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## Editorial

During the past months, we co-editors of *Neo-Lithics*, together with our senior co-editor Gary Rollefson, were approaching the readers of *Neo-Lithics* for their advice and suggestions on the future format of the newsletter. By carefully evaluating responses, we were able to take decisions matching well with one of your mottoes: *If it's not broken, don't fix it.*

We thank the readers for their advisory engagement and appreciate the many good arguments, and are especially grateful for the personal and esteeming feedback we received for our work; we are happy for the vivid, devoted and positive reactions.

Reactions were divided on the issue becoming peer-reviewed while mostly positive for going online. While we understand the strong arguments for becoming peer-reviewed since this way of handling quality simply is a standard and a need for planning careers, we should obey the wisely posed arguments against sharing this trend. The latter not only referred to the special character of *Neo-Lithics* and the alternatives and chances this provides in a landscape of peer-reviewed publications, they also questioned the need for another peer-reviewed publication. One colleague explicitly asked to protect *Neo-Lithics* against changes.

Nevertheless, we weighed all arguments and found among them – together with ours – reasons for changes in *Neo-Lithics'* 25<sup>th</sup> year (from 2018): 1) *Neo-Lithics* continues to be non-peer-reviewed (in the common sense of peer-reviewed) while enforcing a more substantial editor-/ board-based review process as well as non-anonymous peer-coaching. Individual members of an enlarged *Neo-Lithics* board will coach individual contributions by either supporting discussion of high-profile submissions or helping the publishing of important contributions from younger colleagues. Statements and points of discussion during peer-coaching may be published with a contribution if it is for the benefit of research. 2) *Neo-Lithics* will appear online from 2018 (free open access, details to be announced). No new or renewed subscriptions for print versions will be accepted from now on. Subscribers will receive printed versions until their last subscription period ends, while members of ex oriente will always receive print versions. 3) We co-editors of *Neo-Lithics* will approach further potential peer-coaches to join the permanent board of *Neo-Lithics*. Present board members should expect to be asked for peer-coaching occasionally as we also intend to ask other scholars to help case-by-case.

We hope that these decisions respect as many of the users' interests as possible, will help Neolithic research and future *Neo-Lithics*, and will serve our Neolithic research family in the best way. And this family goes ahead with resilient spirits and unimpaired strength, as the Nicosia PPN workshop report demonstrates (*cf.* pages 47ff). It is encouraging.

Hans Georg K. Gebel, Marion Benz, Dörte Rokitta-Krumnow, and Gary Rollefson

## A Short Note on a New Figurine Type from Göbekli Tepe

Oliver Dietrich and Klaus Schmidt (†)<sup>1</sup>

During the 2012 autumn excavation season at Göbekli Tepe, a small figurine (5,1 x 2,3 x 2,7 cm) was handed in as a surface find from the north-western hilltop of the tell (Fig. 1). The motif of the figurine is an ithyphallic person sitting with legs dragged toward his body on an unidentifiable object. He is looking up and grasping his legs. Between the legs, a large erect phallus is depicted (Fig. 2), while a quadruped animal is sitting on the person's left shoulder (Fig. 3). As one half of the figurine has a thick layer of sinter, the question whether there originally was another animal on the other shoulder remains open. The animal species cannot be determined with security either, but the general form is consistent with depictions of large wildcats or bears at Göbekli Tepe (e.g. Schmidt 1999: 9-10, nr. A8). The material of the sculpture is unusual for the site on the other hand. Nearly all sculptures and figurines so far known from Göbekli Tepe were made from local limestone. The new figurine is most likely made from nephrite<sup>2</sup>. The figurine is perforated crosswise in its lower part. A functional interpretation for this detail is hard to give as one perforation would have sufficed to wear it as a pendant for example. Maybe the figurine was meant to be fixed to a support.

The unclear find circumstances and the unusual material raise the question of the figurine's provenance. The sinter layer is a characteristic for finds from Göbekli Tepe (and clearly indicates that the figurine was originally buried with the right side down), but could have formed of course also at another site with similar natural conditions. There is however an older find that could represent a fragment of the same figurine type. This fragment, comprising head and shoulder of a small

figurine (3,9 x 4.0 x 2.8 cm) made from brownish limestone, was discovered in 2002, also on the surface of the tell (Fig. 4). There are two more examples of larger seated sculptures from Göbekli Tepe. A first depiction of a seated person (h. 32.5cm; Fig. 5), badly preserved, was found on the surface of the tell, too (Schmidt 1999: 9, pl. 1/1). Here, the hands are brought together under the belly, the gesture reminds of the 'Urfa Man' who most likely is presenting a phallus (Hauptmann 2003), but unfortunately the lower part of the sculpture is not preserved. A snake could be depicted crawling up the back and head of the sculpture, but this remains uncertain, too. Another example (h. 44 cm) was found more recently in a deep sounding in the northwestern depression of the tell (Area K10-55, Locus 21.2; Fig. 6). The find context is still under evaluation, much speaks for a PPN B date so far. The preservation of this sculpture is also rather bad, the lower part is missing again. Both examples show some clear differences compared to the figurine: the arms are folded in front of the body, there is no animal on the shoulder, and the persons seem to sit on the ground, not on some object. As the lower part is missing we cannot be sure whether a phallus was depicted. Summing up, it seems nevertheless reasonably sure that the new figurine is from Göbekli Tepe – and represents a type, or variant, not known so far in the site's sculptural inventory.

### Date and Analogies

Without knowledge of the original find context, or analogies from clear contexts, there is no possibility



Fig. 1 Seated figurine from Göbekli Tepe (© DAI, Photo N. Becker).



Fig. 2 Detail of legs and phallus of the new figurine (© DAI, Photo N. Becker).

to attribute the new figurine to one of Göbekli Tepe's architectural horizons – Layer III with the PPNA and possibly early PPN B large stone circles formed of T-shaped pillars, or Layer II with early/middle PPNB rectangular or sub-rectangular buildings. Offsite analogies also seem to be scarce.

29 similarly seated limestone figurines are known from Mezraa-Teleilat's phase IIIB, *i.e.* the Late PPNB / early Pottery Neolithic transition (Özdoğan 2003: 515-516, Fig. 1a-c, 2b-c, 4, 5; Özdoğan 2011: 209, fig. 14-21; Hansen 2014: 271, Fig. 9). One more find can be added to this group, a more recently published stone figurine from Çatalhöyük (Hodder 2012: fig. 14b; Hansen 2014: 271). Although the overall form is very similar, the figurines from Mezraa-Teleilat and Çatalhöyük are much more abstracted, the former are sitting on armchair-like seats, wear robe-like clothes and in some cases belts, and examples with animals on the shoulders seem to be missing. As the latest finds from Göbekli Tepe date to the middle PPN B, the figurine must be older than the finds from Mezraa Teleilat and Çatalhöyük. Whether the naturalistic sculpture(s) from Göbekli Tepe can be regarded as the prototypes for this group and thus also a similar meaning could be proposed, cannot be answered with security for now.

Further analogies are hard to find. The much later standing female clay figurines holding leopard cubs from Hacilar (*e.g.* Mellaart 1970, fig. 196-197), and the so-called 'Mistress of Animals', a female figurine seated on a leopard and holding a leopard cub (Mellaart 1970: fig. 228), or, in another case, seated on two leopards and holding their tails (Mellaart 1970: fig. 229) are different in gesture and topic.

## Discussion

The meaning of the figurine from Göbekli Tepe remains enigmatic. The finds from Mezraa Teleilat and Çatalhöyük seem to be the best analogies for now. But in contrast to this group, the find discussed here has the animal on the shoulder (or one on each shoulder originally?) as an important characteristic. There are several examples of animal-human composite sculptures from

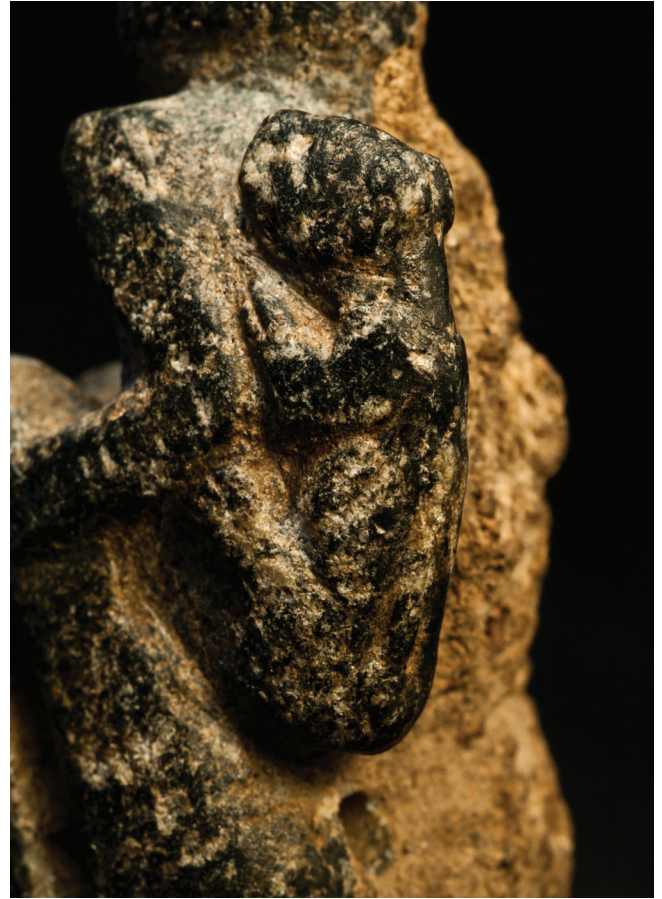


Fig. 3 Detail of the animal on the shoulder of the new figurine (© DAI, Photo N. Becker).

Göbekli Tepe. But they show animals – birds and quadrupeds – on the heads of people, grabbing them with their claws, maybe carrying the heads away (*e.g.* Beile-Bohn *et al.* 1998: 66-68, fig. 30-31; Becker *et al.* 2012: 35). This kind of iconography most likely relates to Neolithic death cult (Schmidt 1999: 7-8). The new sculpture, with one or two animals in the shoulder area, does not fit well into this group. The animal is clinging to the shoulder in a crouched position, there is no indication of aggression or attack (Fig. 3), or a reaction of the sitting person. The animal could thus have a completely different meaning. We could be dealing with a more metaphorical relationship between man and animal here.

At Göbekli Tepe, animal symbolism seems to have an emblematic/totemic connotation in some cases. In every one of the monumental enclosures of Layer III, one animal species is dominant by quantity of depictions (Notroff *et al.* 2014: 97-98, Fig. 5.9). In Enclosure C for example boars have this role, in Enclosure A snakes, Enclosure B has many undecorated pillars, but foxes are more frequent, while Enclosure D is more diverse, with birds and insects playing an important role. Given this background, one hypothesis would be that the animal characterises the person depicted in the figurine as a member of a certain group.

The other important characteristic of the depiction is the prominent erect phallus. Göbekli Tepe's iconography is generally nearly exclusively male (*e.g.* Dietrich and Notroff 2015: 85), and the phallus features prominently



Fig. 4 Fragment of a limestone figurine discovered in 2002 at Göbekli Tepe (© DAI, Photo I. Wagner).

in several depictions of animals and humans. For example, a headless ithyphallic body is depicted on Pillar 43 amongst birds, snakes and a large scorpion (Schmidt 2006). Although the central pillars of the large enclosures are clearly marked as human through the depiction of arms, hands, and in the case of Enclosure D also items of clothing, their sex is not indicated. An erect phallus however is a prominent feature of the foxes depicted on several of the central pillars. There are also a few phallus sculptures from the site (e.g. Schmidt 1999: 9, Pl. 2/3-4).

It is hard to say whether all these diverse depictions/contexts share a similar basic meaning, or a multitude of meanings is implied. There is a vast ethnographic and historic repertoire of phallic depictions in the context of power, dominance, aggression, marking of boundaries/ownership, and apotropaism (e.g. Sütterlin-Eibl-Eibesfeldt 2013 with bibliography). Phallic symbolism is also often integrated in rites of admission in social groups. The association of animal and phallic symbolism in the sitting (watching?) figurine could hypothetically hint at such rites of admission, it could be a mnemonic object illustrating an aspect/moment of the rituals involved. However, further finds from secure and informative contexts from Göbekli Tepe, or elsewhere, should be awaited to shed some more light on this new figurine type.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> This short text was meant to be published much earlier. It has been “forgotten” following Klaus Schmidt’s untimely death in 2014. Although the find presented here is not so new any more, it has not been discussed extensively so far and certainly merits some attention. I have to thank Marion Benz for helpful comments on an earlier version of this text.

<sup>2</sup> Optical classification by Klaus Schmidt.

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Fig. 5 Seated limestone sculpture from Göbekli Tepe (© DAI, Photo T. Goldschmidt).



Fig. 6 Seated limestone sculpture from Göbekli Tepe (© DAI, Photo N. Becker).

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