

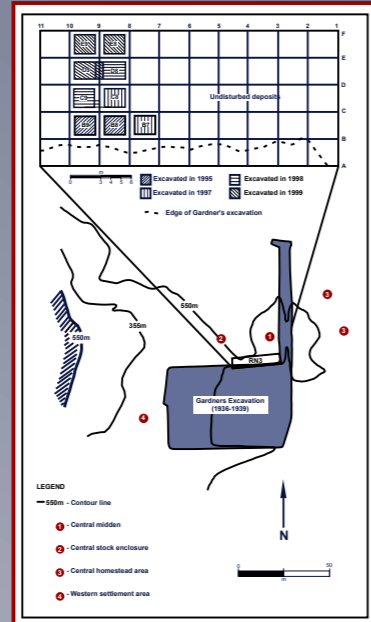
Clay figurines from K2

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Introduction

K2 is an Iron Age site approximately 1km from Mapungubwe in the Northern province. Archaeological excavations were conducted here between 1995 and 1999, intending to differentiate between stock enclosure, midden and living area, and also to find human skeletal remains. An attempt was also made to determine changes in fauna and ceramics in terms of time and horizontal distribution. Human skeletal remains, potsherds, beads, animal bones, iron fragments and several clay figurine fragments were found.



Site plan

Animal Figurines from K2

Excavation	Block (RN2)	Body fragments without head and legs	Body fragments without head/with legs/part of legs	Leg fragments	Horn fragments	Head fragments with horns	Head fragments without horns	Nose fragments	Decorations on fragments	Fragments with legs and head
1995	B8	1	*	1	*	*	*	*	*	*
	B9	1	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Surface	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	1
1997	B8	*	1	1	*	*	*	*	*	*
	C8	*	*	1	*	*	*	*	*	*
1998	C8	*	1	1	1	*	*	*	*	*
	D8	4	2	5	1	1	4	*	1	*
1999	D9	1	1	3	3	4	*	*	*	*
	E8	2	1	7	3	*	*	*	*	*
	E9	1	1	*	3	1	1	1	*	*
	witness section	1	1	3	1	*	1	*	*	1
	surface	1	1	1	*	*	*	*	*	*
Total		10	9	23	12	6	6	1	1	2



Examples of animal clay figurines

Clay figurines

The clay figurine fragments were mostly found in the upper three layers, or later stages of human settlement at K2. The 77 fragments can be classified as either animal (67) or human (10) figurines. They can further be divided into different groups according to body parts represented and decorations.

Human Figurines from K2

Excavation	Block (RN3)	Legs, buttock, body with button and decorations	Body and buttock	Head, arms and breast	Body with belly button and decorations	Body with breast decoration	Head with decoration
1999	E8	3	*	*	*	*	*
1999	E8	*	1	*	*	*	*
1998	D8	*	*	1	*	*	*
1998	Surface	*	*	*	1	*	*
1998	D8	*	*	*	*	1	*
1999	D9	*	*	*	*	*	1
Total		3	1	1	1	1	1



Human clay figurines

Large human clay figurine

During the 1999 excavations three fragments of a large human clay figurine were found. One fragment consists of the right leg, buttock and part of the abdomen. The second fragment is the left buttock, while the third fragment consists of the abdomen with protruding navel. The three fragments form the lower body of a human female, excluding the left leg. From toe to top the figurine fragments measure 15,5cm while the width of the buttocks is 7,2cm and the width of the abdomen 5,9cm. The foot is 2,7cm long and 1,9cm wide. The right leg is 5,1cm long. Decoration on the clay figure consists of incisions around the abdomen on the level of the navel, and incisions down the centre of the back onto the buttocks.



Large human clay figurine

Discussion

Several clay figurines were previously found at K2/Mapungubwe and at the adjacent site of Schroda. The recently found animal figurines from K2 are similar to those described by Voigt (1983) but little is known about the human figurines. Human figurines were probably used for initiation ceremonies and animal figurines as toys by children. Animal clay figurines can be used to gain information about the economy of the time and the area the people lived in (Matenga, 1993:18). Figurines from K2 and Mapungubwe need to be compared with similar figurines coming from other contemporary sites such as Great Zimbabwe and Schroda.

References

Matenga, E. 1993. Archaeological figurines from Zimbabwe. Studies in African Archaeology 5. Uppsala University: Sweden
 Voigt, E.A. 1983. Mapungubwe: An Archaeozoological interpretation of an iron Age community. Transvaal Museum: Pretoria