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Anadolu'da Etnoarkeoloji Araştırmaları

Prehistorik Dönemlerden Günümüze Kadar

Ethnoarchaeological Studies in Anatolia

From the Prehistoric Times to the Present

Editörler/Editors: İsmail Akkaş & Murat Karakoç

Bu kitap, Anadolu etnoarkeolojisiindeki çeşitli konuları ele alan seçilmiş araştırma makalelerinin bir derlemesidir. Kitap, okuyuculara bu disiplin içindeki son araştırmalar ve saha faaliyetleri hakkında fikir vermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca kitap, ele alınan geniş konu yelpazesi ile Klasik Dönem Öncesi ve Tarih Öncesi dönemlere kadar uzanan farklı zaman dilimlerine atıfta bulunmaktadır. Araştırma makalelerini derleyen editörler olarak bizler ve kitaba katkıda bulunan araştırmacılar, çok disiplinli yaklaşımın Etnoarkeolojideki önemli rolüne ilişkin genel anlayışı kabul ediyoruz. "Anadolu'da Etnoarkeoloji Araştırmaları (Prehistorik Dönemden Günümüze Kadar)" kitabının bu hali ile Anadolu Etnoarkeolojisi çalışmalarına büyük katkı sağlayacağı ve önemli bir boşluğu dolduracağına ve gelecekte yapılacak bu tür çalışmalara bir rehber olacağını düşünüyoruz.

This book is a compilation of selected research papers dealing with a variety of topics in Anatolian Ethnoarchaeology. Book aims at providing the reader with insights on recent research and field activities within this discipline. In addition, the book refers to different time periods ranging from the Pre-Classical and Prehistoric Periods to the wide range of topics covered. We, the editors of the research papers, and the researchers who contributed to the book, acknowledge the general understanding of the important role of the multidisciplinary approach in Ethnoarchaeology. We think that the book "Ethnoarchaeological Studies in Anatolia (From the Prehistoric Times to the Present)" will contribute greatly to the studies of Anatolian Ethnoarchaeology and fill an important gap and will be a guide for such researches in the future.

Editörler/Editors:
İsmail Akkaş & Murat Karakoç

Anadolu'da Etnoarkeoloji Araştırmaları
Ethnoarchaeological Studies in Anatolia

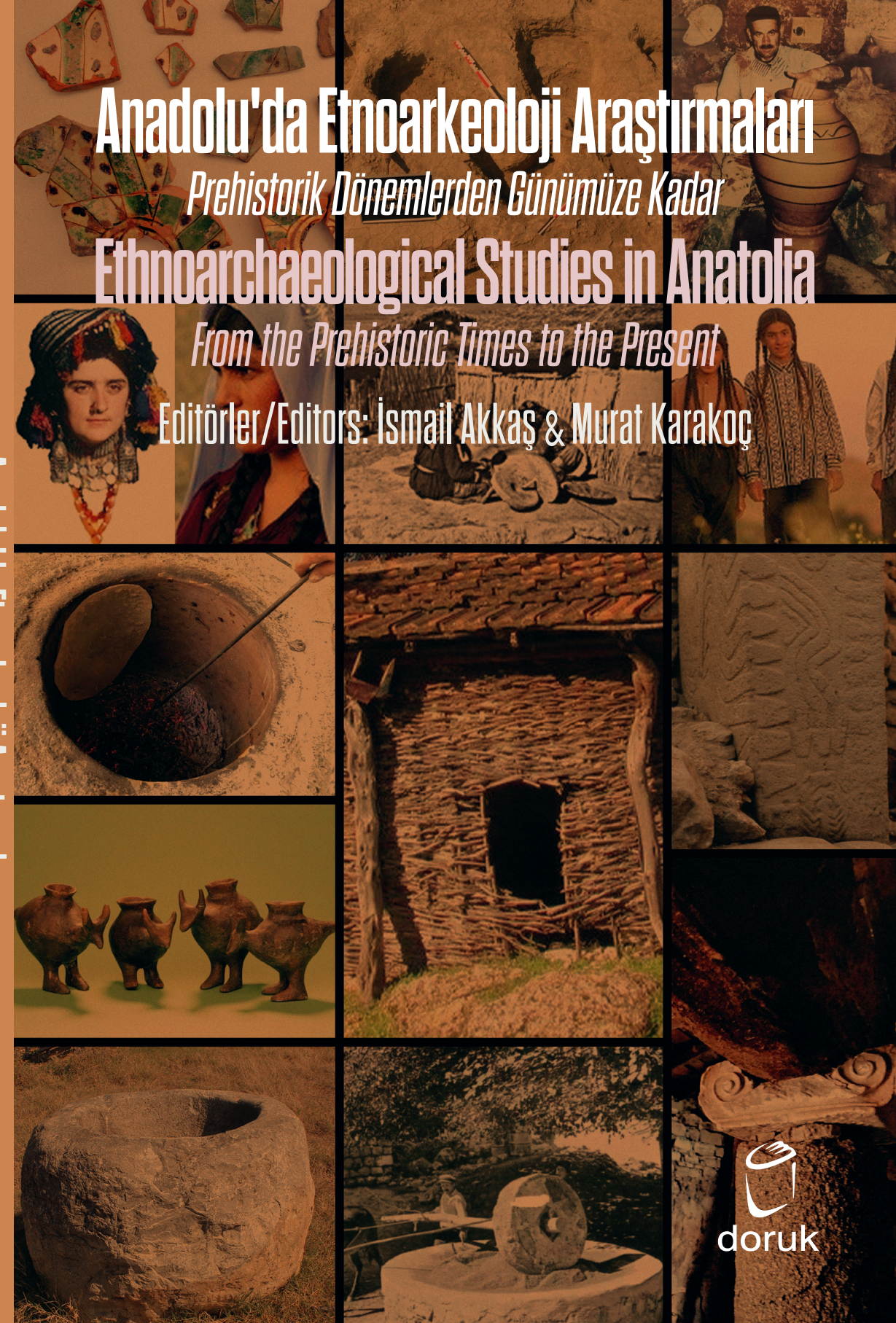
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Prof. Dr. Jak Yakar'ın Danışmanlığı'nda,
Anadolu'da Etnoarkeoloji
Araştırmaları
(Prehistorik Dönemlerden Günümüze Kadar)

Under the Supervision of Prof. Dr. Jak Yakar,
Ethnoarchaeological Studies
in Anatolia
(From the Prehistoric Times to the Present)

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Foreword

This book is a compilation of selected research papers dealing with a variety of topics in Anatolian ethnoarchaeology. It aims at providing the reader with insights on recent research and field activities within this discipline. The broad spectrum of topics dealt with refers to different timeframes with a few going back to pre-classical and prehistoric periods. The editors who compiled the research papers and researchers who contributed them obviously share the general understanding of the crucial role of multi-disciplinary approach in ethnoarchaeology. Indeed, reliance on disciplines such as cultural anthropology, sociology and history of art by some authors contributed to suggestions concerning the likely social, cultural, spiritual and economic significance of material culture remains including art forms from the distant past. With this understanding in mind the papers presented deal with a variety of topics of interest touching on the socio-political and socio-economic considerations in settlement planning, continuity of architectural concepts, the use of space, food production strategies, storage and consumption modes, continuity in traditional local and regional technologies often using ethnographic analogies.

Some of the articles relying on ethnographic guidance demonstrate that in Anatolia and adjacent territories economically encapsulated societies often opted for communal production, which naturally required their being socially organized in a communal mode. In this system, although the means of subsistence production are held by the commune as a whole, status based on gender, rank, age group and kin connections defines the rights and duties of members taking part in the production activities and consumption, and often creates wealth differentiation. Within the communal mode of production, various forms of social orders may have existed ranging from egalitarian communities, more likely briefly and at the onset, to socio-economically stratified communities leading to ranked chiefdoms. The preservation of these socio-economic frameworks must have been crucial, at least to some extent, for communities in the process of being incorporated into state societies.

Finally, this publication strengthens the existing impression that some of the ethnographic case studies involving the preservation of deep-rooted regional rural architectural traditions or various artistic renderings of social norms or spiritual themes recovered or unveiled in Anatolia could be applicable also to neighboring territories beyond its geo-cultural borders.

Jak Yakar

Professor Emeritus

Sonia & Marco Nadler Institute of Archaeology
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Kısaltmalar / Abbreviations

| | |
|----------|--|
| AJA | : American Journal of Archaeology. |
| ANMED | : Anadolu Akdenizi Arkeoloji Haberleri Bülteni. |
| AM | : Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archeologischer Instituts, Athenische Abteilung. |
| AnSt | : Anatolian Studies. |
| AST | : Araştırma Sonuçları Toplantısı. |
| BASOR | : Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research. |
| BCH | : Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique |
| BIFAO | : Bulletin de l'Institut Francais d'Archeologie Orientale |
| bkz. | : Bakınız. |
| BSA | : Annual of the British School at Athens. |
| Çev. | : Çeviri. |
| dn. | : Dipnot. |
| Ed. | : Editör. |
| Eds. | : Editörler. |
| et al. | : ve diğerleri. |
| Fig. | : Figür/Figure. |
| JRA | : Journal of Roman Archaeology. |
| Kat. No. | : Katalog Numarası. |
| KST | : Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı. |
| Lev. | : Levha. |
| MÖ | : Milattan Önce. |
| MS | : Milattan Sonra. |
| No. | : Numara. |
| Pl. | : Plate. |
| s. | : Sayfa. |
| TAD | : Türk Arkeoloji Dergisi. |
| Taf. | : Tafel. |
| vd. | : ve diğerleri. |

Deciphering Göbekli Tepe: The Hidden Potential of Archaeo-Ethnology

(Göbekli Tepe'nin Şifresini Çözmek: Arkeo-Etnolojinin Gizli Potansiyeli)

Cédric BODET*

Abstract: A significant number of symbolic compositions from Neolithic Anatolia display a remarkably similar arrangement. Whether it is a female figure, an animal or a geometric sign (X, H), the central element is often depicted reaching out to two isomorphic symbols, respectively, with limbs, horns or lines/triangles. This general pattern, or part of it, appears to be much too common and deliberate to be random. Some thirty years ago, an original 'archaeo-ethnological' approach has allowed Jean-Daniel Forest to attempt a convincing decipherment of this type of depictions uncovered at the site of Çatalhöyük. To this author, the two side elements symbolize the subgroups of the community, or lineages, permanently exchanging sexual mates, while the central one stands for the capacity of regeneration or for its result, the society. In other words, this represents the exogamic rule ('marrying outside'), clearly identified by social anthropologists to be of utmost importance for all pre-state societies. Reflecting on the symbolism under an isomorphic form, like the twin pillars observed in various Neolithic sites, fertility would thus be conceptualized as a reciprocal marital exchange scheme, no matter how many exogamic subgroups the actual society is divided into: exogamy is represented as two interacting subparts. The recent discovery of

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complete symbolic ‘archives’ pertaining to the Neolithic site of Göbekli Tepe has incited us to dig up Forest’s Çatalhöyük decipherment system and try it against this new array of pictorial representations. Despite inevitable uncertainties, it is striking how well it appears to make sense of most Göbekli Tepe depictions, indicating not only that his intuition must have been rather correct, but also that it must have been widely shared during the Neolithic (and beyond).

Keywords: Exogamy, Symbolic Representations, Neolithic, Dualism, Archaeo-Ethnology.

Öz: Neolitik Anadolu’dan önemli sayıda sembolik kompozisyon, oldukça benzer bir düzen sergiler. Bir kadın figürü, bir hayvan veya geometrik bir işaret (X, H) olsun, sırasıyla kollar, boynuzlar veya çizgiler/üçgenlere sahip merkezi eleman, genellikle iki izomorfik sembolle uzatılmış şekilde tasvir edilir. Bu genel örüntü veya bunun bir parçası, rastgele olamayacak kadar yaygın ve kasıtlı görünmektedir. Otuz yıl kadar önce, özgün bir “arkeo-etnolojik” yaklaşım, Jean-Daniel Forest’ın Çatalhöyük yerleşmesinde ortaya çıkarılan bu tür tasvirlerin ikna edici bir çözümlemesini yapmasına izin verdi. Bu yazara göre, bu iki yan unsur topluluğun alt gruplarını veya sürekli olarak cinsel eş değiş tokuş eden soyları sembolize ederken, merkezi unsur yenilenme kapasitesini veya bunun sonucu olarak toplumu temsil eder. Başka bir deyişle, bu, sosyal antropologlara göre açıkça tüm devlet öncesi toplumlar için büyük öneme sahip olduğu düşünülen egzogamik kuralını (“dış evlilik”) temsil eder. Çeşitli Neolitik yerleşim yerlerinde gözlemlenen ikiz sütunlar gibi, izomorfizm altındaki sembolizm üzerine düşünüldüğünde, doğurganlık, toplum ne kadar egzogamik alt gruba bölünürse bölünsün, karşılıklı bir evlilik alışverişi şeması olarak kavramsallaştırılmış olabilir. Böylece egzogami, birbiriyle etkileşen iki alt parça olarak temsil edilir. Yakın zamanda Neolitik Göbekli Tepe’de eksiksiz sembolik ‘arşivlerin’ keşfi, bizi Forest’ın Çatalhöyük deşifre sistemini araştırmaya ve onu bu yeni resimsel temsiller düzenine uygulamaya teşvik etti. Kaçınılmaz belirsizliklere rağmen, Göbekli Tepe tasvirlerinin çoğunun ne kadar iyi anlaşıldığı dikkat çekici olsa da bu yalnızca onun sezgisinin oldukça doğru olması gerektiğini göstermekle kalmaz aynı zamanda Neolitik boyunca (ve sonrasında) geniş çapta paylaşılmış olması gerektiğini de gösterir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Egzogami, Sembolik Temsiller, Neolitik, Dualizm, Arkeo-Etnoloji.

Introduction

Ethnoarchaeology mobilizes observations made on extant societies to help make sense of little-understood archaeological features. It generally applies to the material culture, particularly its technological aspects (e. g., ceramics, stone-knapping, etc.). There is, however, a whole other domain, the immaterial culture, in particular the ideology, which can be deciphered-cum-reconstructed with the help of ethnology. This is the approach that Jean-Daniel Forest (1992: 31) calls ‘archaeo-ethnology’. It allowed him to reach a remarkable, though little-noticed achievement: the decipherment of the symbolism of Çatalhöyük (Forest 1993). Because the depiction system has its own logic and because the varied motifs bear a striking similarity to those found in other Neolithic symbolic repertoires, it appeared worth attempting to apply it to Göbekli Tepe, which also clearly presents the characteristics of a “symbolic system of communication (... for which...) recourse to ethnographic analogies (...may help...) in decoding prehistoric motifs from Anatolia” (Yakar, 2005: 113-4).

Forest’s decipherment: a presentation

Before anything else, Forest’s approach requires a high degree of detachment from modern cognitive patterns: “the logic of some is not the logic of others” (Forest, 1992: 25-6). Two ethnological principles need to be presented: first, traditional societies are small and enclosed, thence called “universal” by the anthropologist Barnard (1978), in the sense that they form a world by themselves and do not rely on any other group, in particular in terms of reproduction. The implication is that “a community would have consisted largely of kin-related groups” (Yakar, 2003: 442), which were the source of sexual mates of the community at large. Second, in all pre-state societies, this distribution strictly follows the rule of exogamy (‘marrying outside’): one cannot marry within her/his own (sub) group but in another. The consequence of both these rules is that the community is systematically divided into separate interdependent subgroups (Malinowski, 1932: 24-5), strictly defined by matrilineal or patrilineal filiation, permanently exchanging sexual mates for the reproduction of the community as a whole (Lévi-Strauss, 1967; Testart, 1985; Ghasarian, 1996; Walker et al., 2011): two ‘moieties’, four ‘sections’, eight ‘subsections’, or, later, any number of autonomous (farming) ‘lineages’, “through which group identity would have been

established (...) as early as the Late Epipaleolithic/PPNA" (Yakar, 2003: 438).

Symbols are elements taken from nature to mean something specific, a concept. A related set of such symbols thus conveys a message. "Each motif has a precise meaning (related to) original notions, (and) stories or messages (are) conveyed by their combinations (...)" (Yakar, 2005: 117). The message that Forest (1993) deciphered in the symbolic representations (on the basis of the principles devised above) is best summarized in a particular image modelled on certain walls of Çatalhöyük. It represents a female figure giving birth to a bull. The latter is seen as an image of the society: horns are a widespread phallic symbol among domestic societies (Bourdieu, 1998: 44). Thus, society sees itself as the male product of a female regenerative principle. This latter principle has two opposite but complementary aspects: as she gives life by the vagina, she takes it back (swallows it) with her teeth. Also, the female figure touches two pillars or poles with her hands and feet. Pillars or poles being understood as the image of the lineage (Banning, 2011: 626; Kornienko 2018: 17; Jeunesse 2020: 54), the female figure expresses the exchange of marital mates among distinct lineages to ensure the reproduction of the society. These symbols have nothing to do with real men or women; in the absence of writing, they are images chosen to express the endless cycle of life and death of the society rendered possible by exogamy. This iconographic message is also often schematized in a cross figure, 'X' or '+' painted on Çatalhöyük walls and ceramics, incised on Körtik Tepe stone bowls, or sculpted on Göbekli pillars (*infra*). In a famous limestone statue from Nevalı Çori (Schmidt, 2007: 98, Fig. 16), this 'X' sign supports two heads looking in opposite directions, themselves below a psychopomp bird = two sets of opposed elements (horizontal line: two exogamic moieties; vertical line: life/death¹) intersect to form a fifth, complete, feminine regenerative principle (Forest, 1993: 17-21, 30; 2006: 134).

These are the general terms of the message but, often, only parts of it are shown, emphasizing one particular element, itself occasionally reduced to a significant detail, the rest being suggested. Society may for example stand alone, represented by the bull, itself reduced to a bucranium. Also, synonymous signs are often used, each bearing a specific connotation. For example, the snake, as in many cultures, appears as a symbol of 're-birthing' because it sheds its skin

1 The North/South-East/West dichotomy is often identifiable in the organization of the whole village, communal buildings or houses at Çatalhöyük and other Neolithic sites (Forest, 1993; Bodet, in preparation).

(Gibson, 2009: 29), as well as a line of ancestors because of its elongated form (Granet, 1929: 282). In the Neolithic symbolism, snakes and pillars both seem to refer to lineages but the former, especially when represented undulating, is more convenient to represent a provider and receiver of mates, while the latter is more explicit of kinship unity through time. Both triangles and zigzags have been recognized by Forest to represent mates going from one lineage to the other (marriage/alliance), but the former is more understandable as individuals while in the latter (a zigzag being a series a chevron), these individuals are seen as part of a lineage. Pairs of zigzagging snakes thus probably stand for exchanging lineages. Death is omnipresent and is declined in two main forms: teeth of carnivorous animals (fox jaws are actually found in clay protuberances on Çatalhöyük walls) would indicate the death of the body (devoured flesh), while psychopomp birds (Gourichon, 2002: 149) express spiritual death: in oriental art, for example, cranes, which fly at high altitudes, are supposed to lead the soul of the deceased to the heavens (Wilson, 2020: 79). Scavenging birds like vultures and crows could concentrate both types of death like they seem to do in Zoroastrianism; common in Çatalhöyük, these seem however absent or rare in Göbekli Tepe.

We understand that the scenes should not be read at face value but for the message they convey. For example, the Çatalhöyük painting (Mellaart, 1966: 171, Fig. 48) where a huge bull is surrounded by minute hunters wearing leopard skins, expresses the idea that the society, though under the constant threat of death, remains stronger because united (Forest, 1993: 18).

Forest's interpretative system first leaves the reader with a degree of suspicion: how can we know about the correspondence between symbols and meaning? This code was devised after an arduous guess-work profoundly inspired by ethnography and logical correlations as we have tried to show (birds: psychopomp; snake: lineage etc.). But symbols are sometimes interpreted differently by different cultures. The coherence of Forest's symbolic explanatory system can only be verified from its checking against the depictions themselves. For Çatalhöyük, it worked out well, and because these concepts are universal (life, death, exogamy, regenerative principle), there is a probability that it makes also sense of other prehistoric depictions. The emphasis put on the teeth of the fox and boar on pillars 9 and 12 (Schmidt, 2007: 181-8, Fig. 51-9) or the Lion pillar (Fig. 1) at Göbekli Tepe is good indicators that they convey a common message, easily equated with death (below).



Fig. 1: The lion pillar (Schmidt, 2007: 289, Fig. 102). Picture No: D-DAI-IST-GT-1998-DJ-PII_0005, by Dieter Johannes. © Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Göbekli Tepe Project.

Deciphering Göbekli Tepe Symbolic Scenes

The bull: The Society

Stele No 2, enclosure A (Fig. 2), is a convenient place to begin with. A large bovid is on top, a smaller fox below and a crane of similar size at the bottom (Schmidt, 2007: 178, Fig. 46). Overall, the depiction is rather coarse; therefore, the few details represented must bear a specific meaning. The most prominent one is the bucranium of the bull, emphasized by its size compared to the body and by its representation on a flat surface while all other figures are in profile. The bull is expected to stand for the society, and the two horns arguably evoke the unification of its two moieties. Another detail is the teeth of the fox, emphasizing a deathly function. Below, the psychopomp crane, a migratory bird, could stand for the eternal cycle of life and death.

Another detail is the legs of the three animals, represented as perfectly parallel pairs, which is certainly not natural. It seems to recall the importance of the parallel lineages ‘supporting’ the society. Furthermore, the legs are more or less in a chevron pattern, a geometric sign expected at Çatalhöyük to represent

migrating mates (marriage/alliance).

Quite similarly to the ‘bull and hunters’ scene at Çatalhöyük, the scene of stele the scene of Stele No 2 may be read as such: ‘the society everlastingly (cyclically) supersedes physical (the devouring fox) and spiritual death (the psychopomp crane), because exogamy between lineages (bucranium) is respected’.



Fig. 2: stele No 2, enclosure A, Schmidt (2007: 111, Fig. 16). Picture No. D-DAI-IST-GT-1997-CG-P02_0001, by Christoph Gerber. © Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, GBP.

At Çatalhöyük, the bull is not only shown with death but also with the female element, the engendering principle, i.e. life. On the ridge of the western twin pillars of enclosure D (Schmidt, 2007: 204, Fig. 81), there is, between the horns of the bucranium, a hollowed circle, a sign often representing a womb/vagina, that is, fertility: ‘life/the society (the bull) is permitted by the unification of (mates from) distinct lineages/moieties (the two horns), that is, through exogamy’.

The parallel lines: exogamy

The narrow ridge of pillar 20 (Fig. 3) will allow a better understanding of the symbolic role played by the bucranium. Let’s first note that the two vertical lines represented all along each edge are part of the symbolic composition: the

tip of each horn (again disproportionately big compared to the rest of the body) intentionally touches them. For example, on the 'hollowed bucranium' picture just mentioned, the horns are superposed on these vertical lines and in still another case, the ridge of pillar 33, enclosure D (see Fig. 4; Schmidt, 227b: 214, Fig. 92), these two lines are filled with chevrons and snakes, inducing the idea that these vertical lines also are likely to stand for exogamic lineages.



Fig. 3. Ridge of Pillar 20 (Schmidt, 2007: 114, Fig. 22). Picture No. D-DAI-IST-GT-2003-DJ-P20_Ddj0141, by Dieter Johannes. © Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, GBP.

In Fig. 3, the two horns join the two vertical lines. The reading seems to be that 'the lineages that 'the lineages exchange mates so that the society (the bull) can be strong', or 'the society exists only because its separate moieties exchange mates'. The fact that the horn is a male symbol does not imply the union of two men; we are here in the sphere of pure abstraction, as each lineage, conceiving itself as male, provides a mate, symbolically represented as a male. But the picture may also be read diachronically: if the exchange of two males were indeed represented, it would be one generation after the other, two matrilineage reciprocally sending a male for each marital alliance. The two lineages, endless lines of ancestors, are clearly separated and parallel throughout time, recalling that they ought never to mix in confusion but strictly respect exogamy for the society to perpetuate.

To finish the 'reading' of Fig. 3, the bull comes head to head with a snake which seems to be zigzagging between the two lineages, but its tail is too short

and impels the proper reading of the image. We must turn to other reliefs to make this point more explicit.

The snakes: the lineages

Following Forest (1993: 17), the zigzagging snakes represent lineages exchanging mates at every generation. In Fig. 4, they are explicitly shown touching the two vertical lines carved along the edges, promoting the idea that, like with the horns of the bull, parallel and exogamic lineages (or moieties) are mutually and systematically sending and receiving mates to and from each other, or one after the other, for the whole society to perpetuate. The temporal connotation expressed through the snake seems here clear.

At the bottom of Fig. 4, we see three parallel snakes between the two vertical lines. It is possible that the two snakes on the sides ‘copy’ the two lineages, while the one in the center expresses the result of this interbreeding, the lineage of the society as one, again perpetuating through the continuous exogamic exchange.

In Fig. 4, top-right, we see a snake represented on each vertical edge, confirming, in our view, that the vertical lines stand for lineages. In the space between the two lines, we see two converging snakes, possibly representing the two exogamic mates sent by the two moieties and/or the mating of two individuals from distinct lineages unifying for reproduction. The verticality of the representation emphasizes the endless continuity of this process. Taken from this temporal point of view, the two converging snakes may concomitantly stand for death producing life as life produces death, perpetually. In the lower-right corner, the central element joining the two lineages with its legs (shown in a distinctive chevron pattern) is a spider, another symbol of regeneration, tracing a ‘net of kinship relation’ (infra). Sometimes, it is replaced by a scorpion, possibly another phallic symbol (Forest, 2006: 134).



Fig. 4: Snakes at Göbekli Tepe (Dietrich et al., 2012: 686, Fig. 10). © Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, GBP. (Top left: Pillar 01, D-DAI-IST-GT-1997-CG-P01_Dcg0003, Christoph Gerber; Top right: Pillar 01, D-DAI-IST-GT-1997-DJ-P01_D0000, Dieter Johannes; Bottom left: Pillar 33, D-DAI-IST-GT-2002-IW-P33_Diw0054, Irmgard Wagner; Bottom right: Pillar 33, DAI-IST-GT-2002-IW-P33_Diw0004, Irmgard Wagner).

The net: matrilineal relations

The net of social relations takes literally place in the symbolism of Fig. 4 top-left. The net is traced by snakes interwoven in a regular pattern with eight heads on top and nine below. If the snake is a lineage, the reading is clear: all lineages interact with each other, giving and receiving a mate to and from its two neighbors, a symbolic representation (Bodet, 2012) of a ‘generalized’ type of elementary kinship pattern, following the definition given by Lévi-Strauss (1967;

see also Ghasarian, 1996), with the last lineage giving its mate to the first one, thus forming an endless circular pattern. This could be why one side has eight and the other nine snakes, one of the latter being represented twice to illustrate the circular marital pattern on a flat surface. The fact that this stele (No. 1) is found in enclosure A, an enclosure with apparently four main parallel stelae, is perhaps not random: if each stele represents a group made up of two moieties, the net of snakes could stand for the eight subsections arranged in a ‘generalized’ marital pattern, that is, the reproduction ‘network’ of the entire community. The assumption that the Neolithic groups directly depicted their alliance pattern on the pillars of Göbekli must remain very tentative, but ‘exogamy’ and ‘dualism’ seem nonetheless clearly present in both social and symbolic spheres.

The net also appears on stele 12 in enclosure C (Schmidt, 2007: 188, Fig. 59), forming the background on which five birds fly (one of them baring its teeth just like the boar and fox beneath): ‘death (birds) threatens the community, but the tight interaction of the social net (mate-exchange system) traps the birds’. Again, ‘the society, if united by the alliance network, is stronger than death’ could be the meaning of that panel. We understand this not as a vain attempt to ward off death through a magical expression, but as an incitement to respect the rules of the alliance. Individuals certainly die, but the community does not, as it keeps on perpetuating, generation after generation, if it follows the exogamic rule.

The H sign: the regenerative symbol

We mentioned that the recurrent ‘X’ sign at Çatalhöyük was read by Forest (1993: 9, Fig. 2) as the schematized version of the message delivered in the figurative representations, that is, the intersections of four triangles: death and life (up/mouth and down/vagina) through the unification of two exogamic lineages (right and left). The ‘H’ sign, visible on several stelae at Göbekli, is probably a variant of this sign, with vertical lines standing for exogamic lineages linked through marital alliance by a horizontal line. If ‘X’ may emphasize the reciprocal form of the exchange, ‘H’ seems centered on the union that binds the lineages (there are sometimes two horizontal lines -Fig. 5 on top- maybe recalling reciprocity). As a matter of fact, both ‘H’ and ‘X’ signs are visible on the ridge of steles 28 and 18 (enclosures C and D) (Fig. 5), both denoting the exogamic shape of the regenerative principle.

The two vertical lines of the ‘H’ are parallel to (Fig. 4, bottom left), and

even, on stele 28, superposed upon those carved along the two edges of the ridge, confirming, once more, that these lines must represent lineages. On stele 28, the horizontal (Schmidt, 2007: 203, Fig. 80), the horizontal line of the 'H' is superposed on a hollowed circle (symbol of fertility), thus divided into two halves; in stele 18 (Fig. 5, top of the ridge; see also Schmidt 2007: 203, fig. 80), a similar circular sign is placed just above a crescent-shaped symbol, similar to a bucranium with its two horns 'joining' the sidelines. All these signs seem to state: 'fertility is the outcome of the alliance between two moieties', or, 'only the union of two distinct lineages allows for the society to reproduce'.

The anthropomorphic stele

On stele 18, one of the twin anthropomorphic steles of enclosure D, we see an arm on each of the two large surfaces (Fig. 5). Elbows are in an unnatural right angle position, recalling the chevrons of Çatalhöyük understood as the mates travelling from one lineage (each arm) to the other: 'the two folded arms make up the social (anthropomorphic) body'. Each arm ends on the ridge of the stele with perfectly parallel fingers (Neolithic hands are usually depicted in this particular way; see, for example, the Urfa statue in Schmidt (2007: 253, Fig. 93) about to join, just above loins and the circular 'buckle of the belt' (Schmidt - 2007: 253, Fig. 93)

We saw that circles are often a symbol of fertility, a maternal womb or a feminine sexual organ (see e.g. Haland, 2017: 166). This interpretation seems to fit well this circular 'buckle' above the loins, especially since it is surrounded by small H and X signs just described as signs of regeneration. The fertile principle is thus brought into action by the joining of the two hands: the fingers (as an extension of the arms) seem to stand for the several mates belonging to each of the two lineages about to unite to ensure regeneration.



Fig. 5: Pillar 18 (Dietrich et al., 2012: 683, Fig. 8, detail). Picture No. DAI-IST-GT-2010-NB-P18_N01_36, by Nico Becker. © Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, GBP.

Finally, below the buckle are two patties with claws, a probable symbol of death, each prolonging the two vertical lines along the edge and surrounding the tail (phallic symbol? of the fox at the elbow?). Patties and foxes, probable symbols of death, are peripheral to the composition, centered on the womb. The complete reading seems then to become ‘despite the inevitable death (of individuals of the lineage- fingers and arms), the regeneration of the society (the stele centered on the circular womb), that is, the cycle of life and death, prevails through the exogamy of the two lineages’.

The woman²

There is a stone carving from the PPNB level of Göbekli Tepe, a rare depiction of a woman-like figure (Fig. 6). The scene recalls directly the wall relief of Çatalhöyük described above, with her limbs reaching out to two symbolic columns. In this case, also, dualism appears quite clearly: legs, breasts and

² This paragraph was originally written as a personal answer to Çiler Çilingiroğlu asking me how this picture illustrated the conference I was then presenting on the Neolithic dualism (TAG-Turkey III). Her generally positive feedback made me realize that iconography was a good way to illustrate my views. Çiler’s curiosity and open-mindedness are thus partly at the origin of this article, and I thank her here for it.

arms are stretched out wide, possibly in birthing labor. Moreover, if the body is frontally depicted, the head seems to have two profiles, one looking right (west/north?) and the other left (east/south?). The limbs/faces are thus probably reaching out/looking towards two exogamic lineages. These are not represented here, but they are strongly suggested by the position of the figure, which has nothing natural in it. One arm is closed in a triangle position, in the manner of the anthropomorphic stele just mentioned, arguably standing for the migrating mates.

Is there a penis in the vulva depicting a sexual intercourse? In this case, it would more likely present the result of such intercourse-this figure would then give birth to a male element (i.e. the society). Or is it an animal's patty? It would then symbolize death, the feminine principle giving birth to life and therefore to death. Death may also be represented with the mouth (?), suggesting the act of swallowing (like toothed animals). It seems clear that this female figure has nothing to do with a woman; rather, it symbolizes the fertility principle. And if it gives birth, it also incorporates death, following the eternal cycle of life and death put into action through the unification of two exogamic lineages (stretched limbs).

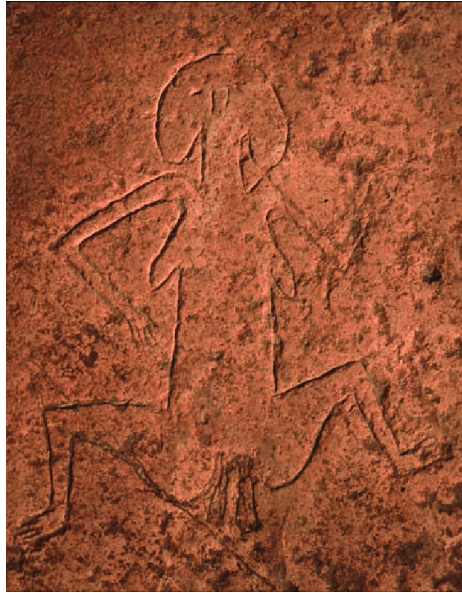


Fig. 6: Female figure (Schmidt, 2007: 290, Fig. 104). DAI-IST-GT-2000-KS-C18_11.

By Klaus Schmidt. © Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Göbekli Tepe Projekt.

How can a society deprived of writing display the message “respect exogamy”? This seems to be just one more example.

Discussion and Conclusion

Symbolic images do not convey what they represent at first glance, and they are chosen as the embodiment of a concept. What concepts may be represented in Neolithic symbolic places? Probably not deities, as such terminology should be reserved to state-like societies (Forest, 1996). Traditional societies have mythical heroes (Testart, 2006), and the bestiary of Göbekli must be in some way connected to them (Schmidt, 2007: 223). “These people must have had a highly complicated mythology, including a capacity for abstraction” (Dietrich et al., 2012: 684). The animals depicted and the heroes of the myths indeed certainly relate to the same concepts structuring the society’s ideology, in particular exogamy.

Ethnology tells us that the focus of attention of pre-state societies revolves around kinship and alliance. Kinship “*is a domain of social relations; a framework of action, rules, and rights; a powerful means to stretch identities across space and time; and a mode of structuring time, history, and memory*” (Souvatzi, 2017: 172). This social structure is shaped by a few basic principles like an equal exchange, reciprocity and exogamy. These are the principles expected to reflect on the symbolism. In other words, what interest those people most is themselves, not as individuals, but as a community.

The images analyzed here are enough to show that a nearly geometric pattern structures them all with evocative elements often found in the same type of relation with one another. The general reading grid devised by Forest for Çatalhöyük thus provides a satisfying *structural* sense (as opposed to the contingent mythical stories which will remain obscure) of a large number of Neolithic depictions. The reader is invited to apply the deciphering keys provided to any other contemporary image.

The end-reading always comes down to the idea that the regenerative principle of the society goes through the reciprocal exchange of mates among lineages. Behind the diversity of scenes, this reading leaves the ‘reader’ with a rather monotonous feeling, but this hammering must have been a necessary one for the people (most probably the elders) who conceived the work: for them, the survival of the community was at stake, threatened as it was by the advent

of autonomous agricultural nuclear families, freed from the reciprocal and prescriptive exchange of mates among the subgroups of a 'restricted' or 'universal' larger community (Bodet, in preparation).

The overall coherence throughout time and space between atalhöyük and Göbekli Tepe shows that both communities shared the same ideological references. In fact, this background is likely to be much more diffuse and widespread, continuing, according to Forest (1996), through Halaf and Obeid cultures all the way to Bronze Age Mesopotamian civilizations (horns as a divine attribute, cross motifs on ceramics, etc.). We have tried to show that the same symbolic pool was probably already present in the Neanderthal cave of Bruniquel (Jaubert et al., 2016) with twin piles of stalactites, a phallic symbol equivalent to the bull's horn, and the dualism present in the Upper Paleolithic Franco-Cantabrian cave paintings (Bodet, in preparation).

Life and death are natural elements on which humans have no influence. Exogamy (reciprocal exchange of mates among subgroups), on the contrary, appears as a fundamental social *rule* which ought to be respected and on which the prehistoric symbolism places its emphasis. The message conveyed at Göbekli Tepe can probably be included in this universal concern.

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