

Building Continuity in the Central Anatolian Neolithic: Exploring the Meaning of Buildings at Aşıklı Höyük and Çatalhöyük

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Abstract

The buildings of the Central Anatolian Neolithic, best known from the intensively excavated sites of Çatalhöyük and Aşıklı Höyük, possess an impressive degree of continuity, allowing us to trace them through multiple phases of reconstruction and over the course of several centuries. This building continuity has commonly been interpreted as a functionally determined feature and a demonstration of the conservative nature of society, but beyond that it has been seen as a self-evident characteristic that does not warrant further consideration. By contrast this study explores the diachronic development of buildings in the Central Anatolian Neolithic, using evidence from deep sounding 4H/G at Aşıklı Höyük and the South Area at Çatalhöyük in order to understand the meaning that building continuity may have had in prehistory. It will be established that functional parameters do not suffice to explain this phenomenon. Applying a biographical approach, two questions in particular are explored: first, whether these buildings have some form of identity that is reproduced through their phases of reconstruction; and, second, whether there is any kind of typical development of buildings over time. The answers to these questions allow us to gain a better understanding of why building continuity was fundamental to society in the Central Anatolian Neolithic.

Introduction

The Central Anatolian Neolithic has been dated to approximately 8500–6000 Cal BC (Thissen 2002a: 324), and refers here to a restricted geographical area that includes the Beyşehir Basin, the Konya Plain, the Tüz Gölü Basin and the region of Cappadocia (Kuzucuoğlu 2002: 33). It is mainly known from excavations at Aşıklı Höyük, Çatalhöyük, Canhasan III and I, Erbaba and Musular. Scholars have argued that the Central Anatolian Neolithic is distinct both from the Neolithic in the Levant (Özdoğan 1995: 58; 1999: 229-32; 2002) and that of the Lake District (Duru 1999; Thissen 2000: 154-56; Umurtak 2000). Most likely the distinctiveness of the Central Anatolian Neolithic is in part a product of archaeologi-

cal research, one that will be eroded in future investigations, but here it seems appropriate to take this region as a coherent focus of study.

Amongst the elements that define Central Anatolian Neolithic sites, the most conspicuous characteristic is the settlement type (Özbaşaran 2000: 135), which is exemplified by a lack of streets in neighbourhood blocks, in which structures are built directly adjacent to one another, the absence of doors communicating directly with open spaces, and a large degree of continuity, in which buildings remain true to their location, dimensions and orientation over long periods of time and through many phases of redevelopment.

It is this building continuity, which in many instances lasted over the course of several

centuries and in some cases resulted in a vertical displacement of up to 6 m, that forms the central subject of this paper. Analysis focuses on the evidence from Aşıklı Höyük and Çatalhöyük, because these are the most systematically excavated sites and good diachronic evidence has been published for both sites.

Surprisingly little consideration has been given to the marked building continuity encountered in the Central Anatolian Neolithic, often regarded as a self-evident feature that can be explained simply as a foundation technique. For instance Mellaart states: 'Because of the habit of building one structure on top of the other, using the old walls as foundations, a certain homogeneity of plan was created' (1967: 67). A very similar statement is made by the excavators of Aşıklı Höyük: 'The plan of a building seems to be dictated by the shape of the immediately preceding structure on that location' (Esin *et al.* 1991: 130).

Although this functionalist explanation is certainly valid and reasonable, it fails to provide an adequate rationale for the practice of building continuity for two reasons. First, it should be emphasised that, despite the fact that many vernacular building traditions are documented in both archaeology and ethnography, where mud brick buildings are constructed without stone walls or foundation trenches (Aurenche 1981: 104; Facey 1997; Horne 1994; Peters 1982), the type of building continuity encountered in Neolithic central Anatolia seems to be without parallels. It is common to find older walls being reused as foundations, but in most cases this does not lead to the sort of continuity in which buildings retain their characteristics over the centuries.

A possible parallel for this type of marked building continuity is documented at two Neolithic sites in Syria—Abu Hureyra and Bouqras—that can be dated to the Middle PPNB (8000–7500 Cal BC) and Late PPNB

(7500–6500 Cal BC) respectively (Akkermans *et al.* 1983: 341, fig. 4; Moore 2000: 208). Only a few structures, however, reveal building continuities over extended time periods at these sites, and these structures seem to constitute the exception rather than the rule. Moreover, even those particular buildings that remained in place over time show degrees of change not witnessed in the buildings of the Central Anatolian Neolithic.

It could be argued at this point that the buildings under study remained in their locations simply because they were surrounded on all sides by other structures. This idea, however, does not hold true, because many of the buildings that will be discussed, for instance those in sounding 4H/G at Aşıklı Höyük (see Figure 2), were in fact adjacent to open spaces and could easily have expanded or shrunk according to the needs of the moment, but instead remained identical.

This leads to a second argument about why the notion of foundation technique does not suffice as an explanation for the building continuity in central Anatolia during the Neolithic. In this paper it will be argued that specific elements in the buildings of Aşıklı Höyük and Çatalhöyük were continuous through time and cannot be explained in functional terms. One such element is the location of certain internal features, which suggests that there is more than meets the eye involved in the building continuity practised in Neolithic central Anatolia.

Perceiving Central Anatolian Neolithic Building Continuity

One of the central questions when dealing with building continuity over long periods of time must be whether the people living at the sites under consideration were aware of the marked continuity of buildings, like the archaeologists who excavate these building remains. If such an historical awareness

existed, buildings may have been conceptualized as continuous buildings-in-sequence, and individual building phases may have been seen as incarnations of a pre-existing structure. Alternatively, the building continuity could be seen as an outcome of a series of episodes in which buildings were constructed along the lines of their direct predecessors, a practice in which the builders need not have been aware of the numerous earlier structures below.

It has often been stated that Neolithic society in central Anatolia was fundamentally conservative in outlook, suggesting that continuity in buildings and in other material remains was simply the outcome of a largely unreflected adherence to traditions (Duru 2002: 174; Gérard 2002: 106; Özdoğan 2002: 254; Thissen 2002b: 14). This position, however, seems untenable logically. Asserting that this cultural horizon was fundamentally conservative begs the question why it would have been more traditional than other cultural horizons that change more quickly. The answer to that must be that the traditions were of great significance to prehistoric people (Bradley 2002: 11). In short, labelling a society as conservative does not answer the question why the people under consideration were conservative.

Heinrich and Seidl (1969) were the first to note that the building continuity of the Central Anatolian Neolithic was not a self-evident feature, but an integral part of social strategies and practices. In a brief article they argued that the ritually most elaborate Çatalhöyük buildings, labelled 'shrines' by Mellaart, were also those with the longest histories. They suggested, furthermore, that these buildings were the original structures of the initial neighbourhood located in the area excavated by Mellaart. In this scenario these buildings were originally free-standing, having been built first in level VIII. The structures subsequently came to be surrounded by

additional buildings that were home to people who regarded themselves as descendants of the groups living in the first buildings. The 'descendants' performed many of their rituals in the buildings where they originated, which came to be seen over time as 'lineage houses' (Heinrich and Seidl 1969: 118).

While this interpretation seems overly simplistic and static, the authors grasped a fundamental relation between 'building pedigree' and ritual elaboration that can be found in many ethnographic cases and will be further explored in this paper. The model put forward by Heinrich and Seidl, however, fails to convince for two reasons. First, it does not explain why the 'initial settlers' would have behaved so radically different from their descendants, choosing to live apart from each other and without reference to any previous structures (which did exist—see Çatalhöyük section below). Second, their model is largely mechanical in nature, and does not allow for social strategies and practice. For instance, the model implies that every building that existed in level VIII would automatically have become a lineage house over time. In contrast, it will be demonstrated below that the actual developments are less linear and more complicated. For instance, some of the level VIII buildings were abandoned relatively early in the sequence, suggesting that the status of a lineage house was open to negotiation.

A subsequent publication addressing the problem at hand was written by Hodder (1998) after a visit to Aşıklı Höyük. Impressed by the massive evidence of rebuilding of structures exposed in deep sounding 4H/G at that site, he considered the option that the historical dimension of these buildings might have been of great importance in the constitution of society at both Aşıklı Höyük and Çatalhöyük. Reflecting on this building continuity Hodder (1998: 89) writes: 'People came to be bound between walls, metaphori-

cally domesticated as they also had to become practically domesticated. The walls at Aşıklı and Çatal had to remain the same because it was the historical associations of those bound within them that created a group continuous through time.'

Although Hodder focuses on individual domestic buildings rather than the problem of ritually elaborate buildings of Çatalhöyük, his arguments are remarkably similar to those put forward by Heinrich and Seidl. Both articles argue that the people of the Central Anatolian Neolithic may have had a historical awareness of building histories and that these histories may have been of great importance in the definition of social groups.

From my perspective the approaches of Heinrich and Seidl, on the one hand, and Hodder, on the other, are only partially successful because they provide a very general and static explanation for the meaning that building continuity may have had in the past (but compare Hodder and Cessford 2004: 32). In order to be more convincing, the argument that building continuity was of importance to Neolithic society needs to address how and why that building continuity impacted significantly on people's daily lives. To do that we need a model that addresses the importance of specific buildings to specific groups of people and that allows for the dynamic nature of developments in society, rather than simply suggesting a direct and non-problematic relation between the history of a building and its status.

In this paper it is argued that the relation between buildings and their inhabitants is a dialectic, mutually constitutive process. On the one hand, buildings are meaningful elements that give shape to the lives of people at both the practical and cognitive level and communicate information about appropriate behaviour (Blanton 1994; Bourdieu 1973; Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995a; Cunningham 1973; Rapoport 1982; Waterson 1990). On

the other hand, buildings are the outcome of social practices (Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1984; Verhoeven 1999). In regard to this relation between buildings and people, Bourdieu (1977: 89-90) speaks of structuring structures that are 'the principal locus for the objectification of generative schemes'. These generative schemes produce habitus—'systems of durable, transposable dispositions' that direct the actions of people through which structures are reproduced. What is of importance here is that the relation between buildings and their inhabitants is ambiguous, and that the status of a building is constituted in social strategies in everyday practice, and is not in any way pre-determined. To capture this ambiguous relation we need to move from rules to strategies (Bourdieu 1977: 9), and to study the specific trajectories of individual buildings, as well as the ways in which these may have been affected by social strategies and contingencies.

In order to move beyond the general level and study the developments of specific buildings, I explore three issues in this study. First, I investigate whether functional explanations for the building continuity in this cultural horizon suffice. Second, I consider whether individual buildings have unique features that are preserved over time. Third, I ask if there are any developments typical of these buildings over time. The latter two questions are biographical in nature, relating to the character and career of a specific building. In the following section I explore the use of this biographical approach in archaeology, and its potential for understanding Central Anatolian Neolithic building continuity.

Buildings and Biographies

In all societies there is an awareness of the fact that the past is present in a variety of material features (Bradley 2002; Van Dyke and Alcock 2003). The most tangible of these features includes old buildings, occupation

sites and burial mounds. Such sites are often given meaning in later periods when the particular context in which a feature developed is no longer understood or considered relevant. Numerous examples of such developments are discussed by Bradley (2002), and similar discussions can be found in Balkan archaeology where the division between 'tells' and flat sites has been explored. For instance, Bailey has interpreted Bulgarian 'tells' as statements alluding to permanence of place (1999), while the continuous occupation of tells is interpreted as a strategy to legitimate a claim on a certain territory, a physical and social expression of continuity with the ancestors (Chapman 1990: 93; 1991: 52; Halstead 1999: 87; Kotsakis 1999).

In these examples, the explanation of meaning in a class of features is interpreted in a standardized manner. By contrast, this paper focuses on specific rather than generalized histories. In this regard an interesting distinction was drawn by Gosden and Lock (1998: 2), who differentiated between 'genealogical history', where the past is created through links to known ancestors, and 'mythical history', where a less well-known past is evoked. A mythical history is one in which superhuman elements, natural powers and pre-social forces are paramount. By contrast genealogical history is the outcome of human agency, and can only exist within a framework of named figures and known acts. That framework is constituted in most pre-literate societies through the mechanisms of kinship, and this kind of awareness of the past consequently may be called 'genealogical history' (Gosden and Lock 1998).

Bradley has argued that specific memories and hence specific histories fade in a timespan from two generations to 200 years at most (Bradley 2002: 14; 2003: 221-22). Beyond that point features from the past become part of the mythical history. Historical ties with the past over longer periods require special media that

can transfer information. The most obvious media are written archives, but in pre-literate societies other types of technologies may exist, including the construction of impressive monuments and representations, a practice that Connerton (1989: 72-79; cf. Rowlands 1993: 142-46) has labelled 'inscribed memory'. This issue will not concern us here, because this study is about domestic buildings, and it will be argued that another means of transferring history beyond the limits of oral traditions is through buildings embodying group histories (Waterson 2003: 46).

Studying specific 'genealogical histories' of Central Anatolian Neolithic buildings involves focusing on the nature and development of individual buildings over time. One concept that has been used in archaeology to do this is 'cultural biography', originally developed by Kopytoff (1986) to describe singularized objects. Biography is normally a concept used for people rather than objects. This usage is based on an important division in Western thought, in which people are opposed to objects, and objects are seen as commodities, whereas humans are not. However, Kopytoff has shown there are many cases where such distinctions are not valid; for instance, in the cases of slavery (humans as commodities) and wedding rings (object as extension of person).

Individualized objects can be studied as if they were a person. Biographical questions that can be investigated for such objects relate to two sets of questions. The first deals with what is considered to be the suitable career of a class of objects, what states of being exist for an object, and how and in what sequence a thing changes from one state to another. Second, there are issues concerning the specific biography of a thing, and how that relates to the suitable career of the class of objects to which it belongs. Among the themes that are important here are, for instance, when, where and how a thing originates, and how the object differs from other objects of the same

kind (Kopytoff 1986: 66-67). All of the above questions are biographical, but a cultural biography would in addition look at an object as 'a culturally constructed entity, endowed with culturally specific meanings, and classified and reclassified into culturally constituted categories' (Kopytoff 1986: 68).

The cultural biography concept has an important potential for archaeology. It has been used by archaeologists and anthropologists to study the particular history of individualized objects, and the meaning attached to them by people during the various phases of their existence. A number of archaeologists have argued that the cultural biography concept can also be used to approach other types of objects, such as buildings, settlements and landscapes (Gerritsen 1999; 2003; Roymans 1995).

The focus here falls on the potential of cultural biography for the analysis of buildings. Gerritsen (1999; 2003) has used this approach to discuss Bronze Age and Early Iron Age building remains in the southern Netherlands. In his work, Gerritsen (1999: 84; 2003: 50) posits that the life cycle of buildings was bound up with those of the households inhabiting them. With his model Gerritsen opens up interesting possibilities for discussing the dynamics of structures and how they were connected to social developments.

Although the domus concept developed by Hodder (1990) was conceived primarily as a structure of thought, a house as microcosm, through which a number of linked oppositions were reproduced, in his later writings on the domus a biographical dimension has been introduced (1998), one that has already been discussed.

Somewhat similar to the later variant of the domus and to the concept of cultural biography are the concepts of 'living houses', proposed by Bailey (1990: 28), and 'use-life', put forward by Tringham (1995: 98). With these concepts Bailey and Tringham want to stress the temporal dimension of buildings, how

long they lasted, whether and how often they were repaired, whether they were replaced by a successor, and how all these temporal aspects were intertwined with the history of their inhabitants.

In an analysis of Ovcharovo, Bulgaria, Bailey (1990: 38-39) posits that continuity in houses throughout building phases, the choice to live on tell settlements, and the use of house models, are all strategies that served to stress a link with the past in order to legitimate or obtain control over land and resources. Although this reconstruction has been challenged (Tringham 1995: 98-99), it provides interesting ideas on what the building biographies and the manipulation of those biographies might have meant at Ovcharovo.

Whereas the cultural biography approach provides a fruitful avenue for the study of buildings in prehistory, the most illuminating anthropology on the meaning of building biographies is linked to a second concept, that of 'houses'. This concept originally derives from the work of Lévi-Strauss (1983), who suggested that houses should be regarded as a social institution through which societies define membership groups. His original conceptualization stems from the analysis of the Kwakiutl, who could not be accommodated into existing theories of kinship. Faced with the problem of defining Kwakiutl social organization, he found that it could be best understood in terms of the houses they belonged to, which were defined in the following manner (Levi-Strauss 1983: 174):

a corporate body holding an estate made up of both material and immaterial wealth, which perpetuates itself through the transmission of its name, its goods, and its titles down a real or imaginary line, considered legitimate as long as this continuity can express itself in the language of kinship or of affinity and, most often, of both.

In subsequent analyses Lévi-Strauss found a large range of other societies with similar fea-

tures, for which he coined the term 'sociétés à maison', or 'house societies'.

A series of recent books have dealt with the idea of house societies, applying it to a series of specific case studies (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995a; Joyce and Gillespie 2000; MacDonald 1987; Sparkes and Howell 2003; Waterson 1990). These studies have rejected the idea that house societies represent a stage in social evolution, as advocated by Lévi-Strauss (1983: 186), while retaining the general concept of the house as a key social institution in anthropological analysis (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995b: 25-26). Thus houses may occur in cultures that do not fit the criteria for house societies as defined by Lévi-Strauss.

Waterson (1995: 49-50) has distinguished three key features of houses: the ideal of continuity, the passing down of some form of valued property, and the strategic exploitation of the language of kinship or affinity. A similar approach can be found in the usage that archaeologists have made of this concept, in which the term 'house societies' is sometimes used for describing cases that do not fit many of Lévi-Strauss's criteria, but in which buildings were continuous structures that held great meaning for their inhabitants (Hodder 1998: 89-91; Kuijt 2000: 140-41; Tringham 2000: 120-21).

In these archaeological case studies, houses are often seen as essentially homologous and independent units. One of the essential elements in the concept of houses as conceived by Lévi-Strauss, however, and in many ethnographic case studies, is precisely the fact that houses tend to form hierarchical systems in which wealth, status, prestige and power are concentrated in a few houses. These buildings are designated 'lineage houses' in this paper, to which other groups or minor houses are attached (Gillespie 2000b: 48-49). In such a system, high-ranking house members may have religious or political authority and privileges that others must do without.

Finally, it is important to highlight the significance of the diachronic element in the formation of houses. Many ethnographers have noted a correlation between the ageing of buildings and the meaning they embody as houses in the sense of Lévi-Strauss (Gillespie 2000a: 9-11; Kirch 2000; Waterson 1990: 142; 2003). The importance of building biographies is perhaps best described by Kirch (2000: 104): 'a process of increased ritual importance as a house ages, as its original builders and inhabitants themselves grow old and pass away to become ancestors, the venerated objects (often buried in the house itself) of house ritual practised by their descendants'.

Through their cultural biographies domestic houses can, over time, gradually become lineage houses that are the central focus of ritual activities and bind together a group of kinspeople. These buildings are of major importance for the creation and reproduction of group identities beyond the household level. A metaphor often used in southeast Asian societies where houses have been recognized is that of a tree, with the lineage house representing the original stem of the lineage, and dependent houses as branches developing from the main body (McKinnon 2000; Sørn 2003; Waterson 2003).

It is important to emphasize that this model is not deterministic; not every building that has been in existence over a long period of time will necessarily become a lineage house. The actual status of a building will be open to negotiation and only a limited number of buildings will actually become lineage houses as a result of the social strategies of individual actors and social groups, on the one hand, and contingencies—for instance, an epidemic—on the other. It is also clear, however, that not every building is suitable for being transformed into a lineage house. Building biographies are an essential element in the articulation of a lineage house. In order to be acceptable as

lineage houses, buildings need to have a respectable pedigree.

Approach

The concept of houses, defined by an ideal of continuity, the passing down of valued property and the strategic exploitation of the language of kinship, can be used in archaeology if and where we encounter buildings that seem to match the criteria, without the need to evaluate whether these were indeed house societies as defined by Lévi-Strauss.

The importance of the house concept from an archaeological perspective is that building biographies play a crucial role in the constitution of society. Although social strategies and contingencies are of major significance in the constitution of both lineage houses and minor houses, building biographies and pedigrees are a key element in the articulation of houses. The awareness of building histories in this system creates a situation in which the past can be contested and adapted to changing demands, but cannot be entirely rewritten. As a result, buildings can become increasingly charged with meaning only with the passage of time.

This temporal correlation can be tested archaeologically provided that we can trace buildings over long periods of time. In the Central Anatolian Neolithic this condition can be met. I now proceed to discuss briefly the evidence from Aşıklı Höyük and Çatalhöyük, in order to demonstrate the potential of the concepts outlined. At both sites the focus will be on areas in which buildings can be traced over extensive periods of time—the deep sounding 4H/G at Aşıklı Höyük and the South Area at Çatalhöyük.

The central issues addressed in this discussion are: first, whether functional explanations for building continuity in this cultural horizon suffice; second, whether buildings have characteristics of their own that are maintained over multiple phases of recon-

struction; and, third, if and how buildings change over time.

Aşıklı Höyük

The Aceramic Neolithic site of Aşıklı Höyük is located on the banks of the Melendiz River at the fringe of the volcanic region of Cappadocia. The 4-ha site was first discovered in the 1960s and has been excavated by Istanbul University from 1989 onwards (Esin *et al.* 1991; Esin and Harmankaya 1999). Forty-seven radiocarbon samples have securely dated the site to c. 8200–7400 Cal BC (Esin 1998).

The main focus of the excavations has been to explore large horizontal exposures at the summit of the mound, totalling some 4000 sq m. These exposures provide an important window into the building traditions and the spatial organization of this Aceramic Neolithic site. Two types of complexes were found on the summit of the mound.

First there was a large monumental complex surrounding courts HV and T (Figure 1). A number of characteristics stand out in this building complex. These include the large size of some of the spaces, the use of distinct building materials and techniques, including massive stone and brick walls and elaborate painted floors, and the presence of features not found elsewhere on the site, such as a large round hearth and post stands (Esin and Harmankaya 1999: 124).

Second, the settlement of Aşıklı Höyük was organized into a number of tightly nucleated neighbourhoods, designated ‘insulae’ by the excavator (Esin *et al.* 1991); these were separated by streets or alleys. The number of rooms within each neighbourhood was somewhere in the range of 30 to 60 (Figure 1). Within these neighbourhoods the main traffic seems to have taken place at the roof level.

The small buildings found within these neighbourhoods were constructed with mud bricks and most likely served domestic purposes.

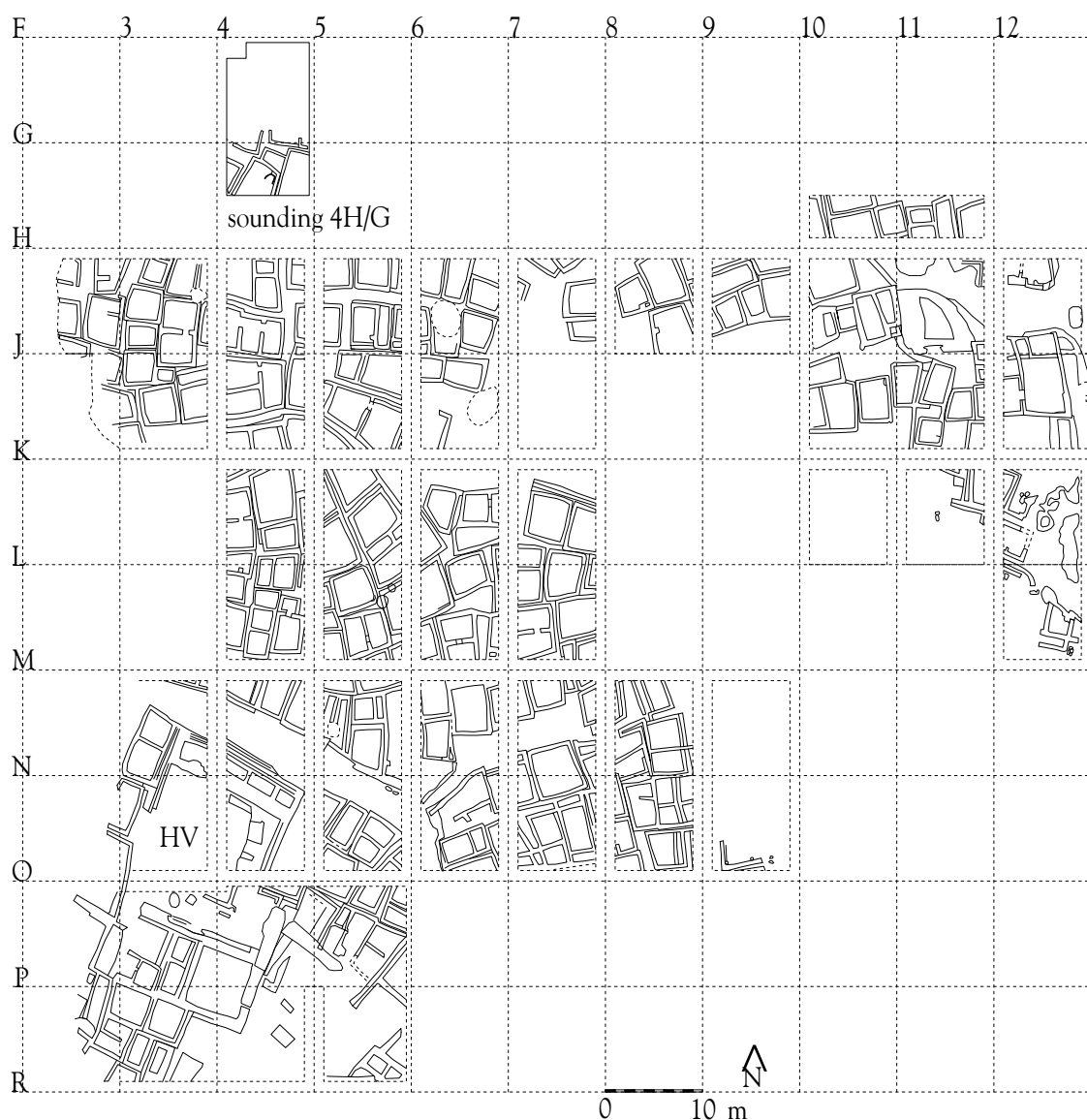


Figure 1. Plan of layers 2A and 2B remains at Aşıklı Höyük (redrawn from Esin and Harmankaya 1999: 90, fig. 3).

Each building was surrounded by a separate set of walls, despite the fact that the structures were often constructed directly adjacent to one another. Some of the rooms contain hearths or bins, but these are not ubiquitous. In addition some of the spaces had sub-floor burials. Although internal doors facilitating traffic between the rooms of buildings were found, external doors are completely absent. Given

this circumstance it seems that buildings were accessed from the roofs.

Apart from the large horizontal exposures at the summit of the mound that document a sizeable part of the final occupation levels at the site, a large deep sounding in trench 4H/G was also undertaken in the 15-m deep archaeological deposits, providing us with a valuable perspective on the diachronic

aspects of building traditions at Aşıklı Höyük. The following strata were distinguished in sounding 4H/G. The oldest remains excavated have been assigned to layer 3, itself subdivided into phases 3C-3A ('A' being more recent). Above layer 3 a flood horizon was encountered consisting of 70 cm of deposits, located 7 m below the summit of the mound. Above this flood horizon were found the layer 2 remains, which seem to be very similar to those of layer 3. Layer 2 was subdivided into 10 sub-phases (2J-2A). Layer 1, which consists of the disturbed remains located in or just below the topsoil of the mound, was not encountered in trench 4H/G.

The stratigraphy and architectural remains of sounding 4H/G have been published summarily (Esin and Harmankaya 1999). On the basis of data provided in that report, and on observations that can be made in the section cut by the river along the western flank of the mound (personal observation, August 2003), it is clear that the buildings of Aşıklı Höyük were generally constructed on exactly the same spot and alignment as earlier buildings, using older walls as a foundation. This leads to the sort of building continuity typical for Central Anatolian Neolithic sites in which buildings maintain their characteristics throughout the centuries (see Figure 2).

Building Continuity at Aşıklı Höyük

Figure 2 presents the building continuity in the deep sounding 4H/G from layers 2I up to 2B. Most of the buildings can be traced through a long series of reconstruction phases, up to eight of which have been documented, amounting to some 5 m of archaeological deposits (Esin and Harmankaya 1999: 93, fig. 9), before the sequence is cut short by erosion. Assuming a use-life of the individual structures of somewhere between 30 and 60 years (for an educated guess, see the Çatalhöyük section), this represents a timespan of some 240 to 480

years. If correct, the buildings at Aşıklı Höyük outlived the maximum span of oral histories, which has been estimated (see above) to be 100–200 years at most.

In order to establish that the histories of these buildings were meaningful, however, it is essential to demonstrate that building continuity cannot be reduced to a foundation technique. Certain elements in the Aşıklı Höyük evidence suggest that the impressive degree of continuity of buildings through time seems to be influenced by factors beyond purely practical considerations. In particular I want to draw attention to a type of spatial continuity that cannot be related to foundation practices—the location of hearths within rooms.

The hearths at Aşıklı Höyük are highly distinct features lined with flat pebble stones that have been published in some detail (Özbaşaran 1998). They are rectangular features, ranging in size from 2.70 × 1.10 m to 0.80 × 0.60 m, and are usually placed in one of the corners of the rooms. In many cases neighbouring buildings use different corners for their hearths. Thus, there is no standardized location for hearths at Aşıklı Höyük. The fact that neighbouring buildings use different corners for their hearths implies that hearth locations are not directly related to factors such as the prevailing wind direction, or micro-cosmological spatial codes (Özbaşaran 1998: 556).

From a diachronic perspective, however, hearths often remain consistently located in the same corner of a building (see Figure 3). In sounding 4H/G the following hearth sequences have been documented. In the south-west of the trench a series of hearths can be traced in phases 2H-MS–2G-MS–2F-ME–2C-C.¹ In the centre of the trench a similar sequence of hearths exists. Originally the hearths of this building were located in the south-east of rooms 2I-RI–2H-P–2G-P. The hearth was then replaced to the north-west of the same building and has been documented in rooms 2G-P–2F-P–2E-P–2D-P (Figure 3).

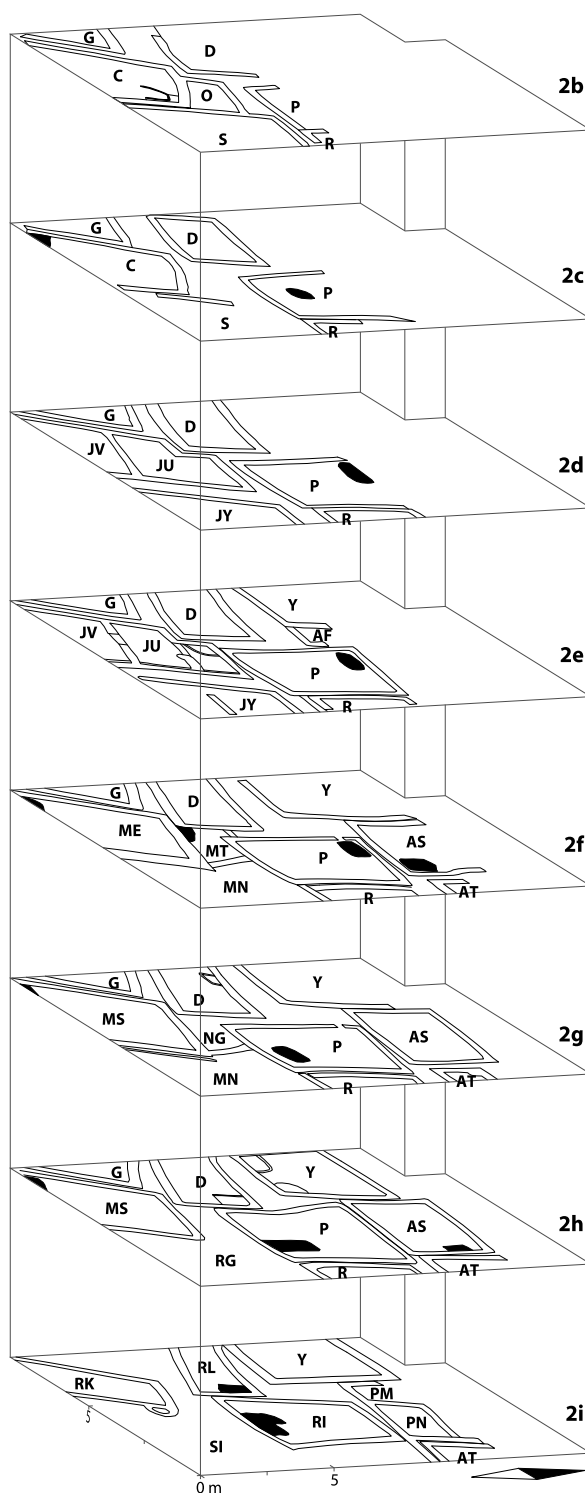


Figure 2. Buildings from deep sounding 4H/G at Aşıklı Höyük in diachronic perspective from phases 2I-2B. Hearths marked in black. Figure prepared by Medy Oberendorff.

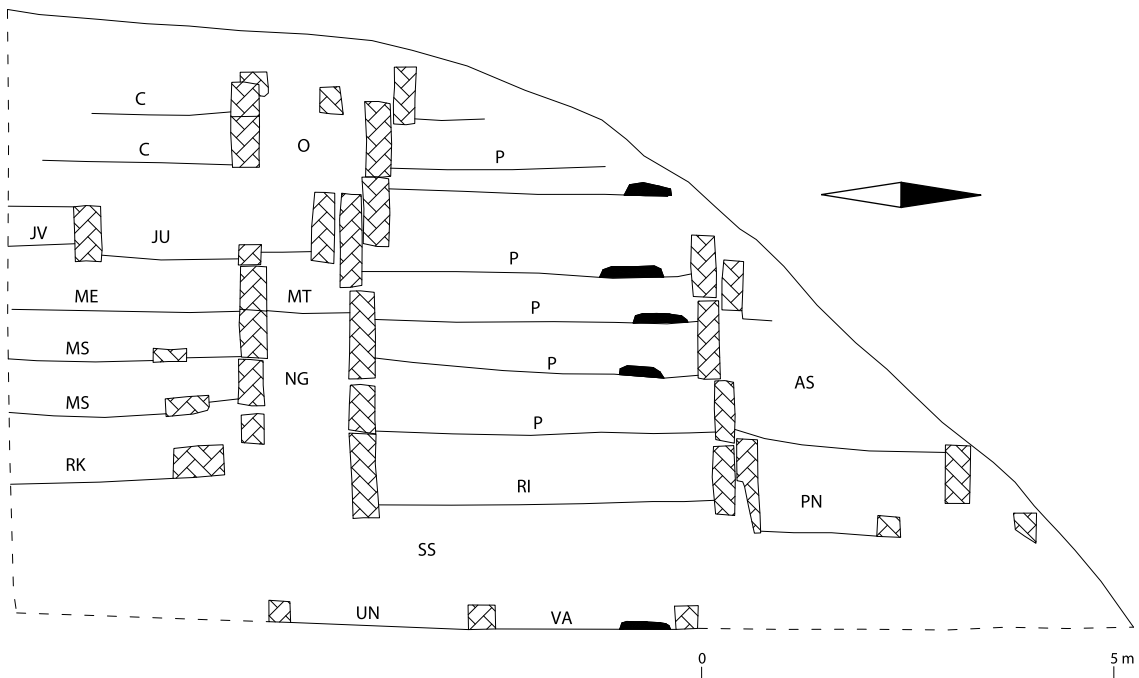


Figure 3. Schematic west section of the north-south axis of sounding 4H/G at Aşıklı Höyük (redrawn from Esin and Harmankaya 1999: 93, fig. 9). Hearths marked in black. Figure prepared by Medy Oberendorff.

The individual hearths in these sequences are often separated by deposits of up to 40 cm of soil. There seems to be no functional reason why these hearths should consistently be in the same corner of successive buildings. Given the fact that no practical explanation would seem to exist for the ‘conservative’ locations of hearths at Aşıklı Höyük, I argue that other elements may have determined their position. In particular, it seems that buildings were continuous entities with some form of spatial identity rooted in their trajectories of development, and that the arrangement of space could not be changed at will.

Thus the following matters seem clear with regard to the Aşıklı Höyük building practices. First, the building continuity that we see cannot be reduced to functional parameters, as the example of the hearths demonstrates that other factors must be in play as well. Second, the Aşıklı Höyük buildings had spatial identities that were respected and reproduced over

long periods of time, which suggests that the people at the site were actively engaged in reproducing the past in the present. This does not necessarily imply that they were aware of the long time depths involved. Third, no typical sequence of development could be outlined for the Aşıklı Höyük buildings. In fact, they remained remarkably similar over the centuries.

This situation stands in marked contrast with that at the later site of Çatalhöyük, where buildings can be demonstrated to change significantly over time. In the next section it will be shown that some buildings gradually became transformed into lineage houses at that site.

Çatalhöyük

The site of Çatalhöyük lies near the modern town of Çumra on the Konya Plain, situated along the former course of the Çarsamba river. The site was first excavated between 1961 and

1965 by James Mellaart. From 1993 onwards archaeologists from a variety of countries, under the directorship of Ian Hodder, have returned to this 13-ha site. To date 13 building horizons have been excavated, labelled level XII to I ('I' being most recent), with level VI often subdivided into VIB (older) and VIA. This sequence is now preceded by an off-site sequence 'pre-level XII.E-A' ('A' being most recent). The sequence as a whole can be dated to approximately 7300–6200 Cal BC.

Çatalhöyük has often been regarded as an isolated and unique site by the global archaeological community, mainly because a corpus of spectacular imagery was found at the site and was expediently published, whereas many of the other Central Anatolian Neolithic sites excavated were less well published or more recently excavated (Gates 2003: 24; Asouti 2006). Many of the features found at Çatalhöyük, however, can best be understood in the context of the Central Anatolian Neolithic (Özbaşaran 2000: 135; Özdoğan 2002).

The buildings that have been found at Çatalhöyük are in many ways similar to those of Aşıklı Höyük. The structures were built of loam and clustered in streetless neighbourhoods, which were separated from each other by streets and courtyards. Each neighbourhood cluster consisted of about 30 buildings that were accessed from the roof level. Except for possible cases in the late levels IV-I, external doors seem to be completely absent, and many ladder imprints have been found in the wall plaster of the buildings.

The typical living room at Çatalhöyük, as documented by Mellaart (1967: 61, fig. 11), contained the following elements. In the southern part of the building, one often finds fire installations, consisting of square free-standing hearths and oval domed ovens built adjacent to the walls. In the same area the ladder entrance is usually located, and it seems plausible that the ladder access also acted as a chimney. This southern area often contains

relatively large amounts of micro-debris, consisting of charcoal, obsidian chips and small bone fragments (Hodder and Cessford 2004: 26–28). It can be opposed to the platforms in the north-east of the living rooms, which were much cleaner and seem to have been plastered more often. It is also in this cleaner area that the intramural sub-floor burials are most often found, as well as the wall paintings and mouldings that have made the site so famous.

These 'ritual features', such as moulded animal heads with inset horns and lively wall paintings, seemingly conflict with the domestic nature of the buildings in which they were found. Following the discovery of the buildings containing these features, a debate ensued about whether they should be interpreted as shrines or as houses. Mellaart (1967: 77–78) argued that many of the buildings he excavated should be interpreted as shrines, and that they could be recognized by the presence of a number of features such as 'wall paintings of an elaborate nature, plaster reliefs, horns of cattle set into benches, rows of horn-pillars, the presence of cult statuettes, and human skulls set on the floors'. The 'shrines' distinguished by Mellaart on that basis constitute up to half of the buildings in some levels at Çatalhöyük (Mellaart 1967: 70). Faced with the logical dilemma that such a high proportion of shrines seems unlikely, he formulated the hypothesis that he had excavated the site's 'priestly quarter'.

The distinction between shrines and houses drawn by Mellaart was found wanting by a number of scholars. Heinrich and Seidl (1969: 116) argued that Mellaart failed to apply rigorously his own criteria, and that in many cases the distinction between houses and shrines was problematic. The problematic nature of the distinction was also stressed by Hamilton (1996: 226), and in a systematic survey of building complexity at Çatalhöyük by Ritchey (1996). On the basis of these critiques it was argued that the buildings from Çatalhöyük should be interpreted primarily as

houses with a ritual dimension, and that the buildings were all more or less equivalent in this respect (Hodder 1996a: 6). Such a model fits well with the notion of the *domus* proposed by Hodder (1987; 1990), in which the Çatalhöyük buildings were seen as embodying a set of symbolic oppositions central to the Neolithic, such as wild versus domestic, and in which each building functioned independently and was homologous to other buildings.

Nonetheless the fact that the shrine/house distinction is difficult to draw does not in itself discredit the possibility that some form of qualitative differentiation may have existed between Çatalhöyük buildings. In other recent studies I have argued that the distribution of mouldings and burials over the settlement is markedly 'asymmetric', with over 80 % of these features clustered in about 20 % of the buildings (Düring 2001: 11; 2003). It seems that some buildings were more appropriate for burials and constructing mouldings than others, even if sharp distinctions between building categories cannot be drawn.

The challenge posed by the Çatalhöyük evidence is to find an explanation that accommodates both the existence of these differences and the shrine-house continuum that is also apparent in the data. The major point in discussing the ritual differentiation of buildings at Çatalhöyük is that it makes no sense to classify them as either house or shrine. Instead it is argued that by taking a diachronic perspective and studying building biographies, the meaning attached to buildings can be understood better.

Building Continuity at Çatalhöyük

The following account of the diachronic development of a number of Çatalhöyük buildings is primarily based on data published by Mellaart (1962; 1963; 1964; 1966; 1967), augmented by data derived from the Çatalhöyük Research Project (Hodder 1996b; 2000; archive reports

at www.catalhoyuk.com). Mellaart excavated the south-western part of the mound. Halfway down the slope, a large trench was opened, called Area E, in which remains assigned to layers V, VIA, VIB, VII and VIII were excavated on a quite extensive scale. Smaller exposures were obtained of layers IX–XII in two deep soundings.

Some building levels were better preserved than others. Whereas many buildings from levels VIB and VIA were burnt, and contained rich finds, the buildings from level V, located just below the mound surface in this area, were poorly preserved.

The main excavation area of the Çatalhöyük Research Project is also located in 'Area E', and is now called the 'South Area' (previously 'Mellaart Area'). Many of the buildings in the South Area were first excavated by Mellaart and were subsequently re-investigated by the Çatalhöyük Research Project, along with a number of other buildings not previously investigated. A deep sounding was sunk below level XII to investigate the earlier occupation of the mound (Cessford 2001). In order to avoid confusion, building numbers from the new excavations are here preceded by the prefix 'ÇRP'.

The diachronic development of the buildings of Çatalhöyük can best be studied in this South Area where a number buildings can be traced from level V down to level VIII (see Figure 4), and in some instances to earlier levels as well (see Table 1). We are dealing with a substantial depth here, both figuratively, in terms of time, and literally, in terms of deposits. The use-life of buildings would have varied considerably. Mellaart (1967: 50–51) mentions a maximum of 120 years, and a normal life span between 30 and 60 years, on the basis of the number of plaster layers. Matthews (2006) reconstructs an average of 70–100 years in levels XII–VIII, and 50–70 years for the later levels. Similar ranges are mentioned for buildings ÇRP-1

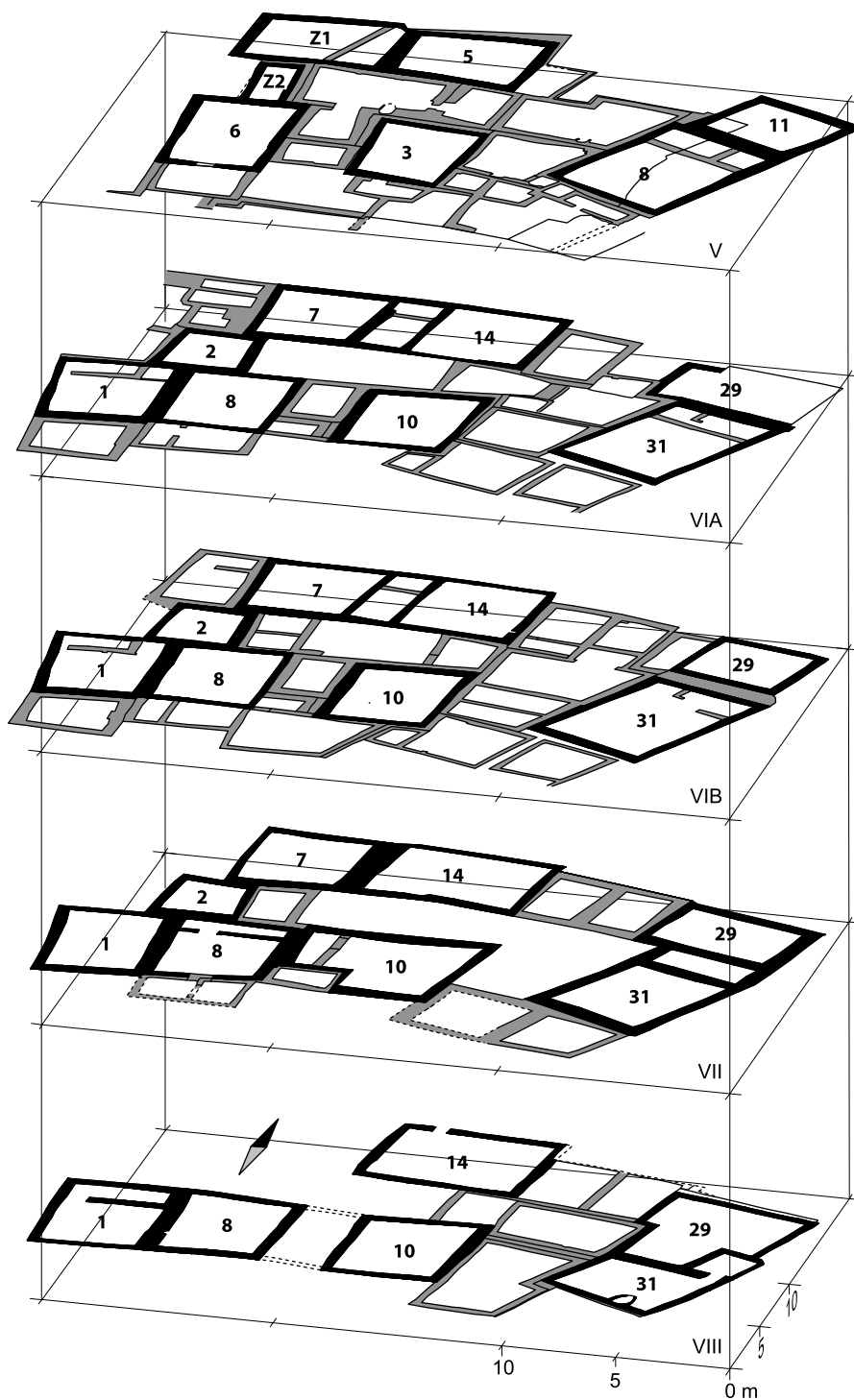


Figure 4. South Area buildings from Çatalhöyük in diachronic perspective from level VIII up to level V. Continuous buildings marked in black. Figure prepared by Medy Oberendorf.

Level	Building 1	B 2	Building 7	Building 8	Building 10	B 14	B 29	B 31East
V	x	Z2	Z1	6	3	5	11	8
	x	x					x	
VIA	x	x					29-court	
VIB/VIA	1 32 P 2	2 5	7 29 4	8 29 P 24	10 32 P 8	14 3 8	x	31 2
VIB							29 12 P	
VII	8*/1 2 P 5	2/s107*	7/s113* P	20*/8 6 P 1	24*/10 5 1	14 1 P	29 3 2	31 49 10
VIII	21*/1 2 P		4*	7*/8 P	6*/10 11 1	14 P	29 2	31 3 P
IX	22*/1 1 P 2			16*/8 P 2?	17* 4 2?			
X	23*/1 2 P? 8?			18*/8 1 P				
		building	burials	painting	mouldings	* ÇRP		
		continuity	x discontinuity					

Table 1. Overview of the development of continuous Çatalhöyük buildings in the South Area and the amount of burials, mouldings and paintings they contain (combining data from the Mellaart and Çatalhöyük Research Project excavations).

and ÇRP-5, excavated in the North Area in recent years (Hamilton 1998: 8-a; Cessford 2006). As an estimate, an average of 60 years for the use-life of the buildings of Çatalhöyük seems consistent with the results of the new excavations at the site. Assuming a use-life of 60 years per building, the sequence from level VIII to level V in the South Area represents approximately 240 to 300 years, depending on whether level VI is subdivided or not. As was the case at Aşıklı Höyük, the continuity of buildings seems to transgress the boundaries of oral history. It should be stressed that the mere fact of this longevity is not an argument that these buildings embodied histories, rather that this is a possibility. The vertical displacement of floors that occurred over the course of the five building levels involved ranges up to 6.40 m.²

Some buildings located in the 'South Area', such as VIII-25 and VIII-27, were abandoned at a relatively early stage in the sequence, to be replaced by midden areas in later periods (Figure 4, indicated in grey at centre). Other buildings were continually occupied from lev-

els VIII or VII up to level V, which was for the most part located directly below the mound surface in this area.³ The discussion here will focus on the buildings that we can trace over several building phases (marked in black on Figure 4), because only these buildings could potentially have become lineage buildings.

A first feature that can be noted about these buildings is a certain continuity in figurative motifs (Matthews 2006). Mellaart (1966: 166) noted continuity in motifs for buildings VIB-50–VIA-50 ('kilim' paintings), and VII-44–VI-44 (moulded leopards). Continuity in motifs can also be noted for VIII-14–VII-14 (geometric patterns of rectangles (Mellaart 1964: plate V-b; Mellaart 1966: plate XLII-b). Another interesting case where a motif can be traced over a longer period of time is Building 8, which had a large bull on its northern wall in phases IX, VII, VIB and VIA, as well as vulture paintings in both levels VIII and VII (Mellaart 1964: 70; 1967: 103; Hodder and Cessford 2004: 35). Finally, Building 1 had intricate geometric paintings in levels IX to VIA (Matthews 2006). Tentatively this sort

of continuity in moulded and painted features can be interpreted as rooted in the accumulated identity of a building.

This idea gains additional support if we accept a recently proposed link between lineages and buildings at the site. It has been argued that the houses at Çatalhöyük acted as sites in which social memories were constructed, and that skulls of particular individuals buried below house floors were removed and possibly incorporated into the successor building (Hodder and Cessford 2004: 35; Hodder 2006).

Second, the buildings in the South Area were investigated with regard to the amount of burials, mouldings and paintings they contained. The interesting pattern observable at Çatalhöyük for these buildings is that we can monitor an increase in their ritual elaborateness over time (Table 1).

Put simply, we can follow buildings that started out as more or less average domestic units, and see how they gradually become invested with symbolism. This can be done by tabulating the occurrence and frequency of mouldings, wall paintings and burials, features that were probably connected to ritual activities. In this manner we can note a clear increase in ritual features both within specific categories of features and with regard to the range of features present. For instance, most buildings have either no or only a few burials in level VIII, but these numbers rise dramatically in later levels for most buildings (six out of eight). Second, we can see that the diversity of ritual features present in buildings becomes greater over time. In level VIII many buildings contained only a single type of ritual feature, but by levels VII and VI most of them contained the full set of features.

As an example of how a Çatalhöyük building developed through time we can follow Building 8 through levels X to V. Building 8 was first constructed in level X upon an area earlier used as a midden. In Building X-8 a

geometric wall painting was found by Mellaart. The building was re-excavated by the Çatalhöyük Research Project as Building 18. In these excavations a neonate burial was found, a series of six ovens, and evidence for bead production and obsidian knapping. In the excavation report it is described as 'relatively plain' and 'lacking symbolic and architectural elaboration' (Farid 2006).

In the successor Building IX-8/ÇRP-16 another geometric painting was found, as well as a black animal painted in profile on the north wall and often interpreted as a bull (Mellaart 1964: plate XIV-b). No burials related to this building were found either by Mellaart or in the new excavations. Burials were similarly lacking in the subsequent level VIII building, in which a geometric painting was found beneath a superimposed scene of two juxtaposed large birds, often interpreted as vultures, flanking two possible human figures depicted on a much smaller scale (Mellaart 1964: plate XIV-a).

It is in levels VII and VIB/A that Building 8 became a truly elaborate building. The level VII building contained a moderate amount of six interred individuals, and a scar that suggests a horned pillar was placed in this building. On the walls of the building a variety of painted and moulded features were found. The earliest feature was a very large painting in the 'vulture' category, showing a number of large birds seemingly attacking small headless humanoid figures. Subsequently a geometric painting was painted on the walls, which consists of rows of abstracted hands around net-like motifs. At a later point in time a large bovid figure in profile was cut through the plaster layers of the north wall, partially destroying the earlier vulture painting in the process. This was then painted black.

Many of the motifs of the level VII building reoccur in the subsequent level VIB/A building, which is undoubtedly one of the most elaborate buildings excavated at Çatal-

höyük. In this building, including its southern anteroom, no less than 29 individuals were interred. In the room itself there seem to have been a number of horned pillars. On the west wall a moulded headless figure with legs spread sideways, a motif that is often referred to as 'goddess figure', was found along with a moulded animal head to the south. On the north wall a red painted cut-out bovid in profile was found that closely resembles the one found in level VII. On the east wall three large and one small moulded animal heads had been applied. These heads bore traces of multiple painting episodes during which geometric patterns were applied. Below the large animal heads a series of superimposed geometric paintings of abstracted rows of hands, in combination with geometric net-like motives, were found. Over these paintings were applied a series of plaster protrusions containing animal skeletal elements, often referred to as 'breasts'.

From the above description it will have become clear that Building 8 developed from an inconspicuous domestic structure described as 'lacking symbolic and architectural elaboration' to one that was extremely elaborate in a gradual manner. During this development we see numerous instances in which motifs used in earlier phases of the building were redeployed in later phases. Thus Building 8 may have followed an 'ideal' career of a building, in that it became an elaborate lineage building, but this was done within the framework of the specific identity of that structure, in which people were referring back to motifs used in earlier phases of the same structure.

Given this development it is all the more remarkable that after level VIB/A the building was no longer elaborated in such ways (see table 1). The level VIB/A building was carefully sealed; all the walls were given a final plaster coating, a group of objects was placed on the floor, and the building was filled with clean material (Mellaart 1963: 61). On this foundation was built a non-elaborate level V

structure (V-6) that lacked paintings, mouldings and burials. I will discuss a possible explanation for this break in place-making activities below.

The idea that buildings became more elaborate over time is also reinforced by another argument. In an earlier analysis of the setting of the ritually elaborate buildings within the neighbourhood blocks of Çatalhöyük, I have demonstrated that these buildings were more difficult to access from outside the neighbourhood block than the less elaborate buildings, because they were more often located in the centre of such neighbourhoods (Düring 2001: table 3).⁴ The mechanism that was responsible for this pattern was simply that these buildings were amongst the older buildings of the neighbourhoods, and younger buildings were subsequently constructed adjacent to them.

Comparing the non-continuous buildings (in grey on Figure 4) with the continuous buildings, it is clear that the former generally contained fewer burials and mouldings than the latter. Only 19% of the non-continuous buildings contained burials as opposed to 58% of the continuous buildings. Likewise 19% of the non-continuous buildings contained mouldings as opposed to 42 % for the continuous.⁵ Nonetheless the fact that non-continuous buildings contain such features at all is an indication that the status of houses was contested and influenced by contingent factors, and it seems that burials and moulding were not always automatically located in buildings with proper pedigrees, perhaps because the status bestowed on buildings by the community was negotiated as part of social strategies of prehistoric people, rather than simply reflecting a fixed constellation.

A final interesting element that is apparent is the complete absence of ritual features in the level V buildings listed in Table 1. This can be interpreted as a reconfiguration of traditions in the place-making activities at Çatalhöyük, in which building biographies

were no longer considered relevant for ritual activities (Düring 2001). The absence of ritual elaboration in the level V successors of the buildings under consideration cannot simply be explained by referring to the eroded conditions of the level V architecture, because the erosion would have left the sub-floor burials unaffected. Burials are, however, completely absent from all the continuous buildings under consideration in level V (see Table 1).

To summarize, the following issues have been established in relation to the building practices at Çatalhöyük. First, the building continuity at the site cannot be reduced to functional parameters. The fact that buildings retain figurative motifs through multiple phases of their existence suggests that people attached meaning to the history of these buildings. Second, by the same token it is plausible that buildings had 'identities' that were respected and reproduced over long periods of time. Third, we can clearly demonstrate that there is a relation between building status and pedigree, in which a domestic building may become a lineage building over time, as was exemplified in the discussion of Building 8. In contrast to Aşıklı Höyük, the house model referred to in the buildings and biographies section does seem to fit the case at Çatalhöyük.

Discussion

On the basis of the two case studies presented above it seems clear that building continuity was a significant practice in the Central Anatolian Neolithic. At both Aşıklı Höyük and Çatalhöyük that continuity cannot be reduced to functional elements alone. In particular, the hearth locations at Aşıklı Höyük and the continuity in figurative motifs at Çatalhöyük suggest that buildings had some form of identity that was maintained over time.

It has been posited that there was some kind of link between the identity of people at these sites and the building in which they

lived, yet the nature of that link has so far not been considered. The relation between buildings and people was probably not established at the household level. If that were the case we would expect dynamic cycles of waxing and waning of each individual building along with the prosperity and decline of the household group inhabiting it. Instead buildings remain almost the same over the course of several centuries. Given these characteristics, the buildings of the Central Anatolian Neolithic may have been used in other ways.

An ethnographic example that might explain this phenomenon is provided by Lane (1994) in a study of the Dogon, who live in Mali. Lane describes a system in which a lineage owns several houses that appear to be similar for all practical purposes, but are used in various ways. Some of the buildings are inhabited by several young men, others by families or widowed women with their children. If the status of a Dogon changes, he or she will generally move to another building owned by the lineage. In such a system there is no need to modify or change individual buildings. Instead the specific uses of buildings may have been tied up with their form and inventories and may have reinforced the identity of their inhabitants.

There is much in the evidence from Aşıklı Höyük and Çatalhöyük to suggest that lineages rather than households may have been the most important units of society. The clearest argument is constituted by the clustered neighbourhoods, which suggest that the household was not an independent self-sufficient unit, but rather was part of a larger social association.

A second point that seems to suggest that lineages were of great importance is the fact that at Çatalhöyük mouldings and burials are predominantly clustered in a few buildings, perhaps indicating that such 'ritually elaborate' buildings were used by a community beyond the household inhabiting them. Some of the

buildings at Çatalhöyük simply contain too many burials to be accounted for by the death rate of their inhabitants (Düring 2001; 2003).

These buildings are better understood as lineage houses that held a special significance for a larger group of households. I have argued that this status could be acquired only with the passage of time, but was in part dependent on social strategies and contingencies. The biographies of many of the continuous buildings at Çatalhöyük, that is, how their specific 'identities' interplay with the ideal 'career' of a building, is remarkably similar to some of the cases discussed by anthropologists in relation to the house concept. The three criteria for 'houses'—the ideal of continuity, the passing down of some form of valued property, and the strategic exploitation of the language of kinship or affinity—could well apply to the more elaborate buildings at Çatalhöyük: the valued property consisting of the house itself and its associated figurative motifs, and the exploitation of kinship and affinity being expressed in the burial assemblages in these buildings. Moreover, it seems clear that hierarchical differences existed between different buildings at Çatalhöyük, and that status, prestige and power were distributed unevenly, being concentrated mainly in the continuous buildings. Finally, it is clear that the diachronic element was of major importance in the articulation of the lineage houses at Çatalhöyük, and that 'simple' domestic structures could become increasingly elaborate over time.

Despite the fact that all the level VIII buildings were more or less equivalent in terms of their overall elaborateness, only some of them became continuous houses whose elaboration increased over time. As was argued in the introductory section, the relation between buildings and people was ambiguous; the status of buildings was constituted through social strategies in everyday practice, and was not in any way predetermined. The most plausible reason why some buildings eventually did become more

ritually elaborate than others is that the group of people associated with these buildings were more successful in promoting the status of that building. Thus the interplay between agency and structure (Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1984) is of key importance for understanding the building practices at Çatalhöyük.

In my perspective, the house concept has the potential to explain how such processes may have worked and why we find a continuum from buildings that are poor in ritual features, on the one hand, to buildings that have great quantities of burials, mouldings and elaborate paintings, on the other. I have discussed the case of Building 8, as it developed from level X to V, in order to show how buildings at Çatalhöyük could become transformed into lineage houses over time. Second, the house concept clarifies why all the buildings are essentially domestic structures. Third, it also provides an explanation for why some buildings were perceived as more appropriate for some categories of ritual behaviour than others.

Whereas lineage houses can be seen to develop out of domestic structures at Çatalhöyük, similar evidence for Aşıklı Höyük is lacking. It is remarkable that not a single wall painting or moulding has been found during the extensive excavations at that site. Intramural burials have been found, but they are much rarer than at Çatalhöyük. In total only 70 burials were found in the 400 rooms excavated (Esin and Harmankaya 1999: 126), and the largest cluster in a single space seems to have consisted of only four burials. Given these circumstances it seems clear that domestic symbolism was less important at Aşıklı Höyük than at Çatalhöyük.

One element that may be of importance in relation to this point is the fact that at Aşıklı Höyük a very large and monumental complex has been found, something completely lacking at Çatalhöyük. Tentatively it may be posited that complex HV/T at Aşıklı Höyük (Figure 1) may have functioned in ways similar to the rit-

ually elaborate buildings at Çatalhöyük, albeit on a larger scale. Thus complex HV/T may have been a place where a larger community gathered to perform activities of importance to its members, perhaps bringing together people from different neighbourhoods, much like the ritually elaborate buildings at Çatalhöyük were important loci for burial rites to a community beyond the household level.

Whatever the role of complex HV/T in the constitution of society at Aşıklı Höyük, it is clear that houses did not become ritually elaborate at this site in the way they did at Çatalhöyük. At that site we can see how buildings develop from one state to the next. By contrast, at Aşıklı Höyük, the focus seems to be on preserving the spatial organization of the built environment, even when there are no functionally determining reasons to do so. The main concern seems to have been to keep buildings as they were. It could thus be argued that these buildings lack a biography, in that they did not change over time. In this manner history, as a trajectory of changes in sequence, was effectively denied. Given that a relation between building pedigree and building status cannot be demonstrated, we cannot prove that the people at Aşıklı Höyük actually were aware of, or cared about, the history of the structures they occupied. It is equally possible that each building was a faithful reproduction of its direct predecessor. Given that the individual buildings probably did not last longer than 30–60 years, however, it seems likely that at least some of the older people at the site would have been aware of longer sequences of buildings. If that argument is accepted, it may be that by connecting the past to the present the existing social order was legitimated at Aşıklı Höyük (Bradley 2002: 11–12; Van Dyke 2003: 188). It seems plausible that both building continuity and building identity held some kind of meaning at Aşıklı Höyük, and that there was a deliberate effort towards reproducing buildings as they had been before.

Conclusion

The buildings of the Central Anatolian Neolithic are characterized by a marked continuity in which they remained in place over several centuries and were vertically displaced over distances as large as 6 m. Despite the impressive nature of this building continuity, it has often been seen as a self-evident characteristic to be understood as a foundation technique or a demonstration of the conservative nature of society. It is remarkable, however, that the degree of building continuity found in the Central Anatolian Neolithic is without parallels in other cultural horizons.

Both Heinrich and Seidl (1969) and Hodder (1998) have argued that building histories may have been of importance in the constitution of social groups, and that the history of buildings may have been tied up with that of their inhabitants. I have reached similar conclusions here, but have argued that it is essential to study specific building histories, rather than propose general explanations, in order to understand how these buildings might have been important in prehistoric society and for prehistoric people. In order to explore the meaning these buildings may have had, and how that might have changed over time three questions were posed: (1) can we demonstrate that the building continuity in this cultural horizon was more than simply a functionally determined element in the building repertoire? (2) do buildings have some sort of identity that is maintained over time? and (3) are there any typical trajectories of development for buildings?

These questions were addressed using a biographical approach that treats buildings as if they were persons, as first proposed by Kopytoff (1986). This perspective meshes remarkably well with the concept of houses as defined by Lévi-Strauss (1983), one that has been taken up in much recent anthropological and archaeological work. From these studies it has become clear that houses may embody

group histories, and often become increasingly charged with meaning over time. Some buildings will eventually end up as a lineage house—buildings that are central to the identity of a lineage, many of whose members will live elsewhere.

In order to investigate the questions posed above from the perspective of the cultural biography and house concepts, diachronic sequences were presented from the sites of Aşıklı Höyük and Çatalhöyük. In sounding 4H/G at Aşıklı Höyük it was demonstrated that building continuity cannot be reduced to a foundation technique because hearths remain in the same location over time, and these hearth positions are not related to any functional necessity or cosmological scheme. In the South Area at Çatalhöyük continuity in figurative motifs attached to a building can be suggested. In both cases it seems that functional explanations do not suffice to explain the remarkable degree of building continuity found in these sites, and that buildings had a form of identity, reflected in dimensions, shape and locality, that was reproduced and respected over long periods of time.

The third issue, whether buildings became more elaborate over time, differs for the two sites under consideration. Whereas little development could be noticed in the buildings of Aşıklı Höyük, the structures at Çatalhöyük show a remarkable patterning over time. In the case of Aşıklı Höyük, I suggest that buildings were deliberately kept identical over long periods of time as part of social strategies in which identities were rooted in a timeless interface of past and present. By contrast, at Çatalhöyük we can see how buildings become more elaborate in ritual features over the centuries, as reflected in the presence of paintings, burials and mouldings. Thus it seems that at Çatalhöyük ordinary domestic structures could gradually acquire ritual significance and become central to a larger group of households.

This development was not mechanical but open to negotiation and contestation, and building status was probably affected by both social strategies and contingencies. Such a perspective, in which buildings could become lineage houses in the passage of time, allows us to move away from the house/shrine dichotomy that has dominated the debate on the ritually elaborate buildings of Çatalhöyük, while accommodating the real differences in ritual elaborateness between buildings that existed at the site.

At both Aşıklı Höyük and Çatalhöyük it seems unlikely that buildings were directly linked to the fortunes of independent households. The buildings of the Central Anatolian Neolithic are simply too static to fit such a model. It seems more plausible that buildings were collectively owned by lineage groups and were distributed amongst members of the lineage, amongst whom the prime mode of competition may have been related to obtaining and exploiting a building of proper pedigree. Such a model seems in accord with other kinds of data from the Central Anatolian Neolithic, in particular the clustered association of buildings into neighbourhoods without public space, and the supra-household structures as represented by the ritually elaborate buildings at Çatalhöyük and complex HV/T at Aşıklı Höyük.

In sum, I hope to have demonstrated that the practice of building continuity in the Central Anatolian Neolithic was not only a foundation technique, but was also an important element in the constitution of neighbourhood communities. These communities were intimately bound up with the buildings that they inhabited and defined themselves in relation to them. The buildings they inhabited represented their histories, and for that reason building continuity was fundamental to the people of the Central Anatolian Neolithic.

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Notes

1. These designations list the stratigraphical phase followed by the space designation used by the excavator.
2. Elevation differences from floors of level VIII to their level V successors; building VIII-8-V-6: 4.66 m; building VIII-10-V-3: 6.42 m; building VIII-29-V-8: 5.31 m; building VIII-14-V-5: 5.31 m.
3. Buildings V-8 and V-11 also have level IV successors: buildings IV-8 and IV-5 respectively.
4. These measurements were questioned by Cutting (2003) on the grounds that neighbour-

hood blocks cannot be clearly defined at Çatalhöyük. That objection is rather facile. Few archaeological settlements will fulfil the requirements of access analyses. The challenge is to find consistent and meaningful patterning in the data nonetheless.

5. Amongst the non-continuous buildings burials were found mainly in two buildings: VIB/A-32 (8 burials), and V-10 (16 burials), whereas mouldings were found in buildings VIII-27, VIB-15, VIB-13, VIA-25 and VIA-6.

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