the two best-preserved ceramic plank figures from Politiko-Troullia (Figs. 8, 9) share nearly identical linear incisions for hair and eyelashes, dashed incisions for eyebrows, simple punctate eyes, protuberant noses, and enigmatic incised dashes

under their eyes. As Frankel and Webb note for similarly uniform examples from Marki-Alonia, these plank figures “express a single concept” (2006: 156), a concept most consistent with group identity.

In overview, the evidence from Politiko-Troullia, featuring interrelated patterns of deer consumption, ground stone tool deposition, and evidence of communal weaving, reflect group activity, to which concentrations of



plank figures (both ceramic and stone) add material symbols of group identity (Falconer and Fall 2013). These lines of inference hold the intriguing potential to reflect an “ideology of textile production” in Bronze Age Cyprus (Knox 2012: 201). As a central thread in this tapestry, the

Politiko-*Troullia* stone plank figure, in conjunction with convergent evidence from *Troullia* and elsewhere, illuminates the larger potential for inference of communal behavior and the production of group social identities in Bronze Age Cypriot society.

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