

12. Catal Figurine Report 2012

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During the 2012 season some 295 figurines were recorded encompassing this and previous years. Many of these came from heavy residue backlogs or were retrieved from other materials including ground stone and faunal. There were 117 figurines recorded from the 2012: 86 of those were zoomorphic (73%), 23 abbreviated, 4 anthropomorphic examples and the rest were classified as non-diagnostic. The vast majority of the zoomorphic examples were horn fragments, comprising 60 in total.

There were several notable finds from this season's excavations. From South M, Space 470, from a layer of infilling, figurine 19390.x3 depicts a very bulky quadruped quite probably a bear (Figure 12.1). It has a long snout which points upwards as if sniffing and very reminiscent of a bear's behavior. The ears are small and flattened to the side far back from the head. It is chipped on left side of face but overall is very well preserved. Short legs make the body appear very close to the ground and thus accentuate the heaviness of the animal. The body shape is very bear-like, and the coat and bulky form of the animal constitutes a single rounded appearance. The tail is also bear-like: it is short and close to the body, but still emphasized as with almost all quadrupeds.



Figure 12.2. Bear figurine 19390.x3



Figure 12.1. 20171.x1 anthropomorphic figurine.

From TPC Space 486, a midden, 20171.x1 is a heavily gouged and lumpy anthropomorphic figurine of a human (Figure 12.2). While it has no obvious genitalia, it may well show a beard given the very prominent jaw area, but no other marks identifying possible sex. It is broken at nose that was originally quite large and probably elongated. The ears are large and half-moon shaped. The arms are folded into chest but not crossed: they were squished into place rather than being shaped separately and in a detailed fashion. The buttocks are large and flattened, forming a rectangular shape. As with many anthropomorphic forms across the site, the stomach protrudes with a possible navel marked, although since the figurine is worn it is difficult to be certain. Fingerprints are visible on right leg as well as both sides of neck/shoulders. The head is disproportionately small for the volume of the body. The back has slight sway but is blocky and undifferentiated. There were also visible white inclusions, probably plaster.



Figure 12.4. Female figurine 20215.x1

Also from the midden in Space 486, 20215.x1 is a figurine depicting a corpulent, rounded female with a dowel hole for a detachable head. There is a clear depression where the head would have sat. The breasts are large, pronounced, drooping breasts but are well-defined. As is the pattern (Nakamura & Meskell 2009), the stomach is large, drooping and protrudes with clear navel distinguished by a hole. The buttocks are large and emphasized with a line. The legs are folded unnaturally at the sides, much like the skeletal figurine from 2005 (12401.x7). The hip bone is emphasized, suggesting again this focus on the fleshed and boney elements of the person (Meskell 2008). The base of the figurine is triangular in shape.

Finally, 18592.x5 from Building 79, Space 134, was excavated from fill in 2010 but only seen in 2012 (Figure 12.4). This is a very phallic form that sits or stands upright on a base. The figurine is detailed with an emphasized glans and foreskin, and reminiscent of other examples in stone such as 1505.x1 and 4116.D1. What is striking about



Figure 12.4. Phallic figurine, 18952.x5

most of the phallic examples we have from the site is that they were crafted as single, separate, free-standing, or disembodied objects. With the exception of one possibility (18545.x1), we do not tend to find anthropomorphic figurines showing the penis on the body of a male at Çatalhöyük. In contrast, we have a few female examples recorded fully (n=5) that show the pubic triangle. It seems significant that the penis can be a stand alone representation or embodiment, whereas the vagina cannot. Similarly, the vagina can be shown as part of the body whereas the penis cannot. Not to sound anachronistic, but as many feminists have long argued the penis, or rather phallus, comes to be an external, separable signifier that symbolically stands for much more than the physical penis.

Ongoing research

This year we also continued with individual research topics. Meskell

continued with some of the work developing out of the collaboration with zooarchaeologist, Dr Louise Martin. This work has been published for 2012 in Cambridge Archaeological Journal. Related work examines the extent of appreciable differences in the treatment and fashioning of bodily forms. Several animal taxa such as deer, goats, dogs, bear, wolves and horses were crafted with exquisite care. The horns and beards of goats; the tails, muzzles and swayed backs of horses; the upright tails and attentive postures of dogs; the ears and snout of boars; were given particular attention and detail. A small subset of these animals within the larger zoomorphic assemblage (n= 1320) may point to their rare and special sightings in the landscape. Tails, tusks, horns, ears and beards are extremely small bodily features to mold, many less than 1cm long.

Many of these bodily features are also very finely modeled as opposed to the bodies of larger quadrupeds like cattle (Martin & Meskell 2012). More contrasting still is the fine detail and smooth modeling of animal species as compared to the anthropomorphic clay figurines (n= 204), those depicting the most detailed human bodily characteristics. While 33% of the animals (n= 438) and 32% of the humans (n=66) could be described as 'finely modeled' the difference lies in the specificities of detail rendered. Following Bennett (2010), the notion of the animal assemblage materializes their emergent properties as well as the interactions between humans and animals. Figurines encapsulate the idea of making something happen, possibly impacting the trajectory of the humans and non-humans alike.

Human heads, when present, do not depict full facial characteristics, sometimes hair is indicated, the nose is indicated to lend a profile, less frequently the ears and mouth, and typically the eyes are omitted. Heads of course can be detachable and those examples where the head could be removed or affixed by a dowel, the bodies are extremely corpulent, often with protruding stomachs, buttocks and flattened breasts and shown seated. The individual heads found have some facial features but are caricatures rather than naturalistically portrayed. This compared to the fine rendering of a deer with its holes for removable antlers (12394.H1),

the snout, ridged back, short tail and rounded ears of a boar/pig (12980.H1), the tail, beard, horns and ears of goats (2250.X2, 19305.X5, 19305.X3, 999998.H60) and the stocky bodies, upright tails and remarkably alert postures of dogs (12648.X6, 15675.H4, 19101.H3, 18154.H3, 19342.X16). Clay captured a species-specific animality (Martin & Meskell 2012): the bodily demeanors, behaviors and physical characteristics of specific, and certainly not all, animals in their immediate landscape. There is a kind of bodily fascination, a loving attention to heads and tails, to animal indicators and also their being that does not easily transfer over into the human world.

We have previously argued against associating figurine practices with narratives and ideas of the Mother Goddess given the lack of evidence for this in the current excavations. However, we have also argued that the Çatahöyük figurine-making addresses a range of concerns and some of these may have included more ritualized practices. While we would not argue that figurines primarily functioned in a magical or sacred capacity, it is likely that they articulated a form of ritualized practice at the level of habitual or even daily life of inhabitants at the site.

Carolyn Nakamura and Peter Pels (forthcoming) have recently explored certain ‘magical’ gestures that may have informed various practices at Çatahöyük. One set of coupled activities is revelation and concealment. Such acts often involve the crossing or breaching of surfaces through burial/embedding and retrieval in or across surfaces; however, they can also involve the *transformation* of a surface. For instance, the abbreviated, expediently made clay figurines, most commonly found in rubbish and dumps, may also articulate a kind of magical economy. Forming – or revealing – a human (or animal) figure from a clay lump, while perhaps requiring minimal skill, does assert a distinctive kind of creative agency through the mimetic act. Some scholars have interpreted these figurine types found primarily in midden and dumping contexts as ‘wish- vehicles’ that were quickly made and perhaps as quickly discarded (Voigt 2000; Hodder 2006, 190; Pels 2010). Again, the focus settles on the process of creation or rendering form from an ‘unformed’

surface or medium, rather than on the final product (Meskell et al 2009). As such, this kind of figurine practice could indeed articulate a magical or ritualized process (cf. Bell 1992), whereby the creative and destructive act embodied by the figurine process rendered the human maker a powerful agent in that context (see also Nakamura 2004, 2005). Not insignificantly, the rather ordinary and mundane act of creating form from clay is coupled with the divine creative power in various ancient texts (see for example the *Enuma Elish* (Sumero- Babylonian), and *Surat alMu'minun* (Qur'anic)).

Figurines as objects are also associated with ritualized practices that appear to mark certain events, spaces or moments. The archaeological category of clusters, which the Hodder excavations have been recording from the outset, includes many deposits that appear to have been intentionally placed. Nakamura and Pels (forthcoming) examined this subset of clusters and divided them into non-ritualized, possibly ritualized, and likely ritualized deposits. Their preliminary analyses suggest that figurines commonly appear in the more ritualized contexts, along with other materials such as antlers, stone tools, human skeletons, animal skulls, blades, axes, pigment lumps, and bone tools (Nakamura and Pels forthcoming, Table 3). The objects found in these kinds of deposits may have articulated or accumulated some kind of social power or significance more generally.

Figurines then should not be excluded from considerations of ritual power and agency. While these materials should not be exclusively defined in such terms, there is some evidence of figurines participation in certain ritualized or even magical registers of social life.

The figurine data, particularly that pertaining to the zoomorphic figurines, will also be a component of a dissertation research project by Lindsay Der (Stanford University). This project investigates how human-animal relations at Çatalhöyük may have played a role in social organization at the site. By using a Geographic Information Systems Analysis (GIS) it is possible to synthesize and map various datasets related to animals at the house level. These datasets include the

iconography (such as wall paintings, reliefs and figurines), architecture, and faunal remains. Currently, there is no evidence of distinct social stratification at the site, yet there are clear differences between houses, namely in the degree and kind of elaboration. As house elaboration and ritual frequently centers on animal themes and associations, it seems likely that this may have been parlayed into the spatial patterning of houses with certain animal representations and objects. This patterning could in turn lead to the identification of intra- community social groups based on differential relationships between the residents of Çatalhöyük and particular animals.

In the 2012 field season, the first stage of this project took the form of a pilot study comprising of three houses. These houses were chosen as they are all from the same occupational level and have similar architectural features. Data was gathered in the field to be analyzed and mapped post-field. The results of the pilot study will be presented in a poster session at the 2013 Society for American Archaeology annual meeting in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Additionally, the zoomorphic horn figurines and horn cores were mapped using GIS in order to see if there is a relationship between the actual remains of animals and animal representations of horns. Figurines tend to occur in external and secondary contexts, in middens and fill, suggesting that these objects were not highly valued but were instead alienable possessions (Meskell et al. 2007; Meskell et al. 2008). Thus it may be possible to see if faunal remains (here the horn cores) may have been regarded in the same way.

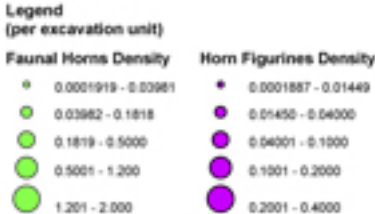
Based on the plot (Figure 12.5), there does not seem to be a consistent one-to-one relationship across the site. For both areas the horn cores and horn figurines seem to cluster around certain buildings, but in other parts of the site, distribution is more sporadic. Roughly speaking, in the South Area, clustering is most concentrated in the southern excavation units whereas in the North Area, this occurs more in the northern units. Furthermore, the highest densities of both figurines and faunal horns are in the South Area. This seems to suggest that these objects played

different roles for inhabitants in different zones of the site. For instance, perhaps horn cores were considered alienable objects akin to the figurines in certain houses whereas in other houses they were not. Further investigation of associated objects and animal representation in high-cluster locales would be useful in understanding the range of practices involving figurines and faunal remains, providing insight into human-animal relations at Çatalhöyük.

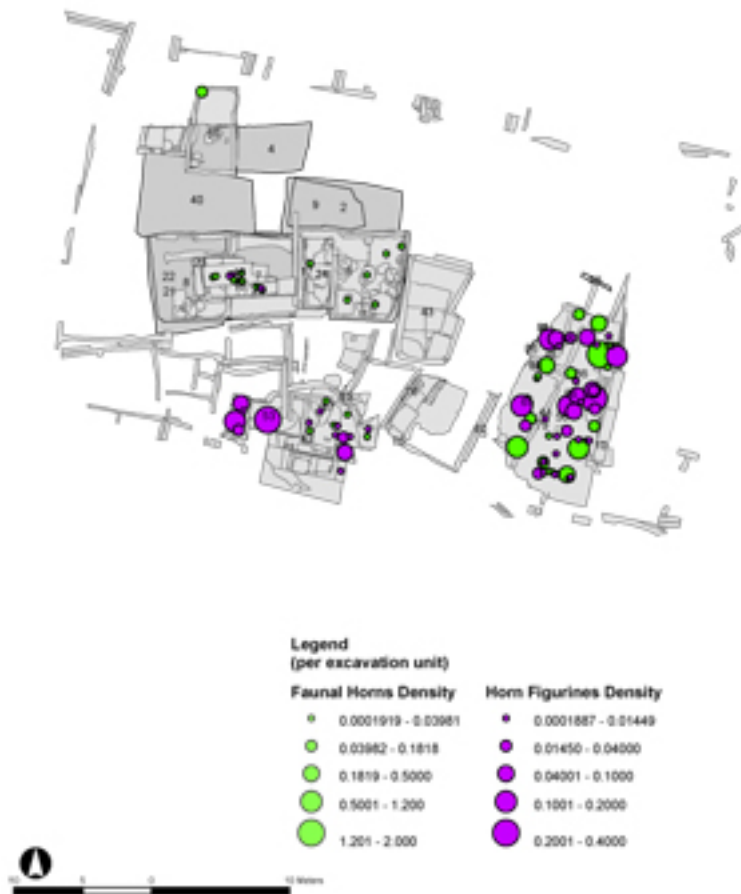
Figure 12.5. Fauna and horn figurine densities

Some caveats should be noted when interpreting the map. As buildings have been differentially excavated, densities rather than frequencies were used. Only finds from the 2000-2012 field seasons were included, as total volume deposits for excavation units are not available for years before 2000. Although the figures for deposits from 2000 are considered relatively reliable,

Horn Fauna and Horn Figurine Densities for North Area



Horn Fauna and Horn Figurine Densities for South Area



there is inconsistency in the methods used for calculating this figure. Some units were based on an extrapolation of volume from area; some were actual measured volumes while others were ballpark estimates. Additionally, some excavation units are missing total volume deposits. Choice of where to excavate, the rate and extent to dig, and recovery methods may also bias samples. Horn cores have particularly poor preservation properties. Lastly, this map includes data from numerous occupational layers which make up a fairly large stretch of time. Part of the problem here is that the chronology for the site is a work in progress and there are still outstanding radiocarbon dates for which the team is

awaiting. Depending on which datasets are desired, sample sizes for given levels may be too small to be significant anymore, thus making a level by level plot impractical.

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