

Moving forward after Çatalhöyük

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The site of Çatalhöyük consists of two mounds near Çumra, Konya, in central Anatolia. The main East Mound has over 18 levels of Neolithic occupation dated from 7100 to 5900 BC, while the West Mound has Chalcolithic levels. The site is one of the largest Neolithic sites in the Middle East and is a well-preserved example of the mega-sites that emerged in the later pre-pottery and pottery Neolithic. The site was established as being of international significance by the work of James Mellaart in the 1960s and a new team has been working there since 1993, resulting in the site being placed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2012.

In 2018, for the first time in 25 years, we had not applied for a permit to work on site at Çatalhöyük. Some excavation work was carried out at the site under the auspices of the Konya Museum, with Çiler Çilingiroğlu from Ege Museum as scientific advisor. It is very much hoped that Dr Çilingiroğlu will take over as the director of a new phase of Çatalhöyük excavations and research in 2019. In the meantime, some members of the old team continued to work at the site, particularly with regard to conservation. A team from Poland led by Arek Marciniak also started excavations with Dr Çilingiroğlu in a new area – the small eastern portion of the main East Mound. I am very grateful to Dr Çilingiroğlu for taking on the task of the site and for being so keen to encourage continuity with the team and methods used in the previous phase of work at the site.

Instead of working at Çatalhöyük itself, the main team assembled in Sicily in order to work on analysis and publication of all the material excavated since 2009. We were very fortunate to be housed and looked after in the Scuola Superiore of the University of Catania. In this pleasant and congenial villa we were able to concentrate on specialist reports and collaborative chapters.

We have previously published 11 monographs covering the results of surveys and excavations at Çatalhöyük since 1993. The aim of the 2018 study season in Catania was to prepare four new volumes. The first of these will describe the excavations that took place between 2009 and 2017; the second and third will be devoted to reports by 30 different specialist teams; and the fourth will discuss 26 different themes that the team has found itself involved in over recent years. The workshop in Catania was organised in relation to these different volumes. Part of the time (often in the mornings when we were freshest!) we worked through the excavations, building by building and space by space. Those who had supervised the excavations showed powerpoints of what had been found in each building, and the different specialists (archaeobotanists, faunal analysts,

groundstone researchers, isotope analysts, etc) presented results that pertained to that building. The aim was to integrate all the different types of data into one coherent interpretation of each building or space. It is the excavators' unenviable task to pull all these different types of data into a single account.

There were two other types of discussion that took place in Catania this past summer. One involved the data specialists presenting draft reports on their results, looking at the site overall and at changes across space and time. For many of us this was the first time we had got to hear of these data results and it was exciting to see how the different accounts related to each other – although not always as smoothly as we might have liked! The aim of these discussions was for other team members to be able to compare results with their own data, and to respond to contradictions where they emerged. The final type of discussion involved all team members working in groups to present their initial thoughts on themes. The team identified 26 different themes that ranged from demographics to inequality to temporalities to seasonality to notions of self and creativity. The aim here was to integrate data from excavations and specialist analyses of data in order to address broader topics that cut across specialisms.

One theme that was discussed at some length was social units and networks. We have long been interested in how up to 8,000 people, all packed into dense housing, could have managed to organise their lives in order to prevent conflict and disaggregation. One result of our recent work has been to understand how many houses were occupied at any one time. There were certainly more open spaces than we had earlier thought, but, on the other hand, many buildings were rebuilt on the same spot without interruption and densities were indeed quite high. We have also come to recognise that the inhabitants were organised into subgroups. Some of these subgroups lived together in local neighbourhoods or segments within the site. For example, there seem to be clear differences in material culture between the northern and southern parts of the main East Mound. But other affiliations cross-cut these spatial groupings. It is often the case that houses with similar wall paintings, for example, are located in different parts of the mound (as shown by the research of Gesualdo Busacca). The networking seems to have been very complex. Recent research by Camilla Mazzucato has used formal methods of network analysis to show the full complexity of social networks and how they changed over time. Work by Justine Issavi has shown the ways in which open spaces, often interpreted as 'middens', were in fact often places where a wide range of activities

took place between houses. Work by Chris Knüsel, Scott Haddow and the human remains team has started to tell a new story about burial practices – that in fact the dead were often not buried immediately but after a considerable amount of time. This delayed burial involved the circulation of the skeletal remains through time and across space in the settlement, contributing to the building of complex networks. Overall, it seems that individuals at Çatalhöyük had a wide range of social networks they could call upon when needed.

Off site, an exhibit about the methods used by the project, presented at ANAMED in Istanbul, continued into 2018. It was organised by Duygu Tarkan and Şeyda Çetin, and was a great success in terms of visitor numbers and impact. Indeed, it won an important prize from Koç Holdings for digital innovation.

The exhibition, ‘The Curious Case of Çatalhöyük’, was developed to celebrate last year’s 25th excavation season of the Çatalhöyük Research Project. Known for its fascinating cutting-edge archaeological research methods and laboratory collaborations, Çatalhöyük is presented through experiment-based display features including 3D prints of finds, laser-scanned overviews of excavation areas and immersive digital displays that bring the 9,000-year-old Çatalhöyük settlement back to life. The exhibition narrates the reflexive methods of the excavations from the initial phase when the trowel touches the soil to the documentation of the finds,

from laboratory analysis to the transfer of information. It sheds light on the work of the research team of international specialists and elucidates the various stages of an excavation project. Although field excavation remained a primary form of investigation at Çatalhöyük throughout the 25 years of this phase of work at the site, digital, experimental and visual reconstruction methods were increasingly employed to aid research and interpretation. This legacy is reflected in the exhibition displays and followed by incorporative artistic interventions to underline how the site has been subject to various artworks and offer new perspectives to understand the life of one of the most complicated societies of its time.

The exhibit has now been moved to London where it will be shown at the Brunei Gallery in SOAS before moving on to Ankara in 2019.

I am deeply grateful to the team who have come together every year and produced such wonderful work. In particular, this year I wish to thank Bilge Küçükdoğan, for her management and care of the team, and Gesualdo Busacca, for introducing us to the Scuola and to Catania and Sicily. Thanks in particular to Francesco Priolo and Francesca Scolla at the Scuola Superiore di Catania. I am, as ever, grateful to our main funders and sponsors, including the John Templeton Foundation, Yapı Kredi, Boeing, Koçtaş and Shell. I am particularly grateful to the staff of the British Institute at Ankara for their long-term support of our work and to Ömer Koç for his long-term friendship and advice.

The Çatalhöyük team at the Scuola Superiore in Catania in August 2018.

