

RELIGION & POLITICS IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

This Strategic Research Initiative concentrates on the interaction between religion and politics that has always served as a crucial determinant in the evolution of state and society in Turkey and the Black Sea region across time. Political ways of mobilising for, maintaining and contesting leadership and authority have often been expressed and transmitted through the use of religion. This theme has at times also merged with discussions on tradition and modernity as well as change and continuity regarding the development of state and society. In the Turkish context, this has not just influenced the evolution of the domestic environment and political systems but also had an impact on the country's international standing and behaviour. Likewise, the balance between religion, state and society has also accompanied processes of state formation and nation building for other countries around the Black Sea, including during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods.

Bodies of evidence: the historic cemeteries of Çatalhöyük

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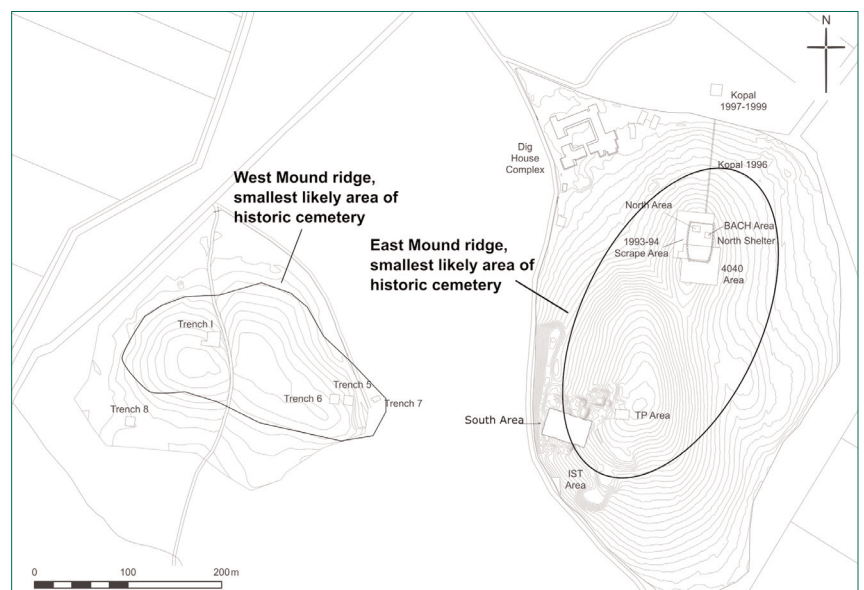
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In addition to its fabulous prehistoric remains (see pages 21–23 below), both the East and West Mounds at Çatalhöyük were used as a series of cemeteries between the first and the 17th centuries AD. The burials of four different communities of practice are present on site: the graves of people who are likely to have been pagan Romans, plain earth burials of the Christian Byzantine population and two phases of Islamic-period burials with their crania or whole bodies rotated to face Qibla. To date, 190 well-contextualised, single primary inhumations have been excavated by the teams working at Çatalhöyük. Approximately a further 100 disturbed contexts and secondary burials containing disarticulated human remains from both mounds are likely to have been graves from one of the phases of the historic cemeteries. We have excavated less than 10% of the likely area of the cemeteries and along with the relatively constant frequency of burials across the majority of the excavated areas of the site this suggests a low estimate of the mortuary population of around 2,000 individuals interred on the site between the first and the 17th centuries AD.

The use of prehistoric tells as later-period cemeteries is common in Anatolia. One of the most recently excavated examples is Ilıpınar Höyük in the eastern Marmara region, where the Neolithic mound was used as a cemetery by Chalcolithic, Bronze Age and late antique populations (Roodenberg

2011). The unusual thing about the historic-period cemeteries at Çatalhöyük is that the four communities of practice are from consecutive periods. This means that the burials could potentially represent continuous use of the site as a cemetery. The cemeteries offer the opportunity to explore how and why burial practices changed over two periods of conversion: from paganism to Christianity and from Christianity to Islam. One of the foci of this year's field season was to construct a radiocarbon strategy which will allow us to determine whether each community of practice developed from the previous phase of use or whether there were significant breaks in use of the site.

Some aspects of the site suggest that the phases of burial are discontinuous. The burials which are likely to date from between the first and the tenth centuries AD do not intercut



Map of the East and West Mounds at Çatalhöyük showing the smallest likely area of the historic-period cemeteries. © Çatalhöyük Archive, with modifications by Sophie Moore

and are evenly spaced, suggesting that the locations of earlier graves were known. By contrast, the burials which are likely to date from between the tenth and the 17th centuries AD cut into the first- to tenth-century burials, suggesting that the earlier phases of burials may not have been visible on the surface of the mound during the later period. Each community using the site as a cemetery had some awareness that earlier people had used the site for the same purpose: the earlier phases because the graves are likely to have been visible and the later because during the process of grave digging they disturbed earlier graves. One of our key research goals is to establish what each community might have known about previous populations who occupied the site and how that knowledge might have affected their burial practices.

The research outlined above focuses on the morphological characteristics of the graves, the placement of the skeletons and the nature of the objects found in association with the individuals, allowing us to define the four separate communities of practice. In addition to this broad-scale analysis we are beginning to see results from a programme of osteological research focusing on burials at an individual level. The palaeopathological analysis of individuals will allow us to begin to discuss aspects of health, disease and medicine within each of the communities of practice.

The burials from the Roman cemetery have proven to be particularly interesting with regards to the palaeopathological evidence, with the skeletons of several individuals displaying significant pathological changes, including degenerative changes, genetic disorders and possible trauma. One individual, from feature 706 in Trench I on the West Mound, shows evidence of quite extreme pathologies. The individual from feature 706 is a male, aged 30–45 years at the time of his death, whose remains display a range of pathologies affecting almost the entire skeleton. The bones of the right arm and the legs were over-sized, suggesting an endocrine issue resulting in gigantism. Despite their size, the bones are lighter than expected, signifying a loss of bone density or osteopenia. An endocrine disease is also suggested by the presence of significant ossification of the entheses, particularly evident in the long bones of the left leg where connective tissue which is usually supple has turned to bone. This may not have affected mobility directly, but may have resulted in swelling of the limb. The long bones of the left arm were atrophied, meaning they are much smaller than would be expected for an individual of this stature; the atrophy of the left arm reflects a brachial plexus trauma, in other words, nerve damage. Finally, this individual has additional bone growth and changes to the spine reflecting possible diffuse idiopathic skeletal hyperostosis, a bony hardening of ligaments where they attach to the spinal column, and trauma, possibly resulting in the decreased bone density.



Left (bottom) and right (top) humeri, anterior view – note the difference in size of the two bones and general porosity of both. © Michelle Gamble 2015



Thoracic vertebrae, left-posterior view with first thoracic vertebrae to the right side of the image. Note the extension of the spinous processes and the fusion of the third and fourth bodies. © Michelle Gamble 2015

Taken together, the changes to the skeleton in feature 706 form a picture of a man who is likely to have suffered quite a bit during life, and yet managed not only to reach adulthood but to attain middle age. He was buried in a substantial grave which was capped with tile and from which coffin nails were recovered. No objects were deliberately placed with the individual from 706, but his burial is largely consistent with others from the group I Roman category in the Trench I area. The level of care which allowed this unusual individual to reach maturity and the nature of his burial have significant implications for concepts and evidence of care within the Roman community. It is hoped that through the combination of our osteological and contextual analyses we can continue to build a more nuanced understanding of the communities who lived and died in the vicinity of Çatalhöyük between the first and the 17th centuries AD.

Reference

Roodenberg, J. 2011: 'Ilıpinar: a Neolithic settlement in the eastern Marmara region' in G. McMahon and S. Steadman (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Anatolia (10,000 323 BCE)*. Oxford: 950–67; <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195376142.013.0044>