

1996 Figurine Report – Naomi Hamilton

THE FIGURINES AND OTHER SMALL FINDS

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Some preliminary comments on the distribution of certain types of artefact, with particular attention to the trench on the North Mound.

THE NORTH AREA

The Figurines

Parts of at least 12 figurines, mostly very fragmentary, were recovered from the excavations on the North mound, and from the rough indication of find spots available so far, it is possible to make some preliminary comments on distribution patterns. Unfortunately, very few figurine fragments were recognised on site, and therefore most were retrieved either from the dry sieve or from flotation samples. As sample data is not yet available to me, I have only a very general idea of where some fragments were found.

Five fragments were found in Space 73, which is outside Building 1, lying between its east wall and the west wall of the neighbouring building. Four of these fragments (1315.H1; 1315.H2; 1320.H1; 1346.H1) were horns of animal figurines. The fragments are very small. The fifth (1346.X1) is the head and front end of a quadruped, and is also small. The size of the fragments could suggest that they were deposited accidentally in this external space within material regarded as rubbish, or that they were difficult to retrieve if they fell into a narrow and enclosed yet external space such as this. Units 1320 and 1346 contained material which could be viewed as rubbish - plant remains, charcoal, obsidian, unworked bone, stone and shell - which would support the idea that these fragments were deposited accidentally. Unit 1315 was a heavily burnt soft ashy deposit containing small quantities of brick fragments and charred remains. This could represent domestic waste, but could also be related to the reconstruction of Building 1 after the major burning event which was followed by the abandonment of much of the southern part of the building. At present it is not clear to which phase Unit 1315 belongs. Most of these suggestions require the presence and breakage of animal figurines in buildings, and the permissableness of figurine fragments being abandoned as refuse rather than a requirement of ritual disposal.

A further five fragments were found in Space 70, the western room of Building 1. Two were horn fragments from units 1154 and 1216, both of which were deposits immediately overlying the floor south of the partition in Space 70. Unit 1154 had a high percentage of burnt brick fragments, as well as small amounts of plaster and charred plants. The presence of these fragments so close to floors suggests they may have been used in Space 70 prior to damage taking place, although this is not certain. Figurine 1187.H1 also came from this area, from heavily burnt deposits overlying the floor. 1187.H1 is a natural formation of an iron bearing stone

which vaguely resembles the fat female figurines which occur occasionally at Catalhoyuk, although the upper body and head are not represented. Mellaart mentions collections of anthropomorphic rocks being found in a number of buildings, sometimes in association with modelled figurines. The figure is very burnt, which suggests that it was in situ on the floor of Space 70 when the major burning event took place in Building 1. Closer co-ordinates are not yet available, but all these deposits were dug on a tight grid.

The other two fragments from Space 70 were found when dismantling the southern half of Fire Installation II. 1444.XI is a clay horn found in an arbitrary layer comprising the walls and floors of the FI. As it is a small fragment, it is possible that it got mixed into this deposit through its presence in building material such as 'midden' which appears to have been used in mortar. 1416.H1 is a roughly made humanoid figurine, missing the head and right leg, and just possibly having male genitals - a feature not previously found on any figurine from this site but which may prove to be simply the remains of sloppy manufacture. Unit 1416 is a series of floors directly underlying the floors of FI 11. Other finds included a bone fish hook, a clay bead, and a piece of wood. There is no evidence so far that any of the finds were heat damaged. The presence of other finds suggests that these items were left lying on the floors when new floors or the FI were constructed on top of them.

Two figurines were found in the main room of Building 1, both from pits. 1905.H1 is a complete, very roughly made humanoid figurine. It was found in an irregular pit against the south wall of the building, below the lowest floors. Details of Unit 1905 are not yet available, but the complete state of the figurine and its presence below the floors does make it possible that this was a foundation deposit. This would be in keeping with Mellaart's records of the deposition of humanoid figurines within the walls of buildings, and their possibly votive or protective nature. 1452.X3 is an animal horn from Space 71. Recorded as coming from a cut, its co-ordinates are not yet available.

Bearing in mind that these observations are preliminary and incomplete, and deal only with one building, overall it is striking that figurines from the north mound are clustered in the western room of Building 1 and outside the building. The two figurines from the main part of the building, were either buried and out of sight (1905.H1) or possibly in a later pit fill. Where Building 1 is concerned we have no figurines associated either with storage bins or with 'ritual features' such as wall mouldings or bucrania.

Grave Goods

Only four definite grave goods were found during 1996; a number of possible ones will also be considered. The definite grave goods consist of necklace 1479.X1 made of disc-shaped or sliced stone beads plus one shell bead (the most common type of bead at Catalhoyuk); bracelet 1921.X3, made of sliced dentalium shell and two pendants - 1921.X1, made of burnt bone, and 1921.X2, made of stone.

The bracelet and pendants were all found associated with a single skeleton, number 1924, from Burial 38. This was an adult buried with an infant on top of it, under the north west platform of Building 1. Initially the bracelet was thought to belong to the juvenile skeleton number 1938.

which underlay skeleton 1924 to the west, having been pushed aside to make space for the adult. However, the excavator concluded that the bracelet was associated with the adult skeleton, on the upper arm. The two pendants were close together near the chin of the skeleton, as though they had been suspended around the neck of skeleton 1924. Burial 38 was in the south-western part of the platform.

The necklace was found around the neck of a juvenile skeleton, number 1913, from Burial 35, also below the north west platform of Building 1. This burial contained only one skeleton, and the beads were found above and below the Deck and on the breastbone. The burial was at the northern edge of the platform, in the centre.

Burial 30 contained the tightly flexed skeletons of an adult (sexed female) and a neonate, as well as the articulated foot bones of a baby of up to 12 months old above the right shoulder of the adult skeleton (which had been placed on its left side). A chip of obsidian was found roughly above the skull of the adult, close to the baby's foot at roughly the same level (accurate co-ordinates are not yet available). A small oval piece of shell was found roughly above the feet of the neonate but at a slightly higher level (accurate co-ordinates are not yet available). These could be grave goods, possibly both associated with the baby represented only by one foot. Mellaart says that a piece of shell is frequently buried with infants, and a chip of obsidian was found with the neonate found in a brick in Shrine VI: 14. Once more details are available it may be possible to make a better assessment, although it is unlikely there can be certainty. Burial 30 was below the north central platform. A number of disarticulated bones were also present, representing at least five adult skeletons.

Skeleton 1378 was found below the east central platform of Building 1. It contained the very tightly flexed skeleton of an adult (sexed male, aged as old). The skeleton appears to have been buried in a basket or mat, which should be regarded as a grave good. In addition, a lump of yellow-beige material behind the skull was thought by the excavators to be yellow ochre. I was not able to examine this closely in situ, but was not convinced. On removal, the material collapsed into soil particles which were put into a jar. Brief examination suggests to me that this was not a lump of yellow ochre, which should have held together and would have a far more vivid hue. Instead, yellow ochre may have been applied to an organic item which was placed in the grave and subsequently rotted away, leaving the yellowish stain on the soil which took its place. Hopefully, analysis of the soil sample may be able to tell us not only whether yellow ochre was present, but whether wood or textile was also present. A single white stone disc-type bead was also recovered from this burial - it was found in the heavy residue following flotation of the soil most closely surrounding, the skeleton. It is not possible to say whether this was a deliberate deposit - single beads have been found in a wide variety of soil units.

Two mini clay balls are reported to have been found in the fill surrounding a juvenile skeleton, but they were not recorded as grave goods as there was no close association between them and the skeleton. Rather they were viewed as accidental additions during, the backfilling of the burial. No details are currently available to me as to which skeleton, burial or platform these occurred with.

Overall, it is clear that the most obvious grave goods found in 1996 were all found below the north west platform of Building 1, although it is possible that a few other items were found under the north central and east central platforms. This is surprising in terms of the information given by Mellaart, which led us to believe that the 'richest' burials would be under the east central and north east platforms. However, the sheer number of skeletons below the north west platform, and low number below the east central platform, are also quite unexpected, and it is possible that this building did not conform to the general patterns offered by Mellaart - as indeed a number of buildings he excavated did not. None of the burials excavated so far in Building 1 could be called rich, although as most are known to have no grave goods at all, a bracelet and two rather handsome pendants, or a reasonably long necklace, (which require considerable input of time and effort, and utilised largely imported materials) is an advance on normal. Botanical results may yet show that a number of skeletons were buried with flowers, food and wooden articles which have not survived in easily visible form. Moreover, excavation has not finished - importantly, the north east platform has not yet been explored and is likely to contain burials (it has a most suspicious hump below its surface!) and the east central platform also contains more burials, as may the north central one. These provisional observations may therefore be radically overthrown next year.

Beads

Leaving aside the beads found as grave goods, 95 beads were retrieved from the north mound, from 61 different units. The majority were found singly, although ten were found in unit 121.3 (nine were almost identical brown stone disc-type beads, the tenth was of white dentalium in the same style). Almost all were found in the heavy residue, which is not surprising as most are less than 4mm in diameter and 2mm thick. They occur in a range of unit types such as floors, room fill, pit fill, fire installation, and immediately over floors. With such poor co-ordinates currently available, it is not presently possible to comment more closely, but at least one can suggest from this wide range of find contexts that beads were in everyday use, and were not solely grave goods. A greater number of beads was retrieved from the north mound than from the Mellaart trench, and while this may be related more to the greater proportion of soil which was floated from the north mound - due to the division of deposits into smaller arbitrary units - it may also reflect the domestic context in which beads were presumably used. Unit 1213 (above) lay directly above the floor of Space 70, and considering the similarity of the beads retrieved from this unit it might be reasonable to suggest that they were part of a single necklace/bracelet.

Miscellaneous

Bone pendant 1239.H1 was found in room fill in Space 70. Other material in this unit bone, charcoal, plaster and burnt brick fragments - suggests this could be a mixture of domestic waste and building rubble. It appears to have been close to Fire Installation 11, possibly overlying the adjacent hearth. Further information is not yet available.

Stone pounder 1267.X3 was found in basal room fill in space 70. The deposit was very burnt, and was interpreted as probably building, collapse. The pounder does not appear to have been burnt, although the butt end is probably broken.

Stone celt 1241.X3 was found in unit 1241 was interpreted as room fill. The celt. was found close to the southern wall, near two obsidian projectile points

Stone macehead 1306.XI was found in Space 73, outside the eastern wall of Building. Unit 1306 contained charred remains and a small amount of brick fragments. The macehead does not show signs of burning

THE MELLAART AREA

The Figurines

The majority of the 62 or more figurines found during the 1996 season came from the Mellaart area. Almost all were found in so called midden layers containing a high quantities of charcoal, animal bone, broken artefacts etc.. These deposits clearly show some variety, and detailed work will be required to separate them into different types of midden. The figurines found in these deposits are also varied. They include animal, humanoid and human figures (both stylised and naturalistic) in states of completeness ranging from very fragmentary (a horn or leg only) to whole. The presence of broken figurines is not surprising in midden indeed Mellaart reported many from his excavations - but the discovery of a complete figurine such as 1073.XI is more problematic. The excavators suggested that unit 1073 might be a domestic dump or possibly a butchery dump. This could suggest that a complete figurine had accidentally been disposed of with domestic rubbish, or that its disposal was required due to accidental contamination from domestic rubbish. However, parts of four other figurines were found in this unit, none of them complete. Perhaps the complete figure was simply no longer wanted/required. The presence of parts of highly decorated human figurines in midden was unexpected, and requires further consideration at a later date.

Figurine fragments were found in most Spaces in the Mellaart area. Of those for which information is available, 16 came from Space 105, 6 from Space 106, 1 from between Space 106 and 107, 6 from Space 107, 1 from the wall between Spaces 107 and 108, 3 from Space 1 15, 2 from Space 1 16, 4 from Space 1 17. None were found in situ in Space 108 - which had only remnants of deposit left by Mellaart - although 6 were found in Mellaart's backfill, and none were found in Space 113 which was below the floors of Mellaart's House VII:7.

Beads

64 beads were recovered from 47 units in the Mellaart area. As noted above, the low number compared to the north mound is likely to be skewed by the smaller percentage of deposits which was floated, but could also relate to the apparently non-domestic nature of the Spaces. Almost all beads were retrieved from the heavy residue. The vast majority were simple disc type stone beads, as on the north mound. However, four unusual beads were found, all described in the small finds catalogue. 1575.X 1 was found in Space 1 05. The small unit 1575 consisted largely of charcoal and ash, with some bone, coprolite and hackberry, and was regarded by the excavators as probably a bucketful of waste. The other three beads 1657.H1, 1668.X6 and 1832.X4 all came from Space 115. Units 1668 and 1832 were in fact a single deposit, and unit 1657 overlay unit 1668. The high level of sticky ash/charcoal in this deposit (30%), which is

different from many midden layers, suggests it could be fairly specialised waste such as oven or hearth sweepings. The excavator suggested they probably represent a slow accumulation of deposits, although the presence of 3 fairly similar and very unusual beads would tend towards the possibility of a single depositional event. Similar beads are known only from one bracelet found by Mellaart in a Level VII burial. Unit 1668 and 1832 were finds-rich. Fragments of matting, preserved as phytoliths, were found in unit 1832.

Miscellaneous

1051.X1 is a pale -grey/green stone miniature adze, well polished on the blade and on one side of the body. It appears to be complete, although it may be slightly damaged at the butt end. (Due to the type and small size of stone nodules used, brief examination cannot always determine whether or not the butt is complete.) Unit 1081 is backfill from Mellaart's Shrine VII:9, our Space 1 12, and seems to be mainly an erosion deposit rather than deliberate redeposition of excavated material. However, it is clear that it may not Genuinely belong to this Space.

1653.K1 is a greenstone miniature axe/celt with a slight adze facet to the blade. The broad blade is well polished, and slightly chipped. The butt is roughly made, and probably broken. (Due to the type and small size of stone nodules used, brief examination cannot always determine whether or not the butt is complete.) No information is yet available about Unit 1653.

1668.X3 is a large (for Çatalhöyük) very dark green stone axe. Much of the blade is missing, but the rest is intact. This is a very nice, well-polished axe with a good, finely made blade. Unit 1668 (see above, beads) was a sticky ashy midden layer in Space 115, and contained a number of special finds including unusual bead(s), a projectile point and worked bone. It could represent oven or hearth sweepings.

1092.H 1 is a regular oval/drop-shaped bone pendant, polished, and perforated towards one end. It is complete. Pendants/beads of this type occur on necklaces from Mellaart's excavations. As it is unbroken, it cannot have fallen from a necklace due to damage, and must have entered the unit in some other way. Unit 1092 was in Space 105, and was a dump or midden layer. It contained fragments of pot, bone, clay ball, obsidian, stone, shell, burnt daub, plaster and charcoal.

1520.X1 is an unusual bone ring/pendant. It was heavily burnt and highly polished. Unit 1520 was in Space 105, and was regarded as a midden dump. It had 2-5% charcoal and small quantities of material generally found in midden - large bone, pot sherds, clay ball fragments, flint and obsidian fragments, shell and stone. The only other notable find was a bone point. This ring, was unbroken when found (it later broke - the burning made it extremely fragile) and it therefore not normal 'rubbish'. However, use-wear shows that it was suspended from the strange projection on one side, and it is possible that it entered unit 1520 by falling from a suspension cord. It is not clear to me whether the burning took place before or after use (burning could be used deliberately to achieve a dark colour, as may be the case with pendant 1921.X1), and therefore whether this could be relevant to its discard.

1579.XI is an antler 'fastener'. The purpose of these items was believed by Mellaart to be fastening cloaks, but they could also be bodkins or weaving shuttles - specialist analysis will doubtless help with this. Mellaart found a number of them in burials, behind the shoulder of skeletons he believed were male. This example is complete, which is why it is mentioned here. It is perforated at one end, which is the most common style although some are perforated in the middle. Unit 1579 in Space 105 and was interpreted as either building collapse or midden. It contained up to 10% brick and mortar fragments, but also small quantities of material associated with middens - bone, pot, clay ball, stone, shell, obsidian and charcoal. As with the last two items mentioned, it is complete and therefore could not have entered the unit through damage, although if it were a fastener it could have fallen from a broken suspension thread.

These few items have been mentioned because of their generally good condition, and their presence in unexpected deposits. At least half the deposits are regarded as midden, yet with one exception these items were usable and 'desirable'. They are not expedient tools, but items one should expect to be curated. An examination of Mellaart's small finds has shown a considerable level of such finds - particularly around and chipped stone items - in outside areas recorded as courtyards filled with midden. This is an area which invites detailed investigation. Closer controls on find-spots may be necessary in order for us to understand precisely which deposits contain these items, and why. While it appears that Space 105 had a unusually high level of finds, this was only in certain deposits; Space 115 also had a fairly high oh level, but largely from a few units.

Overall, these preliminary comments, though very limited in detail, show that Space 105 had the lowest number of finds dealt with here, particularly figurines. However, this space contained a very large volume of deposits compared to other spaces, and more detailed work is required to consider the relative numbers of finds, their condition and quality, and the particular types of deposits within which they are found. As almost all the excavation in the Mellaart area so far has been in external areas/middens, it is not yet possible to make comparisons between finds from internal and external areas. Moreover, these notes have dealt only with certain types of artefact, and mainly complete miscellaneous ones. Space 113, for instance, is apparently internal and produced several fragments of bone rings, and many broken items from other spaces have not been considered here. Comparison with the North area shows a far higher number of artefacts in the external Mellaart area, but it is possible that conditions vary across the site.