

# From Çayönü to Catalhöyük

Emergence and development  
of an egalitarian society

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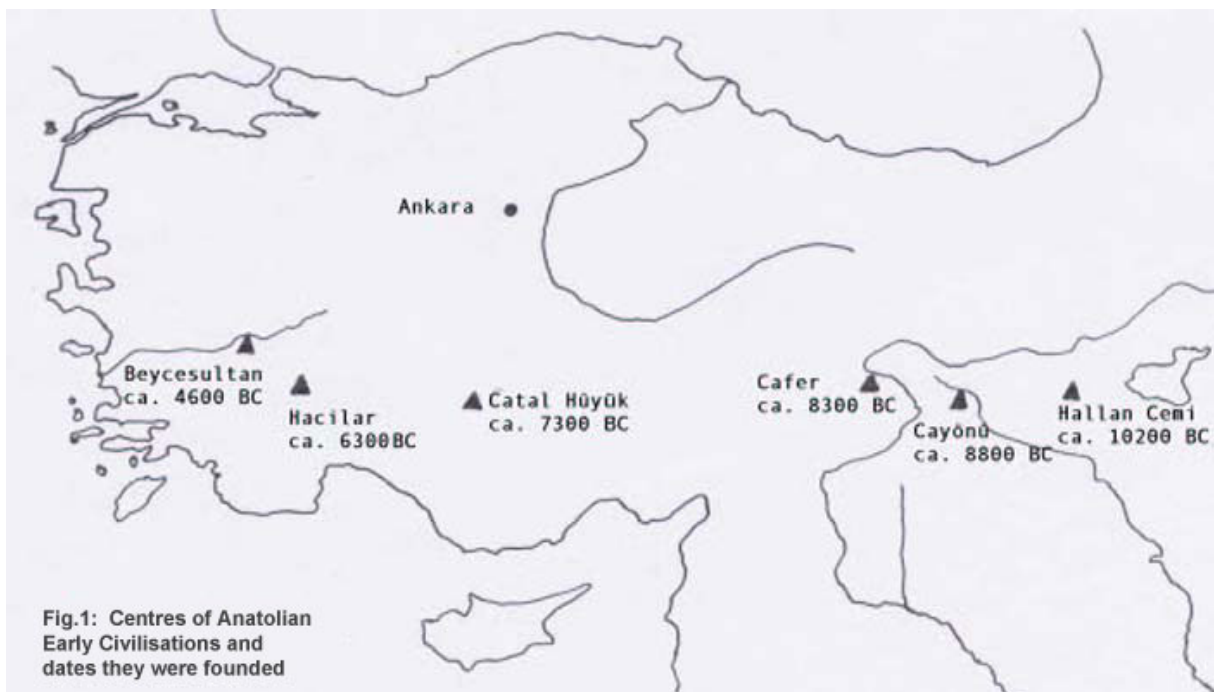
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## The discovery of Anatolian Early Civilization

In 1958, while exploring Southern Anatolia, the British archaeologist James Mellaart discovered a mound consisting of neolithic settlement levels. It fascinated him because it was the most extensive neolithic site known in the Near East. Since this mound is situated at a bifurcation, it is called “mound at the fork”: Çatalhöyük (Turkish “çatal” = fork, “höyük” = cairn) (fig. 1). In 1961, Mellaart began its excavations which lasted until 1965 (with a break in 1964). In 1993, investigations were resumed. The new excavations, under the direction of the British archaeologist Ian Hodder, were projected for 25 years and count among the largest archaeological projects of our time (Balter 1998: 1442/2).

The mound consists of twelve building levels of a neolithic town which was inhabited from 7300 B.C. until 6100 B.C., that is, 1200 years without interruption.<sup>1</sup> According to present-day estimates, up to about 10,000 people lived together in Çatalhöyük (Hodder 1998: 8/1). The settlement was neither destroyed nor looted. A large number of well-preserved finds were awaiting Mellaart and Hodder.

Even though Mellaart was the first to discover a neolithic town he did not discover the oldest and very “first” settlement. The further archaeologists went into the East of Anatolia during the following decades, the older became the cultural centres they found (fig. 1). As late as in 1990 Hallan Çemi was discovered as the (by now known) oldest settlement of permanently settled people (Rosenberg 1999, Rosenberg and Redding 2000). Hallan Çemi was founded in 10,200 B.C.!



<sup>1</sup> All time specifications are taken from (Thissen 2002).

Let us now take a short break here to look at these data in chronological order: Around 11,000 B.C., there were still cave walls being painted in the Pyrenees, 800 years before Hallan Çemi was founded, (Lorblanchet 1997: 268). 800 years after Hallan Çemi was founded, around 9700 B.C., the Ice Age ended (Caspers et al. 1999: 93). If Hallan Çemi, in Eastern Anatolia, stands for the beginning of an epoch, Beycesultan, founded in 4600 B.C., situated farthest in the west, stands for its end (Mellaart 1998: 61). From around 4000 B.C. an exploiter's class begins to establish itself which in 3000 B.C. finally gets into power. The development of metal weapons, a writing system and a ruling authority constituted the most effective mechanisms of oppression available to an exploitive ruling class. Beycesultan, similar to Troya, becomes the capital of a renowned viceroyalty of the Hittites (Lloyd 1974: 211). Here we make the connection with history.

The ancient Anatolian civilizations span spatio-temporally from the end of the Ice Age (in the east) on the one hand to the beginning of history (in the west) on the other. The 6000 years in between comprise exactly the age of the Neolithic, that is, the last phase of the Stone Age when people did not yet produce their tools from metal but were already living settled lives and practised agriculture and animal husbandry.

The Neolithic begins with the "Neolithic Revolution." So let us, too, begin our journey into the past with the neolithic revolution at a site called Çayönü, far out in the east of Anatolia (fig. 1), 10,000 years ago. In East Anatolia, we find the roots of Çatalhöyük (Voigt 2000), the Anatolian ancient civilization and the Anatolian communism (Özdoğan 1997).

### **The social revolution**

The term "Neolithic Revolution" was coined in 1936 by the Marxist archaeologist Vere Gordon Childe (Patterson 2003: 44). It was meant to describe the transition from nomadic foraging to a settled way of life with regard to food production. The term is formed as an analogy to the "Industrial Revolution," the revolution of only the productive forces (Grünert 1982: 167-169). However, some years ago it became evident that the revolution of the productive forces turned out to be a truly social revolution, a revolutionary transformation of all social conditions.

In Çayönü in Eastern Anatolia (fig. 1) the various phases of the neolithic revolution can clearly be traced throughout the succession of building levels. Although none of the basic innovations, such as housebuilding, agriculture and animal husbandry, originated in Çayönü itself, the temporal order in which the new techniques arrived in Çayönü correspond exactly to the order in which they originally had developed albeit at another site (Özdoğan 1997:12, 1999b: 226-227). The lowest layers (8800 – 8500 B.C.) testify to a permanently settled way of life on the basis of hunting and gathering (Özdoğan 1999a: 42-44); in the layer above (around 8000 B.C.) the first (imported) seeds are found (Özdoğan 1994: 40/1); the next higher layer documents the arrival of the first herd of sheep around 7300 B.C. (Cambel and Braidwood 1983: 164). With the practice of animal husbandry, the three basic innovations of the first phase of the neolithic revolution of the productive forces are complete.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The second phase of the revolution of productive forces comprised domesticating further kinds of plants and animals as well as developing new technologies such as producing ceramics and metals. However, it only took place after the social revolution.

This technical progress, however, takes place in a destructive, patriarchal, and hierarchical society of enormous cruelty. Apart from the houses for living and storage, in each of the above-mentioned building levels of Çayönü there was a “special building”, rectangular in shape, measuring 8x12 sqm, without windows, dug into a slope which bordered the settlement towards the east (Schirmer 1990: 378). In front of this temple (Özdoğan 2002: 254), there was a rectangular space of 1500 sqm, flanked by monoliths up to 2 m high (Cambel and Braidwood 1983: 162) – all in all a complex of intimidating monumentality.

To the north, this space was terminated by three large, manorial houses that had identical fronts, alignment and distance from each other. These houses stood on an elevated platform on massive foundations made from big hewn blocks and had carefully constructed stone walls, a verandah and stone stairs. In these three houses, the wealth of the society was concentrated: large blocks of crystals, stone sculptures, shells from the Mediterranean Sea and from the Red Sea (!) (Özdoğan 1994: 44) as well as imported weapons of high quality.

In the Western part of the settlement, the houses were only half as large, of distinctly poorer quality, without any additional features and were not built according to a standardized plan. Only the few tools needed for daily living were found there.

If the unequal distribution of wealth and power already becomes evident just by looking at the architecture and treasures discovered, the existence of private ownership of means of production can be proven directly by an extraordinary finding: All resources necessary for producing tools that had to be transported from far-away locations via a long distance trade system – flint and obsidian – were found exclusively in the houses situated near the temple. There they were stored in blocks of up to 5 kilograms. (Bear in mind that the finished tools weighed no more than 4 grams!) What was not found, however, was midden from chipping stones – no trace of any productive activity. The situation in the slums of the west was exactly the opposite. Here no resources were found but in the streets there was workshop debris from the chipping of flint and obsidian. I.e., there was a small group of people who possessed without working and a large group of people who worked without possessing – in other words, there were classes. These facts are presented in a condensed manner by Mehmet and Aslı Özdoğan (1989: 72-74) as well as by Davis (1998), the latter almost in a form of class analysis.

It is characteristic that this most ancient of all known class societies should present itself to us as a patriarchal society (Hauptmann 1991: 161/3, 2002: 266-267, Özdoğan 1999b: 234/2) of bitter destructiveness: the gloomy temples dug into the mountain like caves served to maintain power in a society that was obviously rigidly organized (Özdoğan 1994: 43, 1999b: 231) through open terror: human sacrifices. In the temples of all building levels huge amounts of blood were shed which the excavators retrieved in thick crusts on daggers, altars or draining funnels which were designed specifically for that purpose (Schirmer 1983: 466-467 and footnote 5, see also 475, Schirmer 1990: 382, 384, Hole 2000: 200-201). The analysis of the isolated blood pigment haemoglobin revealed that it was generally human blood (Loy and Wood 1989, Wood 1998). In the chambers of one of these temples there were the skulls of more than 70 people and parts of skeletons of more than 400 different individuals (Özdoğan and Özdoğan 1989: 71/2) “neatly stacked up to the ceiling” (Schirmer 1990: 382). The situation in the other settlements of Eastern Anatolia was comparable.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For human sacrifices, cf. e.g. Hauptmann 1991, Hauptmann 1991/92: 22, Zick 1992, for the type of society see e.g. Özdoğan and Özdoğan 1998, Rosenberg 1999, Rosenberg and Redding 2000, Hole 2000.

However, whereas in other parts of the globe the development of this kind of class society proceeded further (cf. parallels to Central American civilizations), history in Southeast Anatolia took a completely different turn. On a certain day 9200 years ago the manorial houses at the north side of the large square in Çayönü were burnt down, and this happened so fast that the owners were not able to save any of their treasures (Davis 1998: 259/2, 260/2). The temple was torn down and burnt, and even the floor was ripped open (Schirmer 1983: 467, 1990: 384), the stone pillars around the free space were taken down and the taller of them were broken up (Özdoğan and Özdoğan 1989: 74, Özdoğan 1999a: fig. 41, fig. 42). The place itself – previously maintained and kept meticulously clean for more than 1000 years – was converted into a municipal waste dump (Özdoğan and Özdoğan 1989: 72/1, Özdoğan 1997: 15). After a short chaotic transition all houses had been torn down. The slums in the west disappeared for good, but only a few steps away from the spot where the ruins of the manorial houses had burnt the new Çayönü was erected. The new houses were comparable in size to the old manors (Schirmer 1988: 148-149) but there were no more houses or shacks built to an inferior standard (see sequence of plans in Özdoğan 1999a: fig. 35, fig. 46, fig. 47). In all houses, work was done (Özdoğan 1999a: 53/1) and all hints to social differences were erased (Özdoğan 1999a: fig. 47, fig. 50, also see Schirmer 1988: 148-149).

After these findings had been documented in 1989, the supervisor of the excavations of Çayönü, Mehmet Özdoğan, could exclude the invasion of foreign peoples, war, plagues, and natural disasters in 1997 and concluded that the cause for this change must have been a social upheaval (Özdoğan 1997: 13-17, 33, confirmed in Özdoğan 1999b: 232/2, Özdoğan 2000: 167 and footnote 7).

Not only did the revolutionaries of those remote times succeed in overthrowing a regime thousands of years old, bloody and exploitive – moreover, they also succeeded in developing their own alternative society, devising and realizing it. The social revolution of the year 7200 B.C. is the hour of the birth of neolithic communism. An egalitarian, classless society arises in which women and men are equal, a society which rapidly spreads over the whole of Anatolia and almost simultaneously over the Balkans and which endures for 3000 years.<sup>4</sup>

## Çatalhöyük

Below we will restrict ourselves to the settlement of Çatalhöyük when analyzing the classless society – not that the type of society of Çatalhöyük represents an exception<sup>5</sup> but because the archaeological context does so.

As indicated above, Çatalhöyük holds an astonishing amount of remarkably well preserved finds and buildings (Düring 2001: 1). The conservation of perishable materials is especially remarkable since no comparable place of discovery displays such materials. A fire in the history of the town caused the ground in the layer below to become sterile as far down

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<sup>4</sup> Concerning social transformations, see the four fundamental articles by Özdoğan (1994, 1997, 2000 und 2002). For a similar revolution at another location (Göbekli Tepe) see the final section of Schmidt's article (2000: 41).

<sup>5</sup> Concerning Anatolia, cf. eg. references in footnote 4, concerning Europe, cf. eg. Gimbutas 1996: 323-349 and Whittle 1996: 69-71, 90-96, 355 und 370-371.

as at least 1 m depth and all organic materials to become carbonized in the process (Mellaart 1967: 210). Thus, products of organic material were preserved in carbonized form and we know the weaving patterns of the fabrics (Burnham 1965), clothing, leather artefacts and furs, cane baskets and mats (Mellaart 1967: 79, 218-220), carbonized food (Mellaart 1967: 22-23) as well as wooden tableware, wooden furniture, boxes with their content etc. (Mellaart 1967: 210, 215, Burnham 1965). Moreover, people in Çatalhöyük usually painted pictures on two walls of their houses to document aspects of their lives and experiences (Gimbutas 1990). They buried the deceased under the floors in their houses with characteristic grave goods so that, in a way, we know the inhabitants of the settlement personally, including their fate as far as it can be read from the skeletons: age at death, sex, number of births, diseases, accidents etc., as well as statistical information deduced from these data such as infant mortality, life-span etc. (Angel 1971, Hamilton 1996: 242-262). New methods allow analyzing micro elements in teeth (Molleson and Andrews 1996) and analyzing collagen in the bones (Richards et al. 2003) and thus provide information about what people ate during the last years before their death.

In a nutshell: We know more about pre-historic Çatalhöyük than about many historic civilizations which are closer to us in time.

But how do we know that this society was classless?

Generally, there are three criteria, even four in the case of Çatalhöyük, which must be seen in conjunction:

1. Architecture: In class societies, architecture designed for living and ruling for members of the ruling class differs considerably from architecture designed for living and working of the exploited class not only in terms of quantity (of living space) but also in terms of quality (of structure). It has never been difficult for an archaeologist in Egypt to differentiate between the palace of a pharaoh and a living place of a peasant family.

2. Grave goods: If it is usual in a society to bury grave goods with the deceased it is possible to deduce different social classes from grave goods that differ substantially in quality. The same applies to

3. Equipment with consumer goods: In both cases, let me mention the example of pharaoh and peasant family again for illustrative purposes. It is important, however, that with respect to both grave goods and equipment with consumer goods, gradual differences do *not* present a criterion for different social classes. A prominent piece in an otherwise average grave, certain differences in quality between consumer goods or burial objects that are a little richer or a little poorer are typical for the lower classes and can already be detected in rural and proletarian families of Ancient Egypt (Childe 1952: 61-62).

Architecture, burial objects and equipment with consumer goods: all of these are outstandingly well preserved in Çatalhöyük and shed a light on the classless structure of this society. Additionally, a further criterion plays a role:

Lawrence Angel who analyzed the retrieved skeletons also looked for abrasion of the bones and in all skeletons of the working people found indications to hard physical work (Angel 1971: 90-92, about the new findings confirmed by Hodder (2004: 39)). Angel wrote: "These are striking but expectable adaptations in a people as active as the Çatal Hüyük

frescoes show” (Angel 1971: 92) and concluded: “The price for the creativity and relative stability ... was hard work on the part of everybody” (Angel 1971: 96). – In contrast, in class societies, as is generally known, the possessors do not work, so the members of the ruling class may show diseases of affluence but no abrasion of the bones by hard physical work.

### **Classless society**

The key to understanding the structure of society of Çatalhöyük, however, is its architecture.

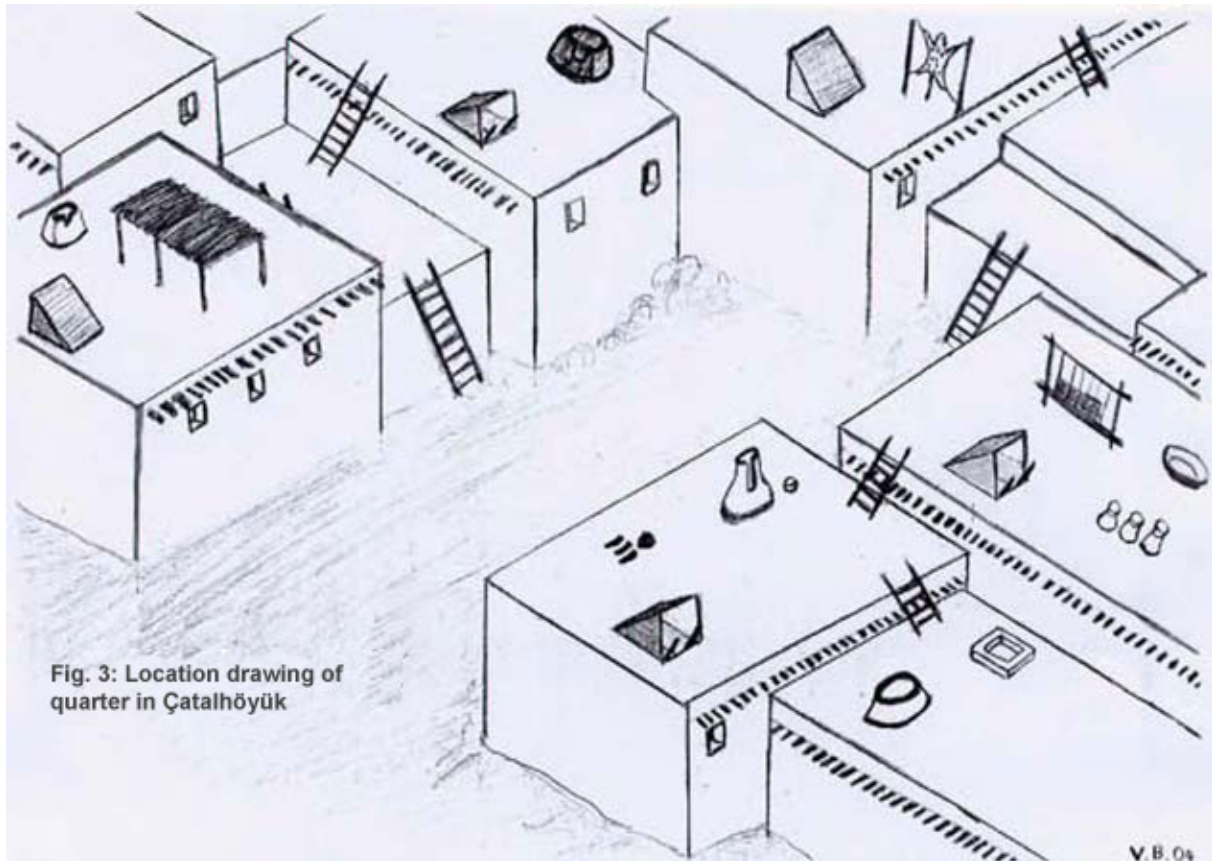
The houses in Çatalhöyük stood wall to wall without any space between them, though each house had its own walls and a flat roof. The town spread in terraces across the mound (fig. 2) and there were only few courtyards situated in the midst of this “honeycomb structure” (Mellaart 1967: 54-59).



Access to these houses was only possible by way of crossing roofs. On each roof, there was a ladder which allowed people living further inside the settlement to climb towards their own home from roof to roof. In the roofs, there was an opening protected by a cover. Here was the ladder leading down into the house (fig. 3) (Mellaart 1967: 56-58).

In the midst of the wilderness, the roofs of Çatalhöyük formed an artificial landscape created by men (fig. 2) which by now has come to be regarded as an independent cultural achievement (Lewis-Williams 2004: 32). On these roofs there were storage containers, hearths, and workshops (fig. 3). The roofs were the actual space of production and communication and had no private character (Düring 2002: 11/2). It becomes clear that life in Çatalhöyük must have been regulated by an abundance of mutual agreements: not only

needed all food be carried over the roofs – each used diaper meant a further descent from all roofs down to the river (fig. 2). Building material for new buildings as well as clay and water for the annual plastering of the inner walls of the houses: everything had to be hauled across the ladders and roofs of other families (Mellaart 1967: 49-50). Findings of two collapsed roofs that had fallen into the houses show that the roofs were not infinitely stable (Hodder 1998: 8/2, 2003: 11/1). Catastrophes could only be avoided by a complex network of binding agreements (Martin and Russell 2000: 68), practices that had become routine (Hodder 1998: 9/1), the physical remnants of which nowadays must appear as indications of rituals (Hodder 1998: 10/2, Lewis-Williams 2004: 56).



The ground plan of all houses was rectangular and at the southern wall – where the ladder led down into the house from the roof – there was the kitchen wing with oven and hearth. On the opposite walls in the north and the east there were platforms laid from bricks where people could sit, eat, and sleep (fig. 4) (Mellaart 1967: 56-60). These platforms belonged to either an adult (possibly with a baby) or two children. Below these platforms, the dead were buried. The walls above were embellished with wall paintings or reliefs. The square middle part between the kitchen wing and the platforms was covered by a plaited mat and, similar to the roofs, served as a working place, as the midden found shows (Martin and Russell 2000: 61-62/2).

Actually, in Çatalhöyük there was only this one house – in 1500 copies. Moreover, the building principle is kept throughout all building levels so that for 1200 years only this one type of house was built, as can be seen in fig. 4. This concerned material, ground plan, height and room layout (Mellaart 1967: 56-64) and even light supply (Mellaart 1967: 68). The interior design, that is, decoration of the walls and platforms, varied only gradually (Hodder 1996b: 362). Even this kind of architecture does not leave room for social differences. All



houses were equal in quality. Representational architecture, such as temples or palaces, is completely absent. Each building was inhabited. The division between "sacral" and "profane" activities was not marked by erecting different buildings (Hodder 1996a: 6, 1996b: 362), but within each house by the existence of a sacral area (the platforms below the mural paintings) and a profane part of the building (kitchen tract and working place in the centre) (Hodder 1998: 9, Düring 2001: 4/2). Thus, the existence of professional priests was unnecessary. (From the results of the excavations in Çayönü it can be deduced that within the framework of the social revolution cultic buildings and priesthood were generally abolished (Özdoğan 1997: 16-17, Özdoğan 2002).) In 2003, it was assumed that only a few minor roads led into the centre. Since one supposed representational architecture there (Mellink and Filip 1985: 19), Hodder started excavations and found ... the central waste dump. ("... there is little evidence of public spaces and buildings – once again Neolithic Çatalhöyük seems to consist of just houses and midden" (Hodder 2003: 10)).

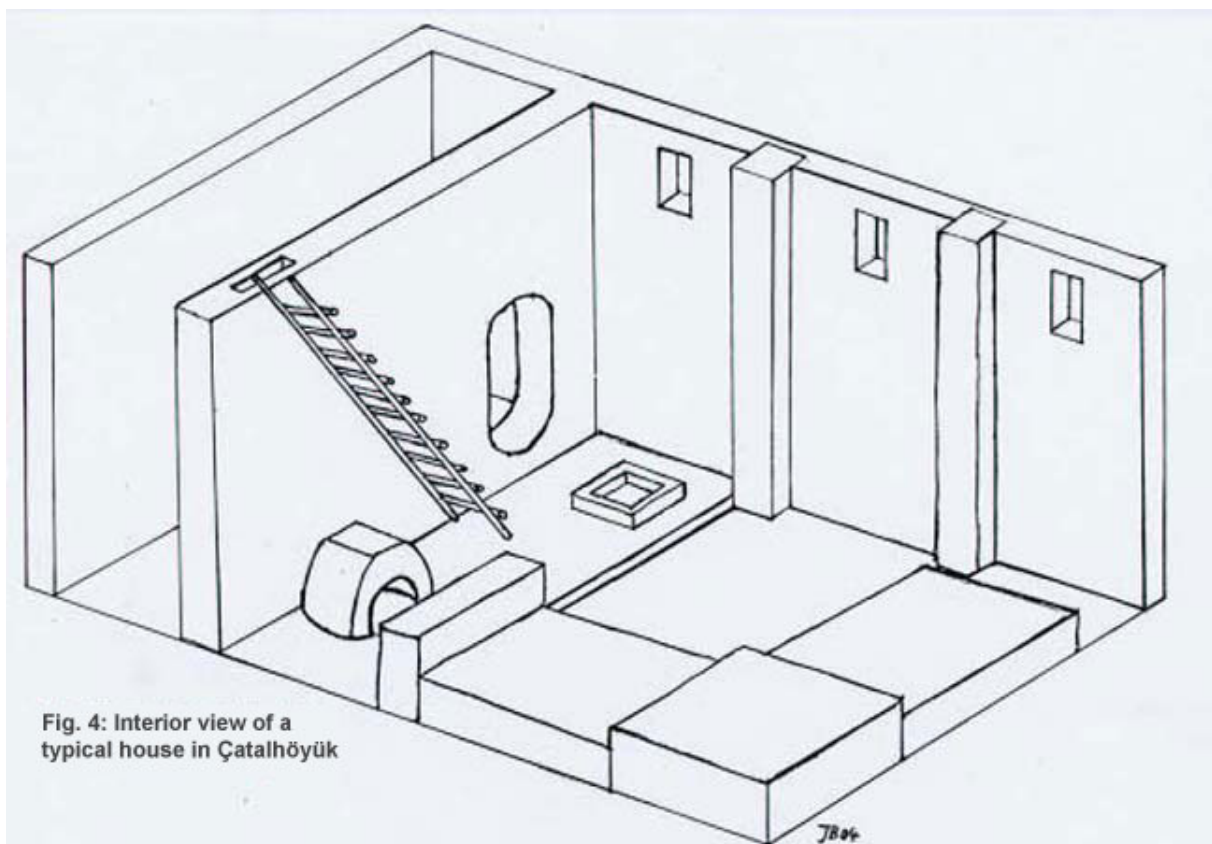


Fig. 4: Interior view of a typical house in Çatalhöyük

The egalitarian nature of the society of people in Çatalhöyük is even reinforced by the only difference between the usage of space in the houses: living space. It corresponds to the size of family so that each adult, or two children below the age of 15, respectively, had 10 to 12 sqm at their disposal. The family size can be deduced from the number of platforms (Mellaart 1964: 93, Mellaart 1967: 60, 67; Hodder and Matthews 1998: 59-51 and fig. 6.3).

Since a house could serve as a living space for about 120 years (Mellaart 1967: 51) the question has to be asked: how did people adapt their living space to the changing number of inhabitants? One answer may be given by the ground plan (Mellaart 1967: 56). Each house with three platforms (corresponding to about 30 sqm) included 1 to 2 small rooms of about 10 to 12 sqm floor space each as shown in fig. 4. These rooms served to keep supplies but, above all, to dispose of anorganic midden such as pottery fragments, leftovers from stone chipping

or plaster, ashes from hearth and oven etc. (Martin and Russell 2000: 62/2-63/1). When the need for more living space arose, the midden was brought from the room to a construction site where it was needed for filling and for producing a level floor space for the foundation of a new house (Martin and Russell 2000: 66-68). The emptied and cleaned room was then at the disposal for more living space (Düring 2001: 5/2). Thus it becomes clear why with enlarged houses the small rooms are missing in the plans (Mellaart 1967: 59). Conversely, if only one person remained in the house, living space was actually reduced to 12 sqm (Hodder and Matthews 1998: 49-51 and fig. 6.3).

The interesting fact is thus that the maximum living space possible was not used from the beginning but only when the need arose – and when it declined, living space was reduced again. If all houses had been equally large, it would have given the impression of equality on the outside, but actually individual persons would have been treated very unequally: an individual in a large family would have had less space at his or her disposal than in a small one. The fact that the houses were adapted to real circumstances ensured that each person always had 10 to 12 sqm to him- or herself. The "living houses" of Çatalhöyük (Balter 1998: 1445, Hodder 2002: 5/2) show that the needs of the people were a socially mandatory basis of production. This evidence is confirmed and complemented by the analysis of burial objects and skeletons.

### **Individuality and gender relations**

The burial objects found in the graves emphasize not only social equality since they differ only marginally concerning their quantity and character (Mellaart 1967: 206) but also confirm the individual differences between persons. The burial objects even vary within one living space (Mellaart 1963: 100f.) and thus rather document differences between individuals than differences due to membership of different classes (Childe 1952: 143-144).

Mellaart could not imagine the societal wealth he found to be generally, equally distributed. Therefore he presumed that the area he excavated was the quarter of the priests, and in the rest of the town circumstances must have been poorer. This was an assumption which could be rejected with good arguments especially after the results of skeleton examinations had been published by Angel in 1971. Already in 1969, it was demonstrated that the collective findings were easier to reconcile with a society without stratification (Narr 1969: 12/2, see esp. Grünert 1982: 194, Hermann 1983: 65-68, and, on the basis of Mellaart's results: Hummel 1996: 269). Hodder's early investigations proved that Çatalhöyük looked everywhere as it did in the area excavated by Mellaart (Hodder 1996b: 360/2-361/1, Balter 1998: 1443/2, Hodder 2003: 10). This means that in Çatalhöyük those differences between people are absent that are so striking in a society divided into classes. Archaeologists accordingly describe this society as egalitarian (Balter 1999: 891/3, Moore 1998) or discuss subtle differences between an egalitarian and a stratified society (for a stratified society: Wason 1994: 153-179, for a society in between: Hodder 1996b: 366/2, for a purely egalitarian society: Hamilton 1996: 262/2). Here, Naomi Hamilton finds the resolving words for this discussion: "Difference need not mean structural inequality. Ranking by age, achieved status, social roles based on skill and knowledge etc. do not necessarily contradict an egalitarian ethos."

The graves in Çatalhöyük already show that a social division of labour was missing since the dead were given tools for various activities of basic production and in each house there were seeds (Connolly 1999: 798/2). However, it can also be seen that people were

partially specialized according to their aptitudes in skilled activities that exceeded basic production, from burial objects such as painting utensils or copper (Mellaart 1967: 209). Presumably by producing ceramics, people in Çatalhöyük had discovered how to smelt metallic copper from copper ore, as documented by the preserved slag (Mellaart 1967: 217-218).

There is a striking difference to class societies: burial objects were not produced explicitly for burials, but they rather were goods which people had used during their lives and which were left to them in death (Mellaart 1967: 209). This also holds true for objects which truly are at the end of the "gradual spectrum." Perfectly crafted flint daggers, mirrors sanded from obsidian that were more brilliant than antique metal mirrors (Mellaart 1967: pl. XIV and XII) as well as flawless tools made from obsidian (Hamblin 1975: 17), all of them found in graves: they document both the deployed different preferences and abilities of people who were able to produce them and the respect of their fellow human beings who left these objects to them in their graves instead of retaining them for themselves. Pieces like these led Mellaart to the assumption that they could have been produced in this perfection only by full specialists, particularly since he did not find any midden resulting from production (Mellaart 1967: 211, Balter 1998: 1443/2). During the new excavations specific attention was paid, therefore, to microscopic traces of midden in the clay floors, and domestic waste was analyzed. In this way, evidence could be provided for midden resulting from working on stones. This means that manufacturing stones was not the task of full specialists but was conducted in every household, or associated households in the case of complex production processes that were possible only collectively (Connolly 1999: 798-799, also see Balter 1998: 1443/2 and Hodder 1999: 6/1). Burial objects that were found in a house had been produced and used in that house and been buried with the person who had manufactured and used them. Hodder draws the conclusion that "we cannot argue for total control of production by an elite" (Hodder 1996b: 361/2).

Just like the "living houses" that changed with their inhabitants and were adapted to changing living circumstances, this attachment of people to the objects of daily life conveys an integrated image of organic structures and vital coherences.

Truly outstanding and especially remarkable is the fact that women, too, received tools as burial objects, just as men did (Mellaart 1967: 209).<sup>6</sup> In later class societies, men (of the "middle classes") received burial objects that allowed conclusions as to their profession but women's graves contained only jewellery: rich women were given rich jewellery, poor women poor jewellery. That these women worked just as hard – if not even harder – than men is not reflected in the burial objects. The tools in neolithic women graves illustrate that women were recognized as equals as a matter of course in the production of goods. This, in turn, supports the assumption that in this society the antagonism between production and reproduction was abolished. There are mural paintings in Çatalhöyük that complement and confirm this assumption; they show men dancing with children (Mellaart 1966: pl. LIV, LV, LIX, LXI), a motif that does not occur in class society until the 13<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and also later only led a shadowy existence. Also, in contrast to Mellaart's statement, not only women were buried with children but men also (Hamilton 1996: 253/1).

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<sup>6</sup> This seems to have held true for neolithic civilizations in general, even for Central European linear pottery culture (linearbandkeramik) (Nordholz 2004: 124). However, this interrelation rarely seems to be observed.

However, not only were women buried with tools but also men were buried with jewellery, partially with considerable amounts (Hamilton 1996: 262)<sup>7</sup>. Naomi Hamilton who in Hodder's team is responsible for working with the graves and therefore for analyzing gender relations, doubts if the definition of a social gender apart from biological sex is at all helpful in the discussion on Çatalhöyük. She regards the concept of gender as bound to our times and their problems and considers the possibility that neolithic humans did not perceive man and woman as being a polarity (Hamilton 1996: 262). Indeed, already in 1990 Hodder developed the thought that the decisive polarity for neolithic perception may have been of a different nature (Hodder 1990). It is interesting that more recent considerations lead to an analogous assumption concerning the Palaeolithic (Heidefrau 2004). The author, Elke Heidefrau, writes: "Possibly, the discussion on gender ... mainly reveals something about our own culture: a culture in which it seems immensely important to know sex of another person (see the first question asked after the birth of a child). To us, a culture in which this is not the case seems almost unthinkable; therefore, such thoughts could open new horizons to us and thus enrich the current gender discussion!" (Heidefrau 2004: 148; translated). Obviously, at that time the real individuals were at the centre, and when they liked to adorn themselves their jewellery was not taken away from them when they died – regardless of their sex. And it was *people* who produced, possessed and used tools and therefore also kept them in their graves – again, regardless of their sex.

Hodder dedicated a separate publication to gender relations in order to refute the older conceptions of a matriarchy in Çatalhöyük (Hodder 2004). In this article in "Scientific American" he presents an impressive documentation of gender equality in Çatalhöyük: there were no significant differences concerning nutrition, body height and life style between men and women. Men and women performed very similar tasks, as can be deduced from the abrasion of bones. Both sexes stayed in and outside the house equally long and were equally active in the kitchen as in tool production. There are no hints pointing to a gender-related division of labour. It is only from artwork that one can deduce that outside the house, men hunted whereas women engaged in agriculture (cf. Hodder). Mural paintings show, however, women together with men in depictions of chase, as published in Mellaart's excavation reports (Mellaart 1966: Pl LIb, LVb, LXIb). And the equal burial of men and women sealed equality even in death.

### **Solidarity and Care**

Equality in society which creates space to develop individuality leads to the question: "How do people who are equal and free interact with each other?" Answers can be found in individual fates as deduced from relations between findings, in institutions and statistical values from examinations of skeletons.

The fate of a hunter, for instance, who was speared by an aurochs and hauled to his house lethally wounded and cared for self-sacrificingly by his family until he died from severe ischial inflammation and deep bone infection (Angel 1971: 91) shows that the family could be cared for even if an important family member was absent. "A girl [...] who suffered

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<sup>7</sup> Mellaart's converse argument stems from the fact that he frequently determined the sex of the skeletons according to their grave goods (!). It was only after Angel's anatomical examinations of the skeletons six years after that the true facts were revealed (Hamilton 1996: 245/2, 258/2).

from a broken femur which might have crippled her” and who died at the age of seventeen received an extraordinarily elaborate burial (Mellaart 1967: 207). This seventeen-year old girl but also the prematurely born infant (Mellaart 1967: 83, 207) and its mother who died together with her child were treated with red ochre (Mellaart 1967: 207), a symbolism which was supposed to ensure rebirth (Mellaart 1963: 98, 1967: 149-150). The burial of a mother who, with her twelve-year old son, was struck dead by a collapsing roof is still tugging at one’s heartstrings today, even in the photography of the skeletons (Balter 1999: 891). Looking at these stories about caring and treatment of the sick, deep empathy for those unfairly treated by fate becomes obvious.

It is not only individual fates that point to caring for the sick but also institutions. Angel interprets various buildings in Çatalhöyük as regular hospitals (Angel 1971: 88).

Comparing statistical data from Çatalhöyük with those from Elmalı Karataş (both from Angel 1971: 78), a town in the same region which, however, was not settled in the Neolithic but in the Early Bronze Age, it is striking that infant mortality there was 30 % higher than in Çatalhöyük. Also, in the town from the Bronze Age no one achieved an age beyond 55 – 60 years whereas in the neolithic town a small portion of the population reached the age of 60 – 70 years. Considering the enormous progress of the Bronze Age revolution on the basis of just a single example, the plough which brings progress of productivity of more than 100 per cent as compared to the neolithic digging stick, such a decline of quality of life seems astonishing. However, other than material wealth (named gross domestic product today), quality of life (infant mortality, life expectancy, caring in case of sickness, assurance of basic alimentation, access to education, equality of opportunity) depend on social conditions much more than on economic efficiency (Sen 1993)<sup>8</sup>.

And the transition from the Stone Age to the Bronze Ages does not only imply numerous technical achievements but also the emergence of class society. Class society means patriarchy and exploitation: women have to work until shortly before they give birth – and after childbirth again as soon as possible. This increases infant mortality and decreases life expectancy of women. Class society means war, too, and this decreases life expectancy of men.

Average life expectancy in Çatalhöyük was 32 years (Angel 1971: 78, 80). Even if we are horrified by this figure, we have to realize that, for the exploited class, it was only reached again around 1750 (Herrmann 1983: 60, see also Ehmer 1990: 202). This means that three hundred years ago the bonded slave peasant had less life expectancy than a free peasant farmer in the Stone Age.

In this way, the positive effects of technical progress were exceeded by the negative consequences of exploitation and oppression.

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<sup>8</sup> Here you find further references to these important correlations, deliberately suppressed by neo-liberal economists.

## What is lacking in Çatalhöyük?

A society is characterized not only by what is existing. What is absent can be just as revealing.

For example, evidence of property offences is missing. Robbery as a criminal offence cannot be proven archaeologically, grave robbery as a special form of robbery can be. Grave robbery exists in all cultures in which objects have an exchange value (i.e. in which the time necessary to produce them is measured), in which these values are distributed unequally in society and great values are given into the graves of the dead while the living suffer in misery. No sanctions, not even the cruelest execution methods, curses of the gods, expectancy of horrible agonies in the nether world ever prevented people from plundering graves under such circumstances which is why grave robbery has always been present since the beginnings of class society. However, in societies where goods have no exchange value since they are merely objects of daily use which are produced and shared according to need but not exchanged, no motive for grave robbery applies. Consequently, in Çatalhöyük there is no example for grave robbery; Mellaart only found unenviolated graves (Mellaart 1989: 23/1). Just as any motive for grave robbery, there is no motive for robbery in general (Engels 1845: 542).

Most impressive, compared with the situation in class societies (e.g. the ones of today) is the fact that depictions of aggression are completely missing.

"What can be said, however, is that from over a hundred paintings, there is not one depicting a scene of conflict or fighting, let alone of war, ill-treatment or torture. There is no taste of things to come with the rise of civilisation" (Mellaart 1989: 22/2).

In the same way, depictions of judiciary and conviction are missing<sup>9</sup>. Since visual depictions of aggressive acts are missing completely, it has to be asked if this is to be attributed to the fact that acts of violence were not tolerated in society and therefore were not depicted (a fact which would be remarkable in itself) or if violence itself was absent in society. The answer is given by the skeletons of Çatalhöyük.

For there is no single individuum which shows indications of a violent death; no finding of bones points to raw violence caused by a fellow individual as a cause of death (mentioned explicitly by Mellaart (1967: 225), implicitly confirmed by Angel (1971) and Hamilton (1996: 255/1)). *No one died because someone else killed or lethally wounded him.*

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<sup>9</sup> It is worth noticing that depictions of fights, wars, and executions do not only constitute a main motif of the art of the latter class society but have also been passed on from the previous epoch (Beltran 1982: 44-45).

Furthermore, dealing with people in a destructive way for cultic (religious) purposes is completely missing. There were

- no trepanations of skulls (Mellaart 1967: 225) – as in neolithic Central Europe
- no deformation of skulls (Angel 1971: 94) – as with Central American peoples or in Ancient Egypt
- no ritual mutilation of the hands (Mellaart 1967: 164) – as in caves in the Pyrenees in the Ice Age
- no knocking out of teeth during initiation rites (Mellaart 1967: 225, Angel 1971: 97) – as with Australian aborigines
- no blood sacrifices. This means that although animals were slaughtered for consumption, there was no equipment for ritual killing (Mellaart 1967: 77).

*And there was no war.*

This holds true not only for Çatalhöyük (Mellaart 1967: 69, Balter 1999: 891/3, Düring 2001: 2) until the last day of the settlement (Mellaart 1967: 53), but for 1500 years for Anatolia (Grünert 1982: 195, Herrmann 1983: 73/1) and from 6500 B.C. until 4000 B.C. for the complete civilization of the Balkans (Gimbutas 1996: 331/1, Whittle 1996: 93, 112) whose definite peacefulness has been stressed already by Childe (Childe 1952: 165).

Taken as a whole, these facts today seem as the archaeology of an utopia. However, we must understand that 10,000 people without central power could never have lived together in such density for such a long time if they had not possessed nonviolent methods for solving conflicts in the first place. If use of force had been part of the repertoire of strategies for conflict resolution, settlements such as Çatalhöyük would not have been able to survive for such a long time – no one could have prevented the settlement from dissolving. Another argument in favour of the absence of violence *a priori* is the above mentioned complete absence of destruction in the cultic area: people had developed images of the beyond which were just as peaceful as they themselves were. "The organization of so many people without major central authority was only possible because of an elaborate social code that regulated the daily lives." (Hodder 1998: 10).

"It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the people of Çatal Hüyük did not see things in our way; they concentrated instead on ... the continuity of life ... and the ways of achieving it. It seems that they understood the importance of continuity, that 'life must go on', a fundamental truth which we tend to miss" (Mellaart 1989: 11).

### **Communist society**

It is probable that the causes of this peacefulness, in the end, were of a socio-economic nature because everybody knew that they could only survive together ("a fundamental truth which we tend to miss"). It is crucial, however, that people dealt with each other in a caring and peaceful manner, knowing they depended on each other. It was only by co-operation that they could survive, and day by day they experienced anew that many persons collectively could accomplish things individuals could not: Çatalhöyük – or, as it is called today in a more general way: „The Neolithic Way of Life“ (for Anatolia: Özdoğan 1997: 27, for Europe: Whittle 1996: 355).

Avoiding destructive activities and not having exploiters on their backs who would have taken most of the fruits of their labour, they could reduce the average working time they needed for satisfying their basic needs to less than half of their productive time, as Narr has deduced indirectly (Narr 1968/69: 419). More than half of their time remained for satisfying their elaborate needs as can be seen in the surprising production of consumer goods (e.g. Mellaart 1964: 84-92, Mellaart 1967: 215, 218-220), in the diversity and quality of alimentation (Mellaart 1967: 224, Helbaek 1964, Richards et al. 2003), and in social life. This is documented by art whose task it was to teach the rules of daily social life (Hodder 1998: 10): painting (Mellaart 1989), music (Stockmann 1985), dances and frequent feasting. From mural paintings (e.g. Mellaart 1962: Pl. XIV, XV, XVII, XVIII) and from the amazing fact that the thigh bones of almost half of the adults showed an anatomical alteration which might have originated from excessive dancing (Angel 1971: 92-94) it has to be deduced that people were feasting frequently. The excavation of the remainders of such a feast also prove that they left nothing to be desired (Martin and Russell 2000: 66).

Thus, feasting and dancing considerably contributed to the stability of society and prevented gathering of too much surplus.

As well as that, remnants from those faraway days may convey an idea of what is possible even at a stone age level when social relations are humane and man is free.

After the socialist utopia had been discredited because of stalinism, the discovery of this society receives a particular importance. It enables collecting empirical data and provides an example for the relations between communist relations of production and social structure – and this in a society which did not just last for 80 but for 3000 years.

The fact that a development such as the one described above was possible in the Stone Age once more confirms that it is not technical development but the organization of social relations which is crucial in determining quality of life and the character of society.

And what would be possible today – at today's state of technical development – if only at last we had reasonable social conditions ...

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