6. The Articulation of Houses at Neolithic Çatalhöyük, Turkey

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The house concept links the diachronic development of the house as a social and material institution and the synchronic relations of dominance and competition between houses. In the articulation of a house not only is its pedigree constitutive but social strategies and contingencies are equally crucial. The status of contemporary houses can vary considerably and house relations may change dynamically over time. The status differentiation of houses at Neolithic Çatalhöyük, Turkey, is discussed both at the synchronic level, focusing on the subfloor burials, and at the diachronic level, in which we can trace transformations of "inconspicuous" domestic structures to houses in the classical sense of Lévi-Strauss. Ultimately, the house concept provides important new insights into how the structure of society at Çatalhöyük was grounded in the actions of individual people.

The central subject of the studies in this volume is the application of the concept of "houses" in the sense of Lévi-Strauss to a series of archaeological case studies in order to explore long-term changes in relations of status, hierarchy, and identity embodied in houses. The question that comes to mind with such a topic is whether the house concept can bring about a more profound understanding of archaeological data or whether it may prove to be yet another fashionable topic, with a use life of only a few years and acting as a blanket denominator for studies that have otherwise little in common.

At first sight, the house concept may seem suspect, in that it bears many of the hallmarks of short-lived fashionable topics. However, I think that houses in the sense of Lévi-Strauss will remain with us because the concept can provide a

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better understanding of archaeological data than is available at present. A major strength of the concept in my view is that it allows us to move from the study of individual households to the relations between households and how they are interrelated within larger entities. This is of some importance, because I believe that the focus on agents and households that has dominated much recent archaeology on the one hand and the more recent focus on communities on the other hand (Canuto and Yaeger 2000; Gerritsen 2004) has led to a neglect of intermediate forms of social association and the ways in which these are constituted (Davis 1992:345; Garfinkel 1998:225). Further, the house concept is of importance because it allows us to deal with the ritual aspects of the house. Finally, the house concept can illuminate the diachronic developments of buildings and how this is interrelated with their status, an aspect that is of special interest to archaeology.

It seems then that the house concept has a great potential for archaeology. However, I will argue that to fulfill that potential it is important to retain the specificity of the concept, while at the same time acknowledging the value of a wider range of related studies inspired by the concept. In the following section these two different approaches will be differentiated as strong and weak analogies. A strong analogy is one in which the two things being compared have their main characteristics in common. In contrast, a weak analogy is one in which the two things being compared are alike in some respects but in which the argument overlooks significant ways that they are different. Following that, I will apply the house concept to the site of Çatalhöyük, where subfloor burials will be used to discuss status differentiation of buildings.

Houses in Archaeology: Strong and Weak Analogies

The house concept was initially formulated by Lévi-Strauss in the late 1970s (Gillespie 2000a) and was initially picked up mainly by French anthropologists (Macdonald 1987) and in Waterson's (1990) seminal study on houses in Southeast Asia. Following a growth of interest in material culture studies in Anglo-American anthropology, the concept was adopted in three major volumes mainly devoted to anthropology (Carsten and Hugh-Jones, eds. 1995; Joyce and Gillespie 2000; Sparkes and Howell 2003), albeit with some input by archaeologists. This path of development has had important implications for the manner in which houses have been studied and how the house concept was transformed as a result of these studies. The questions and definitions used in recent studies of the house are often suited mainly for anthropological rather than archaeological analysis. Thus the initial definition of the house proposed by Lévi-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[,]

was summarized by Waterson (1995:49–50) in three key features of houses: first, the ideal of continuity; second, the passing down of some form of valued property, consisting of both material and immaterial goods; and, third, the strategic exploitation of the language of kinship or affinity. Although undoubtedly useful in the practice of anthropology, this definition often runs into serious difficulties when applied to archaeology.

The application of Waterson's definition to archaeology has led to a situation in which the house concept has been applied to a range of buildings that can be characterized as continuous structures. In most cases it has been assumed, rather than demonstrated, that this continuity was meaningful to the people associated with these buildings. In addition, in many cases the buildings interpreted as houses were seen as basically homologous and independent entities (Hodder 1998:89–91; Kuijt 2000:140–141; Tringham 2000:120–121). Given that many current archaeological studies are based on the premise that material culture can be studied as a text and that material culture is always meaningfully constituted (Tilley 1999), this has led to a situation in which virtually any building that has been used for more than one generation is designated a house. Indeed, in one case, the absence of continuity has been argued to be indicative of houses (Tringham 2000). I will label such applications of the house concept, in which it is used to draw attention to hitherto neglected aspects of building practices while applying it to buildings that lack many of the defining features of houses, "weak analogies" (cf. Headley 1987:214). It is not my intention to criticize this usage of the house concept, because many studies using the weak analogy approach have led to new and better understandings of the buildings they discuss. Among others, a number of the contributors to this volume have fruitfully taken this approach (Bolender, Borić, Gerritsen, Nevett).

However, following Gillespie (2000a:48–49, also this volume), it is my contention that to retain its value as a concept the specific nature of houses as a type of social institution and the elements that define houses should not be obscured. This is of importance not only for studies in which the concept is used in a restricted sense but also for those in which it is used as a weak analogy. Further, retaining the specificity of the house concept allows for archaeological studies that use the house concept as a "strong analogy"—as a type of social formation linked to houses that is not universally present but has to be demonstrated rather than assumed. For example, in a recent study I argued that although building continuity was of great importance to society at the Central Anatolian Neolithic sites of Aşıklı Höyük and Çatalhöyük, at only one of these sites did houses match the properties of the house in the sense the concept is generally used in anthropology (Düring 2005a).

I do not propose that only cases that fit the criteria laid down by Lévi-Strauss should be included in this latter type of analogy. Indeed, the house concept has been fruitfully transformed and improved upon by later scholars. For instance, the idea that houses occur only in a specific class of societies that represent a particular stage in social evolution, as advocated by Lévi-Strauss (1983:186), has been rejected in recent studies while the house as a key concept in anthropology and archaeology has been retained (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995:25–26). Thus

houses may occur in cultures that do not fit the criteria for house societies formulated by Lévi-Strauss, and for this reason I prefer to speak of "houses" rather than "house societies" to avoid the notion that we are dealing with a distinct class of cultures/societies.

In particular, I would argue that the relational elements attributed to houses by Lévi-Strauss have often been discarded too rashly. One aspect often ignored when houses are discussed is that houses tend to form hierarchical systems in which wealth, status, and prestige are concentrated in a few houses, to which I will refer as "lineage houses" in order to differentiate these high-status buildings from other houses. These lineage houses serve as a focal point to a group of people beyond their inhabitants, and minor houses may be attached to them. Many of the rituals relating to this larger group of people will be centered on the lineage houses and may leave a material residue that could inform us on these practices.

It is important to emphasize that interhouse relations and building statuses are not fixed constellations but may change as a result of social strategies and contingencies (Waterson 2000:179). It is essential to monitor the temporal dimension of these relations and study the changes in relationships between houses over time. In many ethnographies a relation can be demonstrated between the *pedigree* of a building, that is, the circumstances of the origins of a building, the (mythical) identity of its founders and the relation to preexisting houses, and its trajectory of development, on the one hand, and the *status* of a building as an expression of the role of that building in social events, on the other hand (Gillespie 2000b:9–11; Kahn, this volume; Kirch 2000; Waterson 1990:142, 2003). On the basis of these studies it is clear that a building can increase in status only over the course of time.

The processes whereby this transformation takes place should not be construed as a type of historical determinism: the trajectories of individual buildings are shaped to a large degree by contingent factors and the strategies pursued by people associated with houses. Nonetheless, the pedigree of a building is an essential component in a system in which building status and ancestry are intertwined, creating a situation in which a shared awareness of building histories may allow for a certain amount of manipulation of the past but in which the past cannot be rewritten at will. The house as Lévi-Strauss envisaged it is the arena in which the social competition of groups of people centered on houses and of the individual people of which these groups consist is played out. This process occurs within the constraints of the existing configuration of relations between houses. House members will try to attach new members to their house and will try to enhance the status of their lineage house, and one essential ingredient in this process is the pedigree of the house. This temporal dimension to the articulation of houses is of great importance for archaeological analysis because we are in a unique position to study this kind of diachronic transformation.

If a strong analogy to the house concept is to be pursued in archaeology I would suggest that the following elements are of central importance. First, it is not sufficient to show that buildings possess a certain degree of continuity. Such continuity could derive from purely functional factors and it needs to be demonstrated that some of the buildings become transformed over time from a "com-

mon" building to a high-status elaborate building that may serve as a lineage house. Given the importance of social strategies in the articulation of houses, it is to be expected that there will be other trajectories of development as well. Some houses that have achieved a certain prominence may decrease in status and others may be continuous but may remain humble in status. Second, it is equally important to study the relations between houses on the synchronic level, that is, the degree of variation between buildings and what that can tell us about interhouse relations. For example, one would expect material residues of house rituals to occur more often in high-status buildings. Below I will explore such interhouse variability at the site of Çatalhöyük.

The Site of Çatalhöyük

The site of Çatalhöyük is located in Central Anatolia, along the course of the former Çarsamba River. The 13-ha site can be dated to about 7300–6200 cal B.C. (Cessford 2001) and falls mostly into the Ceramic Neolithic in the local culture-historical sequence.[1] The site was first excavated by James Mellaart from 1961 to 1963 and in 1965. In those excavations 13 building horizons were distinguished, labeled I to XII from top to bottom, with level VI often subdivided into an older VIB and a younger VIA. From 1993 onwards new investigations have been carried out at the site directed by Ian Hodder. This Çatalhöyük Research Project is scheduled to last until 2017 and encompasses teams from Britain, Greece, Poland, Turkey, and the United States. As a result of the investigations of this project the Çatalhöyük sequence can now be preceded by pre-level XII.E-A strata documented in a deep sounding below Mellaart's trenches.

Mellaart excavated on the southwestern slope of the occupation mound and dug large horizontal exposures. The Çatalhöyük Research Project has been investigating a series of areas across the site, but an important focus of research has been in the same location as Mellaart's trenches, now relabeled the South Area (Farid 2007). As a result, this is the only part of the mound where we possess plans of the settlement throughout a number of levels, allowing us to study the diachronic development of a neighborhood.

The general picture that emerges of the settlement is as follows. Buildings were clustered into blocks, and on the basis of circumstantial evidence we can estimate that these neighborhoods would normally have encompassed about 30 buildings with a few midden areas in between the structures. The individual buildings of which these neighborhoods consisted were accessed from the roof, as evidenced by diagonal scars in the wall plaster of the upstanding walls indicating the former locations of the ladders. The spatial organization of the buildings seems to have been fairly standardized, with the ladder, hearths, and ovens in the southern part of the room. The floors in this area of the buildings are often dirtier and made less carefully than those to the northeast, where one often finds a number of platform compartments (Hodder and Cessford 2004:26–28; Matthews 2005). Other elements found in the Çatalhöyük buildings include cupboards set into the walls, basins, and bins. Some buildings have smaller secondary rooms attached

to the main room, and these generally seem to have served for storage and often contain bins. On the basis of the sizes of these structures and their inventories, it is plausible that these structures served as household residences, housing about four to five people (Cessford 2005; Matthews 1996:86; Mellaart 1967:60).

Additional elements found within these buildings include, first, wall paintings, ranging from solid panels and simple geometric motifs to large figurative scenes showing people engaged with animals, the latter often represented on a much larger scale than the people involved; second, molded features, most often taking the form of molded clay animal heads with inset aurochs horns but also found as animals depicted in profile; and, third, burials located beneath the floors. All these features tend to cluster in the relatively clean northeastern part of the room, but they also occur in other parts of the buildings.

Following the initial excavations, the site quickly became famous largely because of the spectacular imagery uncovered in the houses. These features, especially those of the clay animal heads with inset aurochs horns, seemed in contradiction with the (modern) notion of a house and gave rise to a debate concerning the status and function of the buildings in which they were found.

Shrines and Houses at Çatalhöyük

Given the features he found within the buildings at Çatalhöyük, it is perhaps not surprising that Mellaart (1967:77–78) interpreted many of them as shrines rather than houses, using the presence of the following features as criteria: "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 floors." The shrines distinguished by Mellaart on this basis constitute up to half of the buildings in some of the levels excavated by him (Mellaart 1967:70). Given that this proportion of houses to shrines seemed somewhat unlikely, Mellaart formulated the thesis that he had excavated the priestly quarter of the site.

It is easy to criticize Mellaart's house-shrine dichotomy today, but we should remember that anthropological archaeology was still in its infancy in the European research tradition of those days and that Mellaart's interpretations were adopted by many of his colleagues without hesitation. Further, with the exception of a short article by Heinrich and Seidl (1969), it was only in the wake of the new project at the site that the shrine-house dichotomy was seriously scrutinized.

Çatalhöyük figured prominently in the work of Ian Hodder even before he came to excavate the site. In his famous synthesis of the European Neolithic (Hodder 1990) he used the buildings of Çatalhöyük to demonstrate what he perceived to be a symbolic structure, embodied in the *domus*, which was of key importance for the Neolithic transition in Europe. According to this model the house embodied a set of linked oppositions, revolving around the central dichotomy of wild and domestic, that was central to the transmission of the Neolithic way of life (see also Borić, this volume). What is of importance here is that each *domus* was conceived of as an independent and homologous entity, in which the same symbolic structures were celebrated and played out.

This reconstruction by Hodder was of course at odds with that of Mellaart, according to whom specific buildings were more important than others and were in use as specialized buildings for religious purposes, suggesting that symbolism was not primarily centered on the individual house and that buildings were not equivalent to one another. To reinvestigate this issue Ritchey (1996) created a database of the buildings previously excavated by Mellaart. This was represented in a "building complexity" figure that tabulates a wide range of features associated with buildings, such as, for instance, hearths and platforms, as well as paintings and moldings, but again excluding the subfloor burials (Ritchey 1996). It was concluded on the basis of this building complexity index that there is a continuum from noncomplex to complex buildings at Çatalhöyük and that all buildings were essentially houses with a ritual dimension (Hodder 1996:6).

In my perspective this position is too extreme, however, and does not seem to accord well with the data at hand. It is true that all the elaborate buildings at Çatalhöyük that were labeled shrines by Mellaart appear similar in many respects to the buildings that were not designated shrines. There are no building characteristics that are particular to shrines, apart from the features and inventories that Mellaart used to define them. Thus, no distinction between sacred and profane building types exists at the site. Further, all buildings possess features such as hearths and ovens, which clearly define them as domestic locales. The investigations of the Çatalhöyük Research Project have demonstrated that the more elaborate buildings were used for domestic activities on the same regular basis as other buildings, including the frequency of replastering, which was related to the accretion of soot on the walls (Farid 2007; Matthews 2005). In short, the idea that some buildings were primarily used for cultic purposes rather than for living in, as implied by the word *shrine,* does not seem to be supported by the data.

However, this does not mean that all buildings were equivalent with regard to their "ritual elaborateness." In an earlier study I demonstrated that some of the "nondomestic" features found in the Çatalhöyük buildings, notably the molded features and the burials, were not spread evenly over the settlement, with 80 percent of these features clustered in only 20 percent of the buildings (Düring 2001). It is likely that both burials and moldings had a ritual significance to people at Çatalhöyük. For instance, the molded animal heads with inset horns at Çatalhöyük have been interpreted by some as related to feasting (Adams 2005; Last 1998). It follows that some degree of status differentiation, determining which buildings were most appropriate for rituals in which burials and moldings played a role, existed at the site. At the same time a clear-cut distinction between buildings of different status cannot be drawn. Rather than regarding this as a problem I take it to be an important clue as to how the status differentiation of buildings was negotiated in a complex and changing configuration of house relations.

In contrast to the burials and the molded features, the wall paintings seem to be spread more evenly across the settlement, suggesting that these may have been related to other types of behavior, perhaps connected to individual households rather than suprahousehold associations. From this example it follows that it is imperative to study the distribution of different types of features separately, rather than to lump all the features into a building complexity measure, in or-

der to understand different types of behavior that come together in buildings at Çatalhöyük. In this regard it should be noted that the criteria by which Hodder (1996) evaluated the house-shrine distinction are different from those Mellaart used to delineate that distinction in the first place.

In the following sections I will explore the status differentiation of buildings at Çatalhöyük. This will be done by an analysis of the distribution of subfloor burials over the Level VIB settlements excavated by Mellaart in the part of the site now labeled the South Area. Again it should be noted that subfloor burials were not among Mellaart's shrine criteria nor are they included in Ritchey's building complexity index. Therefore, the burials are ideally suited to test their hypotheses regarding building variability on the basis of an independent set of data.

Burials at Çatalhöyük

Apart from a small number of burials that have been found in outside midden areas,[2] the burials of Çatalhöyük are located beneath the floors of buildings. These burials often take the form of complete primary interments, but in some cases double burials are found. In some buildings burial activities were regularly repeated in the same location, in the process of which earlier burials were regularly disturbed. The result is often a jumbled mass of dispersed skeletons and burial goods, in which only the latest burials have clearly articulated skeletons with associated items. Because of these circumstances it is sometimes impossible to determine exactly how many people were buried in a building and with whom a specific grave item was associated. The solution adopted by the Çatalhöyük Research Project has been to work out a minimum number of persons per burial cluster. This can be done on the basis of the age and sex determinations of the skeletal parts and a count of the frequency of occurrence of skeletal elements present in an assemblage.

The intramural subfloor burial practices of Çatalhöyük have raised a substantial amount of interest (Düring 2003). This is probably because Çatalhöyük was one of the first sites of the Near Eastern Neolithic in which the practice of subfloor burials was documented and because of the circumstance that the assemblage found at the site is one of the largest of that horizon. Additional factors are that some of the burials were exceptionally well preserved and included a range of organic objects and tissues preserved in charred condition. Finally, Mellaart's imaginative and often compelling interpretations of the burial practices can be mentioned. These interpretations have long dominated the perception of the Çatalhöyük burials, but until recently they have not been subjected to serious scrutiny (Düring 2003; Hamilton 1996). I will briefly outline Mellaart's hypotheses and then move on to a discussion of the spatial distribution of the Çatalhöyük burials and how they relate to the buildings in which they were found.

There are three main interpretations put forward by Mellaart that need to be addressed here. First, there is the idea that the Çatalhöyük people were excarnated by animal agents before they were interred in the buildings on the site. This interpretation was mainly based on a reading of a group of wall paintings that

show large birds, probably griffin vultures, attacking small headless humanoid figures that were interpreted as dead people. It should be emphasized that there is no evidence on the excavated skeletons at Çatalhöyük of animal scavenging, and, further, the completeness of the skeletons and their articulation indicate that people were buried shortly after their death (Andrews et al. 2005).

The second hypothesis put forward by Mellaart that needs to be questioned is that there were gender-specific burial practices (Hamilton 1996). In particular, he proposed that women and men were buried beneath different platforms and that they received gender-specific burial goods (cosmetic sets for women, weapons for men). It should be mentioned at this point that no physical anthropologists were present during the 1960s excavations and that Mellaart published his interpretations about the Çatalhöyük burial practices before physical anthropologists had studied the skeletons from the site. The new excavations at the site have not found the kind of gender-specific patterning in the burial record proposed by Mellaart (Hamilton 1996:254, 259, 2005).

The third interpretation by Mellaart of the Çatalhöyük burial practices, which links directly to the topic of this chapter, is the nature of the relation of the people buried beneath floors to the building in which they were interred. Mellaart interpreted the subfloor burials as a practice akin to family tombs in modern graveyards and argued that those buried beneath the floors were the same people who had lived on the floors. In this model each household buried its respective dead beneath its floors (Mellaart 1964:92–93, 1967:205).

Close reading of Mellaart's preliminary reports, however, reveals considerable variability in the burial populations of individual buildings. Some buildings contained remarkably high burial populations, ranging up to a maximum of 32 burials for building VI.10 (Mellaart 1964:93).[3] Such a burial population seems too high if only the building's inhabitants were included. Other buildings excavated by Mellaart seem to have contained fewer burials, but few details are provided in the preliminary reports.

Likewise, the excavations of the Çatalhöyük Research Project demonstrated a large degree of variability in subfloor burial populations. Three buildings have been completely excavated so far in the new excavations. Of these ÇRP-Building 1 contained 64 burials, ÇRP-Building 3 contained eight subfloor burials, and ÇRP-Building 2 contained none (Andrews et al. 2005; Hager, personal communication 2003).[4]

Interesting as this variation in burial densities may be, until recently it was impossible to study the distribution of burials over the settlement in any systematic way. On the one hand, the data from the Mellaart excavations necessary for such an undertaking were not available, and, on the other hand, the available evidence from the current project is limited to a few buildings. In those circumstances it proved impossible to evaluate the household burial hypothesis put forward by Mellaart.

Fortunately I have been able to work with the notes and unpublished manuscripts of the two physical anthropologists, Lawrence Angel and Denise Ferembach, who worked on the 1960s Çatalhöyük skeletal assemblages. While there are numerous difficulties in working with these files, they can be used for obtaining a general overview of the evidence. Using the principle of the minimum number of persons

per burial bag assigned to a specific building, I was able to arrive at a reasonably accurate database of the numbers of burials per building excavated in the 1960s (Düring 2003). To this database we can add the burials that were found in recent years in some of the same buildings previously excavated by Mellaart. This makes it possible to plot the distribution of burials over the Çatalhöyük settlement.

From the data obtained in this manner it is clear that the distribution of burials over the settlement is uneven and varies dramatically among buildings. The large majority of the buildings, amounting to some 80 percent, contained no burials at all. It is probable that the number of buildings containing burials may in reality have been somewhat higher, because in many buildings excavated in the 1960s excavations did not proceed to the subfloor deposits and in consequence the burials in these deposits were not investigated. Nonetheless, we can be confident that many buildings were devoid of burials both on the basis of evidence from the current project, as demonstrated by the case of ÇRP-Building 2, a building without subfloor burials (Farid 2007), and on the basis of the level VIB evidence presented below.

Further, the buildings that did contain burials can be separated into, first, a large group containing only a few burials and, second, a group of only seven buildings that contained over 25 buried people each. The burials in these latter buildings constitute more than half of the total number of burials (Düring 2003). A good example of a building containing a large burial population is ÇRP-Building 1, which, as mentioned above, contained no fewer than 64 burials (Andrews et al. 2005). On the basis of a calculation of the use life of an average building, estimated at about 60 years (Matthews 2006), and given that we have some idea of how many people inhabited these buildings, a reasonable estimate being about four people on average (Cessford 2005; Matthews 1996:86; Mellaart 1967:60), it seems most unlikely that the 64 people buried in this building had all lived in it (Düring 2003:10). In the next section I will contextualize this kind of variability in burial populations of houses, using the example of level VIB at Çatalhöyük.

Burials in Level VIB at Çatalhöyük

To demonstrate the variability in burial density among the Çatalhöyük buildings I will present the data from level VIB in the South Area of the site. There are two reasons this is a particularly appropriate level for studying differential densities of subfloor burials. First, a large exposure has been dug for this level, enabling us to plot the evidence across a neighborhood rather than a few buildings. Second, across the entire area of the level VIB exposure represented in Figure 6-1, the excavations proceeded to the earlier level VII buildings at a lower level.[5]

This is of considerable importance because only in those cases where the Mellaart excavation proceeded to lower building levels were the subfloor burials excavated.[6] For this reason level VIB is one of the best windows into burial practices at the site. It should be emphasized that the number of buried persons in Figure 6-1 could underrepresent the burial populations that may have been present in these buildings. Given that excavations proceeded at a rapid pace in the 1960s it

Figure 6-1. *Burial populations of level VIB buildings at Çatalhöyük; buildings with over 25 burials are identified. Figure prepared by Medy Oberendorff.*

seems plausible that some skeletons may have been overlooked.[7] However, my interest at this point is mainly with the proportional differences between the subfloor burial populations of buildings, and we can assume that for this purpose the data presented serve their purpose.

If we plot the distribution of burials for level VIB, the picture that emerges is as follows (see Figure 6-1). Burials are mainly found within four rooms that seem to have been particularly suitable for burial practices for one reason or another. In addition there are some buildings with only a limited number of burials below their floors, indicated on the figure by dots of a smaller size. Finally, there are many rooms that contained no subfloor burials at all, which lack a dot on Figure 6-1. All of the buildings concerned seem to have functioned as domestic resi-

dences, but in some cases burials were found in anterooms rather than the main living room. Usually when this is the case, the anteroom is part of a building in which the main room also contains subfloor burials.[8]

In total only 21 of the 118 level VIB rooms represented in Figure 6-1 contained subfloor burials, which is about 18 percent. Moving from the spatial representation of the burials across the excavated area to Figure 6-2, which represents the burial populations of level VIB in another manner, it is clear that only four rooms (the main rooms of buildings 1, 7, 10, and 34), with over 25 burials each, together contained the majority of the level VIB burials in this part of the settlement. These burials amount to about 53 percent of all the burials under consideration (136 out of a total of 258 buried persons).

The question of *why* burials are concentrated in specific rooms at Çatalhöyük is difficult to answer within the framework of the dominant interpretations of Çatalhöyük buildings proposed by Mellaart and Hodder. Focusing first on the shrine interpretation, we can see some correlation between Mellaart's classification of buildings and the occurrence of burials, but this correlation does not seem convincing. Many of the buildings that have the largest subfloor burial populations are among the buildings that Mellaart designated as shrines, but some of the other buildings that were interpreted as shrines by Mellaart did not contain so many burials, and some buildings with a high burial density were not classified as shrines by Mellaart.[9] More important, it seems clear that all the buildings with high burial populations were domestic residences, so that an exclusively religious purpose for these structures seems in contradiction with the evidence.

On the other hand, the idea that all these buildings were more or less homologous with respect to matters of rituals and symbolism, as advocated in the *domus* model, does not seem very convincing in a context in which burials are distributed unevenly across the settlement in a manner that is evident from Figures 6-1 and 6-2. Some type of status differentiation between buildings obviously existed, determining that some buildings were more appropriate for burial ceremonies than others.

The house in the sense of Lévi-Strauss provides us with a model in which the uneven distribution of burials across the settlement could make sense. The question of why certain domestic buildings were more appropriate than others for the placement of burials could have a fairly simple answer: because these domestic buildings were lineage houses, focal buildings that embodied the social identity of a social group larger than the inhabitants of a building. These buildings were appropriate locales for the performance of a range of group-related rituals, which included the burial of specific people below the floor of a major house.

The groups that were involved with these lineage houses need not necessarily be thought of as exclusive—individual households may well have had ties with multiple major houses or could perhaps have chosen to bury their deceased in a building of a somewhat lesser status. In this way, the burial of specific people may have been part of a process in which social groups tried to manipulate existing relations of house statuses and house relations to their own advantage.

The interpretation outlined here could be criticized for being based on a circular argument, in that the element to be explained, the differential distribution of the burials, is taken as an indicator of building status, which in turn is used to

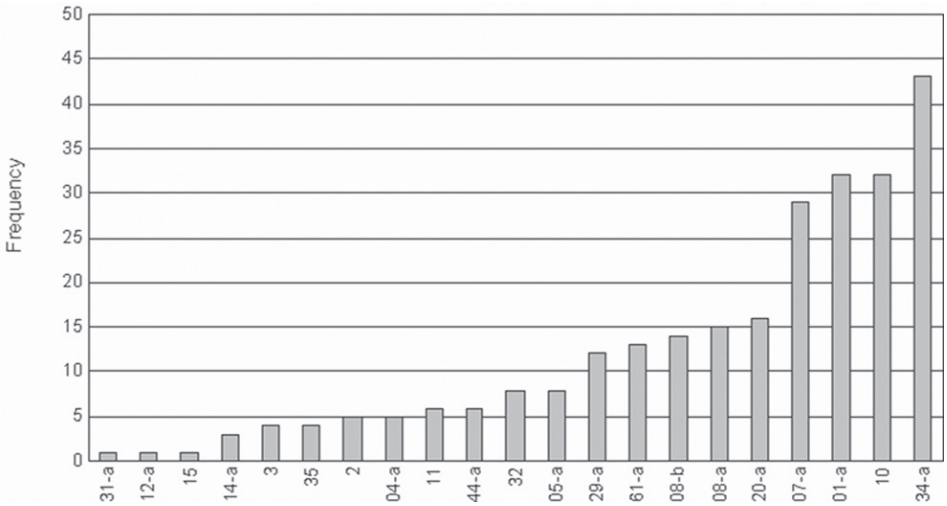

Figure 6-2. *Çatalhöyük level VIB rooms containing burials (number of rooms = 21, number of burials = 258). Figure prepared by Medy Oberendorff.*

explain differential burial densities. Fortunately, with the house model we can test on other grounds the proposition that lineage houses will be more suitable as burial locales. In particular we can study whether there is a relation between the occurrences of high burial densities on the one hand and the pedigree of a building on the other hand. Earlier in this chapter I argued that building status is to a large degree dependent upon the pedigree of buildings. It follows that we would expect the Çatalhöyük level VIB buildings with large burial populations to be of a respectable pedigree, with a long history of occupation and with many illustrious predecessor structures. Fortunately, at Çatalhöyük, we have the kind of evidence that allows us to trace buildings over a long sequence of time and assess how building statuses changed over time.

The Articulation of Houses at Çatalhöyük: A Diachronic Perspective

The area in which we can trace the Çatalhöyük buildings over multiple building levels is more restricted than the large level VIB exposure, but there are a sizable number of buildings that we can trace from level VIB down to level VIII and in some cases even further to level X. The sequence of levels X to VIB represents a considerable period of time. Assuming once more an average use life per building of about 60 years, these five building levels would have lasted for about 300 years. The vertical displacement of the buildings under consideration over the course of multiple phases of reconstruction is considerable. The vertical distances between the floors of the level VIB successors of the two buildings exposed in level X are 4.12 m (building 1) and 5.73 m (building 8), respectively. This is an impressive testimony to the building continuity of these structures.

This building continuity is not similar for all the structures involved, however. Some buildings can be traced over a number of building levels, but there are others that were more short-lived, existing for one or two building levels only, to be abandoned afterwards. Plotting the South Area neighborhood over time (Figure 6-3), we note that buildings can be classified into continuous and noncontinuous structures.

Most of the noncontinuous structures in this neighborhood are associated with a central midden area, and these are indicated in gray in Figure 6-3. Onto the central midden in Figure 6-3 a range of buildings was inserted over time. Examples that can be mentioned are ÇRP-Building 9 in level X, ÇRP-Building 2 in level IX, building 25 in level VIII, rooms 2 and 16 in level VII, and rooms 2, 17, 15, 13, 25, and 26 in level VIB, when the whole midden area was built up. These buildings are often of unusual proportions and shape because they had to be fitted into a preexisting void in the texture of the settlement. What is of interest to note is that most of these buildings were in use for a relatively short duration, and in most cases the locale of these buildings was redeployed as a midden in the subsequent building horizon.

The best-documented example of such a building is without doubt ÇRP-Building 2 of level IX, which has been excavated in recent years by the Çatalhöyük Research Project (Farid 2007). After initial use as a domestic structure, as evident from a variety of features including floors, ovens, bins, and platforms, this building ended up as an animal pen and was used as such over a considerable period (Farid 2007). No burials were found within the main room of this building, the anteroom of which remains to be excavated. Both the facts that this building ended up as an animal pen and that subfloor burials are absent seem to fit with the interpretation that this was a low-status building. The other noncontinuous spaces likewise have few burials below their floors.[10]

In conclusion, it seems that this central area was considered an inauspicious site for constructing a building; it was used only as a last resort and was the first to be abandoned. These were probably low-status buildings in comparison with those to the south and north.

The continuous buildings at Çatalhöyük, indicated in black on Figure 6-3, can be contrasted in several respects with those discussed above. A first and obvious characteristic of these buildings is that they remain true to their location and dimensions over several phases of rebuilding and over the course of centuries. A second characteristic in which these buildings differ from noncontinuous buildings is that they were as a rule in-filled with clean material upon abandonment and their sites were generally immediately redeveloped into new successor buildings (Farid 2007; Matthews 2006). In relation to these two characteristics, it is possible to argue that many of these buildings were regarded not so much as novel structures but rather as reincarnations of preexisting buildings. Whether or not this is the case, it is clear that the degree of building continuity at Çatalhöyük is exceptional when regarded in a cross-cultural context.[11]

A third element in which many of the continuous buildings differ from the other buildings at the site is in regard to their ritual elaboration. Here, the focus will be on the burials found within these buildings (see also Düring 2005a). In

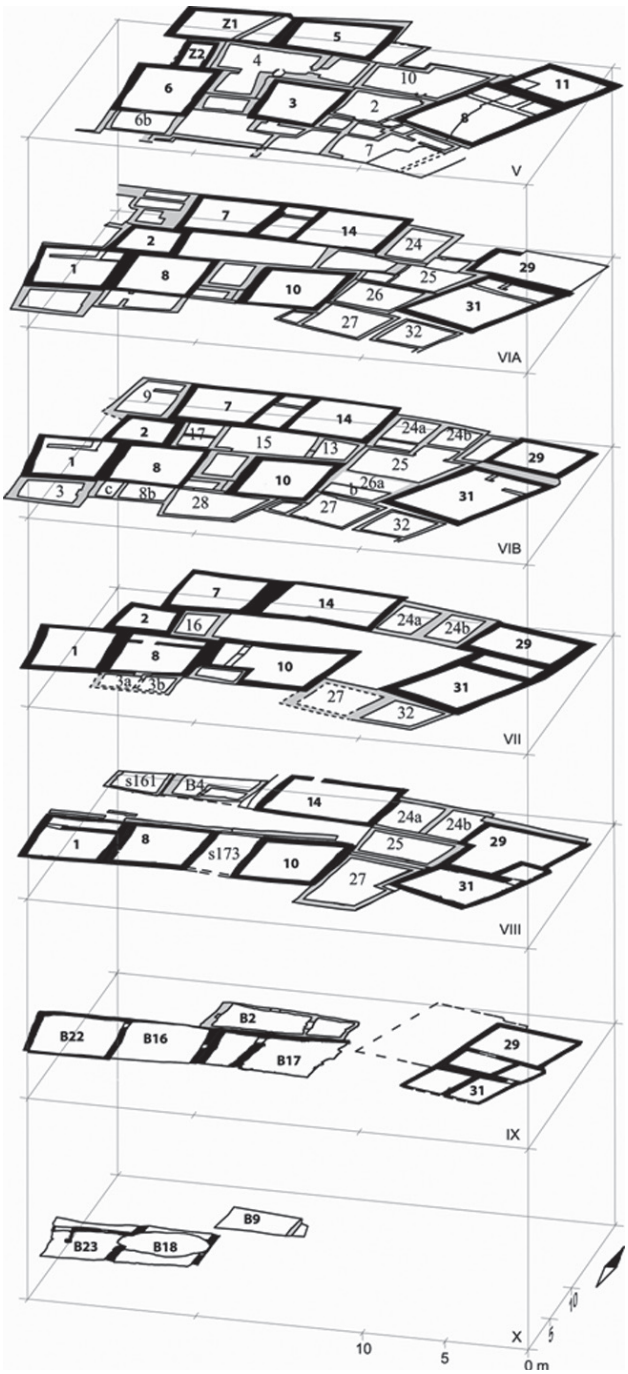

Figure 6-3. *A diachronic perspective on the South Area at Çatalhöyük; levels indicated in lower-right corner, continuous buildings identified in black. Figure prepared by Medy Oberendorff.*

Figure 6-4 I have represented a number of continuous buildings that we can trace over longer periods of time at Çatalhöyük. What we note with regard to the burials found beneath the floors of these buildings is that there is a clear relationship between building pedigree on the one hand—that is, whether they are buildings of good standing as reflected in regular dimensions, location, and a long occupation sequence—and the number of burials that were interred beneath their floors on the other hand. The pattern that we see in Figure 6-4 is remarkably consistent, with initially limited numbers of burials in these buildings, often predominantly young juveniles, and over time an increase in burial populations, which incorporate all age categories.[12]

It is important to emphasize that the increase in building status argued here is not a mechanical process but is influenced by a range of factors, only one of which is constituted by the building pedigree. First, the people allied to individual buildings were not all equally successful in promoting the status of the building with which they were associated. There is a substantial difference between buildings such as 1, 10, 29, and 31, with over 25 burials in their "prime," and other buildings such as 8 and 29, with no more than 12 burials per level. To heighten this contrast I can mention two buildings, 24 and 27, that existed through levels VIII to VIB and must be counted among the continuous buildings yet did not contain a single burial in any phase of their existence.

Second, I would like to point to the case of buildings 9 and 31 (see Figure 6-4). Both of these buildings contained a substantial number of burials in level VII (15 and 49, respectively; the burial population of VII-31 is the highest of the buildings excavated by Mellaart) but their level VIB successors were almost completely devoid of burials. The reasons these buildings were no longer appropriate locales for burial practices are beyond us, but these examples serve to demonstrate that it was the interplay between building pedigree and the social strategies of people associated with buildings that was important in the articulation of houses at Çatalhöyük.

Discussion

The interpretation of building status variability at Çatalhöyük, as reflected in the presence of features such as molded animal heads and elaborate wall paintings, has given rise to a debate concerning the nature of the buildings involved. On the one hand, Mellaart has argued that some of the more elaborate buildings were used as shrines and were devoted exclusively to religious purposes. On the other hand, Hodder has argued against such a classification, stating that all buildings were in use as domestic units and that all buildings incorporated symbolic elements.

In this chapter I argue that both interpretations are problematic. The basic assumption that underlies both interpretations is that there is a direct relation between domestic activities and ritual practices. For Mellaart these sets of activities exclude one another, and for this reason he would interpret ritually elaborate buildings as structures used exclusively for ritual purposes even when it

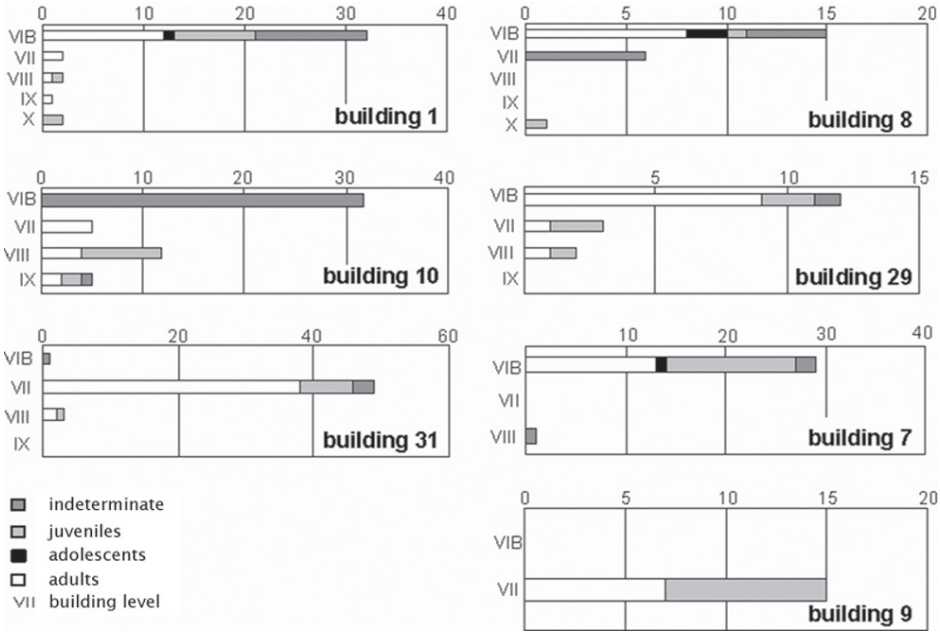

Figure 6-4. *Subfloor burials in continuous Çatalhöyük buildings by level. Figure prepared by Medy Oberendorff.*

is evident that these buildings were also used for a range of domestic chores. In contrast, Hodder maintains that daily life is imbued with symbolism and that the *domus* acted as the main vehicle for the transmission and reproduction of the symbolic structures that were central to Neolithic society. By taking this position he negates the existence of other kinds of symbolic domains that function at more inclusive levels of society than the household.

Summarizing my own position, I concur with Mellaart that some buildings were of relatively high status and were ritual foci in the larger community. However, I agree with Hodder that even the most elaborate lineage houses remained primarily domestic structures, and there is little in the evidence to merit the designation "shrines." In this respect my position is closer to that proposed by Hodder, who argues for an interlinking of domestic and ritual practices. There is much in the *domus* model I agree with—there are certainly symbolic structures embodied in the houses at Çatalhöyük—but I would argue that the *domus* model neglects the existence of ritual practices at scales other than that of the household. Allowing for status differentiation among the buildings at Çatalhöyük enables us to understand how the neighborhood communities at the site may have been integrated beyond the level of the household and how houses may have been organized in a configuration of major and minor houses and via relations of dominance and dependence.

This configuration of buildings, in which there is a certain amount of status differentiation among buildings and in which members of low-status houses may ally themselves with high-status houses, is difficult to comprehend on a syn-

chronic scale, in which the relations of alliance, competition, and dominance may seem natural. It is especially in this regard that the house concept in the sense of Lévi-Strauss has great potential, in that it allows us to understand how common houses may become transformed into high-status lineage houses over time in a constantly changing configuration of buildings. Further, the house concept makes it possible to consider the processes that lie underneath this transformation: the social strategies of individuals and social groups working toward their own advancement with varying degrees of success. The importance of these strategies is reflected, for instance, in the fact that not every building follows an ideal "career" and ends up as a lineage house and also by the circumstance that in some cases houses decrease in importance, as was the case with building VII-31. It is with regard to understanding how houses came to be and how they are affected by factors related to agency and contingency that a diachronic view is of key importance. In this light the fact that a clear-cut distinction between buildings of different status cannot be drawn should be seen as an important clue as to how the status differentiation of buildings was negotiated in a complex and changing configuration of building relations rather than as a problem of classification.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that the house concept could be of long-term importance for archaeology, mainly because it allows us to study symbolic behavior at a scale above that of the individual household and because it allows us to study differential building statuses, in which some buildings may be of greater ritual importance than others. To fulfill this potential I think it is essential, however, not to broaden the house concept to include any building that was meaningful to its inhabitants and continuously occupied over a long period. I do not oppose studies that use the house concept as a source of inspiration for exploring hitherto neglected issues rather than as a direct parallel, using what I call a weak analogy approach. However, I think that there is also scope for a more restricted use of the house concept, which I would call a strong analogy, in which the specificity of the house concept is maintained. Two elements are crucial here: first, the relational aspects of houses—that houses operate in configurations in which some houses are of relatively high status and to which members of other houses of lower status will attach themselves—and, second, the diachronic aspect of houses—that houses can only be understood in the context of their development over time and that their status is in an important part constituted by their pedigree. It is essential in such an approach to demonstrate that some form of status differentiation existed among the buildings concerned and to study how building statuses were transformed over time.

At Çatalhöyük it is possible to use the house concept as a strong analogy. The buildings of Çatalhöyük have already been the topic of some debate concerning their nature. Mellaart interpreted some of the Çatalhöyük buildings with particularly elaborate furnishings, in the form of molded figures and large elaborate paintings, as shrines, arguing that these buildings were foci of ritual activity. In

contrast, Hodder has argued that all buildings were homologous with respect to symbolism and ritual and that there was a continuum from low-status to high-status buildings. To approach these issues I chose to focus on the subfloor burial distribution, because this parameter has not been considered by these authors in the discussion on building status differentiation and seems to hold great potential in this respect.

On the basis of a burial database assembled from the unpublished documents of the two physical anthropologists who studied the 1960s burials and by including the burials found more recently by the Çatalhöyük Research Project, it is possible to study the distribution of burials across the Çatalhöyük settlement. Plotting the burials of level VIB, I was able to demonstrate that their distribution is markedly uneven and that most burials were placed in a few houses. Some of these buildings have burial populations that clearly exceeded the death toll of their inhabitants, and it seems likely that some of the buried persons came from other houses. It seems plausible that these buildings with high burial populations were of a higher status than those devoid of burials.

To answer the question of why these buildings were more appropriate locales for burial ceremonies than others, the diachronic developments of buildings were traced from level X up to level VIB. What became apparent from this analysis is that burials were predominantly associated with continuous buildings and that the burial populations of these continuous buildings increased markedly over time. Thus a clear correlation between building pedigree and the suitability of buildings as burial locations could be demonstrated. This relation is not mechanical, as there are some continuous buildings that did not develop into burial sites and others that were no longer used as such after a certain period, suggesting that social strategies and contingencies may have played a role along with building pedigrees.

In conclusion, I have argued that the evidence of the subfloor burials at Çatalhöyük allows us to discuss the status differentiation of houses. Some buildings were appropriate burial sites for groups of people larger than the inhabitants of that specific house. These houses were certainly domestic units, yet they were also of a ritual significance beyond the household level. It is likely that these buildings functioned as lineage houses in the manner initially described by Lévi-Strauss and later taken up in many anthropological case studies: as focal points for the performance of ceremonies for a group of people associated with that house. This interpretation is further supported by the diachronic developments of lineage houses, which can be demonstrated to emerge out of common houses as a result of social strategies of associated people over a long period of time.

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Notes

1. The Central Anatolian sequence at present is as follows: Aceramic Neolithic from 8500 to 7000 cal B.C.; Early Ceramic Neolithic from 7000 to 6600 cal B.C.; Late Ceramic Neolithic from 6600 to 6000 cal B.C.; Early Chalcolithic from 6000 to 5500 cal B.C. (Özbaşaran and Buitenhuis 2002).

2. Two burials were found in midden areas by the Çatalhöyük Research Project: neonate burial feature 525 in midden space 199 of level XII and male adult burial feature 285 in midden space 115 of level VIII (Farid 2007). It is no longer possible to determine whether any burials were found in the 1960s excavations in midden areas and if so how many (Mellaart 1967:204).

3. The buildings excavated by Mellaart are designated first by their building level and second by their building number. In most cases the buildings retain the same number in different building levels. Thus building VI.10 is above VII.10, which is above VIII.10.

4. In order to avoid confusion between buildings excavated in the 1960s excavations and those of the present project, the latter are prefixed by "ÇRP," designating the Çatalhöyük Research Project.

5. A group of level VI buildings excavated in the final season and designated VI.70–VI.80 were not taken down to the next building level (Mellaart 1966); these are not part of this analysis and are not represented on Figure 6-1.

6. As an example I can mention building VII.9, which was excavated to the floor horizon and published by Mellaart. Recent excavations of the remnants of this building and the subfloor deposits revealed that no fewer than 15 people and one complete sheep were buried beneath the floor during the occupation of this building (Düring 2005b; Farid 2007).

7. It is of interest to note in relation to this point that much higher proportions of juveniles are found in the current excavations in comparison with the 1960s excavations (Düring 2003:12).

8. For instance, anteroom VIB.11, which was connected to building VIB.10, and anteroom VIB.8b, which was part of building VIB.8.

9. For instance, buildings 14, 12, 31, and 45 of level VIB are among the buildings designated "shrines" by Mellaart (1964:Figure 2), and many of them contain highly elaborate moldings and paintings but do not contain sizable burial populations. On the other hand, building 34, which has no fewer than 43 burials, is not included with Mellaart's shrines.

10. There are three burials below VIII.25, five below VIB.2, and one beneath VIB.17.

11. Similar building traditions may be noted at other Central Anatolian sites such as Aşıklı Höyük, Canhasan I and III, and Erbaba (Düring 2006; Özbaşaran 2000:135).

12. It should be noted that zero values at the bottom of the individual graphs in Figure 6-4 might be deceptive in that in some cases subfloor deposits may not have been excavated. However, in my view the overall pattern would survive even if these initial values were modified somewhat.

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