

## **Plastic representations from the prehistoric site at Harmanli**

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The ruins of a prehistoric site from the very end of sixth mill. BC have been found on a lowly rising ground directly above the floodplain on the right bank of the Maritsa River, at about 3.5 kilometers to the north of the town of Harmanli, southeast Bulgaria. Finds belong to the last period of the late Neolithic in Thrace - Karanovo IV - and probably to its transitional phase to the early Chalcolithic, which was identified just recently. However, the upper layer has been almost totally destroyed by the continuing agricultural cultivation of the area, and only scattered pottery sherds have been found; more open shapes appeared in this phase, carinated vessels became more rounded, and the white-encrusted decoration disappeared. For the ceramic complex of the lower layer, carinated and sharply profiled shapes are typical; its most common feature is the incised and white-encrusted decoration as well as certain dark-gray burnished ware with grayish white-painted decoration, which has its parallels in Turkish Thrace and northwest Anatolia.

Plastic representations include anthropomorphs, zoomorphs, and other finds of clay and

stone that are typical for the Karanovo IV material culture as a whole but have some specific features, too. The majority of them find relatively close parallels in the Thracian Neolithic. Despite the lack of relevant archaeological contexts, which should refer to the functional interpretation of the Harmanli finds, certain hints are inherent in their nature itself. One of their common - almost always - features is their fragmentariness; it seems that they have already fulfilled their functions related to the early farmers' ritual activities, and after their fragmentation - so typical that it is most likely intentional, as is being recently acknowledged - they had been "desacralized" and become useless, or at least their "dumped" part could be considered as such. That this could be assumed as more or less certain, at least with the anthropomorphs, is evidenced by their special forming modes, which suggest their splitting in several parts. As regards the "feline" and bulls characters of the zoomorphs, it is probably more reasonable to put them in a broader territorial and cultural context, and to consider them on a comparative basis with other simultaneous sites.