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Places of art, traces of fire. A contextual approach to anthropomorphic figurines in the Pavlovian

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4 First analysis

4.1 Introduction

After the selection of a corpus of anthropomorphic figurines, this chapter presents a first analysis of this collection.

The aim is to order and summarize the basic descriptive information and look for patterning in these data. The investigation is guided by the comparison of the two Pavlovian sites, Dolní Věstonice I and Pavlov I on the one hand, and by the trajectory from the Aurignacian through the Pavlovian to the Willendorf-Kostienkian, on the other hand.

The analysis concerns the properties of the objects that have been used in the descriptions: material, size and fragmentation. A cursory look at the descriptions shows that many figurines are ‘ceramic’, small-sized and usually fragmentary. This chapter also provides an analysis of the shape of the figurines. The head-part is analysed because of the visor-like head of the ‘Venus’ of Dolní Věstonice I (number 12), the realistic faces of the ‘Mona Lisa’ (number 2) and the figurine from the Brno II burial, and the presence of conical heads in Pavlov I. The middle body part of the figurines is investigated because there seem to be differences in design in this respect. Finally, the sexual characteristics of the figurines are analysed because they play such a prominent role in the history of interpretations of these figurines.

4.2 Material, size and fragmentation

4.2.1 MATERIAL

Pavlovian anthropomorphic figurines are known as ‘ceramics’ and ivory carvings. Both are present at Dolní Věstonice I and Pavlov I. ‘Ceramics’ dominate the collections from both sites and are in actual fact very characteristic of the Pavlovian. In terms of the materials, both collections are similar. No ‘ceramic’ anthropomorphic figurines are known from the Aurignacian or the Willendorf-Kostienkian. On the other hand, stone is not used as a raw material for figurines in the Pavlovian. In other words, there seems to be a temporal factor in the use of materials.

4.2.2 SIZE

The range of sizes for the Pavlovian figurines is considerable, though generally small-sized objects dominate (figure 4.1). Some have maximal dimensions smaller than 2 cm, while the largest exceeds 10 cm. The collection of Pavlov I is relatively

Table 4.1 Material of anthropomorphic figurines in the Pavlovian.

	Dolní Věstonice I	Pavlov I
‘Ceramics’	12	8
Ivory	3	1

Table 4.2 Summary of the materials of anthropomorphic figurines.

	Aurignacian	Pavlovian	Willendorf-Kostienkian
‘Ceramics’	–	20	–
Ivory	–	4	2
Stone	1	–	2

small-sized and forms the lower range from smaller than 2 cm up to 5 cm. The Dolní Věstonice I figurines are larger than 2 cm up to more than 10 cm. Most Pavlovian figurines are sized between 3 and 5 cm. Though numbers are small, the Aurignacian and Willendorf-Kostienkian figurines are generally larger (larger than 4 cm) (figure 4.2). The Brno II – figure is exceptionally large with a minimal size of 24 cm.

4.2.3 FRAGMENTATION

In both the Pavlovian sites, the majority of figurines are preserved as fragments. Just five figurines are more or less complete (21%). The situation is notably different for the Aurignacian and Willendorf-Kostienkian figurines. These figurines are not fragmented to the same degree as the

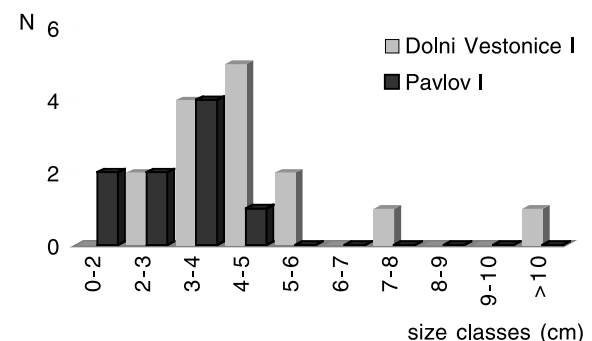


Fig. 4.1. Histogram of size distribution for the Pavlovian.

Pavlovian ones. Though two of them (Galgenberg – Stratzing/ Krems-Rehberg, Petřkovice – Landek) are found in a fragmented state, these fragments could be refitted to make more or less complete figurines. The Moravany – Podkovica figurine only lacks the head, although whether a head was ever present is not clear.

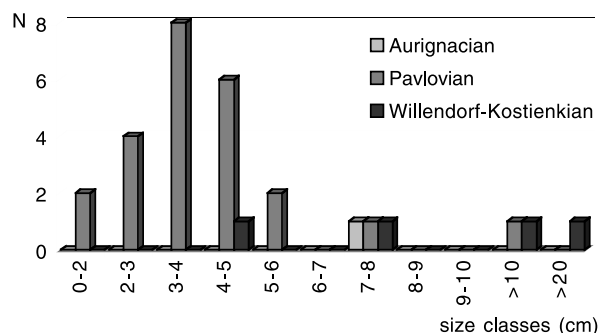


Fig. 4.2. Histogram of size distribution of anthropomorphic figurines.

Table 4.3 Fragmentation of Pavlovian figurines.

	Dolní Věstonice I	Pavlov I
Complete	4	1
Fragment	11	8

Table 4.4 Fragmentation of anthropomorphic figurines.

	Aurignacian	Pavlovian	Willendorf-Kostienkian
Complete	1	5	2
Fragment	–	19	2

4.2.4 MATERIAL AND FRAGMENTATION

Combining the material types and the fragmentation gives a clear picture. Almost all ‘ceramic’ figurines are fragmented in both Pavlov I and Dolní Věstonice I. Even the ‘Venus of Dolní Věstonice’, the only ‘ceramic’ figurine described as complete, is actually missing the lower end of the legs and consists of two fragments. In contrast, all ivory objects from all periods are preserved in fairly complete states. All stone figurines are preserved in fairly complete states as well. It is clear that the material type is the main factor determining the degree of fragmentation.

Table 4.5 Fragmentation by type of material in Dolní Věstonice I.

	Complete	Fragment
‘Ceramics’	1	11
Ivory	3	–

Table 4.6 Fragmentation by type of material in Pavlov I.

	Complete	Fragment
‘Ceramics’	–	8
Ivory	1	–

Table 4.7 Summary of the fragmentation by material type.

	Material	Complete	Fragment
Aurignacian	Stone	1	–
Pavlovian	‘Ceramics’	1	19
	Ivory	4	–
Willendorf-Kostienkian	Stone	1	1
	Ivory	1	1

4.2.5 MATERIAL AND SIZE

The degree of fragmentation also explains that the ‘ceramic’ objects are generally smaller than the stone and ivory ones (figure 4.3). However, there is also a difference between the size distributions of Dolní Věstonice I and Pavlov I (figure 4.4). The Pavlov I ‘ceramics’ dominate in the lower range (1-4 cm), whereas the Dolní Věstonice I figurines also occur in the large size classes. The peak for both collections lies in the size class between 3 and 4 cm.

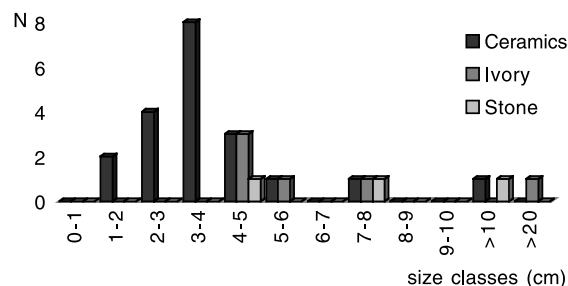


Fig. 4.3. Histogram of size distribution by material type.

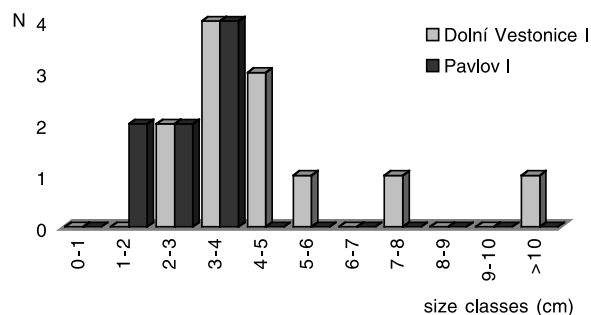


Fig. 4.4. Histogram of size distribution of ‘ceramics’.

This difference can be explained by three factors: 1. the larger degree of fragmentation in Pavlov I (cf. the upper part of the legs (number 24)), 2. the generally smaller size of the figurines in Pavlov I (compare for example the seated woman from Pavlov I with the female body of the uppermost part of Dolní Věstonice I) and 3. the more complete recovery of ‘ceramic’ fragments due to the sieving of sediment in Pavlov I.

4.3 Heads and faces

The most vulnerable parts of figurines is often the narrow necks supporting the heads. In the light of the fragmentation of the figurines, we can expect that the heads are frequently broken off. There are only seven heads represented in my selection of anthropomorphic figurines. Only four of these are dated to the Pavlovian. Only four of the heads are attached or associated with bodies. The five biconic or mushroom ‘heads’ from Pavlov I, though not anthropomorphic, are important here as well. All of them are broken off. The total collection of ‘heads’ (excluding animal heads) amounts to twelve. The most striking feature of the ‘heads’ is the presence or absence of human facial features such as eyes, nose and mouth. A presentation of these data is provided in tables 4.8 to 4.10 and figure 4.5.

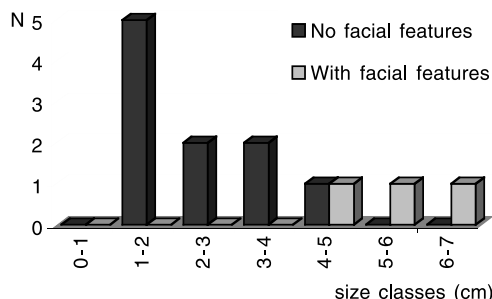


Fig. 4.5. Histogram of size distribution of ‘heads’ with and without human facial features.

Human facial features are only present on ivory heads. The ‘Mona Lisa’ from Dolní Věstonice I-lower zone (number 2) has eyes, nose, mouth, cheeks and chin. On the ivory face from Dolní Věstonice I-upper part (number 13), the eyes, nose, mouth and chin are marked. The head of the Brno II figure is the third example with human facial characteristics. Heads are rare on ‘ceramic’ anthropomorphic figurines. Only the ‘Venus of Dolní Věstonice’ has a head attached to the body. Absolon gives an illustrative description:

The head and neck flow together, the facial features are totally absent. Nose, mouth, ears are all omitted; just the position of the eyes is bilaterally indicated by oblique strokes, reminiscent of medieval visors. Hair is absent, instead four

oval holes have been incised into the top of the bald head, lying symmetrically in a rectangle (Absolon 1938b, 86).

The four small holes incised into the top of the head are a peculiar characteristic that has also been observed on a head from the uppermost part of Dolní Věstonice I. (number 15). This similarity is an important argument for including this head in the group of anthropomorphic figurines. The five spherical, biconical and mushroom shapes from Pavlov I also come to mind. Human facial features are totally absent, also from the ivory biconical shape. These ‘heads’ are all broken off from unknown, unidentified bodies. It is striking that no human facial features are known in fired, silt loam, not even simple faces with only eyes and a mouth¹. Human facial features are also absent on the heads of the Aurignacian figurine and the ‘Venus of Willendorf’. Angeli (1989, 45) notes that ‘there is not even a sign of any feature whatsoever (eyes, nose, mouth, ears, chin)’ on the face of the Willendorf figurine. Granulated bands cover almost the entire head leaving a small, downward oriented, ‘empty’ face. The difference between heads with and without human facial features is crucial with respect to the criteria applied to select anthropomorphic figurines, because these criteria are based on the similarity with a human being’s biological features. The difference is also translated in the raw material and size of the ‘heads’ as well as the association with a body. Human facial features are only indicated on ivory heads. The heads with human facial features are larger than the other ‘heads’. ‘Heads’ without human facial features are associated with anthropomorphic bodies or broken from larger, unidentified bodies. The two ivory heads from Dolní Věstonice I are not associated with bodies and there are no indications that they are broken from larger figurines. In the case of Brno II, the head is part of a larger figurine. Moreover, it is associated with a burial. For the two ivory heads from Dolní Věstonice I, there is no evident association with human remains and no anthropomorphic figurine is known from any Pavlovian burial.

Table 4.8 Presence/absence of human facial features on ‘heads’.

Face	‘Ceramics’	Ivory	Stone
Present	–	3	–
Absent	6	1	2

Table 4.9 The ‘heads’ and anthropomorphic bodies.

	No face	Face
With anthropomorphic body	3	1
Broken (unidentified body)	6	–
Isolated head? (no break)	–	2

Table 4.10 Summary of 'heads' with and without facial features.

	No face	Face
Aurignacian	1	–
Pavlovian	7	2
Willendorf-Kostienkian	1	1
Total	9	3

4.4 The middle body part

The middle body part is the best preserved part of the figurines. The marking of the middle body part can be differentiated into four types:

1. Incision around the middle, below the hips, usually connected with a vertical incision separating the legs;
2. Band around the middle, consisting of short, oblique dashes, in one case with a herring-bone motif, below the hips;
3. Pubic triangle connected with an incision around the middle;
4. No marking of the middle body part.

The type of middle body part could be identified in eighteen out of twenty-four Pavlovian figurines and twenty-three of the entire Central European collection. The data are presented in tables 4.11 to 4.13.

Three types of middle body parts were present at the Pavlovian sites, but their frequency is quite different. In Dolní Věstonice I, an incision around the middle is the dominant marking. In Pavlov I, however, a band of short, oblique dashes was most frequently found. The band of short dashes is only present with the 'ceramic' figurines.

Table 4.11 Middle body part types in the Pavlovian.

Type	Dolní Věstonice I	Pavlov I
Incision	7	2
Band of short dashes	1	4
Pubic triangle	–	–
No marking	3	1
Total	11	7

Table 4.12 Summary of middle body part types.

Type	Aurignacian	Pavlovian	Willendorf-Kostienkian
Incision	–	9	1?
Band of short dashes	–	5	–
Pubic triangle	–	–	3
No marking	1	4	–
Total	1	18	4

Table 4.13 Middle body part types by material type.

Type	'Ceramics'	Ivory	Stone
Incision	7	3	–
Band of short dashes	5	–	–
Pubic triangle	–	1	2
No marking	4	–	1

Even more striking is that the Pavlovian collection is completely devoid of pubic triangles. This feature forms a significant difference to the Willendorf-Kostienkian figurines. Except for the Brno II-figurine, all middle body parts are marked by the presence of a pubic triangle. The middle body part of the Aurignacian figurine is not marked.

4.5 Primary sexual characteristics

Central in virtually all interpretations of anthropomorphic figurines is their sex, in particular the female sex. It is not uncommon to equate anthropomorphic figurines with female figurines or 'Venuses'. An emphasis on primary sexual features is often taken as characteristic of the anthropomorphic figurines. The presence of a pubic triangle, as noted above, would be an important argument in attributing a figurine to the female sex. Whereas this type of middle body part is dominant in the Willendorf-Kostienkian, it is entirely absent in the Pavlovian. This striking observation warrants a critical investigation of the presence of primary sexual characteristics in the Pavlovian figurines in particular. There are of course more characteristics indicative of the biological sex than the presence of a pubic triangle. I have marked the presence or absence of breasts, vulva and penis. In addition, the presence of a pronounced belly is frequently quoted as indicative of pregnancy. A pronounced belly however is in itself not enough for a sexual attribution, but should be accompanied by primary sexual characteristics. Finally, the profile of the middle body part is more or less indicative: broad hips are more frequent with the female sex than with the male sex. On the basis of these characteristics, the figurines can be classified in five logical classes. They can be either male, female or hermaphrodite, or sexual characteristics are absent by design, or the figurines are indeterminable due to fragmentation. The characteristics and the subsequent classification are presented in tables 4.14 to 4.18. I shall summarize the results. More than one third of the Pavlovian figurines is indeterminable due to fragmentation (N=9). Sexual characteristics are absent by design in one fifth of the figurines (N=5). The remaining figurines can be attributed to a biological sex: female figurines make up one third (N=8), male figurines one tenth (N=2) of the total of twenty-four. Hermaphrodite figurines are absent. Indications of pregnancy are not present. The only figurine with a

Table 4.14 Primary sexual characteristics for Dolní Věstonice I.

No.	Breast	Vulva	Penis	Belly	Middle	Sex
1	–	+?	–	?	1	Female
2	–	–	–	–	–	Indet.
3	–	–	–	–	1?	None
4	0	–	–	–	2	None
5	0	0	0	0	0	Indet.
6	–	–	–	+	?	None
7	0	0	0	0	0	Indet.
8	0	0	0	0	0	Indet.
9	–	–	+	–	2	Male
10	0?	–	–	–	1?	Indet.
11	+	0	0	0	0	Female
12	+	–	–	+?	1	Female
13	–	–	–	–	–	Indet.
14	+	0	0	0	1	Female
15	0	0	0	0	0	Indet.

present +; absent by design –; absent by break 0; unclear?
middle: 1 = broad hips; 2 = lean hips

Table 4.15 Primary sexual characteristics for Pavlov I.

No.	Breast	Vulva	Penis	Belly	Middle	Sex
16	+	?	–	–	?	Female
17	+	0	0	0	0	Female
18	0	–	+	0	2	Male
19	+	–	0	+	1	Female
20	+	0	0	0	0	Female
21	0	–	0	0	1	None
22	–?	–?	–	–	?	None
23	0	0	0	0	0	Indet.
24	0	0	0	0	1?	Indet.

present +; absent by design –; absent by break 0; unclear?
middle: 1 = broad hips; 2 = lean hips

pronounced belly has no primary sexual characteristics. Both male figurines have lean hips, whereas the female figurines have broad hips. No difference is noted between Pavlov I and Dolní Věstonice I. The only Aurignacian figurine has no primary sexual characteristics. The Willendorf-Kostienkian figurines are either male or female. The female primary sexual characteristics are more emphasized than in the Pavlovian.

The primary sexual characteristics demonstrate that in Central Europe the anthropomorphic figurines cannot be equated with the female sex. In this case, there is no ‘challenge of explaining why the figurines were female’ (Gamble 1991). Nor can it be suggested that ‘the restriction of the sex of the image to one of these classes [female persons, AV] might seem to be an indication that sex roles were now socially defined — that is to say gendered’ (Davidson 1997, 145).

Table 4.16 Summary of sexual determinations for the Pavlovian.

	Dolní Věstonice I	Pavlov I	Total (%)
Female	4	4	8 (33%)
Male	1	1	2 (8%)
None	3	2	5 (21%)
Indet.	7	2	9 (38%)

Table 4.17 Primary sexual characteristics for Aurignacian and Willendorf-Kostienkian figurines.

Site	Breast	Vulva	Penis	Belly	Middle	Sex
Galgenberg	–	–	–	–	2?	None
Brno II	–	–	+	–	?	Male
Willendorf II-9	+	+	–	?	1	Female
Petřkovice	+	+	–	–	?	Female
Moravany	+	+	–	?	1	Female

present +; absent by design –; absent by break 0; unclear?
middle: 1 = broad hips; 2 = lean hips

Table 4.18 Summary of sexual determinations.

	Female	Male	None	Indet.
Aurignacian	–	–	1	–
Pavlovian	8	2	5	9
Willendorf-Kostienkian	3	1	–	–
Total	11 (38%)	3 (10%)	6 (21%)	9 (31%)

Paraphrasing Davidson (1997, 146), just as in many other artistic systems, the anthropomorphic figurines are either male, female or without sex.

4.6 Conclusion

The analyses presented here consider several aspects of the Central European figurines. I shall now summarize these observations. I shall focus on the Pavlovian and the differences between the Pavlov I and Dolní Věstonice I figurines. The Pavlovian will then be compared in a temporal sequence with the preceding Aurignacian and the succeeding Willendorf-Kostienkian.

With respect to the Pavlovian, the analysis can be summarized in three points.

First, there are two types of anthropomorphic figurines based on the presence or absence of human facial features.

1. Heads with human facial features, only in ivory and in the Pavlovian not associated with a torso.
2. Figurines without human facial features, in all materials. Second, just as in many other artistic systems, the anthropomorphic figurines are either male, female or without sex.

Though female figurines are most frequent, male figurines are present as well. Most significant is perhaps the frequency of sexually undifferentiated figurines. It must be noted that there is no particular emphasis on the primary sexual characteristics in the Pavlovian (cf. Svoboda 1995, 271).

Third, 'ceramics' dominate the collection. This dominance is closely related to the high degree of fragmentation and small size that characterizes the assemblage of the figurines.

In general, the anthropomorphic figurines demonstrate a considerable variation in shapes, positions and markings. There are no standardized types or prototypes. There is no evidence to support the production of series of identical figurines. On the contrary, the variation suggests that each figurine is quite individualized.

The analysis also demonstrates a number of differences between the figurines from Dolní Věstonice I and Pavlov I. The figurines from Pavlov I are generally smaller than those from Dolní Věstonice I. In Pavlov I, the middle body part is more often marked by a band of short, oblique strokes, breasts have a nipple, but a navel is not indicated. In Dolní Věstonice I, the middle body part is usually marked by an incision, breasts have no nipple and the navel is sometimes indicated.

Comparison with Aurignacian and Willendorf-Kostienkian allows us to sketch some temporal trends.

1. Anthropomorphic figurines are much more frequent in the Pavlovian than in either of the other periods.
2. 'Ceramic' figurines are only known from the Pavlovian, but stone ones are absent in the Pavlovian.
3. In terms of the sex of the figurines, the Pavlovian takes a middle position. The only Aurignacian figurine is sexually undifferentiated, which is probably typical for the Aurignacian generally on the basis of a comparison with South German figurines. The Galgenberg figurine has been compared especially with an anthropomorphic figurine from the Geissenklösterle (Southern Germany) (Neugebauer-Maresch 1990). The Aurignacian anthropomorphic figurines known from Southern Germany also lack primary sexual characteristics (Hahn 1986). The Willendorf-Kostienkian figurines, in contrast, are either male or female. The sexual characteristics are unambiguous and the female figurines are marked by the presence of a pubic triangle which is absent in both the Aurignacian and Pavlovian.

notes

- 1 Clumsiness is no argument as very detailed, 'ceramic', animal heads are known.