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The New Swedish Cyprus Expedition 2017: Excavations at Hala Sultan Tekke (The Söderberg Expedition)

Preliminary results. With contributions by M. Ausiayevich, B. Placiente Robedizo, V. Barrera Alarcón, L. Recht & D. Kofel

Abstract

During the eighth field season at the Bronze Age city of Hala Sultan Tekke, excavations in City Quarter 1 (CQ1) exposed massive industrial and domestic structures belonging to three phases of occupation (Strata 3–1) dating to the 13th and 12th centuries BC (LC IIC–IIIA). Georadar survey, penetrating to a maximum depth of approximately 1 m, guided the excavation of walls of Strata 1–2, both of which were destroyed by conflagration. Excavations 1.5–2 m below the surface and also below the maximum penetration depth of the radar revealed a heretofore buried phase of occupation with substantial architectural units. For the first time, massive Stratum 3 structures with a markedly different building technique were exposed. Copper smelting installations, much ash and slag, and storage facilities also belong to this phase of occupation.

Additional excavations guided by results from a magnetometer survey were carried out in Area A, roughly 600 m to the south-east of CQ1. Numerous circular anomalies were excavated. These were identified as Late Cypriot wells, rich offering pits, and a tomb from the same period. In addition to numerous intact locally produced vessels and other finds, the tomb contained a complete Late Minoan II/IIIA piriform jar with bird motifs which have exact parallels from Knossos. Other finds from this tomb include a diadem of leaf gold, amethyst jewellery, and nine sphenonoid shaped balance weights of haematite together with a hornblende whetstone. The features from Area A cover a period from the 16th to the 13th centuries BC (LC IB–IIC).*

Keywords: Late Bronze Age, Hala Sultan Tekke, city, tombs, offering pits, wells

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Introduction

This article is the eighth in a series of annually published preliminary reports on the renewed excavations at Hala Sultan Tekke which began in 2010 under the direction of P.M.

Fischer.¹ For some readers of the current report it may appear repetitive, once again to summarize the results of previous excavations. Nevertheless, we will recapitulate essential information in order to facilitate the understanding of the project and its results without the need to consult previous publications.

Previous excavations established that Hala Sultan Tekke was an important Bronze Age harbour city.² The exact size of the occupied area is still unknown, although estimates of

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¹ Fischer 2011; 2012b; Fischer & Bürge 2013; 2014; 2015; 2016; 2017b.

² *HST* 1–12.



Fig. 31. Equid figurine N100 from Area A, Well Y2 (scale 1:1; photograph by T. Bürge, drawing by L. Recht).

Appendix 2

Horse figurines from Hala Sultan Tekke

BY LAERKE RECHT*

During the 2017 season at Hala Sultan Tekke, the head of an equid figurine was found (N100; Fig. 31). The figurine is remarkable in being a very “naturalistic” piece with a high degree of sensitivity to the features of the animal. The features of the equid are carefully modelled with short ears, wide-set eyes marked both by raised and indented eye sockets (possibly at one point containing inlays), indented nostrils, and mouth shown as open. The mane is rendered by a low-raised and perpendicularly incised ridge along the back of the neck, with marked incisions that follow the line of the head, indicating a falling rather than erect mane, while the forelock falls onto the crown of the head. Taken together, these features suggest that the equid is a horse (*Equus caballus*). This is in line with the horse being the most frequently depicted equid in Cyprus in this period.

DETAILS OF THE FIGURINE

The head is preserved to a height of 3.5 cm, a length of 4.3 cm, and a thickness of 1.3 cm. It is made of a heavy light brown

material (weight 22 g).⁸⁹ There are faint traces of dark paint across the nose ridge and along the side of the head, and a “dotted” line along the left side of the head. The paint may indicate a bridle, consistent with the open mouth which is most likely meant to signify that it carried a bit in its mouth. Bits became the preferred way of controlling equids in the Late Bronze Age (as opposed to earlier, where nose rings appear to have been more common, at least in the Near East).⁹⁰ The open mouth is also a testament to an animal that is not purely passive, but reacting to its bridle, and a craftsperson that was familiar with equids and equid behaviour. Presumably, the figurine head belongs to the complete body of an equid which may have had either a rider on its back or formed part of a two-horse chariot team. The painted decoration is too faded to be certain whether the exact same pattern appeared on both sides of the figurine (which could have helped in determining whether or not it was part of a team).

* I am grateful to Peter M. Fischer for suggesting the topic of this appendix, and for participation in the 2017 excavations at Hala Sultan Tekke. Thanks are also due to Rick Hauser for insightful comments on a draft version of the paper, and to Emma Saunders for suggestions and language corrections.

⁸⁹ Probably terracotta: the careful modelling of the animal's features and manner of incisions suggest this. However, the relatively heavy weight and lack of change in colour in the section could indicate stone (which would make the figurine even more unusual). Future XRF analysis should solve this question.

⁹⁰ Littauer & Crouwel 1979, ch. VIII.

CONTEXT AND DATE

The figurine was found in Area A, in Pit Y2, L66.⁹¹ Pit Y2 may once have served as a well, since traces of “steps” were found in the sides, but the exact nature and interpretation of its contents are not yet clear (see main report). The other finds fall within a range within the Late Bronze Age (LC I–III), and include an almost complete Base-ring I juglet (N102; cf. *Fig. 14:2*) and imported Aegean ware dated to LH IIIA2–B and LH IIIC early (LH IIIA2: fragment of stemmed krater, LH IIIA2–B: fragment of Minoan transport stirrup jar, LH IIIC early: fragments of two deep bowls, FS 284A).⁹² The horse head likely belongs within the later part of this date range (c. 1300–1050 BC). Due to the head’s unique style, it is not at present possible to determine with certainty its more precise date within this range, but it seems more likely to belong to the later part, when horse figurines became particularly popular in Cyprus. The closest contemporary parallel is perhaps a horse head found at the Levantine site of Ugarit. The head is part of a terracotta chariot group of local or Syrian origin and also displays remarkably naturalistic features.⁹³ While the naturalism is unusual, the stylistic concepts are not: small ears with mane and forelock rendered in the same manner as our N100 can be found on a locally produced LC III terracotta figurine from Enkomi.⁹⁴

OTHER EQUID FIGURINES AT HALA SULTAN TEKKE

While N100 presents unique features, other equid figurines have been found at Hala Sultan Tekke. This includes another find made during the 2017 season, this time in the settlement (L608-1; *Fig. 32*). It was found in R66, in T24C, L608 (Stratum 2, see location in *Fig. 4*). The figurine is another head and neck of an equid, in the Cypriot White Painted Ware. It is made of a light red fabric with a light reddish-brown slip and decorated with reddish-brown paint. The ears, mane, muzzle and forelock are broken, but the forelock appears to fall onto the crown of the head as in N100. The eyes are marked by painted circles, and lines of paint run along the side of the head towards the mouth. These likely represent parts of the

bridle (the cheekstraps) since they otherwise interrupt the pattern—this is especially clear on the left side of the head. In contrast to N100, the features of this figurine are more generic, but follow the tradition of locally produced figurines in Cyprus during LC III.⁹⁵ Although less detailed in its features, comparison with other figurines and the falling forelock also identifies this example as a horse. It was probably either carrying a rider or part of a chariot group; the difference in the pattern of the paint on the two sides could suggest it was teamed with another horse to draw a chariot.

Additional equid figurines found at Hala Sultan Tekke include a third head of a horse figurine found during the 2013 excavation of the settlement, in this case a Mycenaean import (LH IIIA–B) which was probably part of a chariot team.⁹⁶ Area A has yielded two further Mycenaean equid figurines from Offering Pit V (N58 and L46-59, LH IIIA–B), both of which likely also belong to chariot teams.⁹⁷ From the old excavations comes a badly damaged figurine head which very likely belongs to an equid and with the same raised and incised mane.⁹⁸

EQUIDS AT HALA SULTAN TEKKE AND LATE BRONZE AGE CYPRUS

Although an in-depth discussion is not appropriate here, a few notes can be made about the role of equids in the Late Bronze Age in Cyprus to put the Hala Sultan Tekke figurines in their historical context. Equids were not entirely new to Cyprus in the Late Bronze Age,⁹⁹ but from this period and into the Cypro-Geometric Period, they became particularly popular. This is part of a broader Eastern Mediterranean phenomenon where light horse-drawn chariots attain an important role in warfare, especially in the battles along the Levant involving Hittites, Egyptians, Assyrians and Canaanites. The large amounts and crucial role of chariots and horses are most famously attested by the so-called Amarna Letters, and by Egyptian material, including reliefs and the remains of actual chariots.¹⁰⁰

⁹¹ For more details about Area A at Hala Sultan Tekke, see Fischer & Bürge 2015, 41–50; 2016, 47–51; 2017c; Fischer & Satraki 2014.

⁹² According to preliminary analysis of Pit Y2 (with thanks to Teresa Bürge). Analysis of Mycenaean/Aegean pottery is carried out in collaboration with Lorenzo Mazzotta, with input from Giampaolo Graziadio and Mario Benzi.

⁹³ Schaeffer 1936, 138, pl. XVIII. Naturalistic examples are also part of the late 3rd millennium corpus of Tell Mozan (Syria)—see Hauser 2007, especially MZ1.209 K1.12, p. 367. Closer to home, some of the horse and rider figurines found at Kourion are stylistically similar but tend to have sharper, more delicate muzzles and raised manes; the majority date to the 7th century BC (Young & Young 1955, see esp. pls. 23–30).

⁹⁴ Courtois 1984, 86, pls. 31/3, XV/2.

⁹⁵ For a catalogue of Late Cypriot examples, see Karageorghis 1993, 43–45. See also Courtois 1984, 84–87 (Enkomi); Karageorghis & Demas 1985, pls. XXXI.42, CXLIX.3880, CLXVIII.3261 (Kition); Benson 1972, 136–137, pl. 35, no. B 1569 (Kourion).

⁹⁶ Fischer & Bürge 2014, 77, 78, fig. 24; Blattner 2014, 94. Part of a White Painted bovid or equid figurine comes from the 2012 excavations—see Bürge 2013, 66, fig. 17.3.

⁹⁷ Fischer & Bürge 2017c, 39, fig. 31.2.

⁹⁸ Åström 1989, 103–104, figs. 206–207.

⁹⁹ Figurines of equids from before the Late Bronze Age are extremely rare and difficult to identify. Possible example appear in Morris 1985, 204–205, figs. 326–329.

¹⁰⁰ Littauer & Crouwel 1985.



Fig. 32. Equid figurine L608-1 from CQ1, Stratum 2 (scale 1:1; photograph by T. Bürge, drawing by L. Recht).

In the Cypriot Late Bronze Age, horses and other equids are associated with the elite, high social status and wealthy tombs. Aside from equid figurines (usually horses when species is identifiable), horses appear as part of the iconography on prestigious imported pottery from the Aegean (often referred to as “chariot kraters”), and osteological remains have been found in a number of tombs.¹⁰¹ Two excellent and almost complete Mycenaean chariot kraters were found in the recent excavations of Pit V in Area A (L46-34 and L46-35), and further examples were found in earlier excavations of Hala Sultan Tekke Tomb 2.¹⁰² They depict a team of two horses in front of a light two-wheeled chariot. The chariot team is the central motif, but appears a variety of combinations with other minor motifs.

Tomb 2 also contained the remains of equids—two donkeys (*Equus asinus*) and one horse (*Equus caballus*)—while other remains of equids especially appear in Area A and vari-

ous well contexts.¹⁰³ Horses and chariots play a crucial role in the Amarna Letters, and if Alashiya is accepted as referring to Cyprus or a part of it, the island took part in the international trading and gifting of horses and chariots.¹⁰⁴ Thus, while horses and donkeys were not the most commonly found animal, they would not have been an unusual sight at Late Bronze Age Hala Sultan Tekke. The iconography favours horses, probably due to their better suitability for the fast two-wheeled chariot, and, more than anything else, they were associated with high status and are especially discovered in mortuary contexts.

¹⁰¹ Kosmetatou 1993; Reese 1995.

¹⁰² Pit V, see Fischer & Bürge 2017c, 198, 205–206, 208, figs. 38.1–2; Tomb 2, see Åström *et al.* 1976, 84–85, pls. LVI, LXXIV, nos. 214–215.

¹⁰³ Åström *et al.* 1977, 172, table 1; Åström 1983, 222, 228–229, tables 20–21; 1998, 136–138; Macheridis 2011, 93; Fischer & Bürge 2015, 47, 54, fig. 26.

¹⁰⁴ See esp. Letters EA 34 and EA 37 (Moran 1992, 105–106, 110).

as arable lands.¹⁰⁷ Additionally, it has been noticed¹⁰⁸ that *C. geophilum* very commonly appears in disturbed soils or those exposed to fire, which could explain its presence in the archaeological material.¹⁰⁹ Reasons of its occurrence in the Stratum 3 (L671) are yet to be discussed.

Preliminary conclusions

The assemblages of different strata seem to be of unified form. All of them contained some cereal, olive and common grape vine remains. However, there is a visible accumulation of olive remains in R71 (L642, L650 and L651) and in R72 (L645 and 649) associated to Stratum 2. It might indicate that these spaces were used as a place for storage/processing of olives. Apart from that, it is possible to suggest that the lack of significant differences between strata might be a result of long-standing usage of the CQ1 also as, for instance, storage or/and food processing area. Nevertheless, to verify this hypothesis further studies are required.

RESULTS: AREA A

From Area A 22 samples yielded results: two of them were taken from ochre layers, six comprised contents of various vessels and the remaining were collected from the fills of other “pits” (Table 5).

From Pit Z5 two samples delivered material for analysis: one from ochre and one from a layer of fill. They contained of grains of einkorn wheat, fragments of indeterminate cereals, one grain of brome grass (*Bromus* sp.), two indeterminate seeds/grains and pieces of coniferous and deciduous groups of charcoal. In Pit Z6, grains of barley, fragments of indeterminate cereals, olive stones, two fragments of indeterminate seeds/grains and pieces of coniferous and deciduous charcoal were identified. All analysed samples were collected from fills of the pit. In Pit Z7 only one fragment of mineralized common grape vine pip and some pieces of deciduous charcoal were found. Meanwhile in Pit Z8 and Pit AA5, only fragments of both coniferous and deciduous groups of charcoal were noted. In Pit EE1, grains of indeterminate cereal/grass and pieces of coniferous charcoal were discovered. From Pit GG, content of a vessel was sampled (N140). It contained piece of indeterminate charcoal, two grains of indeterminate grasses (*Poaceae* indet.) and one seed of goosefoot (*Chenopodium album*).

Tomb LL produced eight samples. Five of them were collected from vessel contents whereas three were taken from various locations in the tomb. In four samples there were only

pieces of charcoal. Two other samples contained remains of indeterminate cereal grains, barley, rachis of barley, one indeterminate taxon and 46 seeds of dyer's croton (*Chrozophora tinctoria*). In vessel N113, four seeds of dyer's croton along with pieces of deciduous group of charcoal were identified. The contents of vessel N121 included eight grains of germinated barley, one rachis of barley, two seeds of corn chamomile (*Anthemis arvensis*) and four grains of indeterminate grasses. Interestingly, no charcoal was detected in the described vessel. Apart from Pit EE1, in all of the samples organic slag was present.

Further studies of germinated barley and dyer's croton and their possible functions are planned.

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¹⁰⁷ Jensen 1974.

¹⁰⁸ Shay & Kapinga 1997.

¹⁰⁹ Hall *et al.* 2003.

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