

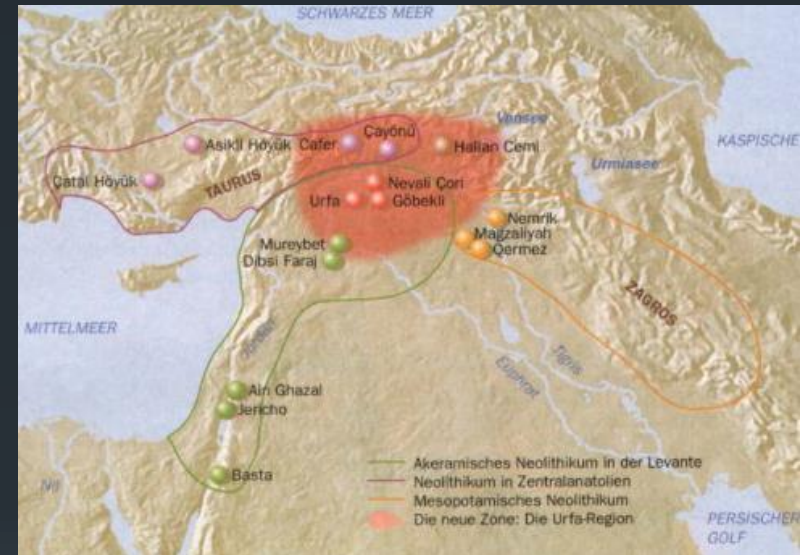
A photograph of a rock wall at the Neolithic site of Çatalhöyük. The wall is made of reddish-brown earth and shows two distinct red handprints. A small white and black object, possibly a scale or marker, is visible near the top center. A bone handle or tool is visible on the right side of the image.

HPAH7014

**Creating Sacred Spaces in Neolithic
Anatolia: Çatalhöyük**

Contextualising Çatalhöyük

- Central Anatolian plateau
- Neolithic farming community:
 - 7400-6000 BC
- Densely packed settlement over 34 acres
 - Estimated population of 3500-8000 people



Location of Çatalhöyük



Artist's reconstruction

Domestic Space

- Shared concept of space
- Access via the flat roof to south room:
 - Only source of light & ventilation
 - Roofs also act as communication & work area
- Plastered interiors
- Cooking hearths & ovens in southern room
- Main room: area for cooking & daily household practices
- Plastered raised platforms: for sitting, working, & sleeping.
- Subsidiary rooms used for storage



Reconstruction of house

Elaboration of Interiors

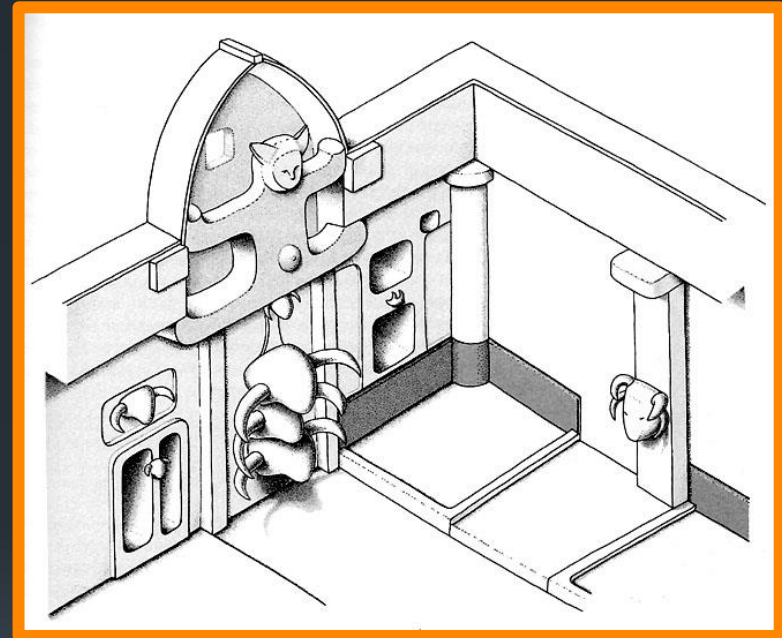
- Domestic space richly elaborated – evidence for symbolic action
 - Intramural burials
 - Wall paintings
 - Reliefs & sculptures
- No public buildings or ceremonial centres but some special houses
- Ritual situated in domestic domain



Reconstruction

Mellaart's Shrines

- Concentration of symbolic, ideological content in some buildings:
 - Wall paintings, plaster reliefs, bucrania, figurine hoards, red ochre burials
- Identified these as buildings of ritual significance
- Shrines:
 - Maintained by “priestly order”
 - Only resided in during ritual festivals



Reconstruction of “shrine” VII.8

Shrines or Domestic?

- Re-excavation since 1990s
- “Shrines” contain domestic debris
- Evidence for intense occupation & household activities:
 - cooking, storage, residential...
- Hodder situates these within the domestic arena
 - Highlighting their ideological significance in social reproduction



House at Çatalhöyük

History Houses

- Hodder notes some differentiation between houses:
 - Some more elaborate with more burials
- What is the relationship between religious symbolism & control of production in different houses?
- Can we identify **history houses** in which symbolic ritual/religious objects were passed down?



Çatalhöyük house

History Houses

- Houses used over generations:
 - Multiple phases of re-plastering etc.
- Elaborate Buildings:
 - More symbolism & more internal fixed furnishings, paintings & plastered decoration
- Specialised burial buildings:
 - More burials beneath the floors
 - Repositories for dead & for specialised action with their remains



Reconstructed house



Burials



Spheres of Entanglement

- “...groups of activities that involved sets of entanglements in social, material, productive, symbolic & other realms” (Hodder 2006: 59)
- Reinforced through specific material engagement:
 - Use of plaster for the walls & decoration
 - Burial of obsidian with ancestors



Plaster figures



Spheres of Entanglement

- Manipulation of special materials
- Creation of symbolic markers within houses
- The “house” became increasingly important as a bonding force for life together
 - Physically, ideologically & spiritually shaping spaces



Plaster relief

Materialising Çatalhöyük

- Vital matter: how material substances shaped & transformed societies
- Different substances incorporated into built environment in domestic sphere:
 - Bones, horns, lime plaster, mud, pigments
- Making spaces as part of social reproduction



Çatalhöyük house

Materiality & Spirituality

- “People crafted their own worlds by crafting the gods. They began to use things to effect change – economically & socially, but also *spiritually*. They became invested in materiality as part of trying to make sense of & control the world” (Hodder 2006: 205)
 - Entanglement with materials & making/shaping of domestic environment
- Created culturally binding forms of interaction which should be considered as spiritual/ritual in some form:
 - Control of knowledge about & the objects of the spirit world” (Hodder 2006: 250)

Materiality & Spirituality

- Hodder describes the houses as “spiritual”: connection to ancestors & animal gods/spirits
- Possibility “that elders within houses protected people with their knowledge of spiritual & material effects” (2006: 189)



Painted plaster

Phenomenological Approach

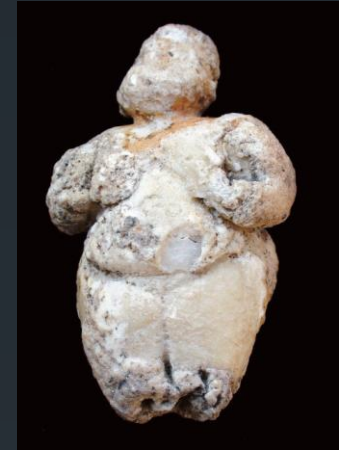
- Movement into & through domestic space socially & meaningfully constructed
 - Descent into dimly lit area
 - Bending over/crawling through small openings between rooms
- Reminiscent of movement into & through caves
- Lewis-Williams: evocative of cosmological beliefs in underworld accessed via caves
- Domestic built environment recreating cosmos



Reconstruction of house

“Creating Caves”

- Various speleothems found at Çatalhöyük sourced from limestone caves in Taurus mountains
- Placed in houses as part of shamanistic ritual or healing objects?
- Nakamura: notes concentrations of such materials in some houses & suggests these are symbolically significant / powerful



Figurine formed from stalagmite



Speleothem sample

Tiered Cosmos

- Lewis-Williams: ethnographies indicate that shamanistic religion believes in tiered cosmos with 3 levels:
 - **Subterranean realm** inhabited by spirits & spirit-animals. Equates with the tunnel experience & associated hallucinations
 - **Upper level** situated in or above the sky, populated by spirits & creatures. Equates with flight & associated hallucinations
 - **Intermediate level** where humans live
- Shamans: individuals believed to have the ability to travel between the 3 levels of the cosmos, & who can interact with the spirits & spirit-animals in the upper & lower tiers
- ***Axis mundi***: the shamans' (vertical) mediatory route between these 3 planes of existence

Building a Cosmos

- Lewis-Williams highlights architectural aspects of Çatalhöyük, which he relates to spiritual trans-cosmological travel
- Verticality relating to *axis mundi*:
 - Ladders
 - Wall columns (juniper columns in earlier buildings from Taurus mountains)
 - Associated with plastered bull's heads: animals related with notions of cosmos
 - Platforms: subdivided floors into discrete levels. Affecting movement through space



Plastered bucrania



Red platform

Building a Cosmos

- Horizontality: plastered panels separated into 3 horizontal levels
 - Lowest painted red or elaborate decoration
 - Between panels: plastered “goddess” figures
- Panels & platforms Lewis-Williams relates to 3 principal divisions of cosmos
- Levels of cosmos associated with female & bull imagery



Painted panels



Summary

- No distinction between domestic & ritual either physically or conceptually
- Creation of symbolic space within the domestic context:
 - How houses became imbued with symbolic meaning & the focus for ritualised actions
- Special houses of Çatalhöyük:
 - Domestic spaces elaborated materially & through repeated ritual actions
 - Play an important role in social reproduction, ritual action & communal ideology
- Lewis-Williams applies a phenomenological approach to understand movement through domestic space
- Built environment consciously reflecting notions of cosmos