

Boncuklu community heritage programme

2013 saw significant progress in Boncuklu's community heritage programme, with construction of a Visitor Centre and the installation of bi-lingual interpretative panels. Progress has also been made in providing information about the site for adults and children, and a series of resources for visitors and local schools hosted on our bi-lingual website (<http://boncuklu.org/>). A series of publications – in Turkish and English – is being developed in time for the 2014 season. This includes a booklet for children with commissioned cartoon characters intended to help form a link with our younger audience. Furthermore, a series of teacher support resources is being produced, including powerpoint presentations and lesson ideas. The development of these resources has been coordinated by Steve Chaddock of Timeline Heritage. The local school teachers are enthusiastic about the project, which will see further developments around the Visitor Centre to allow better community interaction and development of a 'field classroom' on site. Plans have been developed to roof and preserve Building 6, build some replica Neolithic houses and create a visitor path at the site. The project is also contributing to the Neolithic gallery in the planned new Konya Archaeological and Ethnographic Museum. Further sponsorship is being sought to help fund these forthcoming developments.



Interior of the Visitor Centre

Acknowledgements

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Reference

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The season after the year before: Çatalhöyük 2013

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It really did seem like the morning after the night before. After the euphoria of the UNESCO inscription of Çatalhöyük onto the World Heritage List in 2012, we seemed to be living through a severe headache in the 2013 season. In many ways the impact of the inscription was very positive. The guards at the site count the number of foreign and Turkish visitors every day. Since January 2013 the numbers of visitors have increased dramatically. Bus loads arrived daily during the 2013 season, brought by companies advertising themselves with names like 'World Heritage Academy'. Clearly UNESCO inscription has made a big difference, and local and regional communities will benefit. Inscription has also meant the site has attracted greater investment by national and regional heritage organisations. For example, KOP (Konya Ovası Projesi) has provided funding for four new experimental houses that will themselves attract more tourists when they are constructed next year. On the other hand, the increasing numbers of tourists create their own headaches, putting pressure on the parking facilities and causing faster erosion on the paths across the mound. But the greatest impact has to do with regulation regarding health and safety. For example, Stanford University has become concerned about its liability in relation to the tourist numbers and has requested 50 improvements – everything from wooden caps on survey pegs to better medical training for staff. Coupled with the numerous new regulations instigated by the current Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the 2013 season has been a trying one, concerned as much with risk management and compliance as with archaeology itself.

Luckily we have had a wonderful management team wending its way between the increasing demands of bureaucracies and administrations. Yıldız Dirmit has taken over as a very effective Project Manager, supported in the field by the wisdom of Levent Özer and by the help of our Assistant Director, Serap Özdöl. Our temsilci was Fahri Ayçin from the Konya Museum.

Luckily too, the archaeology has been very rewarding and we made a number of remarkable new finds this year. These kept the team in good form, even when our numbers got up to 120, from 22 different countries.

Çatalhöyük is located near Çumra, Konya in central Turkey. The East Mound was inhabited between 7400 BCE and 6000 BCE by up to 8,000 people who lived in a large Neolithic 'town'. There were no streets and people moved around on the roof tops and entered their houses through holes in the roofs. Inside their houses people made wonderful art – paintings, reliefs and sculptures – which have survived across the millennia. The art was first excavated in the 1960s. New work at the site started in 1993 and is planned to continue to 2018, under the auspices of the British Institute at

Ankara and with permission from the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Because Çatalhöyük is a large site (13.5ha) at an early date and with good preservation, its excavation is slow and difficult; it needs a big team.

It is the good preservation at the site that led to the most remarkable of our discoveries in 2013. Building 52 in the North Shelter had been burned by its Neolithic inhabitants when it was abandoned. This conflagration had baked through the floors and platforms of the building; in doing so it had inadvertently preserved cloth that had been placed between the skeletons of those who had previously been buried beneath the floors.

This cloth has been analysed at the laboratories at Çatalhöyük and it has been identified as linen, made from flax. This is one of the earliest finds of cloth in the world, and is certainly one of the best preserved. It seems that the linen, which is very finely woven, was traded from the Levant all the way to central Anatolia. Archaeologists have long known of the long-distance trade of obsidian and shells at this time period in the Middle East, but this is the first indication that cloth or textile may have been part of the trade system, perhaps exchanged for the obsidian from Cappadocia.



Neolithic linen preserved in a burial in Building 52

In the same grave a wooden bowl or some sort of head cover made of wood was placed over the skull of a child. The dead at Çatalhöyük were sometimes treated in very different and remarkable ways. Over the years we have found many unusual burials, such as bodies buried with a lamb, or covered in the scat of a small carnivore, or quite frequently with the head removed. It is tempting to interpret the wooden head cover as a mask, since the latter have been found in the Neolithic of the Levant, but in this case the most likely explanation is that the decayed wooden object is a bowl.

Both the cloth and wooden bowl were found in graves in the northern part of the main room in Building 52 in the North Area of the site. This building had in previous excavation seasons proved to be very interesting and unusual, with a bull's skull and horns set into the west wall and with a bench with bull horns affixed to its side. It was obviously an especially large and complex building. In most buildings, installations such as bull horns on walls were removed when the building was abandoned. But Building 52 was burned, and we often find that burned buildings retained their installations. So it is difficult to work out whether some buildings like Building 52 look more elaborate because of



Wooden bowl placed on the skull in a burial in Building 52



Wild sheep horns arranged along a thin 'bench' in Building 52

the way they were abandoned, or whether they were burned on abandonment because they were special and elaborate – a classic chicken-and-egg problem. One possible indication that Building 52 had long been special and important is that when in 2013 we dismantled the bench that had held bull horns, we discovered a thinner smaller bench beneath it, this time affixed with wild sheep horns. It seems increasingly likely that more important buildings were abandoned by intentional burnings.

In 2013 we also started excavating Neolithic buildings in an area we are calling TPC in the southern part of the site. The aim here is to understand how the site changed in its latest phases of occupation and to link up some of our previously separated excavation areas (TP and South). Here we found buildings that indeed did differ very much from earlier buildings (with, for example, very thick walls built with large flat bricks) and which had not been burned on abandonment. One of the buildings at this late phase had walls painted with designs not seen before. Normally the paintings at Çatalhöyük are made using dark paint (red or black mostly) on a white background, but in this case very regular white lines had been painted on a darker background. This painting continued along at least the east and north walls of the main room: it must have been a very bright and vibrant space.

Normally archaeologists record everything, including wall paintings, using paper and pencil and photography. Indeed, archaeological recording has become increasingly a matter of filling in forms and drawing plans on permatrace. This is slow and laborious, and afterwards, back in the dig house, all the data have to be entered into the database, the plans scanned and digitised and the photographs uploaded. In 2013 we started making use of new digital technologies to speed up this process and make it more flexible. Using computer tablets, images are taken of what is being excavated and these images are converted into 3D models that can be orthogonally rectified and placed into the GIS database for the site. Still in the trench, the excavated features or skeletons can be drawn over and annotated and uploaded as shape files into the GIS. So all the planning and



Justine Issavi recording using a tablet in Building 80

recording can be done without paper. This system was used successfully in 2013 in a few excavation areas; we hope to expand the use of tablets across the whole site next year.

For many years, teams have also been working on the Chalcolithic West Mound at Çatalhöyük. In 2013 the trenches there were finally filled in and closed down. So this was the last year of excavations by the team led by Peter Biehl, Eva Rosenstock and Jana Rogasch. Members of the team will be returning to work on post-excavation, but we are sorry to see them leave the field. Much has been accomplished and we now have for the first time a good picture of how the Çatalhöyük community changed as it moved into the sixth millennium BCE.

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The 2013 Çatalhöyük team assembled near the North Shelter (all photos Jason Quinlan)