

Çatalhöyük Figurines - Lynn Meskell (University of Stanford) and Carolyn Nakamura (Columbia University)

Abstract

This year the figurine team focused on recording basic information for all of the 1526 objects in the miniature shaped object corpus. As a result we were able to perform some preliminary spatial analyses, which allowed us to begin discussing notions of process, context, and circulation of figurines at the site. In addition to finding more of the common abbreviated and zoomorphic types, excavators uncovered some less common and new forms. The 4040 and IST surface scrape uncovered two very small unsexed human clay figurines with protruding stomachs and buttocks (11324.X3, 11848.X1). Another anthropomorphic stone figurine was found in a midden in 4040 (12102.X1), similar to 10475.X2 from last season, but with the head and neck sawed off. Another midden unit, (10396), in the 4040 produced 11 figurines/fragments (most zoomorphic). Finally, the IST team found a very atypical human clay figurine (12401.X7) that depicts a robust female on the front and a skeleton on the back; the neck has a dowel hole and the head is missing.

Given the diversity of this collection, we seek to explore the various assemblages and materials as figured lifeworlds. A notion of figurine as *process*, rather than object or end product is therefore central to our project. Given their specific materiality (portable, three-dimensional, miniature), figurines can render multiple levels of representation and participate in, or even anchor, storytelling activities that mediate issues of memory and identity. We find the wider practices of embedding materials, and the circulation, plastering and defacement of body parts to be evocative gestures that intersect with many figurine practices. These may embody and express particular notions and relations of life and death cycles and we plan to explore these issues and connections more fully in future seasons and publications.

Özet

Bu sene figürin ekibi, 1526 adet ufak buluntunun basit verilerinin kaydı üzerinde yoğunlaştı. Bu çalışmanın sonucu olarak, Çatalhöyük'deki figürin dağılımı, kavramsal methodlar ve kontext gibi ilk analizlerin sonucu olan verileri tartışma imkanı bulduk. Genelde bulunan daha kısaltılmış, hayvana benzer örnekler ek olarak, bu sene daha farklı, yeni şekiller bulundu. 4040 ve İST alanlarındaki yüzey kazımaları sonucunda iki adet, çok küçük boyutta, seksi belli olmayan çıkık, göbekli ve kalçalı insan figürinleri bulundu (11324.X3, 11848.X1). Geçen sene bulunan figürine benzeyen 10475.X2 ve 4040'daki bir çöplükte bulunan bir başka insan betimli taş figürinin başı ve boynu kırıktır. 4040 alanındaki diğer bir çöplükte, 10396, 11 adet figürin ve parçaları bulundu (Çoğu hayvan betimli). Ayrıca İST ekibi, ön tarafı kadın, arka tarafı iskelet olarak betimlenmiş, boyun kısmı delikli ve başı olmayan, olağan dışı bir kil figürin ortaya çıkarıldı.

Introduction

This year we continued to build up the database archive and refine the system implemented last year in 2004. Although much work remains to be done, we were able to compile basic data (material and form) for nearly all objects and fragments in the collection in terms of material and form, enabling us to perform some preliminary spatial analyses. The findings from these analyses now allow us to discuss notions of context and circulation of figurine materials at the site and thus address and challenge some popular conceptions about the Çatalhöyük figurines offered by Mellaart and others who have studied the materials previously. We aim to present a more

comprehensive and representative range of figurines from the site, balancing out the sensationalized finds of the so-called ‘Mother Goddess’ images with the ubiquitous abbreviated figural and animal forms in clay. Our initial findings pose a challenge to the special status given to the category of figurine and its commonly assumed associations with art, women and religion. The diversity of the Çatalhöyük corpus alone demands that we examine a number of variables and interpretations beyond those specified, implicitly and explicitly, by the simple category of figurine.

An overarching goal of this research, then, seeks to make a decisive move away from the notion of figurine as thing; rather, we propose to view the figurine *as process*. As we emphasized last year, our database design process did not simply involve archiving the collection, but engaged a critical rethinking of analytical and interpretive categories oriented towards a more integrative approach to figurine studies. We suspect that certain types of figurines will find closer ties to wall art, representational architectural features, and to plastering activities in general than perhaps to other types of figurines. Refocusing figurine research towards such areas of overlap prompts a productive rethinking of our taxonomic framework in terms of processes of resource acquisition, technological and gendered production, and use rather than in terms of the end product. This approach broadly embraces the idea that technology is social before it is technical (Foucault), thus allowing us to consider the social processes involved material selection, preparation, fabrication, use, circulation and discard.

By developing these aims, the larger interpretative issues of self-representation — the negotiation of self and sexuality, and relations between human and animal worlds — might thus come into sharper analytical focus. We seek to move away from sterile attempts to deduce function and meaning from a visual reading — the ‘is it a deity or not’ type of equation? Instead we seek to look and maneuver around the objects, weaving together patterns of figurine making, technology, use, mobility and discard, coupled with the traversing of categories from figures to plastered features to wall paintings. In this way we hope to build up more of a lifeworld for the Neolithic community, taking into account the inherent visuality and materiality of a figured corpus.

Given our knowledge of representational spheres at Çatalhöyük, this prompts us to ask was there something special about settling down in tightly packed communities in the Neolithic that make its inhabitants more attentive to the contours of personhood and sexual identity, are they playing with classifications and categories that we might find unfamiliar? But first of all we have to balance the scales in terms of readily identifiable genders as the numbers of male, androgynous, phallic and ambiguously sexed figures needs to be recalculated. This is a task we have taken seriously over our first two seasons and are close to achieving a fuller picture of the entire range of material. A notion of *becoming* at this site might then have encompassed experimental imagery that incorporates various sexual symbolism, or combines innovative ways of viewing attributes depending on viewpoint, movement and circulation.

The following report will provide a brief discussion of the current status of our work, including the identification of some key issues, work completed, new finds, the presentation of some preliminary analyses and interpretive directions, and plans for future work.

Issues addressed and work completed

1. The Archive

At a fundamental level we need some dialogue between the two periods of excavation in terms of material culture — even if not the stated contexts, given the levels of specificity in recording during the 1960s (Todd 1976). The scale and speed of the early work uncovered a dazzling array of materials, yet lacked the benefit of the present project’s careful, contextual methodologies. This is evinced very clearly with the figurine corpus. If one were to take the Mellaart finds at face value, specifically the published pieces and thus ignore the wide variation in figurine types, then one might posit that two rather different sites had been dug (see Mellaart 1962; see 1964; 1965; 1966; 1967; 1975). Mellaart would have uncovered a large number of impressive stone and clay pieces, whereas conversely our project would have found more mundane clay examples of quadrupeds, bucrania, abbreviated human forms and so on. Though we have found impressive examples, the mundane dominates numerically. One

way to challenge this picture is to re-excavate Mellaart, to literally work in his areas and through his spoil. A training and educational excavation (TEMPER) under the aegis of the wider project carried out the latter and we now have a very good idea of what Mellaart missed, overlooked or even discarded. Our numbers indicate that he missed significant numbers of figurines (anthropomorphic and zoomorphic) along with fragments of them, non-diagnostic pieces, shaped clay pieces and scrap that is probably ceramic debitage.

One of our first tasks then was to investigate whether this discrepancy largely can be explained away by differences in excavation methodologies and goals or whether it, in fact, does present some kind of meaningful patterning. Others have previously made assertions concerning figurine patterning at the site (Hamilton 1996, in press; Voigt 2000), however, we remain highly skeptical of such analyses given that they have assumed a certain equivalence between the 1960's and current excavation collections and not taken differences in excavation methodologies into account. In order to make any meaningful comparisons, some attempt at balancing Mellaart's picture must be undertaken. Fortunately, we were able to address this issue somewhat by including materials from Mellaart's study (etutluk) collection (The project became aware of these materials last year when the Konya museum turned them over to the project to store on site after they were deaccessioned from the Ankara collection. To our knowledge these materials have not been studied previously), and materials found in his spoil heap dug by the TEMPER project (see archive reports 2000-2004). Materials from the current excavations in Mellaart's area (now called the South Area) also contribute to balancing out the Mellaart profile. The emerging figurine database will include these materials recorded in appropriate detail. Given that contextual information is missing or minimal for most of these materials, they cannot be used in analyses that look at patterning over time and space.

2. The Database

Initially, we designed an extensive database to accommodate a broad range of shaped objects to ensure that we did not overvalue the category of figurine. This decision has resulted in a database record of over 1500 objects, many of which are non-diagnostic fragments and scrap. After having become more familiar with the figurine materials we have decided to employ a tiered recording methodology. Although we have not yet worked out the specifics for this system, most likely it will involve fully recording all diagnostic figurines and figurine fragments, while recording only fabric and weight of the non-diagnostic pieces. Basic descriptive and contextual information for all objects will be recorded where possible. This season we accomplished entering this data for all objects present on site and all known objects from the Konya and Ankara museum collections. We focused on entering basic information that would allow us to perform some preliminary analyses of basic patterning across the site and over time:

- ID number
- Inventory number
- Unit
- Year
- Area
- Space
- Building
- Feature
- Level
- Location
- Object Type
- Material
- Form (representational)
- Type (representational).

These basic data also allowed us to investigate some of Naomi Hamilton's assertions (2005), and conclusions from the heavy residue report in Volume 6 (see discussion below). As mentioned last year, we have structured the database in such a way that allows for the recording of objects from the most general, descriptive terms to more specific, interpretive categories. We believe that this provides the most flexibility for a variety of analyses. Given this consideration, we are eager to dispense with previous terminologies used by Mellaart and Hamilton

such as humanoid, ex voto, schematic, mother goddess, fat lady, as they cannot be disassociated from problematic narratives from art and religion. Our process-focused approach challenges the idea of figurines as static, stationary objects to be viewed and kept in special areas. Hamilton herself presented alternative interpretations for some of the Çatalhöyük figurines, possibly as toys, or jewelry and adornment. While there is little evidence for such use, it is likely that figurines circulated throughout the site and we will put forth a few alternative possibilities.

3. Clay technologies

We continued to work with other clay material specialists, Mirjana Stevanović (building materials), Nurcan Yalman (pottery), and database specialist, Mia Ridge, to agree upon a common clay terminology that would enable better functionality of database queries. Although there are some basic commonalities between ceramics, figurines, building materials and clay balls, the fabric and firing technologies for each are quite specialized and substantially different. A broad aim of the project seeks to better understand the range of clay technologies employed at the site. The clay figurine fabrics are not uniform, although they do appear to cluster into a few different type groups ranging from coarse ‘dirty’ clay to very fine clean marl and plaster. Some fabrics do appear to be similar to miniature clay balls (see reports by Atalay) and possibly some ceramic fabrics (Yalman, pers. comm.) Next season, we plan to begin working out a methodology for the systematic recording fabric type and degree of heat exposure. Given that figurines are predominantly found in secondary contexts such as midden and fill, such work and the eventual comparison of fabrics across object types, will be important for getting at aspects of figurine production and fabrication, even if only obliquely.

4. Experimental Methods



Figure 80. Anthropomorphic/phallic forms. Left: 10474.X, Right: 79-799-65 (Ankara Museum).

Video and Multiple Perspectives. Given our interest in exploring embodied processes of crafting, decision making, material agency, and circulation involved in figurine practice (see 2004 Archive Report), we continued to document some of the figurines on video in order to emphasize the experience of these three-dimensional, portable objects as likely viewed from multiple perspectives. The theme of ambiguity, both in terms of form and sex, needs to be addressed within the Çatal figurine assemblage. As we reported last year, most of the figurines are unsexed and often cannot be assigned to any clear cut traditional category of male or female. This kind of ambiguity often exploits the three-dimensionality of a figurine, a form that can support multi-leveled and hybrid representations like the anthropomorphic and phallic forms in Fig. 80. This specific materiality of a

figurine also invites one to handle and manipulate it and view it from different perspectives. Given this capacity, figurines might likely have been engaged in interactive activities such as storytelling, wish fulfillment, didactic devices concerning transformation, and/or exploration of personhood and sexuality. Again, it is important to entertain the possibility that figurines operated outside of cultic and religious contexts, that it was not necessarily the object itself that was meaningful but the social activities their materiality anchored and supported.

Replications. We also brought some clay modeling material to experiment with re-creating some of the most ubiquitous forms found at Çatalhöyük (We acknowledge that there are differences between working with clay and working with oven-bake clay modeling paste, but given the sensitive issue of forgeries, we decided to use

a modern modeling compound. All copies were destroyed after the experiment). We all encountered various levels of difficulty in this task (Participants included ourselves, John Swogger, Mira Stevanovic and Marina Lizzaralde). We imagined that the simplest abbreviated forms would take only five or six moves to make. But we found that despite their apparent simplicity, the zoomorphic and abbreviated figurines are of a particular cultural style (although there is no standardization of form, there is a certain level of stylistic consistency visible within the various types). The forms were surprisingly foreign to us even though we were constantly handling and examining them. At the outset, even the most experienced person (John Swogger) took some 15 moves to make an abbreviated form but with practice quickly paired the process down to 6 moves. For the animal figurines, fashioning the entire head and body from a single piece of clay proved to be difficult for us, but could be done with a certain amount of practice.

Fingerprints. After reviewing the literature on fingerprint analyses on ancient materials, we decided that correlating fingerprint ridge breadth with height and age would provide the most fruitful avenue for such research (Kamp, et al. 1999). Determining any statistically significant differences in ridge breadth due to sex requires a “genetically close” sample group for comparison (Cummins 1941; Jantz and Parham 1978; Malvalwala, et al. 1990; Stinson 2002). We find do not believe that any modern population can provide such a sample and find studies that assume genetic proximity based only on geographic proximity problematic. Although counts of figurines with fingerprint impressions have not been finalized, we took a sample of 34 print impressions from horn, quadruped, abbreviated and non-diagnostic forms. To avoid leaving a residue from the vinyl polysiloxane dental compound (Patterson Dental Supplies) on the figurine surface, we took impressions of the fingerprints using modeling clay and then lifted the print images from the modeling clay. In future seasons we plan to collect prints from all field samples that have such impressions as well as obtain permission to life images from the figures in the Konya Archaeological Museum.

2005 Finds

This year the project recovered 47 objects from excavation and 26 figurines from Mellaart’s spoil heap. Basic counts for the excavation finds are presented in Tables 1a-1c below.

Object Form	Count
figural	32
figural, non-diagnostic	9
geometric	3
geometric, non-diagnostic	1
non-diagnostic	2
TOTAL	47

Table 1a. 2005 Shape Objects

Figural objects	total	non-diagnostic	Secure
anthropomorphic	14	2	12
zoomorphic	19	5	14
indeterminate	17	9	8

Table 1b. Form Distribution of 2005 Figural Shaped Objects

FORM	Total	Indeterminate	Secure
abbreviated	4	4	0
human	6	0	6
horns	9	2	7
quadrupeds	6	3	3

Table 1c. Type Distribution of 2005 Figural Shaped Objects



Figure 81. 12102.X1. This headless figure is a solid rounded base extending up to a wide horizontal groove indicating a waist that gives way to the upper torso.

12102.X1

Description. The figure comprises a solid rounded base extending up to a wide horizontal groove indicating a waist that gives way to the upper torso (Fig. 81). Two diagonal (shoulder to waist), deeply incised lines indicate arms and a single vertical line divides the chest down the center and may be suggestive of breasts. The neck and head are missing, but have been cut off, probably with obsidian and other stone tools, and perhaps even polished after removal (Karen Wright and Adnan Baysal, pers. comm.).

Context. This figurine derives from a midden context in the 4040.

Discussion. Although the neck and head are missing, it is likely that this piece is similar to the example found last year in space 227 (10475.X2). Another example of a removed limestone head occurs with a figurine now in Ankara (79-8-65). Although speculative at this juncture, the removal of heads is a provocative theme for discussion. Such practices occur in human burials, and we have seen the circulation of heads after death repeatedly at Çatalhöyük. Within the clay figurine assemblage there are several headless bodies that have dowel holes in the neck and also small spherical objects that resemble heads. Certainly, there is the technological consideration that forming the head and body separately is easier for those less skilled in figure modeling. We found this to be the case in our experimental work with fashioning figurines. But given the presence of dowel holes (which allows the easy removal and exchange of heads) and evidence for the intentional removal of heads across the site, we suggest that figurines might be involved in activities of myth and storytelling. Figurine worlds may have provided a rich vehicle to explore narrative and transformative experience — the exploits of individuals, encounters with animals, mythic or historic. The ability for figurines to be malleable, to change identities through the transfer of heads (or change of viewing angle), presents an interesting set of possibilities and leads us away from static forms into the notion of figurine as process (see discussion below).

11324.X3

Dimensions (H.xW.xTh.): 2.84 x 1.41 x 1.14cm; 2.5g.

Description. This figurine is a very small standing human figurine with well-delineated features carved from soft limestone (Fig 82). On the head, ears are indicated and the face depicts eyes, a large nose and mouth. The torso is relatively broad with arms hanging down at the sides. The figure shows a protruding belly with a large belly button incised in the middle. The belly slopes down and outward, then cuts in straight to the groin. The thick legs are divided both front and back and have well-formed feet. On the back the leg divide proceeds up the buttocks, which also protrude outward from a very straight back.

Context. 11324.X3 derives from space 202, building 42 in the 4040 area. The unit has been interpreted as some kind of infilling or leveling event to the south of the bench in this space.



Figure 82. 11324.X3. A very small standing human figurine with well-delineated features carved from soft limestone.

Discussion. This figurine is interesting both in terms of its miniature size and lack of clear sexual features. One other similar figure was recovered this year from the Istanbul surface scrape (11324.X3 Fig. 83). Such miniature objects can invite a much different range of use activities than the larger statuettes. While the latter are often (wrongly) envisioned as sitting in a shrine, being viewed but not circulated or handled, the former perhaps are more easily seen as more portable objects that can be carried, worn, exchanged, hidden, etc. The lack of any clear sex markers in these embodiments also compels us to reconsider the status of gendered representation within the figurine corpus. Although many take exaggerated buttocks and stomach to be indicative of femaleness, such features are necessarily ambiguous markers of sex. And we must consider the possibility that the emphasis of these traits invokes meanings beyond that of binary sex categories. Figurines whether sexed or unsexed may deal more with the exploration of identity and personhood than with categories determined or bounded by gender.

12401.X7

Dimensions (H.xW.xTh.): 6.51 x 7.37 x 6.44cm; 221g



Figure 83. 12401.X7. Hybrid representation perhaps of life and death.



Description. This figure depicts a human, hybrid representation perhaps of life and death. The front portrays the typical robust female with large breasts and stomach (provocatively, the navel appears to protrude (umbilical hernia) which sometimes occurs in pregnancy); very thin arms with delineated fingers (see Ankara 79-251-65) fold up to rest on the breasts (see Ankara 79-803-65 and 10475.X2). The front base of the figure is missing but it appears to be seated with legs crossed in front (Ankara 79-20-65; 79-656-65). Red paint is present around neck and between breasts in four concentric chains (Ankara 79-20-65), and on the wrists and possibly the ankles. The trace of red paint in lower area suggests painted decoration seen on the ankles of other figures. The back portrays an articulated skeleton with a modeled spinal column, a pelvis and scapulas that project above shoulders. Individual ribs and vertebrae are depicted through horizontal and diagonal scoring. A prominent dowel hole indicates that originally the piece had a separate, detachable head. A circular ‘footprint’ around the dowel hole suggests that the head fit snugly into this curved space. The figurine was plastered and shows evidence of undergoing secondary burning (darkened clay/yellowish plaster), which is especially visible on the front from arms/breasts down and diagonally down sides where plaster is missing.

Context. 12401.X7 was found by the Istanbul team in an ashy area of space 252 with a large amount of ground stone, grinding stone, and a mace head.

Discussion. We have found no parallel examples for this piece across the site, the Anatolian Neolithic or the European Neolithic for that matter. The skeletal representation indeed seems unique, but even the style of the female body, with its exaggerated breasts and stomach, is different from other known Çatal examples that portray the female body in more naturalistic proportions. Given that the head is missing, we asked John Swogger to make a few Çatal types from modeling clay so we could get an idea of what the figure might have looked like with a head. The most interesting example was one modeled after the plastered skull found in 2004. He suggested a link between the plaster/skull and living body/skeleton couplings of the two representations. This led us to think more about the act of plastering which we will talk more about in the general discussion.

Unit (10396)



Figure 84. Quadruped 10396.X2.

This unit is part of a primary midden deposit (truncated by a Roman foundation trench) in Space 268 in the 4040 area. Eleven figurine/ figurine fragments mostly comprised of zoomorphic forms (horns and quadrupeds) were recovered from this unit. One or possibly two abbreviated forms were also found (H3, H12). Most of these objects were recovered from screening. Only two X-finds were recorded. X1 is an obsidian point and X2 (Fig. 84) is a nearly complete standing quadruped with tail, R horn and rear R leg intact; all other legs are missing. There is a puncture mark through L horn x-section suggesting that the horn was intentionally broken off. Given the number of figurines found, this unit warrants closer examination.

Preliminary counts

The results of some basic object counts based on our new recording methodology are presented in Tables 2a–4b. As we are still in the process of refining our recording system, inputting unrecorded materials, sorting out exact numbers, and waiting for contextual information, *these results should be taken as preliminary only*. The counts were tabulated very quickly on site and there may be discrepancies among totals between different tables. We will sort these out later on when we publish a more complete and thorough analysis.

Shaped Objects	total	non-diagnostic	?	secure
figural objects	999	233	111	655
non-diagnostic objects	416	/	/	/
scrap?	110	/	/	/
Total number	1525	/	/	/

Table 2a. Overview of Shaped Objects

Representational Form	total	?	secure
anthropomorphic ¹	396	130	266
zoomorphic	508	170	338
indeterminate	205	0	205
geometric	51	12	39

Zoomorphic forms	total	?	secure
quadruped	192	15	177
horn	273	125	148

Horn types	total	?	secure
horn	273	125	148
straight horn	43	29	14
curved horn	175	57	118

Anthropomorphic Forms	total	?	secure
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human	120	15	105
abbreviated	207	53	154

Abbreviated Form Profile	total	?	secure
abbreviated_all	207	53	154
abbreviated_REC	16	1	15
abbreviated_Mellet	22	4	18
abbreviated_CHC	21	2	19
abbreviated_current_excavations	148	46	102

Figural Type	#	#	#	9	8	8-7 (7?)	7-6 (6?)	6 (5?)	5	4	3	2	1	0 total		
anthropomorphic	1	0	1	24	33	3	25	48	84	5	4	6	5	14	253	
human	0	0	0	4	9	0	6	5	30	0	2	4	5	11	76	
abbreviated	0	0	1	15	16	3	15	33	23	5	2	2	0	0	115	
zoomorphic	1	0	8	9	50	6	21	99	71	8	2	1	0	3	279	
quadruped	1	0	1	2	27	1	8	45	35	8	1	0	0	3	132	
horns	0	0	7	6	20	5	7	52	25	0	1	1	0	0	124	
total no. figural objects	2	0	10	40	93	11	54	181	131	13	6	7	5	14	567	
TOTAL no. shaped objects	5	-	#	#	##	#	17	#	313	##	25	7	7	5	#	830

Table 4b. Counts per Level

Table 2b. Type and Subtype Profiles of Figural Forms

1. Anthropomorphic includes abbreviated forms.

Mellaart figural object profile	CHC (museum)	MELLET (etutluk)	REC (spoil)	total
zoomorphic	96	38	20	154
quadrupeds	83	28	1	112
horns	3	5	15	23
anthropomorphic	113	30	18	161
human	65	5	1	71
abbreviated	36	22	16	74
Mellaart All²	205	81	73	359

REC Object Profile	totals
figurines, all	47
figurines ?	12
indeterminate	11
scrap	7
non-diagnostic	17
Total	73

Table 2c. Profiles of Mellaart Materials including his Spoil heap (REC)

2. Totals include indeterminate and non-diagnostic pieces not presented in this table.

DATA CATEGORY	Count
midden	212
fill	209
arbitrary	47
construction/make-up	46
floor	33
cluster	14
activity (penning or burying event)	7
natural	1
Total Number of Figural Objects	569

Table 3a. Figural Objects by Data Category

Features/ Unit Category	fill	floor	midden	construction	cluster	arbitrary	skeleton	Feature Totals
wall	21	0	2	21	0	5	0	49
burial	33	0	0	1	0	1	5	40
platform	1	13	0	9	1	0	0	24
bin	7	0	0	5	0	0	0	12
pit	8	1	0	0	0	0	0	9
fire installation	2	5	0	1	0	1	0	9
pit	7	1	0	0	0	0	0	8
roof	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	7
cut	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
basket fragments plastered elements	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
architectural	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	5
central "room"	0	2	0	3	0	0	0	5
niche	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
screen wall/room partition	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	4
wall opening	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	4
oven	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	3
cache (obsidian)	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
hearth	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Category Totals	101	23	2	59	1	7	5	198

Table 3b. Figural Objects by Feature

Building	Level											
	XII	XI	X	IX	VIII	VII	VI	V	IV	III	II	I
1												
2												
3												
4												
5												
6												
7												
8												
10												
11												
16												
17												
18												
21												
22												
23												
24												
25												
28												
29												
44												
45												
47												
49												
2 bldgs.	0	4 bldgs.	6 bldgs.	5 bldgs.	5 bldgs.	5 bldgs.	4-6 bldgs.	4 bldgs.	3-4 bldgs.	1 bldg.	1 bldg.	0

 = level present in building
 = ?

Table 4a. Buildings in Levels

Discussion

Becoming bodies

The new figurine project at Catalhöyük has taken a new direction in terms of embodied imagery and the concomitant rethinking of gender and sexuality. While this represents new work, it is also in a preliminary stage. We might approach the archive through various modes of viewing, leading to other ways of interpreting, and different viewpoints (literally and metaphorically), angles, and so on. On a primary level what seemed most salient at Catalhöyük was the presentation of being or personhood, not a specifically gendered being with discrete sexual markers, but an abridged version of the bodily form. The basic representation consists of a head and nose on cylindrical torso ending in a solid or divided base, but some are more elaborated with other incised and modeled facial features and head pieces or decoration (Fig. 85). Despite their simplicity there is some degree of variability in terms of shape or posture, size and style. Some are extremely small with appearing to have only a small head on a base. Many are bent forward and as they have disproportionately long pillar forms, begin to look rather phallic. This pillar can either end in a conical base or a divided pair of stumpy legs: the latter type also begins to represent male genitalia when viewed from various angles. The abbreviated types are generally made in much finer, cleaner fabrics such as marl, than the zoomorphic figures. Most show signs of uneven firing and were probably ‘passively fired’ near ovens or hearths during routine activity.



Figure 85. *Abbreviated Forms f.*

Other figurine makers took this trunk or pillar like style to another level, the cylindrical body and elongated neck assumed a phallic form and may have been evocations of sexual ambiguity—the blurring of sexual features or sexual complementarity combining differently gendered bodies (Fig. 80). Most of these forms are made of stone, a low quality marble found locally (10264.X1, 12102.X1). We have seen similar but perhaps more striking examples from prehistoric Mediterranean (Knapp and Meskell 1997) and Near Eastern contexts (Kuijt and Chesson 2005). We also see similarities in the worked bone assemblages, specifically items of personal adornment (Russell 2005), which show phallic forms specifically the pillar shape ending in a knob or groove. The abbreviated forms with stubbed limbs mentioned earlier, while reminiscent of a simple bodily form also evoke an image of male genitalia.

Many researchers at the site are beginning to ask why masculinity is so strongly demarcated across a range of imagery (Hodder 2006). For example in wall paintings of people and animals, maleness is very present. Animals being chased, teased or hunted seem to be male with erect genitalia. Our future research seeks to question whether the Neolithic was a sexual revolution, a period of ‘self’ exploration at a level not experienced before. Is the coming together of people in clustered communities a way of seeing the self differently, of exploring the contours of a

sexed self, of understanding self-fashioning in less than binary terms? From this perspective, figurines also could be part of a process rather than a finished and contained product. In coming seasons we plan to explore the nature of personhood as a visual category. How did the visual presentation of the self mesh or diverge from other spheres of selfhood, like that presented in the household, through the processes of burial and re-circulation, and across a range of experiential settings?

In our work we have discovered that using video to record the figurines as they are moved and handled provides a more embodied set of perspectives and viewpoints and allows us to begin to witness some of the visual punning that we think underlies many of the fabrications. Given the nature of representational practice within the figurine corpus, the theme not only of ambiguity in gender but also in form or being is emerging. We will therefore extend these broader discussions of self and personhood to include considerations of human and animal relations.

Questions of context

As a general premise at Catalhöyük the figurines and shaped clay objects as a collective are found in secondary contexts, they are primarily in room fill, fill between walls, middens, burial fill and rubbish areas. Occasionally they have been found on or near floors. In the new excavations we do not see the patterns that Mellaart's early work would suggest, that figurines (specifically anthropomorphic) are found in special or cultic areas associated with features such as platforms, shrines, grain bins and so on. For example, Mellaart (1964) described finding a 'goddess figurine' painted red in an associated shrine, we too have found red paint on clay figurines but none come from such grandiose contexts since the whole notion of what constituted a 'shrine' has been cogently deconstructed. Mellaart often claimed that figurines (goddess figurines no less) were found only in shrines, whereas the more rigorous excavations over the past decade have shown them to be consistently in rubbish and fill deposits, alongside vast quantities of animal bone, plant remains, ground and chipped stone and other small finds. Interestingly, when we have excavated rooms with plastered bucrania and benches with protruding horns (Building 52 2005, see Figs. 5, 38 & 40), there were no figurines to be found, human or animal. This space would have definitely been categorized as a shrine area for Mellaart. One of the rare instances where we may have evidence of purposeful deposition came from last season in Space 227 of Building 58 where a carved stone figurine seems to have been placed on a floor in association with a number of animal bones, worked bone, obsidian fragments, and worked stone. The excavator believes that this was not consistent with room fill but an assemblage purposefully left there after which the room was backfilled (Space 227, 2004). Continued excavation of the west half of this space this season has recovered information that changes the interpretation of this context slightly; the cluster of objects including the figurine were not on the floor but on a raised platform in the southeast corner of the room (Bogdan, pers. comm.). In the rest of the space, were found a lot of animal bone in the infill, on the floors and stuck in the oven, and (Building 58 2005). While such an event may be difficult to substantiate archaeologically in the end (Hodder, pers. com.), the finds recovered may relate to the closing of the house or related event. However, Shahina Farid (pers. comm.) has made the astute point that a 'closing' event could also be interpreted as an 'opening' event given the nature of building processes at the site. Again, perhaps such binary distinctions are unhelpful here and we might rather consider an emphasis placed not on clearly demarcated events but rather the liminal spaces or periods in between them. Multiple lines of evidence point towards more fluid ways of viewing the world as salient for the Çatalhöyük inhabitants.

This notion leads us to critically examine which of our categories might have been meaningful in the past. Are there substantive differences—in terms of manufacture, treatment, use and circulation—between female and male, stone and clay, human and animal in the figurine corpus? Contextual information might address such issues, however, the predominance of secondary deposition for all types complicates the picture. Figurines commonly evoke or have even become synonymous with notions of a 'mother goddess', the female domestic sphere, and ritual or cultic activities, but such ideas alone do not account for the striking diversity of the Çatalhöyük assemblage which features objects spanning a spectrum of highly elaborated to abbreviated forms, human and animal representations, and range from careful to quick disposal/depositional contexts. Although, some of the objects likely derive from ritual activities, the majority is associated with contexts suggestive of more everyday practices. Furthermore, a strict division between the 'everyday' and the 'magical' or 'ritual' might not have been operative in the past; allowing for this possibility marks another example of our concerted attempt to challenge

taxonomic structures or binaries in all levels of interpretation (Nakamura and Meskell 2004). Our recording and analysis attempts to unpack descriptive categories as much as possible and gives equally footing to a diversity of interpretive possibilities.

If we think of a range of uses or rationales for making figurines we arrive at the usual suite of suggestions: amulets, talismans, narrative devices, representations of individuals or ancestors, tokens, training devices, deities, gaming pieces, objects of magic or manipulation, initiation, contracts in clay, and so on. Does this really help us at Çatalhöyük? All of these possibilities have degrees of merit, yet since we lack the primary contexts, they can only be suggestive. However, we can potentially analyze across various media to try and ascertain a symbolic lifeworld — it is important to note that figurines did not exist in a vacuum for the people of the Neolithic, they must have worked in conjunction with other forms such as wall paintings and plastered features. They must have had symbolic resonances across these classes, perhaps even working cross-platform literally.

This enables us to say certain things. For example, wall paintings of an anthropomorphic nature do not generally resemble those images from the figurine corpus. The wall paintings generally show humans in active positions with their arms and legs clearly delineated. In the plastered wall features we typically have splayed individuals, arms upraised with all the limbs clearly delineated, and with no sexual features. This is quite different from the many anthropomorphic figurines in their abbreviated and sometimes sexed forms. In addition, quantitatively there are more males shown actively in wall paintings than female, and many figures show no sex characteristics at all. The human forms in painting are much more realistic, and more detailed. Again, this is at variance with the anthropomorphic figurine corpus.

There are a few examples that do resemble the larger, more detailed pieces from the figurine corpus. A female with upraised arms from Level IV looks remarkably like a robust figurine type, with small, undistinguished feet (Mellaart 1962). Another of the figures known as ‘leopard dancer,’ although we would not use such terms, has a painted area around his head comprised of dots. Interestingly there are several figurines of various types and shapes that have holes around or on the head indicating hair or a specific hairstyle or decoration (e.g., Figs. 86a-c.). Looking at ethnographic groups we often forget about paint for the face and hair, coupled with other decorative elements.



Figure 86a. 5043.X1.



Figure 86b. Creative reconstruction of 5043.X1 by John Swogger.



Figure 86c. Figurines with perforations and puncture holes.

Moreover, if we look at the wall paintings from Mellaart's excavations, they feature both humans and animals, some of which may assume mythical proportions. Leopards clearly have captured the imagination in two-dimensions (Hodder 2006) but have little resonance in the ceramic figurine assemblage. However, the famous red bull is shown (undoubtedly dead) in a wall painting surrounded by humans, and images of cattle and of metonymic bucrania are ubiquitous in the clay figurine assemblage as well as in plastered house features. Yet there is only one little known wall painting that shows animals in a form we would recognize from the figurine assemblage.

Mellaart claimed correctly that animal figurines could be pierced or maimed after modeling, but was largely incorrect in his assumption that they were placed in pits after use. Again, these animals look rather different from the representations in wall paintings. The majority of the figurines are cattle and domesticates (Fig. 87.), and there is a notable absence of the exotic fauna evidenced in the wall plastering of leopards and the painting of stags,

birds and so on. Moreover, we have several examples of pierced abbreviated and anthropomorphic forms noted which problematizes the notion that this action is simply about hunting magic. Previous interpretations somewhat narrowly posit that stab marks signify the killing of animals (and by association, people). This assertion is tenuous and requires closer scrutiny since although many of the animals appear to be very damaged, most do not show unequivocal evidence of ritual stabbing or maiming. Our future work on fragmentation patterns will address this issue in more detail.



Figure 87. *Quadruped forms.*

We do have tangible evidence that the skeletal elements from boars, vultures, goats, bulls, all get embedded into walls with plaster coatings and moldings (see Figs. 85). These probably have a stronger connection to the types of zoomorphic figurines we find. One possible interpretation is that ancestors or sacred beings were perhaps mediated through the animals, as cattle are today for the Zulus. In the South African case it is not that the specific animals are in any direct way the ancestors in question, but they are the medium through which they can be contacted – an embodiment of sorts. These plastered animal parts may also relate to real or mythic events and encounters with the wild, with powerful animals and equally powerful human hunters. Basically we should envisage other interpretations that move beyond simplistic notions of goddess and bull worship.

Off the pedestal

A central aim is to try and rethink the categories that Mellaart so successfully instantiated, to try and refigure the corpus: to take figurines out of the static position of religious statues, destined to spend their lifetimes sitting it out upon alters and pedestals. This was tacitly influenced by Mediterranean and Egyptian traditions of cultic statues and Mellaart's vision of Çatalhöyük was heavily influenced by his knowledge of these Bronze Age civilizations (Meskell 1998). In fact, Mellaart used these comparative data sets as analogous ethnohistory, his own type of ethnography through the vastly richer and more recent aesthetic and textual records. While we are not interested in identifying or using modern Turkish ethnographic traditions to understand the Neolithic, it is instructive to look at other cultural repertoires in order to, in a sense, defamiliarise and divorce ourselves from Mellaart's vision.

Today we also tend to represent figurines in the same static and unmoving genres, diligently producing technical drawings that place figurines in their sitting, upright postures. By showing various views of these objects we inhibit the possibilities that figurines were handled, moved and thus viewed in a variety of positions. Working with John Swogger we are currently attempting to re-imagine some of these clay figurines as being carried on the person, possibly within skin or textile bags, probably with a range of other portable items (organic and inorganic). And there is evidence of wear on the small anthropomorphic and zoomorphic examples in clay. It is more difficult to determine wear on stone examples as the process of manufacture also includes various forms of abrasion. It is difficult not to reflect on Zuni fetishes and the portability of those material beings, their need for food and

sustenance and so on. Like the Zuni example, it is possible that some figurines may have been worn about the body by means of string or twine, attached in some way to other things (Fig. 88). It should also be noted that the abbreviated anthropomorphic figures sit on bases for the most part, some of the stone examples do, but notable marble examples have no feet, never sit on stools or chairs nor do they have flat backs which suggest that may have been positioned in reclining postures or were circulated through the site and thus regularly handled (don't get the meaning of this point). Here again the use of hand held video provides another instructive layer of viewing as it challenges the static renderings we are familiar with and brings the figurines to life. It also allows us to recreate a process of handling, turning and circulating figurines, as was the case in antiquity.

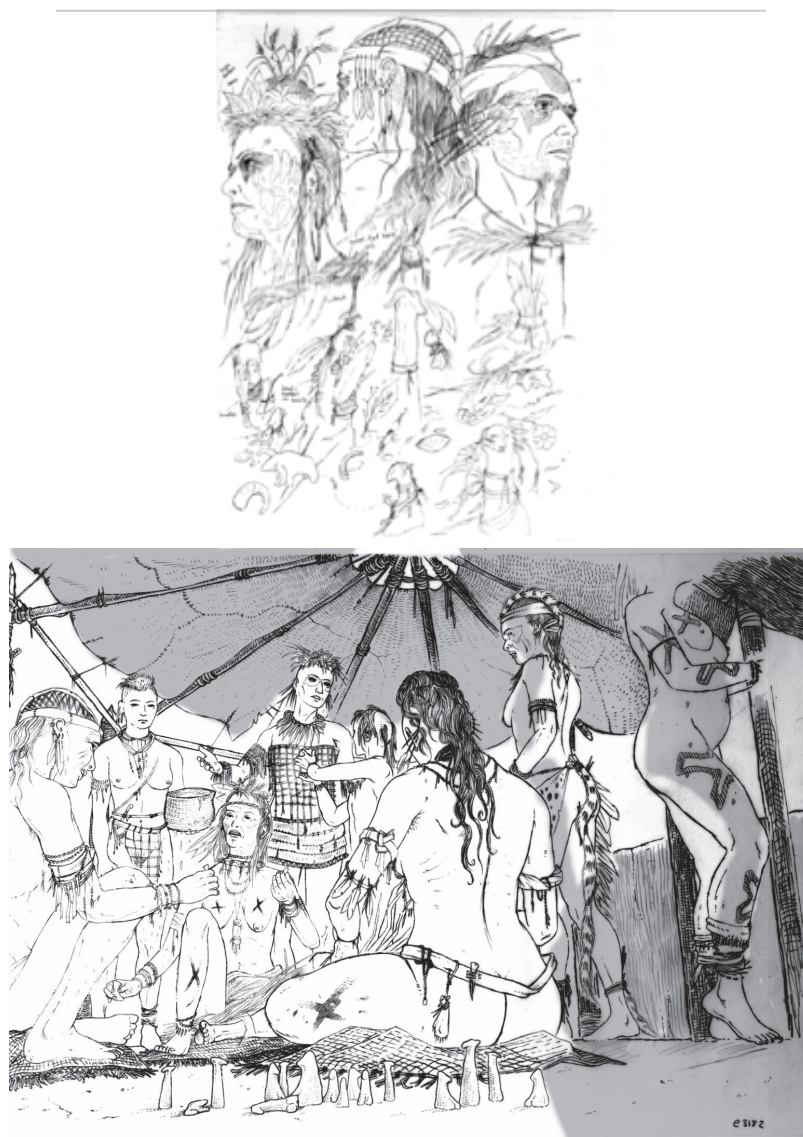


Figure 88. Creative reconstructions of figurine making contexts within households by John Swogger.

We tacitly imagine that the pieces retrieved, whether in clay or stone, *are* as they *were* originally — devoid of not only paint, but also the possibilities for beading, clothing, the addition of cloth, skin, twine, grasses and so on. All of these materials occur frequently at the site (and are readily identified in other ethnographic contexts). If we

look more closely at the carving, abrasion, and surface patterning we may see differences around areas such as grooved ‘waists’ on some of the stone figures, last season and this season. This year we may have found the tools, both obsidian and ground stone, which may have been for carving and working the stone figurines at the site, such as the example below.

In the 4040 Area this year another marble figurine (12102.X1) was excavated from a midden context. Similar to the example last year, this piece combined a solid base likely with a phallic neck. But in this recent case the long neck has been carefully cut off, probably with obsidian and other stone tools, perhaps even polished after removal (Karen Wright and Adnan Baysal, pers. comm.). Another example of a removed limestone head occurs with a figurine now in Ankara (79-8-65). It may be speculative at this juncture, but removal of heads also occurs in human burials, the circulation of heads after death as we have seen repeatedly at Çatalhöyük, also we have several clay figurines that have dowel holes for what appears to be detachable heads and also the small spherical heads which may have been used to complete some of the composites (Fig. 89). It is also possible that heads may have been made of different materials or highly abstracted forms (see Bailey 2005, Figure 7.4). What might this treatment of heads tell us about the construction of identity? The role of myth and storytelling may have been central and that figurine worlds may have proffered a rich vehicle to explore narrative and experience — the exploits of individuals, encounters with animals, mythic or historic. The ability for figurines to be malleable, to change identities through the transfer of heads, presents an interesting set of possibilities and leads us away from static forms into the notion of figurine as process.



Figure 89. 1056.H1, clay head.

Challenges to prior interpretations

In the past two seasons we have turned a skeptical eye toward many of the previous interpretations offered for the Çatalhöyük figurine assemblage. We believe that most of the assertions concerning any general patterning can not be regarded as significant given that they are premised on a very small sample sizes or incomparable sample groups. Furthermore, the number of figurines has been dramatically inflated by the inclusion of many minute, non-diagnostic fragments of shaped clay from heavy residue and we have attempted to rectify this problem this season.

We must also take into consideration the particular nature of excavation practices, which results in certain levels, buildings and areas being more represented than others. Various areas of the site have very different excavation goals. For instance, archaeologists in the 4040 have excavated a relatively large area dating primarily to Levels III/IV and VI/V, while certain buildings, such as Buildings 1 and 17, persist throughout several levels (see Table 4a). Previous interpretations have neglected to consider these factors and have tended to aggregate all materials and contexts together; consequently, these analyses do not present compelling arguments (Although Hamilton (2005) does discuss particular buildings and contexts, she does not take these subtleties into account in her assertions about general patterning). It is important to factor such issues into analyses of general patterning across the site and through time since they can potentially skew interpretation. Table 4b presents basics counts of figural object types found by level. Most of the objects cluster within Levels V-VIII with Level VI producing the largest number. The number of figurines declines dramatically from Level V onward. Rather than assume that this patterning is meaningful, we must at least investigate the possibility that it might result from the upper levels being

underrepresented in the excavated areas or other similar factors that might skew the numbers (contra Hamilton). We have begun to examine patterning across the site and over time in a more rigorous manner, but any assertion must be born out through appropriate data groups. For instance, to get a more representative idea of figurine patterning over time, we will focus on certain buildings that span multiple levels. Ideally, the materials require an integrated analysis, one that considers numerous variables at once. While we have not yet completed these analyses, it is possible to address and challenge some previous assertions made about the Çatalhöyük figurines.

In the most recent publication, Naomi Hamilton (in press) makes several assertions about contextual associations and changes in representational practices among the figurines. Regarding the anthropomorphic types, Hamilton (in press: 205) proposes that human representations become more common in Level VI and dominate in Level V, and ‘humanoids’ (what we call ‘abbreviated’) cease after Level V. However, at present count we only have 4 anthropomorphic (2 human, 2 abbreviated) and 2 zoomorphic examples from Level V. From Level V onwards there are few examples of any type other than Mellaart’s designated finds totaling to only 35 of 830 figural objects. Given such low numbers we feel her assertions cannot be justified at this time. Moreover, by our count, the largest number of anthropomorphic figurines come from Level VI (see Table 4b).

Hamilton (in press: 193) also asserts that there is a pattern with figurines being associated with ashy deposits interpreted as oven rake-out of occupation floors. But when we examined the details of those finds we found that many of these examples derive from heavy residue collections and are actually non-diagnostic pieces of clay or scrap and are indeterminate as figurines. Many pieces collected from heavy residue over the years are so small as to be unidentifiable even in terms of base material. This is a practice we have modified in the 2005 season at the point of collection and recording. Including the most recent seasons excavations, there are a total of 21 examples labeled ‘figurine fragment’, only two of which are secure figurines (curved horns); there are nine possible figurines, and the rest are scrap or shaped clay. She has also suggested that there is patterning to show figurines associated with in oven floors, and floors in general. In our recent counts only 33 figurines can be found in association with floors, 14 of which can be assigned with certainty. Again, the numbers Hamilton bases her assertions on are too small to be considered significant. She does, however, conclude that very little can be said about context through deposition given that most of the figurines derive from secondary contexts (in press: 195). On this point we concur.

Perhaps the most controversial assertion Hamilton has made concerns a change in gender ideology reflected through the figurines. She claims that ‘strongly sexed’ figurines are in a minority, particularly in the early levels, and that they become far more common in the latest levels of the site. Moreover, all the strongly sexed figurines are female, and the male and phallic figures all occur in levels VII and VI. She states, “the situation suggests to me that there is a change in sex/gender ideology during the lifetime of the site, and that the change is centered on Level VI although aspects of it started earlier” (in press: 211). She attributes this perceived change to other changes at the site such as increased specialization of production, major economic that had impacted on social and ideological spheres. There is a “loss of male and phallic figures after Level VI, indicate than an ideology related to sex/gender and possibly concerned with the role of women (but perhaps concerned just as much with the role of men) was altering, and that figurines were utilized to portray this ideology and perhaps to broker it” (Ibid). Given that clearly sexed figurines make up such a small minority of the entire figurine corpus, Hamilton is at pains to support her thesis that figurines ‘brokered’ an ideological shift. Certainly, we would expect to see signs of this in other assemblages if this were the case. Also, given the comparatively few number of male or phallic figurines in the first place, their disappearance from the archaeological record should not be overstated. In such cases, we believe that looking across representational media and material categories would better address such grand issues of gender ideology. But we are rather more interested in the ambiguously sexed and sexless representations that encompass most of the figural objects, which moves us into a different way of looking at sex and sexuality at Catalhöyük (see *Becoming Bodies*, above).

In the past two seasons we have found Hamilton’s atomistic style of listing multiple inventories of numbers of figurines by context, type, level, and occasionally by building or space is redundant and moreover, restricts a coherent picture of figurine practice and its complex associations. Although, she does identify some important

issues and themes, as a whole her assertions need to be closely reexamined and tested in order to differentiate the solid claims from the more tenuous ones.

Figurines as process at Çatalhöyük

The notion of figurine as process can refer to almost every stage in the life of a figurine. From its inception the gathering of materials for making represents a social process of procurement, whether sourcing local stone, clays or combining the plaster from regular wall plastering activities with marl to fashion figures of remarkably fine quality and light appearance. In all of these activities we could imagine a collective sphere where various individuals were present and where collaboration took place. In the case of ceramic examples, following on from retrieval were stages of preparation and cleaning of clays. Many but certainly not all of our examples are made from relatively clean clay with little chaff and small grained inclusions. If we turn to stone we think that most of the marble and calcite came from within a 15-20km radius of the site. As stated above, we also have in our lithic and ground stone assemblage the tools with which figurines were undoubtedly carved, suggesting too that these were completed on site. Karen Wright believes she has identified an area of Mellaart's old excavation that functioned as a stone figurine workshop. While it would be possible that figurine manufacture may be a secretive skill, shared by a few, our evidence suggests that the making of such pieces occurred in or around houses, certainly in a domestic context using materials readily at hand. That next process of making could be both formal, as in the case of carved stone, or more informal and everyday in the case of shaping anthropomorphic and zoomorphic images. In the case of the latter, the routinized making and individual variation suggest many people were fabricating figurines in and around settlement much of the time. They would have had easy access to the materials, and in the short space of time it takes to shape abbreviated forms people could have made them at regular intervals.



Figure 90. Plastered skull (11330) from Building 42.

Albeit difficult to reconstruct, we might posit that everyday social lives may have incorporated much image making, from the repeated layers of wall painting, embedding and plastering parts of animals, to decorate with stamp seals on skin or fabrics, crafting items personal adornment, and of course making figurines. Given the quantity of clay scrap and non-diagnostic pieces found in domestic contexts (over 500 on last count), we might suggest that figurine making occurred in and around houses and did not explicitly occur off site (Fig. 90). We have initiated a preliminary analysis of fingerprint size, and while it is too early for anything conclusive, we can conjecture now that these were not clay toys made by children as some have suggested. Since many are lightly fired, some have commented that they are 'passively fired' by hearths or ovens, again in domestic contexts. To date there is no evidence for specially built kilns at Çatalhöyük and, as with other clay objects, these were exposed to heat during other processes of cooking, burning, and heating or lighting houses. Again these were all public activities or at least household practices.

Given the time that has elapsed since Mellaart's publications and the evocative images he presented to the public, and the residual power of that imagery, its stubborn refusal to be vigorously challenged and replaced – we do need to call upon some radical ways of rethinking or refiguring the archive. Figures were probably moved about during their use lives as well and it is unlikely that they were static and sitting about, as outlined above many cannot stand unaided. Though we can say little about their original use lives from the excavation and contextual data retrieved, we know from their use-wear, damaged state and their final deposition in fill, that they were not like 'cult statues' that were separated from human affairs, spatially and temporally. These were incorporated into practice, a moving and mobile suite of embodied actions,

One suggestion we have is that the small clay human forms (and perhaps some of the animal figures) were collected together in small skin or woven bags, worn or carried, as evidenced in other ethnographic contexts. They could have been carried together with other evocative objects such as pebbles or stones, objects of amuletic value, organics, bone objects decorative and functional, or other types of miniatures. If we think of Native American fetishes, these were often carried or worn on the person and treated like the animal spirit that it represented, so they were fed ground turquoise from miniature pots. Natural products like sage were imbued with sacred valences and were carried in what is considered sacred bundles. The significance of these objects is formed through action not in isolation or distanced contemplation. They are *things* to be used.

We might posit that the people who made the clay examples were probably different to the individuals who fashioned the stone pieces. Perhaps the large complex stone and clay pieces really belong to another category. Researchers tend to put these all together under the heading of figurines, but perhaps the informal clay examples are really a different sort of *thing* – not simply because some would say they are 'crude' but rather because of their expediency or frequency, as opposed to the larger scale projects. A related point is because there are so few points of aesthetic contact between such groups of objects. What really are the visual overlaps, certainly the contexts are related since they are all (almost without exception) found in building fills and midden. The clay example found this year with skeletal features (see below) was also found in amongst collapsed building materials in decontextualised fill. While they are undoubtedly purposeful in their inclusion in such deposits for the most part, we struggle to reconstruct the contexts of their primary use. We have difficulty imagining that being placed in fill should be their *raison d'être* for manufacture of course, which may not be wholly incorrect in all cases. One thing that mitigates that idea is the practice of movable heads as mentioned above, and the general idea of transforming figurine identities by their appearance. They are things in process, in motion, and thus temporally situated. While this may seem an obvious statement, the various things we tend to call figurines may have had very different roles and purposes for people at Çatalhöyük and it may prove misleading to categorically lump them together.

Almost all of the clay figurines of this very general type have missing heads, although damaged we might posit that many also had dowel holes for detachable heads. One figurine that does retain the head is now in Ankara museum (79-803-65) though it has been restored (from the present state we cannot be sure, but this looked originally as if it were all one piece). The ears and nose is prominent, the eyes less so and there is little sign of a mouth. There is a head ring present and an incised line at the top of the forehead. Apart from this exception most clay figurines whether sexed or not are missing heads: stone heads remain intact in the main. However given that we have several marble examples that have been intentionally decapitated such as the example found this year in the 4040 region (12102.X1).

Thinking through the figurine with other forms of representation at Çatalhöyük, such as the plastered animal parts, we have begun to think more about the idea of embedding, particularly the hard forms of bodies, the skeletal or horn and claw elements of animals that survive after fleshy decay. We see so many instances where cattle horns, boar tusks, vulture beaks, weasel and fox skulls are embedded in walls, platforms and features — all of which are the boney elements that both represent the individual animal and successfully survive death. With the addition of plaster and shaping: some retain their life like forms for perpetuity, others remain lumpy and hidden. So too with this figurine, the bony, skeletal part of the human body that survives death and burial is both embedded and revealed. The villagers regularly saw human skeletons as they dug down to retrieve skulls and objects from burials (Hodder 2006). Just like the embedding of real animal parts, this representation grapples with the embedding of

real human parts with a shaped human living form. The notion of embedding real human bones in some manner like the animal parts may have been taboo, as imaginable in many societies but obviously not all as the Maya circulation of worked human bone makes apparent (Meskell and Joyce 2003). So we are perhaps witnessing an extension of the community's treatment of animal world, more specifically the dangerous animal world, and an application to the human body. The aesthetics of fleshing out the skeleton can also be seen in the form of plastered skulls, the earliest of which for Anatolia was found last year at Çatalhöyük (Fig. 88). John Swogger has suggested that the heads of figurines, possibly even detachable ones come to represent the plastered skulls with their high foreheads and smoothed, minimal facial treatment, minus mouths and detailed features. Clays and plasters may have had a specific set of associations with bodily flesh as well, whether human or animal flesh, as the numerous examples from the site may suggest.

Keeping the dead close by and rendered permanent (at least in through living memory) was made possible through this process of embedding; whether burying them under platforms and plastering over them, plastering skulls and burying them with descendents, embedding the boney parts of animals as plastered protrusions, or perhaps even making clay images of the human form with protruding skeletal elements. Were these attempts to transform, display and render permanent the iconic and durable elements of human and animals: skulls, horns, beaks, claws and so on? Duration is a recurring theme in a great many human societies, both ancient and modern and, while being careful not to impose Egyptian notions (something Mellaart was very keen to apply) of death and burial, it would not be inconceivable to envisage that the Çatalhöyük residents were concerned with their own sense of history and memory. That making of history applied equally to the embedding of specific animals as well as people, to the rendering permanent of particular individuals, possibly even events such as the capture and killing of an aurochs or bear. The fabrication of history and memory might not have been focused solely upon human beings, but upon animal and spirit worlds as well. While these ideas are briefly sketched, our aim for future work is to link the figurine corpus more closely with these other materialities and to reconfigure the whole as *process* rather than inert objects of worship or contemplation.

Final thoughts

This report has attempted to cover many aspects of a figured lifeworld at Neolithic Çatalhöyük. While it is too early for us to draw many definite conclusions we hope to have laid the groundwork for analysis and interpretation in our upcoming seasons: what we have described above is all part of our ongoing work. We plan to continue to experiment with ways of embodying and representing figurines and their surrounding practices of making, circulation and deposition by using various new forms of media coupled with creative reconstructions. We also want to embed figurines themselves into wider visual and material worlds at Çatalhöyük and continue to rethink and refine the specific taxonomies that we readily construct and instantiate as archaeologists (Meskell 2004). We are already some way to rethinking certain material hierarchies and associations and sometimes inverting them.

We also have some very pedestrian tasks at hand, such as the balancing up of previous work with our own findings. This is particularly true in terms of species and gender categories where humans rather than animals, and similarly women rather than men, have been over emphasized in the corpus. This leads to a further rethinking of sexuality and self, particularly in the context of the Neolithic and given the myriad tantalizing images of a specific brand of masculinity from other sites such as Göbekli or Nevali Çori. There is much more to be done on the notion of community at Çatalhöyük, the site is a very specific locality that may have visual and material links to other sites in Central Anatolia, but retains a unique set of associations and practices. It may be that the experience of village life, and the choices of clustered housing and intramural burial tell us a great deal about social life at this time. The ubiquity of image making in general at the site suggests that what we would consider 'ritual' or 'religious' things and acts infused and comprised the everyday to such an extent that it might be impossible to parse out. Again the specificities of our categorical understandings are unlikely to mesh with the ancients.

To attempt a summary of the themes that we find most evocative at present first is the notion of figurine as *process* rather than end *product* must be the first. It is indelibly linked to the idea of circulation and mobility; figurines are not static but mobile and potentially shifting things. Part of that malleability is their inherent possibilities for identity changes and narrative, evidenced at Çatalhöyük by the detached heads and ceramic anthropomorphic bodies with dowel holes. In addition, we have the removal or severing of heads in the case of stone human

figurines. The idea of storytelling, coupled with memory and identity are evocative. And finally this connects to the wider practice across media of embedding skeletal parts and plastering or covering them with cultural materials that replace impermanent natural ones. In doing so both animals and humans were preserved, they survived death and decay, and were incorporated into the very fabric of houses and spaces at the site. They served as ever-present reminders, fleshed out, of their former selves and former existence, redolent with memories, stories or myths that are steeped in their attendant materiality.

CHfig_D8_current

Çatalhöyük Figurine and Miniature Shaped Object Database

New Record duplicate record sort show all

Layout: #1

Record: 21 Found: 48 Total: 1526 Unsorted

ID no: 10396.H2 year: 2005 Unit no: 10396 Feature no: MEL No: Area: 4040 data cat: midden Building no: Sample no: Space: 266 unit loc: external space desc: Level: phase: Location: CH: FG3 Inventory no: Object type: shaped object Object form: figural

DIMENSIONS
 max. h (cm): 1.32
 max. w (cm): 0.50
 max. l (cm): 2.07
 diam (cm):
 weight (g): 1.0

MATERIALS & MANUFACTURE
 Method: hand-modelled Quality: fine
 Material: color: Munsell
 Primary: clay dark gray 2.5 Y 4/1
 Secondary:

CLAY DESCRIPTION
 heat exposure: medium baked primary secondary
 fabric texture: fine
 inclusions: surface cross-section not visible
 inclusion type:
 inclusion freq: 2.5 Y 5/2
 core color:

TREATMENT & ELABORATION
 Adorn't fabric:
 Adorn't color:
 surface treatment: well smoothed Decor:
 surface color: 2.5 Y Misc:
 paint color:
 Fingerprints:

REPRESENTATION DESCRIPTION
 Reprnt Comp: sex features: none
 Form: zoomorphic sex interp: unknown
 quadruped: pose: horns:

CONDITION
 Preservation: fragment Condition: intact 1 piece(s)
 fragmentation: broken at base
 Envir wear:
 Use wear: free-standing

CONTEXT DESCRIPTION AND ASSOCIATED FINDS
 Deposition:
 Description: primary midden deposit, truncated by roman foundation trench, but same as 10348 and 10369
 feature desc:

GENERAL
 Comments: curved animal horn found with 10396.H1
 Images:
 Image ID's: ESCN1422 ESCN1423 ESCN1230
 drawn: conservation treatment:
 Data Entry: complete incomplete Entered by:
 new record duplicate record delete record

Figure 91. The figurine and miniature shaped object database recording form.

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