

## Chapter 6

# Group Identity and the Politics of Dwelling at Neolithic Çatalhöyük

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### Questions asked: choosing stories and narratives

One of the main objectives of this paper is to offer a new perspective on the history of the Neolithic community of Çatalhöyük that will attempt a shift away from site-level analysis and potentially-restrictive labels such as the 'ritual'/'symbolic' as opposed to the 'economic' and the 'subsistence-oriented'. These aspects of archaeological research at Çatalhöyük are certainly critical to our understanding of the site (see contributions in the present and previous volumes of this series) both on its own terms and, furthermore, as a theatre for the intercession of contemporary concerns and debates in archaeological practice (see Hodder 1998; 2000). The purpose of this contribution, however, is to consider the results of such analyses in the regional context of the development of Neolithic societies in central Anatolia, aiming at the elucidation of the broader historical processes that framed the beginnings of the settlement, and the formation and negotiation of group identity during its lifetime. This I hope to achieve primarily through the investigation of aspects of the organization and use of domestic space (focusing on art) and the landscape, in ways that could illuminate how any archaeologically-detectable strategies of space manipulation (viewed in their local and regional context) might reflect group perceptions and ideologies.

Developments in archaeological research at Çatalhöyük and the Neolithic of central Anatolia as a whole, have a long history of non-convergence which can be traced back to the first investigations of the site by James Mellaart. During the 1960s, Çatalhöyük stood out for the uniqueness of its material culture, architecture, and art (particularly the painted and sculpted wall decorations) which bore little or no resemblance at all to what was known at the time from Anatolia and elsewhere in Southwest Asia. This lack of regional comparanda, matched by Mellaart's

own interpretative framework, eventually resulted in the perception of Çatalhöyük as a major religious centre devoted to the cult of the 'mother goddess' and inhabited by a society that was divided along the lines of 'priests', 'priestesses' and lay people, hence anticipating by some two to three millennia the emergence of complex societies with temple economies in Mesopotamia, Anatolia and the eastern Mediterranean (see Mellaart 1963d, 78–81; 1967). Following this initial period of discoveries, Mellaart and his interpretations became the object of intense scrutiny. Over the next two decades the 'uniqueness' of Çatalhöyük and its 'cultic' character were gradually played down in favour of more rationalized explanations. This coincided with the increasing amount of archaeological research in the region, culminating at the excavation of the earliest levels of Canhasan by David French (French *et al.* 1972) and the initial exploration of Aşıklı Höyük in Cappadocia by Ian Todd during his survey of central Anatolia (Todd 1966). These approaches sought to explicate the material culture of Çatalhöyük and its perceived 'affluence' through interpretative models that emphasized the role of agricultural production and the site's potentially strategic location for intercepting the flows of obsidian and other raw materials between Anatolia and the Levant (see Bartel 1972; Todd 1976). At the same time, many of Mellaart's original suggestions pertaining to the religious functions of the site (as for example his distinction between 'shrines' and 'houses') went mostly without being explicitly addressed as did his theories on the existence, locally, of a cult of the 'mother goddess'. The uncertainties surrounding the methodology deployed by Mellaart in the reporting of some of his most extraordinary findings (particularly wall paintings, some of which were reproduced in his monumental monograph and later publications mainly through artistic reconstructions and text-based general descriptions with little direct reference to the originals) could only reinforce further

the scepticism in parts of the academic community about the factual basis of some of his interpretations (see Eiland 1993; Voigt 1991).

In the 1990s, the renewal of archaeological investigations at Çatalhöyük saw the establishment of a research agenda that aimed explicitly at the development of a 'reflexive method' of archaeological practice (Hodder 1997; 2000). Çatalhöyük henceforth emerged as a multi-faceted and multivocal project, capable of accommodating perspectives that could be convergent or diametrically opposed. One of the principal goals of 'reflexivity' has been to foster, at the level of the excavation and specialist research alike, the need for accountability towards the multiple interested parties laying their claims on the site (Hodder 1998; 2000). Thus, from its very beginning, the project was designed to address research goals that ventured well beyond its potential contribution to debates and developments taking place within the framework of the regional Neolithic archaeology. This has been most evident in its sustained preoccupation with redefining the purpose and means of archaeological practice and interpretation (see Hodder 1999). One consequence of this state of affairs has been the relative isolation of the site and the archaeological work performed on it from the broader archaeological discourse concerned with the origins and development of Neolithic societies in central Anatolia and adjacent regions. Such an approach was bound to view the site as a closed, self-defined system without external referents, hence limiting the scope of archaeological interpretation. By extension, it would also appear to foster the theoretical and intellectual alienation of the archaeologists themselves working at Çatalhöyük from the larger debates and questions facing Neolithic research in this part of the world (but see recently published collections of papers in Gérard & Thissen 2002; Erdur & Duru 2003). The breadth and multiplicity of research agendas incorporated in the project, combined with an unprecedented array of archaeological specialisms brought at the site and the application of very detailed excavation, recording and sampling procedures (Farid 2000) have also contrived in creating an extraordinary wealth of information, largely unmatched among other excavations in Southwest Asia. Together, these factors can be considered as largely responsible for the persistence of a notion of 'uniqueness' when Çatalhöyük is compared to other Neolithic settlements in the region.

Hence, turning back to the early days of research in Çatalhöyük, an underlying pattern can be recognized. In the 1960s it was the absence of a measure of comparison that raised Çatalhöyük to a class of its own. During the 1970s and 1980s increased archaeo-

logical work and the realization of the fundamental theoretical faults of earlier approaches led largely to a 'demystification' of the site, with the emphasis shifting away from Mellaart's 'shrines' and the ubiquitous 'mother goddess' to more tangible (and empirically demonstrable) realities as for example settlement economy and the perceived importance of the site in regional exchange networks. The more unsettling, and for that reason more difficult to entertain, aspects of the site (when not marred by controversy) were largely confined to the margins of the academically-acceptable discourse (but see Cauvin & Cauvin 1984; Cauvin 1987). During the 1990s Çatalhöyük became once more 'marginalized', in a way also 'exoticized', by virtue of its perceived isolation from the wider research agendas of the regional Neolithic archaeology. One could argue with some justification that 'old' concepts still lay beneath the frequent invocation of Çatalhöyük primarily in the context of discussions concerned with the role of symbolism and the transformations of 'religious' expression and meaning in the Neolithic of Southwest Asia (e.g. Cauvin 2000a,b; Verhoeven 2002).

This situation has been arguably reinforced by a dominant archaeological discourse that tends to view central Anatolia as an area peripheral to major developments occurring elsewhere in Southwest Asia at the end of the Pleistocene and the beginning of the Holocene (e.g. Cauvin 2000a). Anatolia did not possess a strong tradition of Epipalaeolithic and Pre-Pottery Neolithic A habitation; hence it could not claim participation in the so-called 'nuclear zone' of economic and socio-cultural transformations that prepared the ground for the emergence of agricultural village life in the Near East. At the same time, scholarly attempts to rectify this negative picture concentrated mainly on emphasizing the differences (e.g. in material culture and architecture) of large early sites such as Aşıklı Höyük from their predecessors (in the chronological sense) in southeast Anatolia and the Levant (e.g. Özdoğan 1997a,b). A conscious attempt was also made to play down the role of agricultural production (whose indigenous origins are arguably much more difficult to demonstrate) in the subsistence practices of Anatolian Neolithic communities, which were generally presented as relying primarily on gathered resources with agriculture gaining importance only towards the later phases of the Neolithic (e.g. Özdoğan 1997a,b; Voigt 2000, 288; Gérard 2002; for a recent critique of the erroneous yet persistent conceptualization of Early Neolithic village communities in Anatolia largely as 'sedentary hunter-gatherers' see Asouti & Fairbairn 2002). This discourse has had clear political undertones as well:

viewing central Anatolia as a distinct 'neolithization zone' that emerged independently of developments in neighbouring areas, and (at the same time) stressing its perceived role in the spread of Neolithic economies in southeast Europe, were both key concepts towards the rejection of the epistemological premises of 'Eurocentrism' within Anatolian prehistoric archaeology (e.g. Özdoğan 1997b). In this debate, Çatalhöyük continued to resist more precise categorization: was it a 'special' site with impressive domestic art, a nearly utopian affluent society of settled hunter-gatherers that flourished long after food production had been established elsewhere in the region? Or can one best interpret it as a major regional ritual centre whose cult of the 'mother goddess' encompassed all those traits considered as paradigmatic of Neolithic 'religion' in the Near East? (see in particular the critique of this concept by Jean-Daniel Forest 1993, 35–6). It becomes evident from this necessarily short discussion that Çatalhöyük has occupied a place in the archaeological imagination mainly as a self-contained entity, with little explicit discussion as to how it may relate to the broader regional picture, except perhaps for the study of Neolithic symbolism and religion. Furthermore, with reference to the current excavations, the site has transpired to a large part of the wider archaeological community principally as a laboratory of ideas and a suitable arena for the application and testing in the field of novel approaches to heritage management, analytical practices and archaeological interpretation (Hodder 1998; 1999; 2000).

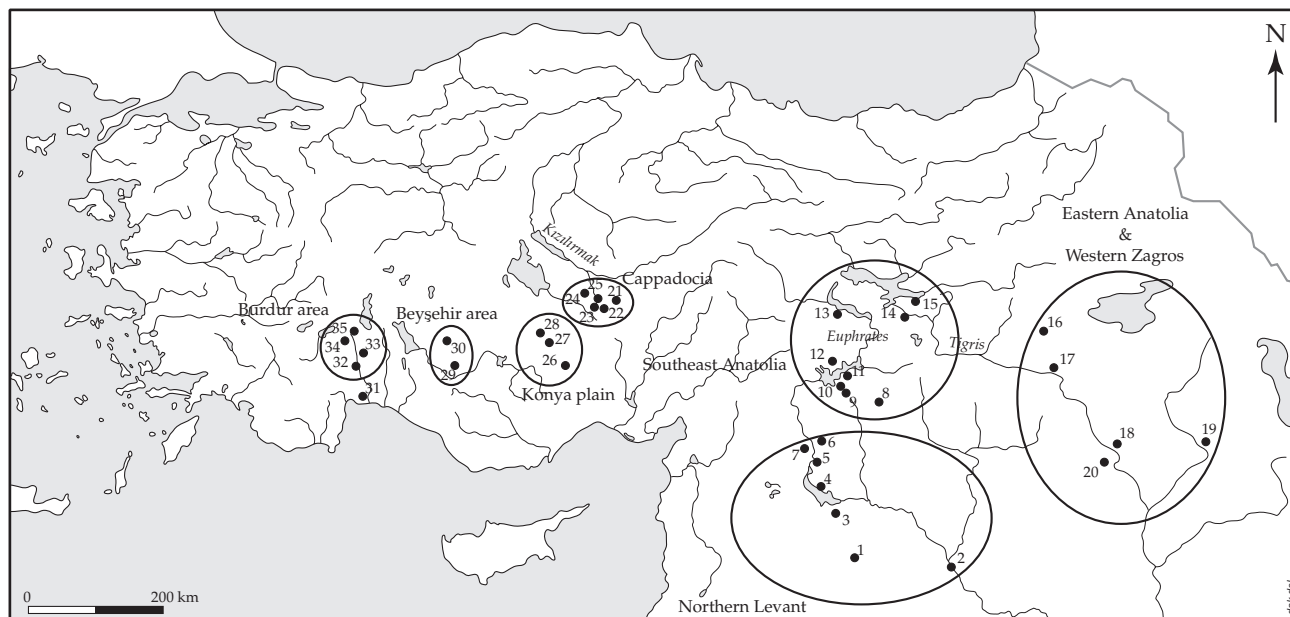
The approach adopted in this chapter sets out to offer an alternative narrative of the history of Neolithic Çatalhöyük, by using the themes of art and the use of space as starting points for exploring the formation of group identity and its negotiation inside the settlement. A central role is also awarded to locating comparable processes relating to the emergence of Neolithic sedentary life elsewhere in central Anatolia. Such a perspective sees art and the organization of space in Çatalhöyük neither as a self-contained system imbued with symbolism in need of decoding, nor solely as a reflection of slow-evolving, habitual routines of practice (e.g. Last 1998) ultimately devoid of meaningful external referents. In my opinion there is an important 'middle ground' to be covered that involves an explicitly historical approach aiming at the reconstruction of the political economy of the settlement. This approach starts from the premise that material manifestations of identity and social relations (expressed in this instance through art and the organization of space) were active agents in the emergence of sedentary life at a period of decisive importance in the prehistory of southwest Asia: that of PPNB expansion and the consolidation

of control over 'new' territories. In central Anatolia this was a time of radical changes effected on diverse social agglomerations that nonetheless drew (as I will argue later in this chapter) from a repository of shared cultural traditions.

I would also like to bring to the attention of the reader another important reason for insisting on the appropriateness of a historical approach emphasizing the central role of regional contexts in the construction of site narratives. The current domination of theoretical archaeological discourse (particularly evident in the highly competitive arenas of western academia) by the global messages of (post)modernism often tends to reduce past societies to a passive ground for the wholesale (and sometimes uncritical) exportation of western ideas and worldviews. This in turn has frequently resulted in the production of all-embracing and largely essentialist interpretations which reduce the scope for regional variability, while at the same time ironing out sources of ambiguity and contestation of the dominant theoretical paradigms in the archaeological record. It follows that, despite repeatedly voiced claims to the contrary, such interpretations tend to mask if not erase altogether the diversity and distinctiveness of prehistoric human experience (for a recent discussion of these issues as regards European Neolithic archaeology see Cooney 2002; for more specific discussions on the manifestations and role of theory within Anatolian archaeology see Erdur & Duru 2003).

### Çatalhöyük in its regional context

What can the extant archaeological record tell us about central Anatolia around the time of the first Neolithic settlement? The earliest site excavated to date is the aceramic hunting station of Pınarbaşı A in the Konya plain, radiocarbon-dated at the second half of the ninth millennium cal. BC (Watkins 1996; see Fig. 6.1 for distribution of archaeological sites). The lack of habitation sites from earlier periods, although not total (cf. Baird 2002; 2004; this volume), is suggestive of a general absence of archaeologically visible settlement in the region. Although the routes from the Levant to the obsidian sources of the Cappadocian highlands were known since the Epipalaeolithic (Balkan-Atlı *et al.* 1999; Binder 2002) there is no compelling evidence to suggest that at that time central Anatolia participated actively in such exchange networks or, alternatively, that it became the target of frequent visitations and/or population movements from more southern areas. The harsh environmental conditions prevailing in central Anatolia during this period (Roberts *et al.* 1999; 2001) were probably instrumental in prohibiting the estab-



**Figure 6.1.** The main Neolithic and Epipalaeolithic sites located in the areas discussed in this chapter: 1) El Kowm; 2) Bouqras; 3) Abu Hureyra; 4) Mureybet; 5) Jerf el Ahmar; 6) Dja'ade; 7) Haloula; 8) Göbekli Tepe; 9) Biris Mezarlığı; 10) Söğüt Tarlası; 11) Nevalı Çori; 12) Gritille; 13) Cafer Höyük; 14) Çayönü; 15) Boytepe; 16) Hallan Çemi; 17) Demirci; 18) Nemrik; 19) Zawi Chemi Shanidar (Palaeolithic–Epipalaeolithic); 20) Qermez Dere; 21) Gedikpaşa; 22) Aşıklı Höyük; 23) Musular; 24) Yelibelen Tepesi; 25) Kaletepe; 26) Can Hasan; 27) Pınarbaşı A & B; 28) Çatalhöyük; 29) Erbara; 30) Suberde; 31) Öküzini (Epipalaeolithic); 32) Bademağacı; 33) Höyücek; 34) Hacılar; 35) Kuruçay.

lishment of settlement (permanent or seasonal) of the type familiar from the Natufian in the Levant. Local habitation networks were probably of low density and were also characterized by a high degree of mobility as indicated by their low archaeological visibility. This pattern could have been even more accentuated in the flat, semi-arid plateaus of the Konya basin, where potentially exploitable microenvironments were confined in the few locations receiving seasonal waterflows from the surrounding uplands.

On the other hand, with the onset of the Holocene climatic optimum (c. 9500 BC) mobile hunting groups such as those indicated by the excavations at Pınarbaşı A, could have benefited substantially from the opportunistic exploitation of seasonal concentrations of herbivore herds and waterfowl in the expanding steppe-wetland-woodland ecotones (see Martin *et al.* 2002; Asouti 2003). Excavation data have indicated that these groups had at least some contact with the Mediterranean littoral south of the Taurus mountains (Watkins 1996) where a long history of Epipalaeolithic habitation is well documented (Otte *et al.* 1995). This does not exclude the possibility of more permanent aceramic sites being established near marshes and fluvial outlets, suggested by the findings of surface surveys in the Konya plain (Baird this volume). We can only speculate as to their nature, size and longevity.

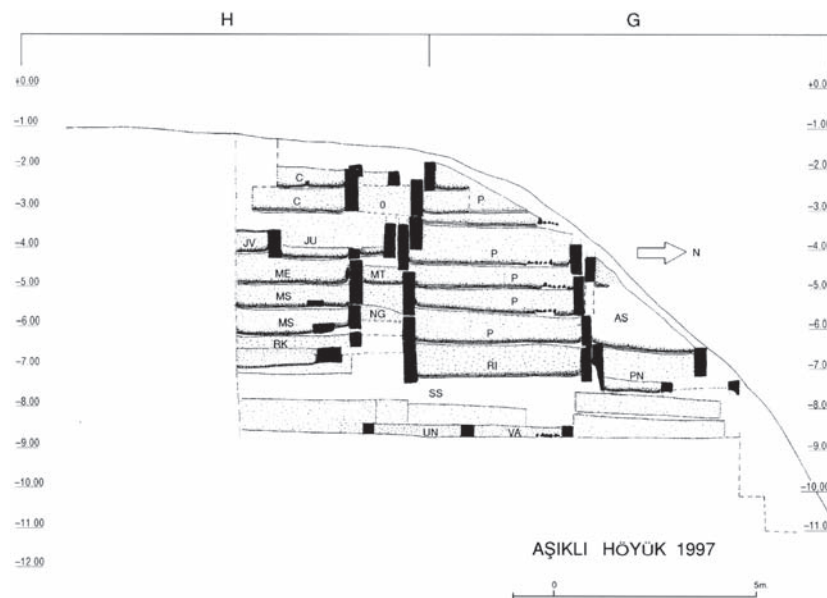
However, lithic assemblages known from both the survey sites and the Pınarbaşı hunting station suggest a degree of technological conservatism (with microlithic 'Epipalaeolithic' industries: see Watkins 1996; Baird this volume) which points towards a prominent role for hunting-gathering subsistence practices, at least in the Konya plain, during this period.

At around 8400 BC we have definite signs for the intensive exploitation of obsidian quarries in the Cappadocian highlands, in the area of Göllü Dağ (Kömürcü / Kaletepe) (Binder & Balkan-Atlı 2001; Binder 2002). Obsidian exploitation is characterized by highly standardized *chaînes opératoires* of lithic production indicating a high level of specialization, whilst their products were dispersed over a very extensive area including PPNB territories in southeast Anatolia, the middle Euphrates, southern Levant and Cyprus (Binder 2002; Balkan-Atlı 1994a,b). These artefacts were most probably of little utilitarian value and appear instead to represent prestige exotica circulated between different communities (see discussion in Carter *et al.*, Volume 4, Chapter 12; Cauvin 2000a, 93).

Significantly, the establishment of the earliest known permanent settlements in Cappadocia, such as Aşıklı (Esin *et al.* 1991; Esin & Harmankaya 1999) took place at around the same time and in close proximity to the areas of obsidian exploitation, in the context

of a region-wide wave of settlement diffusion beyond the confines of the so-called 'core areas' of eastern Taurus and northern Levant during the middle PPNB (see Cauvin 2000a). Cappadocia thus figures prominently as one of the main frontier zones between central Anatolia and the southeast Anatolian and Levantine cultural complexes. But was the emergence of large-scale sedentary settlement in this area the direct result of population movements in search of new lands and/or greater control over obsidian sources? Or could one envisage instead a process of 'acculturation' with the transference of knowledge (including agriculture) perhaps from itinerant knappers to local hunting-gathering groups?

The evidence available from Aşıklı is somewhat intriguing in this respect (the detailed analysis of the earliest levels of the site is still incomplete). The rarity of Early Neolithic permanent settlements in this area would appear to preclude the possibility of large-scale demic diffusion. The idiosyncratic obsidian industries of Aşıklı, exhibiting few similarities to contemporary southeast Anatolian and Levantine ones, have already been remarked upon as 'atypical' by several authors (e.g. Cauvin 2000a, 216). In particular, the presence of distinctive geometric microliths (see Balkan-Atlı & Der Aprehian 1998; Binder 2002) may indicate the persistence of locally-derived elements. At the same time, a direct linkage of the lithic repertoires and the workshops exploited by the Aşıklı community with those known from Kömürcü/Kaletepe remains unsupported by the available evidence (Abbès *et al.* 1999). An explanation positing at least some role for indigenous hunting groups in animal exploitation (albeit limited by way of animal husbandry and breeding techniques) could also be considered, given the archaeozoological evidence indicating the loose management of local wild sheep herds (Buitenhuis 1997; Vigne & Buitenhuis 1999; Martin *et al.* 2002). Yet, the alternative of a purely local development is equally improbable. Aşıklı architecture exhibits a few links to southeast Anatolian prototypes manifested, among other things, in the selection of building materials and, crucially, the investment in the creation and maintenance of elaborate spaces (cf. Hauptmann 1999; Esin & Harmankaya 1999; Özdoğan 1999; Duru 2002). The evidence currently available on plant-exploitation practices also suggests a fairly-developed



**Figure 6.2.** Section of the deep sounding in Aşıklı showing the continuity of building plans and the positioning of hearths (after Esin & Harmankaya 1999).

system of agricultural production, in which not only the plant domesticates but, more importantly perhaps, the knowledge for their successful manipulation, are very unlikely to have developed locally (van Zeist & de Roller 1995; Asouti & Fairbairn 2002).

It would seem a far more plausible option that small groups moved into Cappadocia, perhaps armed with previously established links and alliances with indigenous social units. Such alliances could have taken shape in the context of regular contacts around the obsidian workshop areas and/or occasional exploratory forays into neighbouring territories. The overall settlement layout in Aşıklı (e.g. the adherence to pre-existing building outlines including the positioning of internal features such as hearths: Fig. 6.2) indicates the existence of a strongly-cohesive and conservative social group which, although probably incorporating local elements, apparently sought to preserve its relative autonomy from both local 'influences' and further external inputs. This dominant ideology might have been further underpinned by performances of public gatherings and rituals (by virtue of their enactment in buildings and open courtyards set in isolation from the residential areas and accessed through a monumental road). These could have involved supra-household groups (e.g. village elders) or even 'elite' households (Esin & Harmankaya 1999; see also Byrd 1994; 2000). Eventually, however, such formalized socio-political alliances broke up; they either got transformed beyond the point of resilience of previously binding social agreements and value-systems emphasizing long-

term lineage continuity, or were rendered obsolete by later developments such as the renewed presence in the area of 'foreign' elements originating in southeast Anatolia and/or northern Levant as proposed by Jacques Cauvin (2000a, 219). To date, little is known by way of excavated sites and published results for what followed Aşıklı. Musular (and two more as yet unexcavated open plan settlements, Yelibelen Tepesi and Gedikpaşa: Özbaşaran 1999) that appeared shortly before the end of Aşıklı, may represent an altogether different pattern of socio-economic and territorial organization. The evidence published thus far (Özbaşaran 1999; 2000) would seem to support an interpretation of Musular as a non-domestic site; other functions such as ritual (with an emphasis on the hunting of wild cattle) and/or as a craft production site could also be considered.

The related distribution of Early Neolithic habitation sites and obsidian-knapping spots in the Cappadocian region is informative beyond the mere investigation of local developments. It clearly indicates that, throughout the period of the PPNB expansion in Anatolia, incoming groups chose to settle areas likely to have been part of pre-existing networks of activities, for reasons probably relating to the presence of unusually favourable microenvironments (in a region otherwise quite marginal for sustaining large-scale settlement based on hunting and gathering alone) and the proximity to highly-prized obsidian sources. Other areas (such as the inhospitable arid plains of northern central Anatolia) remain tellingly 'blank' on the map, and probably acted as natural barriers that defined both the feasibility and the direction of paths of movement. The Konya plain represents a good example of a similar configuration (see also Kuzucuoğlu 2002). The sole areas that could feasibly accommodate early hubs of activity whilst also forming points of entry into the plain during later periods, are those comfortably linked to sources of water at the northern foothills of the Taurus mountains (sharply contrasted with the dry lacustrine plateaus and the marl steppe extending over the central and northern parts of the plain). It was probably through such locales that the main routes of contact came to be established between the Cappadocian highlands, the Konya plain and, further to the west, the Beyşehir-Burdur region.

To date, we know very little of the archaeology of this intermediate zone. As discussed above, unequivocal remains of Early Neolithic settlement in the Konya plain prior to and/or contemporary with Aşıklı are rare. One relatively well-known permanent aceramic site is Canhasan III located on an alluvial fan in the eastern Konya plain, at the Taurus foothills dating from c. 7600 BC (i.e. broadly contemporary

to Musular) (Fig. 6.1). Canhasan III has given good evidence for a mixed agricultural economy based on plant and animal domesticates (French *et al.* 1972). It seems therefore likely that the importation of plant and animal domesticates into the Konya plain was effected through this route. The regular presence of obsidian (as yet of unknown source) alongside flint in the lithic industries of Pınarbaşı A might also indicate the existence of older contacts and paths of movement between the Konya plain and Cappadocia, which later on could have facilitated incoming agricultural communities to establish themselves at critical points along the routes of obsidian circulation.

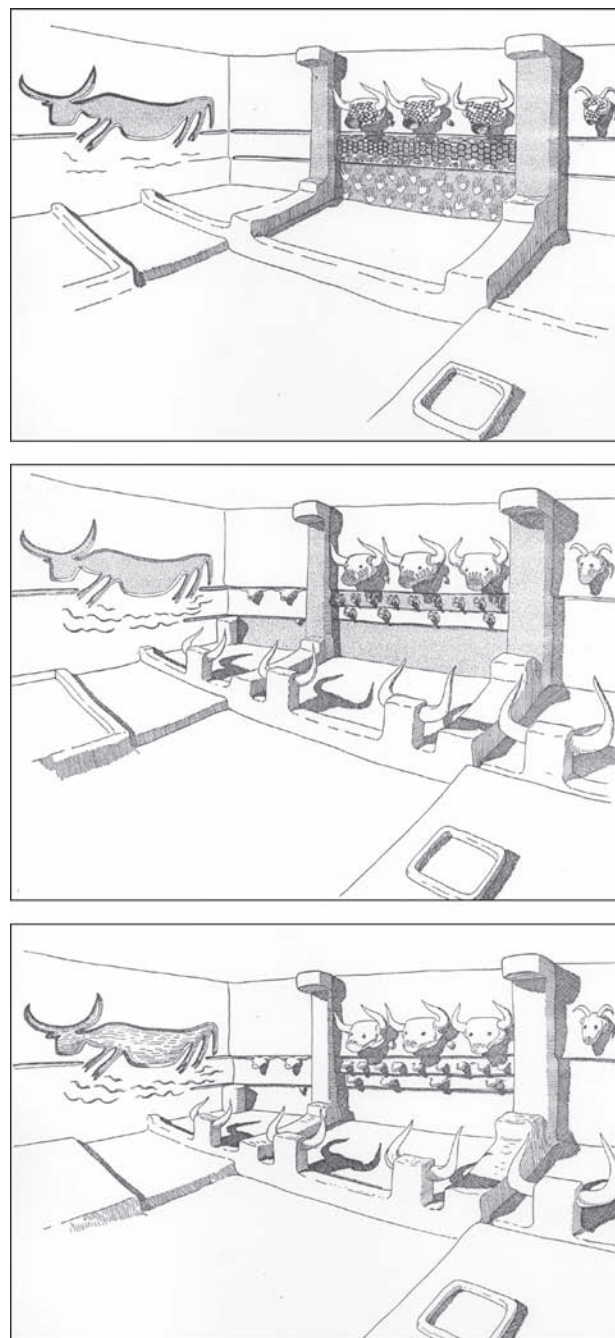
The emergence of Çatalhöyük in the western Konya plain towards the end of the Anatolian Aceramic (c. 7400 BC; in Levantine terms corresponding to the later part of the PPNB) could be understood in a similar context. Field survey evidence (Baird this volume) has indicated that the site, during its earliest phases, formed part of a larger network of dispersed small aceramic settlements exploiting diverse microenvironments in the wetland zone of the Çarşamba delta. The evidence available thus far also suggests the participation of Çatalhöyük in a broader sphere of regional interactions, as indicated by the transient presence in the lithics from its earliest excavated phases of diverse industries with links to Canhasan III (Konya plain), Aşıklı, Musular (Cappadocia), Suberde (Beyşehir) and areas further afield in southeast Anatolia and the Levant (Carter *et al.*, Volume 5, Chapter 11). The contribution of locally-derived elements is also indicated in the lithic industries, with the persistence of microlithic traditions similar to those known from the ninth millennium BC site of Pınarbaşı A (Carter *et al.*, Volume 5, Chapter 11).

The subsequent growth of Çatalhöyük at a time when other Aceramic sites in its vicinity eventually came to an end may be due to a multitude of factors. The certain presence from its earliest excavated levels of plant and animal domesticates (Fairbairn *et al.*, Volume 4, Chapter 8; Russell & Martin, Volume 4, Chapter 2) could be a case for their 'late' (i.e. late Aceramic) importation in the western Konya plain. This might in turn imply the attractiveness of the site due to the opportunities that such knowledge held for long-term sedentary habitation in an area which (being at the edge of the central Anatolian steppe) was characterized by marked seasonal and spatial fluctuations in resource availability (Fairbairn *et al.* this volume). Chief among such opportunities would have been the potential for agricultural production to buffer seasonal shortfalls in wild resource yields, by making widely available a more controllable (and thus predictable) suite of cultivated plant staples. This

may explain, at least in part, the process of settlement amalgamation believed to lay behind ‘the enduring concentration of population’ at Çatalhöyük (Baird 2002, 149). However, any suggestion for the exclusivity of agricultural innovations at Çatalhöyük during this period (and hence their likely role as instigators of local socio-political change in the western Konya plain) requires empirical demonstration through the analysis of subsistence-related data sets from other Aceramic sites in the same area.

Whatever the exact causes for the convergence of local Aceramic communities in Çatalhöyük (for a detailed discussion see Baird this volume) it is interesting to examine how any tensions and differences (not least territorial ones) that could have existed between them and exogenous groups were accommodated, and what kind of insights can be obtained concerning the factors conditioning population redistribution and the establishment of a commonly-shared group identity. The cultural vocabulary (rich in southeast Anatolian elements) already familiar from Cappadocia persists in Çatalhöyük, being mostly evident in architecture and aspects of the material culture (cf. Mellaart 1967; Esin *et al.* 1991; Esin & Harmankaya 1999). However, there are at the same time some important differences: Çatalhöyük has provided no evidence for the existence of monumental structures with functions conceptually similar to those familiar from Cappadocia and the southeast. Instead, ritual expression appears to have been ‘internalized’ and delegated to individual households. One could object here that such structures may as well lie somewhere in the unexcavated portions of the mound. The important point is, however, that key features of non-residential buildings in southeast Anatolia, such as the high concentrations of burials, the prominent presence of animal representations and/or animal body parts, the red-plastered floors, and even the careful sealing of such buildings with layers of clean infill upon their closure known from Çayönü (see Özdoğan & Özdoğan 1989; Hauptmann 1999; Özdoğan 1999), in Çatalhöyük are all encountered in association with domestic spaces. Furthermore, although the development of the settlement layout appears to follow the general outline of previously standing structures (Cutting this volume), this does not match the level of adherence to pre-existing building plans and even the locations of hearths observed in Aşıklı.

One could argue therefore that the structuring of social groups in Çatalhöyük was probably quite flexible being centred, it seems, on individual households instead of larger supra-household social units and associated ritual performances. This social arrangement probably developed under the additional influence of



**Figure 6.3.** Reconstruction of the different phases of decoration on the east wall of ‘shrine’ E VI.8 (for photographic records of the original finds see Mellaart 1963d, pls. IX, X) (after Mellaart 1963d).

an indigenous tradition of dispersed, small-scale settlement and land use (Baird this volume) that persisted (albeit transformed) during the lifetime of the site, as indicated by the appropriation of land and resources extending over a very broad range of territories and ecological zones (Asouti, Fairbairn *et al.*, Russell &

**Table 6.1a.** Example of phasing of one of Mellaart's 'shrines'. This table summarizes his description of the phasing of the different types of decoration on the east wall of 'shrine' E VI.8 (for a graphic representation see Fig. 6.3). Only two reliefs (one sunken) existed on each of the west and north walls and no decoration at all on the southern wall (Mellaart 1963d). Note here also that 'shrine' E VI.8 was the first building in which Mellaart believed he had found modelled 'breasts' (in the last phase of decoration on the east wall; see Fig. 6.3). The theme of 'breasts' recurs in his excavation reports but it was only at its first occurrence where he interprets them as clay mouldings, covering animal bone parts (here boar mandibles/tusks) that had been set inside the walls in previous phases, instead of deliberate representations of woman breasts. Similar clay mouldings were found in 'shrine' VII.35 (where a weasel and a fox skull had been also covered with clay).

	North wall	South wall	East wall	West wall
Phases 1-2	'cut-out' relief of cattle?	no decoration reported	The wall was separated in three panels by two vertical plastered posts painted red; the central panel bore a row of three bucrania with superimposed layers of painted decoration; the wall surface below the row of bucrania was divided in two panels; the upper bore two superimposed layers of painted abstract motifs; the lower panel was also painted red. One ram's head (possibly painted) was attached on the SE main panel.	no decoration reported
Phase 3	'cut-out' relief of cattle	no decoration	The three bucrania in the central panel bore muzzles painted in red and were otherwise left undecorated; the lowermost panels on the NE corner were also red; the position of the upper panel below the bucrania in the centre of the wall was taken by two rows of wild boar mandibles with their tusks set on projecting beams (nine in the upper beam, four in the lower); the mandibles had been stuck inside holes made through the earlier painted decoration.	'mother goddess' plaster relief with outstretched arms and legs set in the middle of the west wall
Phase 4	'cut-out' relief of cattle was of larger proportions?	no decoration	The two vertical plastered posts were replastered but left unpainted; below the row of three bucrania, the boar tusks and mandibles were covered in clay thus resembling breast-like protuberances; the NE main panel bore two small clay-modelled bucrania; the boundary between the platforms abutting the west wall and the central part of the room was marked by a series of four horned pillars.	replastering of 'mother goddess' relief; below lay a bull's head that rested on the floor level

Martin, Volume 4, Chapters 10, 8, 2). Such a social environment also seems to be at odds with processes of identity negotiation expressed through collective public/ritual performances that were controlled by supra-household groups. It would thus appear likely that the conceivably longer and more pronounced presence of early settlement in the western Konya plain necessitated substantially different processes of cultural and socio-political integration of indigenous and incoming social groups from those observed in Cappadocia.

Thus far I have outlined the regional background into which Neolithic Çatalhöyük appeared in the western Konya plain during the eighth millennium cal BC. What follows is an attempt to weave into this wider context a more detailed narrative of specific processes of identity formation, starting with one of the more famous and interpretatively controversial features of the site: its art.

### Group identity and the transformation of cultural vocabularies: the origins and 'meaning' of the Çatalhöyük art

One of the most remarkable aspects of the Çatalhöyük buildings is their internal decoration. Painted wall decorations, reliefs in plaster and animal-bone parts (especially the modelled bucrania) are more or less

unmatched elsewhere in central Anatolia. That the inhabitants of Çatalhöyük considered them important is suggested by the fact that sometimes they were retrieved from buildings prior to or after their final closure (see Cessford, Volume 3, Part 3). It should also be noted that the wall paintings at least did not fulfil a purely decorative purpose, as can be deduced from their almost exclusive association with burial platforms (see below). In fact, it is likely that during the greater part of the lifetime of individual buildings walls remained blank (Mellaart 1967, 132; Todd 1976, 34; Matthews, Volume 4, Chapter 19).

Based on Mellaart's published material (Mellaart 1962c; 1963d; 1964e; 1966b; 1967), it is possible to divide art into different thematic units. Wall paintings seem to represent the most diverse category. Aside from red-painted plastered floors and panels, there has also been evidence of non-figurative motifs (hand-prints, abstract motifs and the so-called 'kilim' patterns, the latter probably imitating real textiles and/or reed mats hanging from the walls). Another group of wall paintings, the largest, comprises animal-related subjects (for a detailed inventory of all animal representations in different media see Russell & Meece this volume) including the well-known 'hunting scenes'. In these various animals are depicted (including bovinds, equids, deer, lion?, wild boar, birds and, possibly, wolf and/or dog). Landscape-related themes seldom make



**Table 6.1b.** *Examples of Mellaart's reporting of episodes of redecoration in 'shrines'. Unfortunately (considering the wealth of wall paintings and plaster decoration uncovered during his excavations) he did not employ a consistent methodology for the description of building internal phasing. He concentrated more on the description of the pictured themes, their thematic analysis and interpretation, thus contributing to the creation of an illusory picture of stability concerning building decoration*

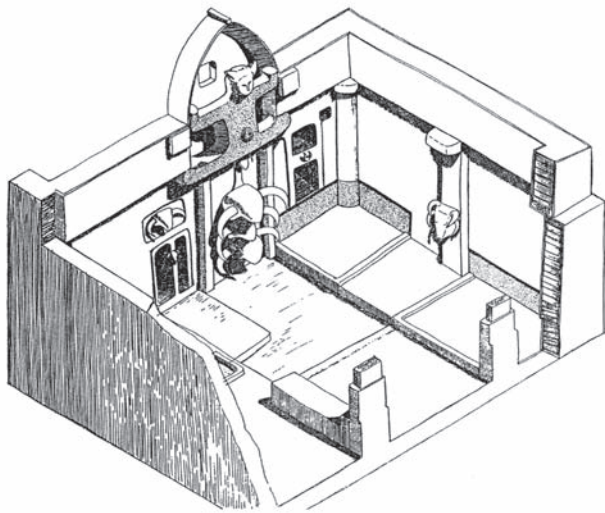
<p><b>Level VI</b></p> <p>Other 'shrines' for which Mellaart reported alterations in painted and plastic decoration through time but their precise phasing remains unspecified: E VI.7, E VI.10 (Mellaart 1963d). For E VI.10 in particular, he mentions in his 1964 report: 'Behind the thick layers of plaster on the west wall, earlier features were concealed such as larger niches, scars of broken-off animal heads, and the lower jaw of a wild boar above fragmentary geometric designs' (Mellaart 1964, 50).</p> <p>Successive phases of decoration (again not described in great detail), are also reported for 'shrines' VIA.50, VIB.70, VIA-B.80 (Mellaart 1966b).</p> <p>Mellaart describes for the so-called 'leopard shrine' (E VI.44) the multiple replasterings and repaintings that occurred on the pair of facing leopards set on its north wall (Mellaart 1964e, 42 &amp; pls. IIa-b). He furthermore reports that in several of the 'shrines' excavated during the 1963 season 'earlier forms of decoration could be established' (1964e, 40). He also reports constant variation in building decoration, in that shrines were frequently reverted into houses and vice versa. This phenomenon (given his interpretation of the site) he construed as evidence for the discontinuity of cultic practices (1964e, 45).</p> <p>In 'shrine' E VIB.31 Mellaart found evidence for the deliberate destruction and the scouring of plaster reliefs and bucrania set on the west wall.</p>
<p><b>Level VII</b></p> <p>The successive episodes of repainting (at least 5) are reported for the pair of facing leopards in high relief, set in the main panel of the north wall of 'shrine' VII.44. The leopards were overlaying earlier wall paintings depicting ibexes.</p>
<p><b>Level VIII</b></p> <p>In the description of 'shrine' VII.8 (the so-called vulture shrine) Mellaart recounts that the famous scene of the seven vultures attacking lifeless human bodies was the first one in a sequence of wall paintings. The second phase included a suite of geometric and abstract themes. The third phase did not include wall paintings; only plaster reliefs and cut-out figures. The wall paintings themselves were executed on different occasions but Mellaart did not elaborate in his report (Mellaart 1964e, 57-64)</p>
<p><b>Level IX</b></p> <p>'Shrine' IX.8. An early phase of decoration had a large black bull on the north wall and below it a niche and a rectangular structure painted in red. Above it deep layers of plaster into which were cut at a later phase the silhouettes of two animal heads, a horned animal and a feline (Mellaart 1964e, 70)</p>

their appearance in Çatalhöyük wall paintings. The only ones uncovered thus far are the 'volcano scene', showing what appears to be an agglomeration of closely-packed buildings set against an active volcano (Mellaart 1964e, 55 & fig. 11, pl. VIa; for alternative interpretations see Russell & Meece this volume) and two 'mountain scenes' where animals (mainly goats) are also prominent (Mellaart 1966b, 176-7 & pls. xxxv-xxxvi). Mouldings included plaster reliefs (animal heads, felines and human-like figures and the so-called 'mother goddess' figures with outstretched arms and legs), bucrania and other bone implements (mandibles, skulls, scapulae, horns and horn cores) set inside architectural features.

What can these representations reveal to us about their function and meaning? We have seen how interpretations trying to view them as illustrative of a Neolithic religion of the 'mother goddess' might be fundamentally misled. There is furthermore no evidence from recent detailed analyses of the Çatalhöyük art to support the existence of such a cult within the community (Russell & Meece this volume). The same

can be stated (based on the re-examination of Mellaart's archive and recent excavation data) for theories addressing them as signifiers of structured / gendered oppositions played out inside the household (e.g. Hodder 1987; 1990; cf. Hamilton 1996). I would like to suggest here an alternative interpretative framework that takes as its starting point some of their more obvious archaeological correlates, namely their context of use/display and their treatment by the Neolithic inhabitants of Çatalhöyük, as these can be reconstructed following the lifecycles of individual buildings. Tables 6.1a-b present in summary form the results of this exercise based on Mellaart's archive (reconstructions of the building lifecycles, including the phasing of individual structures excavated during the recent investigations at Çatalhöyük, are presented in exhaustive detail in the excavation reports of Volume 3 and need not be repeated here).

One important observation arising from both the results of the recent excavations and the summary descriptions in Tables 6.1a-b (see also Fig. 6.3) is the transient character of all 'artistic' elements. Wall



**Figure 6.4.** *Top: Restored view of 'shrine' E V.10 (for photos of the features preserved originally see Mellaart 1963d, pl. XIII). Bottom: original photograph of 'mother goddess' plaster relief from 'shrine' VII.23 (height approximately 1 m) (after Mellaart 1963d; 1967). Ian Todd describes such plaster reliefs at Çatalhöyük as follows: 'the standard type of figure ... consists of an approximately parallel-sided body, sometimes with a distinct swelling around the stomach, with arms and legs which branch out at right angles to the body and turn up at the ends' (Todd 1976, 51). The sole attribute that could be considered as indicative of femaleness is the 'swelling' but its presence is not universal. In light of the absence of other more conclusive features the interpretation of these figures as 'female' (and from that deducing their association with representations of 'mother goddess') should be considered as highly speculative.*

paintings, as noted already, are mostly associated with burials and they were anything but permanent. Yet, this impermanence could be accounted for by their as-

sociation with burial platforms and hence the fact that they were probably marking and/or commemorating the deaths of household members. They thus seem to be connected, in terms of function, with memory/household ancestor rituals (Mellaart 1963d, 61; Hodder & Cessford 2004). A similarly strong association with burial platforms, however, cannot be substantiated for plaster decoration and animal bone parts (see Mellaart 1967; excavation reports in Volume 3). In addition, plaster reliefs and bone were characterized by impermanence and versatility in their positioning inside individual buildings. Todd reports as 'the most striking feature displayed by the animal heads ... the enormous variety of types found in the different buildings' (Todd 1976, 56). They were furthermore remodelled (by painting and/or replastering) or in many cases obliterated altogether not only between levels but also during the lifetime of individual buildings (Todd 1976, 50–63; Cutting this volume), a fact which could be considered as somewhat unexpected for elements presumably imbued with religious meaning. Indeed, the results of the much more detailed recent excavations have indicated that relief decoration of various kinds largely followed the frequent cycles of tearing down and remodelling and/or repositioning of internal features such as ovens, hearths, niches, etc. (Volume 3; also discussions in Cutting and Russell & Meece, this volume).

What about the thematic content of these representations? Here it is instructive to note (once more) the almost exclusive presence of animal motifs/body parts. Humans, when present, are in the context of animal-related scenes, whilst even the so-called 'mother goddess' wall reliefs are visually more like anthropomorphic figures lacking gender-specific characteristics (see Fig. 6.4; also discussion in Russell & Meece this volume). How do these representations compare with evidence for the organization of the Neolithic domestic space elsewhere in central Anatolia? Very little in first appearance; excavations at Canhasan III have been of very limited extent. Aşıklı with over 400 excavated residential units has furnished thus far no evidence of comparable internal decoration. The same is also true of residential buildings in southeast Anatolia. By contrast, a comparison of the Çatalhöyük iconography with the elaborate non-residential buildings known from the southeast (Nevalı Çori, Göbekli Tepe, Çayönü) reveals a number of similarities between the two areas, both thematically and stylistically (Fig. 6.5). It is also interesting to note here that although the southeast Anatolian sites seem to have no immediate predecessors in their respective areas, their non-residential buildings exhibit unmistakable parallels to architectural and iconographic traditions



**Figure 6.5.** Examples of attributes of non-residential contexts from southeast and eastern Anatolia: 1) Public building in Nevalı Çori; 2) bear-like freestanding sculpture from Göbekli Tepe; 3) decorated orthostat with birds and wild boar from Göbekli Tepe; 4) animal sculpture from Göbekli Tepe; 5) graphic representation of monolithic pillar (cattle, bird, wolf?) from Göbekli Tepe (height 3.15 m); 6) fragment of stone T-shaped pillar showing (reptile) figure with outstretched arms and legs (a motif that we see later repeated in human representations at Çatalhöyük) in relief from Göbekli Tepe; 7) human figurine (5.8 cm) with 'leopard skin' from Nevalı Çori; 8) bucranium from public structure in Hallan Çemi; 9) boar tusks and mandible from Çayönü (sources: Hauptmann 1999; Rosenberg 1999; Schmidt 1998; 1999; 2000; Özdoğan 1999).

known from eastern Anatolia and the western Zagros (manifested in sites like Hallan Çemi, Qermez Dere and Nemrik 9), emphasizing architectural features such as schematically modelled pillars, monolithic orthostats, and the representations of animals including snakes, wild boar, lion and birds. Of the latter it is worth noting the ritual use of raptor wings and/or wing-feathers as clothing articles, postulated for Zawi Chemi Shanidar (see discussions in Cauvin 2000a, 172–3; Matthews 2000, 32, 36–9 and references therein). Elements of these older traditions of animal-related symbolism seem to have survived in Çatalhöyük (e.g. in the raptor skulls set inside walls and the relevant wall-painting themes of cranes, boar and lion reported in Mellaart 1966b, 190 & pl. LXIII; bird paintings, probably cranes, have also been found at Bouqras on the Syrian Euphrates; see summary by Matthews 2000, 48–9). It is also interesting to note here another possible parallel, with the use of crane wings in Çatal as parts of costumes (Russell & McGowan 2003; for the possible occurrence of bird-like costumes in the wall paintings see Mellaart 1964e, 64 & pl. XII).

One important difference between Çatalhöyük and the southeast Anatolian complex, discussed in the previous section, is that in Çatalhöyük such representations occur exclusively inside domestic spaces. Leaving open the possibility that comparable public/ritual spaces could have existed within the settlement but remain as yet unexcavated, it should be stressed that there has been no evidence thus far from either excavation or surface scrapping and prospections to suggest that any part of the mound may contain something other than domestic buildings and/or open spaces reserved for the disposal of domestic refuse (see Farid, Cessford, Volume 3, Parts 2 & 3; also Matthews 1996; Pollard *et al.* 1996). Even Building 1 with its extraordinary concentration of burials may contain the burials of individuals claiming membership in a single extended family unit. By inference, one could also hypothesize that the rituals associated with artistic representations in Çatalhöyük were substantially different in scope and content from their counterparts in southeast Anatolia, where emphasis lay on collective and, in certain cases, apparently corporately-controlled ritual performances aiming *inter alia* at the establishment and maintenance of community cohesion (see Verhoeven 2002).

Several suggestions have been put forward in this volume to explore further the role (direct or indirect) of aspects of the art in the life of Neolithic households at Çatalhöyük including, among other elements, ancestral-memory, initiation, passage and feasting rituals. It is, however, the potential socio-political dimensions of the Anatolian ritual vocabulary

(seen in the context of its removal from the public domain and its relegation to the privacy of the household) that seem to offer a framework robust enough to allow a deeper understanding of its pervasiveness in the daily life of Çatalhöyük. The appropriation of collective identity markers by individual households might signify the dissolution of earlier traditions of corporately controlled systems of ritual expression, and their ‘re-invention’ in a different social context. In the latter, asserting ‘origins’ and, by extension, cultural identity had become the prerogative of nuclear families or extended kin groups. Individual households, although in essence adhering to a widely-shared cultural and social code, had nevertheless mustered its external manifestations to the extent that these could serve their own social, economic and political interests. These could in turn have been outwardly expressed in such diverse arenas as feasting, passage/ancestral rituals and commemorative events. In this context, Mellaart’s observation that inside buildings ‘monumental plaster reliefs ... occupy the most prominent places *for they are meant to be seen*’ (although arguably not by the ‘faithful’) is certainly instructive, as is their contrast with the primarily burial-bound wall paintings (Mellaart 1963d, 61, emphasis added). The recent re-examination of his archive also seems to suggest that much of the corpus of animal-bone parts placed inside domestic spaces probably entered the household as remains of feasting ceremonies (Russell & Meece this volume). Following the same line of argument, it is also noteworthy that aside from the already remarked upon transient character and (in the case of plaster reliefs and animal-bone parts) occasional ‘objectification’ of such elements, there is furthermore substantial variation in their distribution among individual buildings (Ritchey 1996). In addition, it has been observed that certain buildings appear to be more ‘complex’ (i.e. ‘artistically’ elaborate) than others in ways that may imply household differentiation based, for example, on specialized access to and/or consumption of raw materials (e.g. obsidian) and figurines (see Hodder & Cessford 2004). One possible interpretation, among others, of this pattern is that such elaboration of domestic spaces may represent a socially sanctioned means for asserting the prowess (economic and otherwise) of individual households in appropriate occasions (e.g. through the display of animal heads in the aftermath of feasting ceremonies).

Such a process of ‘re-inventing’ traditions, largely unprecedented in the history of Early Neolithic settlement in Anatolia, might be further explained when considering the particular economic and socio-political conditions surrounding the beginnings of Çatalhöyük,

discussed in some detail in the previous section. This observation becomes all the more significant if one considers that, at a regional scale, the middle-late PPNB of the Levant and Southeast Anatolia was generally a period marked by the separation of residential and non-residential (public/ritual) spaces (see Byrd 1994; Kuijt & Goring-Morris 2002; Verhoeven 2002). It is conceivable that a similar system of ritual expression, centred on the household, could have left open an important arena for the inclusion in the community (at least during its formative phases) of social units with varied origins. Furthermore, the pre-existence of settled and/or mobile groups in this area, presumably accustomed to indigenous practices of extensive land-resource management and exploitation, would have necessitated a relatively flexible social framework, capable of accommodating diverse vested interests on both economic and social fronts. Conversely, such 'inclusiveness' might have contributed in generating the social setting that eventually allowed exogenous groups within the community to identify with the place and create local links and relations as sources of social and territorial legitimation.

#### **Negotiating identities: ideologies of homogenization and difference in Çatalhöyük**

Several contributions in the present and previous volumes of this series have stressed the remarkable continuity and stability observed in the life of the settlement, particularly evident in the organization and aesthetics of domestic space and also in subsistence practices (e.g. Cutting, Last this volume; Fairbairn *et al.*, Russell & Martin, Volume 4, Chapters 8 and 2; also Hodder & Cessford 2004). Long-term changes evident for example in obsidian production (Carter *et al.*, Volume 5, Chapter 11; Connolly 1999b), the choice of hunted species (Russell & Martin, Volume 4, Chapter 2) and fuel procurement and consumption (Asouti, Volume 4, Chapter 10) may be tied to occasional shifts in the overall range of exploited resources, at least some of which were probably due to human-induced changes in the configuration of the local wetland taskscape (Asouti, Volume 4, Chapter 10). Yet, these changes appear to lack tangible archaeological correlates in more obvious 'markers' of social change and differentiation such as architecture (Cutting this volume), contrary to suggestions put forward by earlier studies (e.g. Düring 2001). Furthermore, the evidence discussed in the previous section concerning the manipulation and frequent alterations of domestic space seems to be best interpreted in the context of routine activities and periodic adjustments in the living spaces used by individual households, rather than

as indicators of household differentiation based on social status and the generation of economic surpluses (Cutting this volume). The overall impression is that of an essentially egalitarian society, bound by custom and tradition as manifested in the prevalent routines of practice that appear to permeate nearly every aspect of the community's daily life. It is also very likely that such a social arrangement maintained a strong ecological basis as well, in that it probably allowed for some measure of sustainability (e.g. through the establishment of community consensus over cultivating, herding, collecting and hunting areas/rights) in the exploitation of dispersed and seasonally-unstable land and plant/animal resources (see Fairbairn *et al.* this volume). Indeed, there is very little evidence to suggest that large-scale deforestation, land degradation and/or erosion occurred during the lifetime of the east mound (Asouti, Volume 4, Chapter 10; Asouti & Hather 2001; Roberts *et al.* 1996).

Moving away from the macro-scale, it is possible to begin assembling some evidence concerning how individuals and kin groups coped with the demands of such a social and economic system. A detailed account of data sets as diverse as burials, ceramics and figurines (to name just a few) is well outside the scope of this chapter. However, it is still possible to summarize here some patterns which appear to contradict the general picture of a strictly-defined egalitarian ethos, and could be considered instead as indicative of a certain measure of asymmetry and competition in relations between individuals and households.

Starting from the economy, there is some evidence from the recent excavations to suggest that household-based craft production apparently contained in it the seeds of at least some sort of incipient specialization; this is suggested, for example, by the presence of distinct concentrations of residues deriving from bead manufacture (Building 18), obsidian reduction (Building 23), and flint knapping and skinning (Building 17) in some buildings of the South Area and their absence from others (see Farid, Volume 3, Part 2). Furthermore, there is good evidence from lithic, archaeozoological and archaeobotanical analyses for the continuous procurement of materials originating from a very extensive resource extraction zone (probably an integral part of long-established strategies for averting the risks inherent in the exploitation of seasonally-unstable plant and animal resources). It is thus conceivable that parts of the population had to spend at least some time away from the main settlement during the agricultural, foraging/procurement and herding cycles (see Fairbairn *et al.* this volume). Indeed, evidence suggesting the practising of hunting and herding 'nomadism' has emerged from the neigh-

bouring late Neolithic (seventh millennium BC) rock-shelter of Pınarbaşı B which may be associated with hunting expeditions and seasonal forays in seek of pastures away from Çatalhöyük (D. Carruthers pers. comm.; see also Martin *et al.* 2002). The implications of such a system of resource exploitation for labour allocation/scheduling and the overall organization of subsistence production, particularly if we take into account seasonality models and the currently accepted population size estimates (see Cessford, Volume 4, Chapter 16; Fairbairn *et al.* this volume), have remained until now largely unexplored (see also Asouti & Fairbairn 2002, 213–14). However, it seems reasonable to assume that such a subsistence pattern seriously challenges existing theories for the general prevalence among Early Neolithic societies of the ‘Domestic Mode of Production’, emphasizing household self-sufficiency and the absence of economic specialization (Sahlins 1972; see also discussion in Hodder & Cessford 2004).

There is also archaeobotanical evidence from both the recent excavations and the re-examination of the Mellaart archive suggesting the presence of an element of specialization in crop-seed storage and, possibly, agricultural production as well. This evidence amounts to the exclusive presence of lentil stores in Building 1 (Fairbairn *et al.*, Volume 4, Chapter 8) and the predominance of einkorn wheat in storage contexts of building E.VI.17 (Fairbairn *et al.* forthcoming). Such ‘specialization’ was in all probability not a universal phenomenon, as indicated by the mixed crop stores of building A II.1 (Fairbairn *et al.* 2002). However, even in the cases of Buildings 1 and E.VI.17, it contrasts sharply with the archaeobotanical finds from associated oven and trash deposits that indicate the consumption of a diverse range of crop plants. Although differences in the composition of archaeobotanical samples derived from storage and consumption-related contexts might also be the result of the incomplete preservation of storage assemblages, it seems plausible that they signify at least some element of exchange in cultivated food resources among households (Fairbairn *et al.* 2002). Furthermore, while storage media were generally located in the smaller side-rooms, the presence of large plastered bins in the main spaces of Buildings 17 (Phase 2) and 1 (Phase 3) seems to suggest that in some cases they might have been used as a vehicle for the display of household ‘wealth’, by being appropriately placed in those spaces most likely to be accessed by non-household members (A. Fairbairn pers. comm.).

In what concerns community perceptions of the individual, burial practices can be instructive. Although the custom of multiple inhumations un-

der platforms inside domestic spaces means that attributing burial goods to individual skeletons is problematic, due to the unavoidable intermixing and disturbance of deposits (Hamilton 1996, 258), it is nevertheless interesting to note that the great majority of such objects comprise items of personal adornment (Mellaart 1963d, 99). These include beads of various materials (bone, copper, lead, mother of pearl, dentalium, rock crystal, deer teeth, etc.), pendants, elaborate flint daggers and bone tools/ornaments (the ‘belt-buckles’, bone rings, etc.), textiles, shells, furs, pigments of various kinds including red ochre (in many cases found spread over the head and/or the chest of individual skeletons, or simply as lumps and/or contained in baskets and shells), obsidian mirrors, etc. (Todd 1976; Hamilton 1996). It could be argued, with some justification, that such items reveal a sustained concern on the part of members of the community with individual differentiation expressed, in this instance, in body adornment. Similar concerns could also be invoked for interpreting the presence among the lithic assemblage of obsidian points with signs of impact damage, as (hunting?) ‘trophy’ symbolizing personal achievement (Carter *et al.*, Volume 5, Chapter 11). The fact that (with few exceptions such as beads) there seems to be little standardization in the kinds of goods associated with burials, could thus reflect not so much a general lack of indicators of the kind traditionally used by archaeologists to infer status differentiation (Hamilton 1996, 260–62), but instead the very fluid nature of the socially accepted material means available within the community for achieving individual and/or household distinction. Comparable notions of social status might also lie behind more exceptional cases of mortuary practices observed in Çatalhöyük, such as the (thus far unique) burial in the midden deposits of Space 115 of a young male adult, and the headless burial under the floor of Building 6 of another adult (Farid, Volume 3, Chapter 2; for a similar case of decapitation burial in Building 1 see Andrews *et al.*, Volume 4, Chapter 11). These burials could be perceived as representing the opposing ends of the stranger/social outcast on the one hand, and the powerful/exceptional individual (household head and/or skilled craftsman, farmer, hunter, traveller) on the other, whose memory was preserved in this atypical for the community customs way (see discussions in Farid, Volume 3, Part 2; Andrews *et al.*, Volume 4, Chapter 11).

Finally, a tendency towards asserting household identity can also be traced in the selection and manipulation of building materials. Here again the record is fragmentary and much of the analysis on sourcing clays from mortars and mud bricks is still ongoing

(see discussion by Matthews, Volume 4, Chapter 19; Tung, Volume 5, Chapter 10). Based on the excavation archive, it has been proposed that the use of double walls instead of party walls was established after Level IX (Mellaart 1966b, 168; Farid, Volume 3, Part 2). However, the recent excavations have also indicated that even before this change takes place, the Neolithic inhabitants of Çatalhöyük had devised ingenious ways for imprinting household ‘personalities’ on the materials from which they constructed their buildings. Buildings 16 and 22 of Level IX represent a case in point; although they shared a party wall and access hole (thus suggesting their simultaneous construction) it was striking to discover that two different kinds of bonding material had been used from each side of the party wall (Farid, Volume 3, Part 2). This difference becomes all the more significant if one considers that it involved the colour of the mortar, hence standing for an unmistakable and most visible differentiation of household property boundaries.

#### **Epilogue: merging stories into history**

The story presented in the preceding sections remains out of necessity an incomplete one. In my effort to demonstrate the usefulness of a perspective based on the consideration of the politics and processes of identity formation for understanding Neolithic Çatalhöyük, it was inevitable that some important yet complex data sets (e.g. figurines and stamp seals) alongside a more detailed consideration of settlement organization and architecture, would remain outside the scope of the present paper (see Cutting, Last, this volume; Hamilton, Volume 5, Chapter 9; Türkcan, Volume 5, Chapter 8). My aim in this chapter was not to attempt an ‘all-inclusive’ narrative of Çatalhöyük and its interpretation, but rather to break down the site-region dichotomy and focus instead on those elements that could be informative about processes of continuity and change underlying the development of Neolithic societies in central Anatolia. One of the main purposes was also to identify possible avenues for future research. This was necessary since the greater part of our factual basis consists of data sets generated by older excavations (the Çatalhöyük art represents a prime example). At the same time, much of the potentially-informative collection of other central Anatolian data sets relevant to this period is as yet either incompletely published or unstudied. Therefore, the approach outlined here serves mainly to indicate the interpretative gains that can be obtained from a regionally contextualized analysis that attempts to integrate multiple strains of information, in order to construct meaningful local and regional narratives.

The proliferation of animal-related themes inside domestic spaces at Çatalhöyük comes near the end of a very long period in the history of Neolithic Anatolia during which such imagery maintained a strong association with ritual practices aiming, among other things, at enhancing the socio-political cohesion of early settled communities. Practices, emphasizing secondary mortuary rituals, have been extensively documented from elsewhere in southwest Asia (e.g. the Levant) for the period corresponding to the middle PPNB, and have been interpreted as indicative of the need within sedentary communities to balance the multiple social pressures arising from the cohabitation of large numbers of people, through their ‘participation in community events that cross-cut kin and household lines’ (Kuijt 2000a, 144). The solutions adopted in Anatolia for addressing the challenges of sedentism seem to have been substantially different in scale and scope, as indicated by the much more prominent (and archaeologically-visible) emphasis on monumental structures and associated animal symbolism (see Hole 2000, 207; Verhoeven 2002). Such means of ritual expression are in turn likely to have arisen from a more pronounced social need for recourse to formalized and symbolically-potent mythologies of origins, particularly germane in areas that lacked a strong local tradition of permanent settlement during the Epipalaeolithic and the PPNA.

As a distinct cultural entity central Anatolia offers a number of very informative insights concerning the emergence of large-scale Neolithic settlement in this area during the PPNB chronological horizon. It is important to keep in mind, however, that what we see in the regional archaeological record are only the remains of the successful stories in this process. In other words, we should not be drawn into assuming that the spread of sedentary agricultural societies was in itself a linear development. The limited evidence available to date seems to suggest that complex political processes were probably at play, which are likely to have been further accentuated by various social and ecological parameters affecting the direction and overall rate of settlement expansion. In this respect, it is also tempting to think that the ‘agglutinative’ settlement pattern, so characteristic of the Neolithic architecture of central Anatolia, might claim (at least in part) its origins in those exogenous groups entering Cappadocia and the Konya plain during the middle and late PPNB being gradually established in ‘new’ areas and/or incorporated within pre-existing socio-economic networks.

Central Anatolia emerges therefore as a region of major importance for refining our conceptual models of the varied processes of Neolithic expansion and

socio-cultural change marking the Early Neolithic in the Near East, contrary to earlier views suggesting its peripheral role in the region-wide mainstream process of Neolithic diffusion (e.g. Cauvin 2000a, 92). A more nuanced approach should also accept that the establishment of sedentary agricultural societies in Anatolia (as elsewhere in southwest Asia) could not have been simply a matter of a dominant ideology, 'religion' or psycho-cultural complex being transmitted through the actions of expansionist groups marching forward in 'a state of messianic self-confidence' to (literally) conquer new lands (Cauvin 2000a, 126, 205). The existing archaeological record refutes this proposition, whilst its theoretical foundations are also questionable. Furthermore, as stressed already, even a cursory analysis of the Çatalhöyük art (itself one of the milestones of Cauvin's theory) can demonstrate that the idea of a region-wide Neolithic religion based on the cult of the goddess and the bull is not supported by the available evidence, and therefore does not constitute an appropriate framework for its interpretation. Instead, each site and sub-region seem to have different stories to tell in what concerns the establishment of Neolithic village life in their territories, drawing as they did from diverse traditions of habitation and subsistence strategies, exchange networks and ritual expression (see Kuijt 2000b; Kuijt & Goring-Morris 2002). In this context, the similarities (artefactual, symbolic and otherwise) observed between different regions should be treated as a matter for investigation aiming at a deeper understanding of their contextual attributes (contingent upon pre-existing socio-cultural traditions and the history of contact with other regions); not as outright 'proof' of (self-explanatory) population movements and linear settlement expansion. However, the picture offered by the archaeological record in central Anatolia is still incomplete and the propositions presented in this paper should be viewed more as suggestions for future research rather than some kind of definitive statements. Only through further excavation and publication of the earliest phases from the two largest settlements in the area, Çatalhöyük and Aşıklı, and other as yet unexcavated early sites, it will become possible to understand better the socio-political and economic context of PPNB expansion in central Anatolia, as well as the contrasting patterns observed in this process between the Konya plain and Cappadocia.

In Çatalhöyük itself, the adherence of the community to a set of inherited and/or acquired cultural and social codes could not prevent the apparent demise of the dominant value-system (a process that could have been further motivated by various economic and/or demographic factors and associated changes in belief

systems) culminating in the abandonment of the East Mound some 1000 years later (thus mirroring to a certain extent earlier developments in Aşıklı). Even in this apparently 'egalitarian' society, itself the historical product of complex socio-cultural adjustments effected among groups of diverse origins, communal codes of social behaviour seem to have co-existed with elements of social inequality. Ethnographic research suggests that 'moderate inequalities', based on individual/household achievement, household 'wealth' and a tendency to manipulate (in socially-acceptable ways) community institutions, may enhance the ability of individuals and social coalitions (e.g. households, kin groups) to accumulate benefits derived from preferential access to information, technological innovations, exchange networks and ritual knowledge (Wiessner 2002). The accumulation of prestige and influence acquired in such ways might also facilitate in time the introduction, by the same agents, of new ideas and institutions within the community (Wiessner 2002). Finally, in what concerns ideology, I want to draw attention here to the contradiction inherent in household-based strategies of socialization seeking to reproduce a dominant communal ethos (see Hodder & Cessford 2004) that may nonetheless end up enhancing the emergence of competing household identities, through their preference for private (instead of community-centred) ancestor rituals and the construction of family genealogies.

The Çatalhöyük sequence has provided at least some indications that are suggestive of similar (medium to long-term) transformations. Approximately halfway through the lifetime of the settlement (i.e. post-Level VI) there start to occur visible (although by no means simultaneous in their timing) changes in settlement organization (Cutting this volume) and material culture (e.g. in figurines: Voigt 2000; lithics: Conolly 1999b; ceramic production: Last, Volume 5, Chapter 5), which remain, however, still poorly understood in what concerns their likely associations with household competition and resulting socio-economic changes within the community. An interesting research question, in need of further investigation, is whether or not technological innovations and any shifts observed in settlement structure and the production and consumption of material culture during its later phases, could be correlated with increasing household competition, eventually resulting at the breaking down of the customary social order.

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