

ARCHITECTURAL TERRACOTTA MODELS AND THE RITUAL COMMUNICATION OF THE LOCAL CREATION OF TRADITION

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Abstract

The paper focuses on a special form of local ritual identity closely connected to notions of “tradition”. This is understood as fluid construct that is directly linked to social and political dimensions and has a specific connection to the past. It determines which rites, performances and accompanying items and devices are regarded as traditional. These create a specific form of local identity through the construction of local collective memory to lend historical depth to one’s own cultural identity and to ground it therein. Corresponding rituals serve as anchors tied to a real or imagined past and giving the practicing actors a feeling of belonging, solidarity, and connectedness. I will discuss these dynamics of the formation and transformation of a local ritual identity within Iron Age contexts in Sicily, focusing on a specific group of ritual objects: architectural terracotta models. These depictions of small houses or huts were deposited within funerary and cultic contexts either as freestanding models or miniaturized replicas attached to bowls. The paper will ask for their symbolic meaning and value embedded in ritual discourses, followed by a discussion of the specific function of hut models within cultic performances. An examination of the find contexts and chronological sequences shall then illustrate their metaphysical value as objectifications of local tradition and history.



BETWEEN LOCAL TRADITION AND URBAN INNOVATION
Ritual Space and Religious Dynamics in Ancient Sicily

OCTOBER 21-22,
2022

WORKSHOP

Initiated by The Group of Young Academics
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