

1999 Figurine Report – Naomi Hamilton

Figurines, Burials/Grave Goods and Beads

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Abstract

The proportion of baby burials continued to be high and many were placed in baskets. There is still no evidence of excarnation of intact skeletons prior to burial. Grave goods included red pigment and bead bracelets, anklets and necklaces.

The figurines from this season exhibited the wide range of form and style seen in previous seasons, as well as some variety in fabric. Perhaps most important are the figurines from Building 17, four figurines were found, but two of them, human in type, were deliberately broken prior to deposition, and found in closure-type fills. Animal, humanoid and possible human figurines were found in the early levels of the South Area.

Beads were mainly recovered from flotation and in the earlier levels beads appear to be more common, although the range of types is smaller. The number found suggests that beads were part of everyday wear, and were not used solely or mainly for burial.

Figurines

The 1999 Long Season has provided a welcome opportunity to examine the figurine data over a much wider spatial and temporal range than previously. 191 figurine fragments were recovered during 1999, compared to 270 over the previous six seasons, and they came from a number of different buildings and external areas. This permits a broader analysis of issues such as depositional context and fragmentation, which have hitherto been difficult to consider due to the small numbers involved.

Nevertheless, figurines are very scarce items compared to other artefact groups at the site, and it is therefore still too early to make generalisations or definite statements about many of the important questions raised by the occurrence of figurines on neolithic sites.

The 1999 data does appear to confirm that figurines are rare in buildings compared to external areas. However, the number of figurines/figurine fragments varies between buildings, and almost all those found have been recovered from infill rather than being deposited deliberately within buildings. There are important exceptions to this, which will be discussed below, but it is a finding which raises questions concerning the origin of infill materials. In particular, the differential occurrence of figurines in the fill of main and subsidiary rooms needs further

examination in conjunction with other data groups. An association between figurines and ovens, which had been noted in previous seasons, is reinforced by the discoveries in 1999.

Although the much larger number of buildings investigated this year than in previous seasons seems to make conclusions concerning distribution (particularly the internal/external issue) much clearer, the data has to be modified by the fact that most of the buildings excavated in 1999 were originally dug by Mellaart, with only small areas of undisturbed deposit remaining.

Thus the data is not comparable between all buildings. In fact, not a single entire building was dug during 1999, as all but Building 17 had been investigated by Mellaart, and the floors of Building 17 remain in situ, concealing foundation layers and more burials. Indeed, Building 1 is the only one to have been excavated completely by the current team, as the floors of Building 5 also remain intact, Building 2 has only been finished in Space 117, and the excavation of Building 3 has not been completed - again, the floors remain. Thus comparisons are extremely problematic. Although it is possible to search the archives for information concerning Mellaart's finds, his excavations did not use the same methods and in particular did not employ sieving of all deposits. Since a high proportion of figurines is recovered from the dry sieve or flotation, the absence of figurines from many buildings in Mellaart's excavations does not mean they were not present in fills, construction materials and oven rake-out.

Where external areas are concerned, only two were excavated this year, and in rather different style from previously. Space 115, which has occupied many weeks of work in earlier seasons, was finished off in two large spits, reducing the distributional information severely and making the data qualitatively different from that obtained from the space earlier.

Space 181, the deep sounding, retained a single space number as it descended several metres through external deposits, and doubtless would have been divided into several spaces had it been part of a horizontal exposure. These two areas are figurine- rich - indeed, Space 181 provided 74 of the 191 figurines recovered this season - but cannot be compared directly for the reasons just given.

In this report I shall comment briefly on the figurine complement of each building or external space and then draw attention to a small number of particularly interesting or significant figurines from the 1999 season. Detailed analysis must await the final report.

South Area

Building 2

Excavation of Space 117 was completed this year, while Space 116 was abandoned for the construction of a shelter. Thus this building has essentially been finished, although perhaps 30cm of deposit remains above the floor of Space 116. A total of 22 figurines has been found over several seasons, 18 from Space 117 and 4 from Space 116. Of these, 2 are human (one 116, one 117), 11 humanoid (2 in 116, 8 in 117), 2 animal (117), 6 animal horns, 2 unclear. Almost all were recovered from room infill; an animal horn was found in a plastered bin/platform edge, another came from an ashy spread and a third from the collapse debris within the clay ball bin.

The difference in numbers between the two spaces cannot be related entirely to the sizes of the rooms. However, seven of the figurines were found during the 1999 season in the basal levels of Space 117, and it is possible that some remain in Space 116.

Building 6

This building was largely dug by Mellaart as Shrine VII:10. No figurines were recorded as coming from this building in the 1960s. During 1999, seven fragments were recovered from the remaining deposits, and a further two from the interface of Buildings 6 and 17. Five came from the main room, Space 163 - two scraps of animal horn in grave fills, probably accidental; two tiny humanoids, roughly complete - one from the fill of a cut, one from oven rakeout; and a humanoid head from wall plaster.

Most interesting was the presence on two broken human-style heads in the subsidiary space 173 - both have punctured decoration, one in a very elaborate style.

Buildings 7/16

These are the remnants of superimposed buildings dug by Mellaart as shrines VIII:8 and IX:8. Three figurines were found at the interface between the buildings, all redeposited since the original excavation. Two are parts of animals, one part of a humanoid.

Building 16

Six figurines were found in the remains of shrine IX:8. Their contexts are interesting - five were found in oven rakeout, while one was in wall plaster. Two are humanoid, two are animal horns, two unclear.

Building 17

This was a new building untouched by Mellaart, and it is the first time we have had in situ figurines in the style of those made famous by Mellaart. Only four figurines were found, two of them deliberately broken prior to deposition, and found in closure-type fills. They are human in type, and are described below. The body belonging to 5021.D1 may still be in situ, within a deposit supporting a sagging wall. A complete miniature humanoid was found in a post-retrieval pit. A most unusual faceless humanoid head was found in the lower infill (see below).

Building 18

This is the remains of Shrine X:8 dug by Mellaart. 11 figurines were recovered, all from Space 171, the main room. 9 of them were found in oven rakeout - seven animal horns and two humanoid fragments. The remaining two - an animal horn and a humanoid leg - were found in floor make-up.

Building 23

This is Mellaart's Shrine X:1. Only three figurines were found, two from the large room Space 178, one from subsidiary room Space 179. An animal missing its head came from a plastered bin edge in Space 178; the other two are unclear fragments.

Deep sounding / Space 181

74 figurines were recovered from this area. This is largely in line with our previous evidence from external areas. Unfortunately very few external areas have been dug, but 39 figurines were found in the extensive midden-type deposits filling space 115, and the very small external areas surrounding Building 1 were also figurine rich. Unfortunately, because of the nature of the Space 181 exposure, no data is available concerning the proximity of this area to buildings and the relationship of the deposits containing figurines to other elements of the settlement.

Thus it is too early to say whether the presence of large numbers of figurines in Space 181 is related to a hitherto undocumented more widespread use of figurines in the early than the later levels, or to different use or disposal methods. The 74 figurines found in Space 181 consisted of 34 animal fragments, mainly horns; 20 humanoid; 4 possible human; and 15 unclear. All were damaged in some way. In addition seven cones similar to the bases of some humanoids were found. It is unclear what they represent, whether they are related to figurines or are something entirely different such as token or gaming pieces.

They were all intact.

Bach 1

The excavation of this trench is not yet finished, but so far 47 figurines have been found there, of which 41 are from Space 86, the main room of Building 3. Ten of these were recovered during the 1999 season, nine of them in Space 86. Most of them were parts of animal heads, five found in floor make-up and two in the screen wall collapse. Part of a human figure was found in a mixed floor and packing unit, and a humanoid fragment came from a bin fill. Another broken humanoid came from an ashy deposit above a floor in Space 158.

Kopal

Two possible figurines were found in the basal layers of this trench, both fragmentary but very large. One bears some resemblance to the well-known marble double human figure from the 1960's excavation, but is too broken to be certain that it was also a double figure. The other is an animal horn.

Individual figurine descriptions

The figurines from this season exhibited the wide range of form and style seen in previous seasons, as well as some variety in fabric. Clearly it is not feasible to comment in detail on each piece - many of which are small fragments anyway - but a few items of particular interest and/or significance are described and discussed below.

4116.D1 is an unusual and interesting piece. One of the few made of stone (in this case marble), it is a stylized head and shoulders with a strong phallic aspect. Details of eyes, nose/chin, hair and neck are pecked into the polished surface.

The base is rough and not level, suggesting that it may have been broken from a larger figure. Unfortunately this figurine is unstratified (from section cleaning), but probably belongs to level VII.

45mm high, 28mm wide, 33mm deep, 57.4g. Marble.

5043.X1 is one of the most striking found during our seven seasons at Çatalhöyük. It is also one of the largest, certainly the largest complete figure although larger heads have been found in previous years. This is a carefully made self-supporting clay figure consisting of a fairly featureless, sexless body with slightly swelling stomach and divided feet, reminiscent of humanoid figurines, and a head with many features - a protruding nose (again similar to humanoid ones) with eyes and nose indicated by incisions/slashes, and ears decorated with multiple punctures.

The backward sloping top of the head has 29 holes pierced into it, possibly for the attachment of hair or head-dress. The surface is well smoothed, and polished in parts. Overall this figure combines both careful and basic modelling, as well as both lack of and great attention to detail. Of particular importance is the find context, in a closure-type unit over an oven in Building 17.

Immediately before deposition, the head had been broken from the body and placed beside it. The size, style and depositional context of this figure suggest some form of guardianship or tutelary role rather than a religious one, but such issues will be examined properly in the final publication within a broader analysis of the figurine and other data.

943mm high, 543mm wide, 506mm deep, 234g. Clay.

5021.D1 is a figurine head also from Building 17, in a similar closure-type fill in the oven area, belonging to the same phase of activity as 5043.X1. It is almost identical to the head of 5043.X1 but slightly smaller, and made of a much sandier fabric rarely used for figurine manufacture. The main difference in features is that the nostrils are shown on this face. This head also appears to have been broken from the body just prior to deposition, although this is more difficult to ascertain as it was retrieved from flotation and hence the state of the break is less helpful. According to the excavator, it is possible that the body is still in situ, where a block of soil is supporting a sagging wall. Perhaps in future seasons it will be discovered.

33mm high, 40mm wide, 35 mm deep, 31.76g. Clay.

4656.H1 is also from Building 17. It is one of the smallest figurines found so far, and is intact. It is a stylised humanoid consisting of a thin body, two feet, and a pronounced nose. The front view resembles an inverted T, and the figurine cannot stand unaided. It was found in a post-retrieval pit.

10mm high, 6mm wide, 6.2mm deep, 0.19g. Clay.

4624.H1 is the fourth figurine from Building 17, and is also worthy of comment. At first glance it is a standard sized humanoid head broken from a body, with a scarf at the back of the head. It is the front of the head that is peculiar, however, for it is faceless. In place of the normal pinched nose, there is a slightly concave area which has been smoothed over in antiquity.

It appears that either this was made faceless, or it was made with a face which was then deliberately pinched out and the surface smoothed. The obvious inference is that this was some kind of ritual or magical defacement of an image, presumably with detrimental intent. However, whether this is an accurate interpretation is impossible to say at present, and it may never be understood. This figurine was found in the lower fill of the building, and was fragmentary.

24mm high, 11mm wide, 9mm deep, 2.06g. Clay.

5323.H1 is another faceless humanoid head with a scarf at the back of the head. Much larger than 4624.H1, it is very similar in style. Again, the face area is slightly concave, and the clay has been smoothed over in antiquity. It was found in a substantial dump in Space 181 at a depth of 999.94-999.45m.

24mm high, 21mm wide, 13mm deep, 7.32g. Clay.

4839.H2 is part of a human-style head with punctured decoration. Only the left half remains, split vertically down the nose region. The eye and mouth are shown with puctures/slashes, and there are two punctures in the ear. Four red marks have been painted on, three around the eye and one below the ear. This head is beautifully made, of a very fine fabric. It was found in Space 181 in a substantial dump/midden layer, at a depth of 1002.53-1001.93m.

19mm high, 12.5mm wide, 11mm deep, 1.5g. Clay.

4793.H1 is another human-style head fragment with punctured decoration. The face is damaged, but the outer edge and back survive, and there are seven punctures running from the mid-forehead to the left ear. This figurine was found in Building 6, Space 173 - the smaller of the two rooms.

23.6mm high, 18.7mm wide, 10mm deep, 2.39g. Clay.

4921.H1 is also a human-style head fragment with punctured decoration, again from Space 173 of Building 6. It is the left half of the head, split vertically down the nose area, and has a large modelled ear. The front slopes outwards towards a defined chin, the back is rather triangular, and the neck is wide and thick. The eye and mouth are indicated with punctures, which also decorate the ear and - the first example so far at Çatalhöyük - the chin. The chin also bears red paint. The suggestion is of a beard, possibly red. The whole is carefully modelled in a fine fabric.

23mm high, 13mm wide, 13.2mm deep, 2.26g. Clay.

The occurrence of two human-style heads with punctured decoration in Space 173 is of particular interest, as complex figurines were generally - though not always - found in the main rooms during Mellaart's excavations.

4121.D5 is an almost complete humanoid from Space 115.

Although at first glance it appears to be a standard humanoid with divided legs, it has two features which are unique so far.

Firstly, either side of the nose are two carefully incised/impressed eyes, made with a curved tool. Secondly, below the shoulders is a bulge on either side of the body indicating folded arms. These two features support the view I have expressed previously that humanoid figurines are schematic representations of humans, rather than images of birds or bird-like creatures. Although the pinched nose found on humanoids can look rather beak-like, this is a result of the method of manufacture. Similar but often less pronounced noses are found on the larger human-style faces, where space permits more careful modelling.

34.5mm high, 11.4mm wide, 16.5mm deep, 2.59g. Clay.

4325.H1 is a humanoid figure at the other extreme of the spectrum from 4121.D5. Found in the interface between spaces 163 and 170 (superimposed buildings 6 and 17), it is a complete, crudely modelled, lumpish, featureless figurine consisting of a conical base surmounted off-centre by a head with a short pert nose. The base is flat and it stands unaided.

27.6mm high, 13.5mm wide, 8.3mm deep, 1.85g. Clay.

Burials and Grave Goods

The burials, though few in number, continued to give us surprises this year while also providing us with data comparable to that found by Mellaart. In particular, we found burials placed in baskets for the first time, something Mellaart had encountered in the lower levels. We also found, contrary to Mellaart, that the proportion of babies continued to be high, as in Building 1. The discrepancy between our findings and Mellaart's in this respect may be due to a number of factors, such as the poor preservation of infant bones, the discovery by the current team of baby skeletons placed elsewhere than under platforms, and of course the enormous differences between buildings which are emerging. The discovery of a number of dismembered skeletal parts runs parallel to our continuing discovery of intact skeletons with no sign of excarnation prior to burial.

22 burials were excavated this year, of which three were in Bach1 area, 10 in Building 6 (nine in Space 163, one in Space 173), four in Building 17 (Space 170), two in Building 23 (Space 178), and one each in Building 18 (Space 171) and Spaces 168 and 181.

Building 3

A single burial of a young child was excavated beneath the north- west platform in Space 86, where there appear to be more burials awaiting investigation next year. More interesting was the burial/deposition of two skulls face to face in the middle of the floor of Space 86, one female young adult (3529.X2) and one probably male juvenile/adolescent (3529.X1). The significance of this is unclear.

Building 6

The nine burials in Space 163 consisted on one adult female, one young adult and one adolescent male, and six babies. They were mainly in the centre, west and south west of the room, with only one by the east wall and one in the north-east quadrant, which is not the pattern expected from the 1960s excavations.

However, the skeleton by the east wall (4424), a baby, had red pigment on it, which does conform to Mellaart's data; however, another baby in the south-west (4406) also had red pigment on it. Three babies, ranging in age from neonate to c18 months, were buried in baskets.

The adult female (4615) was buried in the centre of the room with a complete weasel skeleton and lots of mouse bones probably derived from owl pellets. Why owl pellets should have been added to a grave is intriguing, although they may have been incidental inclusions in grave fill derived from an external area.

Further analysis is in progress. The presence of a weasel may be related to the discovery of a weasel-type penis bone in the burial of an adult male in Building 1 several years ago.

The young adult male (4593) burial, placed mid-way along the west wall, is even more unusual. The skeleton was missing the skull, which appeared to have been removed in situ perhaps due to lack of space in the grave, and was placed on its back with a plank of hackberry wood on top. It is possible that this may have formed the base of a wooden box, but if so the upper part has disintegrated.

Skeleton 4406 was the complete skeleton of a baby of around 8 months, buried in the south-west. It had red ochre on it, and was wearing a string of beads on each wrist and an ankle. The bracelets consisted of alternating bone and blue/black stone beads sliced from cylindrical preforms. The anklets were made of bone beads of the type which imitates deer teeth. This burial was lifted in block and is now on display in the Konya Museum.

Skeleton 4458 was buried in a basket with a lid, almost in the centre of Space 163, and a necklace was found in the neck area. It consisted mainly of red ochre beads (37 whole, 40 fragments), as well as 11 of black limestone, and slices of a whelk-type shell (7 whole, 2 fragments).

A burial was also found in Space 173, the subsidiary room or antechamber of Building 6. The skeleton of a neonate (4927) was found in a basket, covered in an orange organic substance which could be yellow ochre. Mellaart did not report any burials from subsidiary rooms, although the records show that a handful did occur. A yellow organic substance was found in

some burials in Building 1, and may relate to smell containment or have significance concerning cause of death - as might other pigments found on skeletons.

At least three skeletons seem to have been excavated by Mellaart in this building in 1965 - an adult female, and adult male, and a child. Unfortunately there is a question mark beside the building number in the skeleton records, so it is possible that the attribution is incorrect. No data are available concerning the position of the burials within the building.

Building 17

Four burials were excavated in Space 170 this year, and there are more to come out in future. Two babies were buried by the east wall, one (5177) in a basket, with red pigment and a worked bone object ([Figure 57](#)); the other (5357) with a yellow organic deposit.

An old female (5169) was buried in the south, and 12 bone bead preforms imitating deer teeth were found in the crook of her arm, grouped as though they had been placed there within a bag. A flat clay ball was found by one foot, but this may not have been a deliberate inclusion, although miniature clay balls have previously been found in graves, also possibly as accidental inclusions.

The skull of an adult female (5022) was found in a post-retrieval pit at the northern end of the west wall. It appears to have been a deliberate deposit, for which we have no parallels so far.

Building 18

A single skeleton was found in Space 171, the remains of Mellaart's Shrine X:8. It was a neonate placed in the south-east corner in a domestic-type area. Burial of neonate babies behind ovens in the south or south-east has been found in several buildings by the current team. Half a large clay ball lay on the upper body/skull, which was crushed. This may have been an accidental inclusion. Clay balls have been associated with ovens in a number of buildings.

Building 23

Two baby burials were excavated in Space 178, the main room of the building which was excavated by Mellaart as Shrine X:1.

Both were in baskets, and both had been disturbed - possibly after Mellaart's excavation, when the area would have been vulnerable to burrowing animals. One was a foetus (4853) placed in the north-west corner; the other (4861) was 4 or 5 months old, and placed in the middle of the northern end of the room. Red ochre had been applied to the skull.

Space 181

The fragmentary skeleton of a neonate buried in a basket with a yellowish organic substance was found in the midden-type deposit south of the deep sounding. This is the second burial found in a midden-type deposit; the other one was excavated in Space 115 in 1998. They raise questions

about why they were not buried within buildings - whether due to disease, hasty or secret burial, outsider status etc. The use of a basket, so common with other burials of babies excavated this season, suggests that similar treatment was being afforded this baby in some aspects yet deposition in a midden area shows different treatment in other ways. The organic substance may be yellow ochre.

Beads

A large number of beads was found this season, some 650. Unlike in previous years, few of these were derived from burials. The vast majority were retrieved from floatation, and they were found in many different deposits. A detailed analysis cannot be offered here. Nevertheless, one or two points stand out.

First, almost all beads found this year were of the same type, small disc/ring-type stone beads sliced from cylindrical preforms. The variety is far more restricted than in previous years, which confirms my earlier impression from both our own work and Mellaart's that level VII offered the greatest variety of bead types. However, Mellaart found beads of a wider range of materials in burials within the lower levels - for instance, copper, lead and deer teeth - and those have not yet been forthcoming in the current project.

The second point is that far greater numbers of beads have been found in some deposits than in previous years. Whereas until now they have been arriving in ones and twos, the deeper we got the more common it became for bead numbers per unit to rise to the tens or twenties. Unit 5290 had 48. This may relate to a range of factors - units may be larger and/or more arbitrary; beads may have been used more commonly in the earlier levels; or strings of beads may have been lost in external areas and not retrieved for various reasons. When numbers rise to 48, it suggests that a string of beads was involved, which was not recognised during excavation because of the difficult conditions, and since only a portion of each deposit is floated, more beads may have been put through the dry sieve where, due to their small size, they were not caught. Only one string of beads has previously been found in a non-burial context - a bracelet of mixed bead types on a floor near the southern oven in Building 2, Space 117. Given that a small trickle of beads has always been found in non-burial units, it is surprising that fewer strings/groups of beads have been discovered before. The number found during 1999 does suggest that beads were part of everyday wear, and were not used solely or mainly for burial.

Figures

Figure 56: Figurine 5043.x1 from Building 17

Figure 57: Bone Object found with skeleton 5177