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DEATH AND DYING IN THE NEOLITHIC NEAR EAST



KARINA CROUCHER

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To Paul Goodwin and Boots Croucher

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Preface and Acknowledgments

This book developed through doctoral research at the University of Manchester and teaching at the Universities of Liverpool and Manchester. It has been made possible by a British Academy Post-doctoral Fellowship. The book is intended to offer both an overview of and new insights into some of the most fascinating archaeological data from the Neolithic Near East, including plastered skulls, anthropomorphic statuary, and evidence of people's relationships with their dead. It also seeks to challenge some of the normative perceptions in the present, whilst exploring the role that interpretation of the past plays in creating and perpetuating norms and ideals. It is hoped that the interpretations offered in this book will provide a start rather than an end point on which students and researchers can build, by offering new and engaging understandings about living and dying in the past.

I would like to thank the directors and excavators for their generosity in allowing me access to the archaeological sites and material discussed in this text; without their work and support this book would be rather empty. For giving me permission to discuss their excavations and use of their images, I am indebted to Peter Akkermans (Sabi Abyad), Stuart Campbell (Domuztepe), Jack Green (Ashmolean Museum), Nigel Goring-Morris (Kfar HaHoresh), Ian Hodder (Çatalhöyük; photography by Jason Quinlan and reconstruction by John Swogger), Stuart Laidlaw (Kenyon Jericho Archive, UCL, and photography by Cecil Western), Gary Rollefson ('Ain Ghazal; photography by Peter Dorrell, Stuart Laidlaw, John Tsantes, and Hisahiko Wada), Klaus Schmidt (GöbekliTepe, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, and Jens Notroff and Oliver Dietrich), Danielle Stordeur (Jerf el-Ahmar and Tell Aswad), Akira Tsuneki (Tell 'Ain el-Kerkh), Paul Goodwin and Joanne Wright for their help with illustration, and for their personal photographs, Ellen Belcher, Paul Goodwin, Elizabeth Healey, and Kay Prag, and my friends and family in Bangladesh. For their willingness to discuss strands of evidence and for providing me with access to unpublished material, I would like to thank Eleni Asouti, Douglas Baird, Ellen Belcher, Steve Bell, Diane Bolger, Michelle Bonogofsky, Brian Boyd, Jennie Bradbury, Bronwen Campbell, Dana Campbell, Beth Conklin, Lindy Crewe, Aurelie Daems, Timothy Darvill,

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Notes to the Reader

All dates presented in this publication, unless otherwise stated, are BC calibrated.

References include the author's name, year of publication, followed by page number: (e.g. Croucher 2005: 8).

Used correctly, the anatomical term 'skull' refers to the skeleton of the whole head, i.e. the cranium, facial bones, and mandible combined. However, in the literature relating to the Neolithic Near East, 'skulls' and 'crania' can be poorly differentiated and the terms are often used interchangeably. This is particularly the case in the literature relating to plastered skulls. Therefore, while recognizing that the use of the word 'skull' might be anatomically incorrect in many instances, for general accounts I have used 'skulls' to include crania and parts of the skull. Where information is available, the presence or absence of mandibles has been included in individual accounts of sites.

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List of Abbreviations

GENERAL

American School of Oriental Research	ASOR
British Association for Near Eastern Archaeology	BANEA
Cardiopulmonary resuscitation	CPR
Centimetre	cm
Circa	c.
Cubic metre	m ³
Electroencephalograph	EEG
Glasgow Coma Scale	GCS
Hectare (10,000 m ²)	ha
International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East	ICAANE
Metre	m
Oxford English Dictionary	OED
Square metre	m ²

DATING

Accelerator Mass Spectrometry	AMS
Anno Domini	AD
Before Christ	BC
'Before Present' (a date set at before 1950)	BP
Calibrated (dates)	cal
Calibration abbreviation	±
Calibration programme	<i>OxCal v4.1</i>
Pottery Neolithic	PN
Pre-Pottery Neolithic	PPN
Pre-Pottery Neolithic A	PPNA
Pre-Pottery Neolithic B	PPNB
Early Pre-Pottery Neolithic B	EPPNB
Middle Pre-Pottery Neolithic B	MPPNB
Late Pre-Pottery Neolithic B	LPPNB
Late Neolithic	LN
Uncalibrated (dates)	uncal

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Death and Dying

INTRODUCTION

There had been many deaths this season, one of them in his own cave; he had only to put the corpse where he had left the new baby at the last quarter of the moon, and the hyenas would do the rest . . . Moon-Watcher left the body under a small bush and hurried back to re-join the tribe. He never thought of his father again (Arthur C. Clarke, 2001: *A Space Odyssey*, 1968).

Our culturally specific attitudes to death determine the ways in which we understand and interpret this fundamental and inevitable factor of life. Whilst death is universal, attitudes to it vary dramatically, including experiences of mourning and grieving, as well as the perceived correct disposal of the deceased. A natural instinct is frequently one of shock or abhorrence when disposal methods or attitudes towards the dead differ vastly from those we consider to be normal, whether in our everyday lives or in works of fiction.

This volume seeks to challenge some of our assumptions about death and the dead body, suggesting new ways of interpreting the mortuary practices of the Neolithic Near East. It considers treatments of the corpse which, whilst considered shocking or disturbing by modern standards, when contextualized reveal not only vastly alternative worldviews from our own, but also offer new questions to ask of the archaeological data: for instance, investigations of identity, personhood, and gender in the past, and consideration of concepts such as social memory and the not unproblematic notion of ‘ancestors’; the webs of relationships between people, their environments, and their new material world, and between humans and animals, and the living and the dead.

The Neolithic is an exciting and fundamental period in human development, when ways of living altered to include new relationships with and understandings of the environment and the surrounding world. It is a time when people became increasingly dependent on agriculture, domesticated crops, and animal species as well as becoming more permanently settled in larger groups. Alongside changes in subsistence were developments in architecture: the construction of often larger, more complex and sturdily built structures, which came about alongside changes in technology, including the use of lime plaster, complex chipped stone tools, and, later, pottery manufacture. There were, no doubt, developments that are less visible archaeologically due to preservation conditions, including woodworking and textile-making, and the use of other perishable resources, such as basketry and matting, frequently evidenced through impressions in plaster or clay.

Alongside these developments, changes in mortuary practices were also taking place, which provide some of the most intriguing and breathtaking archaeological material excavated from Neolithic contexts. Included in the wealth of material are plastered skulls, where faces made from mud or lime plaster were recreated onto the skulls and crania of the dead. Other mortuary practices range from burials beneath the floor in houses, in courtyards, and in abandoned buildings. Burials were often decapitated, and there is evidence of the curation of skulls, secondary burial of bones, and the fragmentation of bodies and material culture in the mortuary domain. It is practices such as these that provide the core evidence for this publication, along with human representations, material culture, and architecture, where relevant. Asking different questions of the data reveals new insights about life and death in the Neolithic Near East, revealing understandings about personhood, relational identities, and gender and family roles, as well as considering people's relationships with each other, the dead, animals, things, and their material and environmental worlds. This provides a more 'humanized' or 'peopled' past, enabled by decades of research by archaeologists focusing on subsistence strategies, site formation, and architectural developments. Research into these themes has provided a crucial understanding of key changes and archaeological sites, which can now be built upon to explore new avenues of research and interpretation.

A case-study approach is taken throughout this book, focusing on the small scale, and building interpretations from the bottom

upwards. This requires analysis of individual sites or features, rather than providing a large-scale overview or narrative. Rather than fitting the evidence into a preconceived framework, such an approach reveals differences as well as similarities and patterns in archaeological evidence, and problematizes the grand narratives of development which are familiar in overviews of the Neolithic in the Near East, a topic that will be discussed in greater detail in chapters 2 and 3. Instead of focusing on a linear developmental trajectory, this book takes the approach advocated by Foucault (1971), which he describes as 'genealogies of practice', where traces of practices are followed as they ebb and flow through time and place, rather than searching for a linear pattern or trying to plot their origins.

The developments that took place during the Neolithic period are often seen as paving the way for the later development of the earliest cities in Mesopotamia and Anatolia (the 'cradle of civilization'), with ways of living in large numbers that we are not unfamiliar with today. The Neolithic is consequently often studied from a modern perspective; thought about from the situation of urbanism and modernity whose roots are ultimately sought in the Neolithic. Such approaches inevitably project back into the past the patterns of behaviour that will lead to modernity, including values and ways of life, social hierarchy, and attitudes to material culture, property, animals, and the environment. And more fundamentally, concepts such as individuality and gendered identities are usually assumed rather than questioned. This is not necessarily intentional; notions of being are deeply embedded in modern ways of life and feel natural and universally 'normal', even though we are aware that even basic concepts such as individuality, family organisation, or gendered roles are culturally constructed. Ethnographic evidence has provided information on the fundamentally different ways people experience the world and provided alternative understandings of personhood and identity. Ethnographic case studies, however, are not analogies for past behaviour, but are a means for understanding the variety of human experience which may differ from our modern, Western ways of viewing the world. Even biological givens such as death and biological sex can be culturally and historically contextual, suggesting that vastly alternative ways of thinking and being should not be excluded from archaeological interpretations. Such recognition of our biases in interpretation is therefore necessary. Rather than searching

for concepts with which we are familiar, such as social hierarchy, wealth, and status, new avenues of interpretation are investigated. In chapter 4, for example, re-analysis of the ‘skull cult’ and plastered skulls includes discussion about display and performance, and the concept of ancestor veneration, involving non-human ancestors and evidence from monumental anthropomorphic monoliths. Our ways of studying the past are also discussed in chapter 5, where alternative perspectives on gendered identities and family roles are examined—including ambiguous gender categories—which move away from accepted notions of male and female as binary opposites. In chapter 6, concepts of fragmentation are investigated, analysing the intentional disarticulation, defleshing, and possible consumption of the human body and animals. Human–animal relationships are considered alongside the notion of animals as ancestors, and the review of personhood is seen here as relational and contextual, rather than only relating to personal, individual identities in the past.

TERMS AND CONVENTIONS USED IN THIS PUBLICATION

Chronology

The ‘Neolithic’ is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as ‘relating to or denoting the later part of the Stone Age’ (OED 2005). This is traditionally described as the period marked out by the introduction of agriculture and domestication of animals, spreading from the Near East by the 8th millennium BC to Northwest Europe by the 4th millennium BC. The Near East¹ includes the geographic regions of

¹ The region we call the ‘Near East’ has a historical legacy that pre-dates World War II. However, the term is as problematic as it is Eurocentric and implies a focus on where it is ‘Near East’ to, in this case, Western Europe. So rather than viewing the region from its own perspective, the name suggests its significance in relation to Europe and the Western world. The name also holds various connotations which often romanticize the nature of the ‘other’, the ‘Exotic East’. A more politically correct name for the region is Southwest Asia, which broadly encompasses the same geographical areas for some purposes, although the term ‘Near East’ frequently also encompasses the North African countries of Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia, and the Arabian states of Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen (i.e. by the US Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs or the Near East Foundation). For this

Ancient Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and the Levant. Mesopotamia is the land between and around the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers, which is modern-day Iraq and Syria. Anatolia covers most of Central and Southeast Turkey, and the Levant stretches down into Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine. Some sites in Iran are also referred to in this publication, as is the island of Cyprus in the Mediterranean.

Whilst the Neolithic period is definable in dictionary terms, in reality its temporal edges become blurred as the periods directly preceding and succeeding necessarily become incorporated into discussions of the Neolithic. For this reason, this volume takes the broadest definition of the period, beginning at around 10000 BC and continuing until the Later Neolithic, approximately 5000 BC. At the end of this temporal scale is the 'Halaf' period, which is sometimes included within discussions of the Late Neolithic and at other times separated into the Chalcolithic. I have included some sites from the Late Neolithic here, following Akkermans (1993: 3) and Campbell (1998). In reality, these temporal boundaries are the creations of archaeologists rather than real entities in the past, and as they are artificial categorizations for our material, it is not surprising that the evidence does not always fit into these neat categorizations. However, a great deal of research has been invested into defining these periods according to common factors in their architecture, subsistence, economies, and material culture. This has provided an in-depth understanding of archaeological sites and key changes, an invaluable resource enabling further investigation, and the development of new approaches and interpretations.

Key publications detail many of the important archaeological sites and provide overviews of aspects of the Neolithic Near East, presenting comprehensive analyses of the archaeological data. For the Levant, the review by Kuijt and Goring-Morris (2002) 'Foraging, Farming, and Social Complexity in the Pre-Pottery Neolithic of the Southern Levant' remains a valuable compilation and analysis of key sites and chronological periods, with Asouti's (2006) 'Beyond the Pre-Pottery Neolithic B interaction sphere' placing the PPNB in a more theoretically informed and interpretative context. Akkermans

publication, the countries of North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula are not included within the general term 'Near East', although the label 'the Near East' is used for archaeological consistency within the discipline, with all of the problems mentioned above acknowledged.

and Schwartz (2003) provide an overview of the prehistory and early history of Syria in *The Archaeology of Syria: From Complex Hunter-Gatherers to Early Urban Societies*, and for Mesopotamia, Matthews (2003) *The Archaeology of Mesopotamia: Theories and Approaches* provides an excellent overview. For Anatolia, Sagona and Zimansky's *Ancient Turkey* (2009) provides an overview from the earliest inhabitants until the mid-1st millennium BC. Resources that are a little older in date, yet still valuable to students of archaeology, include: Pollock (1999) *Ancient Mesopotamia*; Maisels (1993) *The Near East: Archaeology in the 'Cradle of Civilization'*; Matthews (1998) *Ancient Anatolia*; and Roaf's classic (1990) *Cultural Atlas of Mesopotamia and the Ancient Near East*. Edited volumes, providing insight into the most prominent archaeological sites and perspectives, include: Kuijt (2000) *Life in Neolithic Farming Communities: Social Organization, Identity, and Differentiation*; Özdoğan et al (2003) *From Villages to Cities*; Levy (1998) *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land*; and Özdoğan and Başgelen (1999) *Neolithic in Turkey* (an updated version is due to be published shortly); and Steadman and McMahon (2010) *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Anatolia*.

In the Near East, the Neolithic is subdivided into the Pre-Pottery Neolithic (PPN) and Late Neolithic (LN), or Pottery Neolithic (PN). The PPN is further subdivided into the Pre-Pottery Neolithic A (PPNA), the Pre-Pottery Neolithic B—with early (EPPNB), Middle (MPPNB) and Late (LPPNB) phases—and the Pre-Pottery Neolithic C, often also referred to as the Final PPNB. This final phase/PPNC is also often classified as belonging with the Pottery Neolithic or Late Neolithic (see Asouti 2006: 94). The Late Neolithic is categorized differently in the North and South of the region, and then continues into phases named after their find-sites, such as Hassuna, Samarra, and Halaf. This volume uses labels such as 'PPNA', which, although accompanied by flaws, facilitate archaeological comparability and communication in a common archaeological language (see Campbell 2007).

Recent archaeological convention has also moved towards presenting dates as calibrated dates BC, frequently denoted by the abbreviation 'cal. BC'. However, as calibrated dates are used throughout this publication, 'cal.' will be omitted, and instead, uncalibrated dates will be marked by the abbreviation 'uncal.' Further discussion of absolute and relative dating is provided in chapter 2, which, in offering an overview of the chronological phases, climate changes, and issues surrounding

excavation and interpretation, considers the dominance of the search for origins of agriculture and social stratification, and discusses the inherent flaws in the archaeological labels and categories used to define the changes within the Neolithic Near East.

Mortuary practices: labels and definitions

There are few publications that deal explicitly with the mortuary evidence from the prehistoric Near East. Notable exceptions include the edited volume of conference proceedings by Campbell and Green (1995) on the *Archaeology of Death in the Ancient Near East* and the ICAANE workshop proceedings of 'Houses for the Living and a Place for the Dead' (Balkan et al 2008, in a subsection within Córdoba et al). These volumes provide essential data, on which this publication builds.

Within the Neolithic Near East, several burial types are common and will be referred to throughout this book. Primary articulated burials involved the burial of the whole body; other terms used include 'fully articulated', or 'in anatomical order'. The former is used when it is known that the body was interred in a complete state while the latter describes skeletal remains of a body that was buried in its correct anatomical order. Locations of burials can also vary from dedicated cemetery settings to domestic locations, such as beneath the floor in houses, where the dead were kept in close proximity to the living.

'Secondary burial' was also practised. It usually involved the retrieval of the body—or parts of the body—from the grave, and removal of some or all of the remains for reburial. The parts that are reburied are referred to as secondary burials. The remains may not necessarily have been buried initially, but may have been excarnated—left out in the open—or the body may have been intentionally defleshed or disarticulated before burial. The terms 'defleshed' or 'disarticulated' are used frequently throughout this publication, referring to the processing of the body, usually through cutting away the flesh or dismembering the body. Evidence for these practices is derived through analysis of the bones: primarily whether the skeleton is complete and in the correct anatomical order. Frequently, the smaller bones of the body are missing as a result of secondary burial, such as finger and toe bones, and the bones are only rarely in the

correct anatomical order. Other evidence can include cut marks on bones, or signs of weathering or animal activity, for instance, gnaw marks. Skulls, crania, and long bones were frequently retrieved from graves, and some eventually underwent secondary burial. Motivations for such practices will be discussed throughout the book, but the practice may reflect veneration and respect for the dead rather than indicating violence and disrespect.

Aside from primary and secondary burials, cremations are occasionally seen in the mortuary record from the Neolithic Near East. While cremation deals directly with the body of the deceased, a secondary aspect of the ritual often involved the collection and disposal or deposition of the ashes, or on occasion they remained in situ with the pyre.

Whilst there is a variety of treatments of the corpse that are archaeologically visible, in most cases at least for the Neolithic Near East, whatever the most common mortuary practices involved remain undetectable to us at present. There are simply not enough archaeological remains to account for populations that were alive. It might be feasible that we are yet to find undiscovered burial grounds. It is more likely that bodies were disposed of in a way that has not left an archaeological trace. Most of the dead we are dealing with are exceptions of burial and preservation, but nevertheless they provide a productive means for studying past lives.

Anatomy

Anatomical terms for parts of the body are frequently used within this publication. For a quick reference, the skull refers to the bones of the whole head, including the mandible or jawbone. The cranium, or its plural crania, refers to the upper part of the head without the lower jaw. The upper maxilla is the upper part of the jaw. Other bones referred to include the clavicle, commonly called the collarbone, located at the front and top of the torso and connecting the upper part of the breastbone with the shoulder; the scapular or shoulder bone; and the long bones, which are the bones belonging to the limbs. For the arms, these include the humerus, ulna, and radius, and for the legs, the femur, which is the thighbone, the largest single bone in the body, with the tibia and fibula comprising the lower legs. The patella is the bone of the kneecap, and phalanges refer to the finger and toe

bones: the metacarpals (hands) and metatarsals (feet). Other terms used are more familiar, such as the pelvis, ribs, and vertebrae. The medical convention of terming the left and right sides of the body as they are experienced rather than as they are viewed is also used.

DEATH AND DYING

This introduction so far has focused on the Neolithic Near East. Before moving onto more detailed discussions of the evidence in later chapters, this chapter will discuss cultural attitudes to death and dying, including practical aspects of dealing with the dead and the emotional reactions of grieving and mourning.

Being dead

While death is universal, our attitudes to it are dictated according to our various cultures, including our own personal experiences. Boddington's observations still hold true, that 'three facets of death concern the student of the past: the cause of death, the personal and social reaction to bereavement and the treatment of the corpse. None of these are independent from each other' (Boddington et al 1987: 4). In addition to this, we are also interested in the information that burial practices can reveal about the communities involved, as well as indicators of the life (rather than just the death) of the deceased.

Reactions to death, varying widely as they do, are rarely random, according to Metcalf and Huntington (1991: 24), but are always meaningful and expressive. This includes processes of mourning and grieving, the treatment of the dead body itself, as well as fundamental concepts such as the point at which a living person becomes a cadaver, as will be discussed below. To begin, this section will consider what it means to be 'dead'.

The time of death is considered to be medically clear cut but that too can be contextual and culturally interpreted. To the question 'When are we dead?' there are multiple answers: for instance, whether the point of death occurs with the last breath, the last beat of the heart, or with brain death, as all of these can mark the end of life.

It has been argued that in the modern West there is a clear distinction between being alive and being dead; 'a living subject becomes a dead object, a corpse' (Hertz 1960: 28). However, with medical advances the ability to prolong or artificially extend life often leads to some ambiguities; but it is generally accepted that the act of breathing and a beating heart indicate life. Even when brain dead a patient can be kept 'alive', although 'the concept that brain death (i.e. total cessation of integrated brain function, especially of the brain stem) constitutes a person's death has been accepted legally and culturally in most of the world' (Maiese: 2008; see also Lock 1997 for a discussion on brain death and transplant legislation). Yet diagnosis is complex, with criteria detailed in the Glasgow Coma Scale outlining tests to determine brain activity, although recent research has revealed that levels of brain activity may be present yet undetectable through the usual tests, but an accessible EEG scanning device capable of detecting brain activity of this sort is currently being developed (National Research Council of Canada 2010). Such problems of detection of brain activity have a direct impact on the legal status of being either 'alive' or 'dead'.

Once dead, it is not always the case that death is final, with the revival of patients frequently seen; death can be reversed, to which numerous survivors of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) can attest. There are also ambiguous states, with certain drugs such as tetrodotoxins causing symptoms that simulate death (Davis 1983; Hahn 2007). And while victims occasionally recover from poisoning, they are often pronounced dead prior to their recovery.

Aside from medical definitions, cultural understandings of when the time of death occurs can vary. For some, death can be viewed as the point at which the 'spirit' leaves the body. An account from Fiji in the late nineteenth century by Reverend Williams describes his observations of the process of laying out the body, which was performed several hours prior to actual death. The 'dead' still ate and drank, in one case, for a further eighteen hours. According to a local Fijian, the man was dead, with eating and talking viewed as involuntary actions of a body which was now an empty shell, the soul having departed (Williams 1884: 161). As well as an early point of death, the reverse can occur. In the Hindu tradition, the moment of death can be seen as occurring when the *pran* (the vital breath) leaves the body during the cracking of the deceased's skull during cremation (Parry 1982: 79).

The dead may continue to occupy a physical role in society: upon entering a Torajan house, Nigel Barley's host reached out to what appeared to be a large bundle of rags or clothes and introduced Granny. The body, having been wrapped in quantities of absorbent cloth to soak up the putrefaction juices, did not smell offensive. When asked how long Grandmother had been dead, the response was 'We don't say that. She's "sleeping" or "has a headache". She won't die until she leaves the house. She's been sleeping for three years now' (Barley 1995: 54f).

These instances relate to the concept of a 'social death' rather than a physical one, with the living investing in the endurance of the dead for some time. Just as the point of death may be ambiguous, what death is perceived to be can also be contextual, when in some cultures, certain states of sleep, illness, sexual climax, or trance are described as 'little deaths'. For instance, among the Dowavos, fainting or entering a coma are both considered to be states of death (Barraud et al 1994: 112).

Just as the point of death may be flexible, there is also debate surrounding the point at which life begins, whether at birth, conception, or at some point in between. The model of a life-course that begins at birth and ends at death can be seen as problematic, with the unborn and the dead frequently coming into social existence (Hockey and Draper 2005).

Death as transformation

As well as the physical transformations that take place at death, when the living body becomes the dead corpse, the act of dying can be considered a transformation rather than an ending. For instance, among the Karanga of Zimbabwe death is seen as the point where the highest stage in the development of the person can begin (Aschwandien 1987: 212). Death can also be seen as the stage when the person begins the journey to their final destination, as described by Hertz (1960: 34–6) for Borneo, and practices in Madagascar described by Rudd (1960: 162) and Bloch (1971: 138), where until the secondary burial feast, the souls of the deceased have not properly departed to the world of the ancestors. Dying is seen as a continuation of processes during life for the Merina of Madagascar. Life's journey is viewed as a process of drying, commencing at birth, when a child is

wet and soft. Throughout life the hard, dry aspects develop, advancing toward an almost totally dry person by old age. The process culminates with the final drying of bones after burial, exhumation, and finally reburial in the ancestral tomb. 'Being born, aging, dying, and later burials are all merely episodes within the same gradual sequence' (Bloch 1988: 13).

The living and the dead are frequently seen to coexist (Whaley 1981: 1) whether permanently or temporarily. The Ga'anda peoples of Northeast Nigeria view death as dangerous, sanctioning that the spirit should be properly contained and celebrated. The spirit of the deceased is believed to reside within a ceramic vessel, *hlefenda*, where it is kept alive for one year. The vessel is placed in the deceased's former sleeping room, and as the spirit is regarded as still alive, the vessel is washed and regularly refilled with freshly brewed beer, the room is kept clean, and fires are lit to warm the spirit. A year after death, a second funeral ceremony, *metfoxta*, is performed. Here the vessel is taken to a ritual grove, held by the neck and then smashed, to finally release the spirit to the afterlife. Proper treatment of the spirit during the period between death and the smashing of the vessel is seen to encourage positive relationships between ancestors and the living (Berns 1988: 71–2). To the Ga'anda, 'death is a continuation of life in another sphere' (*ibid.*). The dead person becomes an ancestor, another transformation of identity, and another role.

The examples above offer an insight into the variety of experiences of death and dying. The point at which death occurs can be social as well as physical, and even medical definitions can be problematic. Yet whenever death occurs, the disposal of the deceased's body is usually required, and this involves processes that are themselves culturally sanctioned.

Treatment of the dead body

There are various ways of disposing of a dead body, but in the modern West, there is usually a choice between burial and cremation. Burial location is considered important, whether in a religious, sanctified setting, or more recently, within environmentally sustainable burial grounds where the dead are buried in a more natural setting (Rumble 2010). Decomposition of the dead body occurs at varying rates

according to certain conditions. These include the stability of temperature and humidity, and the chemical composition of surrounding soils, whether acidic or alkaline. There are famous examples where fleshed bodies have been naturally preserved, including the bog bodies of Northern Europe (Giles 2009 and references within), the frozen bodies of the Pazryk in Siberia (Rudenko 1970), as well as the desiccated remains found in South America and in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, or the intentionally preserved mummies of Egypt. However, more often than not, at least in the Middle East, we are likely to excavate skeletal remains rather than fleshed ones.

Some bodies retain physical importance long after their death; the preserved remains of Lenin are an example of a dead body that has remained in active use, displayed for many years after death. A comparable situation is witnessed with some Christian saints, with their preserved bodies and body parts retaining spheres of display.

In some circumstances, preservation of the flesh of the dead is desired, but the reverse is true in other contexts. Rudd discusses his fieldwork in Madagascar where he observed that the decaying corpse was considered unclean. There was a desire to 'release the skeleton from this uncleanness' (Rudd 1960: 185), which involved the removal of flesh and cleaning of bones during subsequent ceremonies. Although the decaying corpse may be considered unclean and polluting, the dead paradoxically are also seen as sacred. Whilst this may appear to be a contradiction, perhaps it is the physical 'uncleanliness' of the corpse that is seen as polluting and the spiritual context and notions of ancestors that are viewed as sacred. The skeletons are seen as clean. Once the flesh has gone, the bones are cleansed in the river, smeared in ox fat, and thereafter considered clean and sacred (Rudd 1960: 185).

Excarnation of bodies may be practised, meaning that bodies are left in the open and inevitably become sustenance for vultures and other carnivorous animals. On occasion, the bones may then be collected, or not. Archaeological examples have been debated, for instance in Iron Age Britain (Carr and Knusel 1997; Carr 2007) and the British Neolithic (Smith 2006). More commonly, bodies are buried or cremated. Cremation involves burning the body, which in a modern context involves different methods, from the open pyre still seen in parts of the Indian subcontinent, to the crematoria used in much of Europe and America. In the latter, the ashes are usually

ground down to a consistent ash before they are given to relatives. The ashes are often retained within the household, or they are scattered, with the location often thoughtfully planned in a meaningful place associated with the deceased. The temperature and duration of cremation determine the state of the remains left behind. When the bones have not been ground down, it is often possible to determine the age and sex of the deceased from the fragments of bone. This analysis also requires that the cremated remains have been buried or placed in a location where they have been preserved.

Grieving, mourning, and treatment of the dead

In the past in the UK the dead were washed and dressed within the home, but in more recent times, preparation of the dead body has been removed from the household, family, and daily life to another context. The growing role of the funeral director reflects the fact that the dead are increasingly distanced from everyday life, handled by professionals, in a sanitized and clinical environment. Rarely do we see, touch, or clean dead bodies, and it has even been argued that death has become the ‘new pornography’: ‘formerly children were told that they were brought by the stork, but they were admitted to the farewell scene about the bed of the dying person. Today they are initiated in their early years to the physiology of love; but when they no longer see their grandfather and express astonishment, they are told that he is resting in a beautiful garden among the flowers’ (Ariès 1974: 92f, after Gorer 1955; see also Foltyn 2008).

The way that the dead body is treated is closely related to beliefs about death, aspects that directly impact on the living, and their mourning experiences. For us in the modern West, our experiences of death are usually dominated by feelings of grief, sadness, and loss, especially if someone close to us has died. These experiences and emotions towards death are deeply embedded in us, so much so that it is not unnatural for us to expect that these attitudes towards death and grieving are ‘natural’ and inherent. However, it does not take much searching before alternative attitudes to grieving are uncovered. For instance, I was able to witness a Hindu cremation site in Nepal, on the banks of a tributary to the River Ganges. Here, the dead were brought into the open—not secluded or covered—in ceremonies which were public and open. The bodies of the deceased were oiled

and decorated with flowers by their loved ones, and the scene was one of calm and content rather than grief and sadness. Undoubtedly the survivors would mourn and grieve their relatives, yet the emotions expressed at the time of the funeral were overwhelmingly positive ones. This did not appear to be the masking of real emotions, but rather the genuine feelings surrounding the practice, which perhaps was enabled in part by a belief in an afterlife or reincarnation, a heartfelt conviction that death was not the end. Whilst this account may be anecdotal, research has been undertaken into other contexts. For instance, in a study in Brazil by Scheper-Hughes (2004 [1992]), the lack of sorrow or grief expressed by the mothers at the death of their babies was genuine, and not an attempt to mask 'real' feelings.

In other instances, such 'quiet' behaviour does represent the suppression of emotion. For instance, a description of a Swedish funeral scene accounts that 'no outburst of emotion is expected. The widow who does not cry is said to be "brave" and "strong"' (Jacobson-Widding 1988: 137). For some cultures, the opposite is expected, with public demonstrations of grief, including wailing and weeping, often thought to be more prevalent, or at least expected, among female mourners (Rosenblatt et al 1976).

Funerals are highly performative arenas where the living express or suppress emotions and are often required to act in particular ways. They are also occasions where people congregate and long-term networks are maintained and strengthened. In all cases where there is a deliberate disposal of the dead, rather than an accidental, undiscovered death, it is the actions of the mourners, the living, that determine the factors of burial or disposal of the dead. This is fundamental to studies of mortuary practices and is a topic that will be discussed more fully in chapter 3.

The details above provide an insight into different treatments of dead bodies as well as the experiences of the living. Many examples are taken from ethnographic case studies, demonstrating the variability of cultural attitudes to the one thing in life that is universal: death. These examples cannot be used analogously, as to suggest that anthropological case studies can be transposed onto archaeological remains is limiting, and the subject of criticism within archaeological discourse. However, ethnographies do provide alternative insights and offer other ways of considering the evidence, enabling us to some extent to move beyond our own culturally constructed experiences and expectations. While these ethnographic resources are

valuable, ultimately our aim as archaeologists must lie in the direct interpretation of archaeological data. New interpretations involve the merging of archaeological theory with archaeological data, and as such, the archaeology of the Near East is experiencing a new era of interpretation with new methodologies with which to interrogate data. This, alongside rigorous excavation and recording techniques, ensures that it is now an exciting time to study the Neolithic Near East, and in particular as we shall see in the forthcoming chapters, aspects of death and dying and the information revealed about living during this crucial period of human development and change.

The next chapter provides an overview of the region, its key sites and general trends in mortuary practices. Chapter 3 discusses key theoretical approaches and provides an introduction to the post-processual approaches used throughout this book. The first chapters provide the necessary background and foundation to the archaeology and approaches taken to enable reinterpretation of archaeological data in the remaining chapters of the book, which discuss ancestors and the use of skulls (chapter 4); gender and sexuality (chapter 5); and personhood and issues of fragmentation in the mortuary arena (chapter 6). As we will see, life in the Neolithic Near East involved a complex web of relationships; between people, things, animals, and the surrounding physical and material world.

The Neolithic Near East: An Overview

HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

Geography

The geographical region has already been briefly outlined in chapter 1, with the Near East encompassing the modern-day Middle East, from its Mediterranean coast across to Iran, including Central to Southeast Turkey. The terms Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and the Levant are used throughout this publication. Although the terms are fairly arbitrary, rather than actually existing as regions in the past, they are used for ease of quickly identifying the geographical region under discussion.

The expanse of land within the Near East is vast, covering an area of thousands of square miles with varied environmental conditions. The Taurus mountain range extends from east to west across South-Central Anatolia into the Zagros Mountains, forming a natural obstacle, separating Anatolia to the north and dividing Iraq and Iran. Whilst the mountain ranges may be considered a barrier, their variable terrains and climates enabled the exploitation of varied resources, as well as access to water. Whilst Turkey contains mountainous regions there are also large expanses of open land, flat plateaus, with the Anatolian plains extending across Central Anatolia, areas which would have included marshy resources during the Neolithic period. Flat lands can also be seen stretching across Mesopotamia to the Levant, through Iraq, Jordan, Syria, and Saudi Arabia, areas which were much dryer than their northern counterparts. In addition to lakes, streams, and rivers, seasonal *wadis* run through the region making fresh water readily available, with the sea accessible in several directions: to the west of the region where the east Mediterranean coast meets the Levant in Israel, Lebanon, and the south coast of

Turkey, the Red Sea in the Levant, and the Arabian Gulf in the southeast of the region. As archaeologists looking at points on a map, it is easy to overlook the often vast distances between sites within the Near East. It is also important to realize that our labels and borders are modern ones, rather than relating to the people we are studying. Inevitably, given the current debates in the politics of the region, archaeology gets used for nationalistic or local agendas (Fahel 2010; Hawari 2010; Yahya 2005; Sayej 2010), yet it is important to assert that during the Neolithic period the peoples inhabiting the region were not divided into their own discrete cultural groups that coincide with the countries present today, but rather, they pre-dated by many thousands of years the existing debates and discourses which surround modern-day politics in the region. To divide the region up according to our modern borders is counterproductive, both to understanding the past, as well as in terms of modern relationships and coalitions (Al-Jubeih 2010).

Past environments and climatic changes

The region has been subject to various climatic shifts during its prehistory. The Holocene brought about a gradual warming after the previous ice age, but there were however some changes to the pattern of gradual warming. The Younger Dryas resulted in cooler temperatures for around a millennium between 10 700 and 9600 BC (Willcox 2005: 538). The extent of the impact of climatic changes on the development of agriculture is still not settled; whether the cultivation of wild cereals was hindered as a result of the colder conditions has been debated (see Willcox 2005 for a summary). Willcox argues that ‘this period of climatic deterioration was not a catastrophic event’, without radical changes to vegetation cover (2005: 528). For more detailed discussions of the climatic events, see Maher et al (2011a) and Robinson et al (2010), both of which highlight the problems of attempting to apply cause-and-effect relationships between archaeological and climatic events too simplistically; additional evidence is still needed to provide further insights into the impacts of the Younger Dryas on the region (Robinson et al 2010: 62).

Following the Younger Dryas, rainfall levels increased and a warmer period followed, with the wettest period in Southwest Asia within the last 25,000 years (Robinson et al 2006: 1521). These were more

temperate conditions than today, with crops gaining a more plentiful water supply, leading to richer vegetation, prior to intensive herding and agriculture (Bar-Yosef 2008: 319–20). These conditions lasted until c.6225 BC, when a climate change took place, termed the 8.2ka event (the date has been taken from year BP—‘Before Present’, a date set at 1950). This resulted in another period of cooler, dryer climatic conditions, lasting for around 300 years, thought to have brought drought conditions in the Near East. The 8.2ka event has been linked with socio-cultural and demographic changes occurring at the end of the LPPNB, with decreased settlement sizes and population dispersal, alongside over-exploitation of resources (for a summary and reassessment of the evidence, see D. Campbell 2009). However, current evidence from the Southern Levant now suggests that changes in settlement patterns during the end of the LPPNB were not linked to the 8.2ka event (D. Campbell 2009: 66; Maher et al 2011a: 22), with patterns between socio-cultural changes and climatic episodes thought to be far more complex than previously understood (Maher et al 2011a). In Northern Mesopotamia, evidence from Sabi Abyad suggests that cultural changes peaked at the time of the 8.2ka event, rather than evidencing an immediate detrimental effect caused by climate change. Rather than a diminishing effect, communities apparently adapted to the new conditions, with changes in animal husbandry and secondary products, accompanied by developments in ceramic storage and cooking vessels. An increase in the use of stamp-seals suggests a greater recognition and control of property at a time of changing community social structures, which consisted of both mobile pastoralists and sedentary agriculturists (Akkermans et al 2010; stamp-seals may also be related to notions of personal identity, as will be discussed in chapter 6). It is apparent that climatic conditions should not be deterministically assumed to be detrimental to human societies, but rather they can be catalysts, whether directly or indirectly, for adaption and innovation (Akkermans et al 2010).

Chronology

The next section will discuss approaches to chronology and some of the issues and problems particular to studying the Neolithic Near East before defining the main chronological subdivisions of the Neolithic, as well as key archaeological sites, particularly their mortuary

practices. The chronology of the prehistory of the Near East is complex, especially as various terms are used with reference to different parts of the region.

Radiocarbon dating and calibration

The chronological periods of time in the Near East are defined by developments and changes in mobility and settlement patterns, architecture, domestication, and agriculture, accompanied by changes in ritual behaviour, artefacts, and technology. Many of the chronological distinctions are marked by changes in ceramics for later periods, and lithics for earlier ones, with increasingly detailed typologies for artefacts in these and other categories. Whilst for many regions of the globe such typologies can now be firmly refuted or supported by radiocarbon dates (^{14}C), for the Neolithic Near East, problems arise with the calibration of ^{14}C dates (see Benz 2008). This is an ongoing challenge that has been recognized for some time (Wright 1973), with an under-representation of calibration samples resulting in decreased accuracy. Web resources have been established which give easy access to conversion programmes (i.e. Bronk Ramsey 2010) and databases for dates of archaeological sites (e.g. CANeW, Bischoff 2004; *PPND—Platform for Neolithic Radiocarbon Dates*, Benz 2011), and AMS (Accelerator Mass Spectrometry) methods mean smaller samples are needed and measurements are more accurate.

This book uses calibrated dates BC throughout, and therefore a ‘cal.’ is not included. Where dates have been presented in publications as uncalibrated, they have been converted using a calibration programme, *OxCal v4.1* (Bronk Ramsey 2010). Calibrated dates are often presented with values \pm , which relate to the potential deviation in the final date; this has been omitted for our purposes here. For the early Neolithic in the Near East, uncalibrated dates can be up to around 1000 years younger, pre-calibration. However, there is a plateau on the calibration curve for PPNA dates, with a wider possible range of dates than with other periods. Whilst ^{14}C dating has been heralded as revolutionary for the dating of archaeological sites and samples, there remain continued issues and problems, including questions regarding sampling methods and the choice of samples used for dating. For instance, if a piece of timber is used within a structure, that piece of timber may already have been of some age prior to its use as a building material. Thus using that

sample to date the period the building was in use is problematic, although it would give a date *terminus post quem* (an earliest date for the sample).

Once the chosen samples are secure and unproblematic and have been analysed for their dates, there are various methods of processing the statistics to assess the sequences of those dates. Most recently this includes Bayesian statistics, which also take into account stratigraphic contexts for archaeological dates, thus giving greater reliability (see Buck et al 1991, 1992). The case study by Westaway et al (2004) is a good Near Eastern example of the different ways of processing dates. Depending on the type of model used, dates can vary, giving differences of a few hundred years for absolute start and end dates for a site or occupation period, with a consequent impact on patterns of adoption and spread of various cultural traits.

Relative chronologies

Due to the limitations of absolute dating, greater emphasis is placed on the use of traditional relative chronologies for the prehistoric Near East. These are archaeologically identifiable patterns in assemblages which are sequenced according to their relative dates to each other. A recent article by Campbell (2007) has explored the dating of the 'Halaf' and the following 'Ubaid' periods, which are both established as period-types by the pottery from the sites where they were first discovered, so Halaf is based on the pottery found at Tell Halaf in Syria, excavated by Oppenheim in the 1930s (Oppenheim 1933) and the Ubaid from Tell 'Ubaid in Southern Mesopotamia, excavated in 1919 and the early 1920s (Hall and Woolley 1927). For periods before pottery, the Pre-Pottery Neolithic, lithic types, and technologies are often used in a comparable way (see Asouti 2006: 91–2 and references within). The production of different types of worked-stone tools is linked to suites of characteristics and material culture, architecture, ritual behaviour, and subsistence strategy (i.e. Kuijt and Goring-Morris 2002; Rollefson 2001; Banning 1998). Sites dated to these periods frequently cover a large geographical area, and there is a natural tendency for archaeologists to focus on similarities rather than differences between excavated materials.

However, our chronological system has its roots in culture-history (as will be discussed in chapter 3), and there is a risk that patterns of

archaeological discovery are confused with real prehistoric patterns in activity. When excavation patterns are studied, it can be observed that gaps in archaeological periods often correspond with gaps in excavated sequences (Campbell 2007: 1–2); our lulls in evidence for sites geographically and temporally may relate to a lack of excavated material, rather than necessarily reflecting a real absence of past activity. Campbell (2007) convincingly argues that we need to recognize our chronologies as simply being a tool for ordering our data, rather than interpretative devices.

There are additional problems in the non-standardized use of terms and labels applied to our material. For example, differing terminology can be applied to the same lithic types by different scholars (Bar-Yosef 1998: xiv), as well as disagreement concerning which types of material culture (whether lithics, architecture, or food-production techniques, for instance) characterize the changing social systems (Kuijt 2000a: 5). In addition to the broader cultural labels and traits identified, there is a variety of localized chronologies used (see for example Akkermans and Schwartz 2003: figs 3.2, 4.2; Maisels 1990; fig. 4.1; Nissen 1998: fig. 1), where calendar dates relate to varying periods across the region.

Whilst groups of material culture and other traits are useful tools for ordering data, the definition of culture-historic periods often dominates research at the expense of other observations of the evidence. ‘One could argue that the effort that has been directed to assigning dates to chronological phases has actually distracted attention from interpreting past social processes’ (Campbell 2007: 23). A chronocentric approach to the past has also been critiqued in other areas of archaeological research (see Dowson 2000 [1998]), yet many archaeological pursuits revolve around asking ‘when’ things happened. Whilst this is understandable, and the dating of sites and excavated objects is an essential component of understanding long-term change, or comparing and situating short-term events, this needs to be kept in check with understanding the limitations behind our knowledge and understanding of chronologies. Moreover, chronological research is strongest when it is used as a means to explore other avenues of research, rather than as an end point. It is also possible to investigate past events, processes, and societies even when their exact date cannot be determined, or when they cannot be precisely situated in a chronological framework.

Traditional approaches

There is often a perceived necessity to place sites within their chronological frameworks, with developments traced from the Neolithic through to the emergence of early city-states, for example, Charvát (2002) groups developments into economic, social (hierarchical), and metaphysical trends from the Palaeolithic, Neolithic, and through to Early States. When social, economic, and ideological issues are discussed in Near Eastern prehistory, significance is usually focused on assigning sites ‘with some precision within a fixed chronological framework and thereby to relate them in time to each other and to other events and processes within Mesopotamia and beyond’ (Matthews 2003: 64–5).

Fundamental changes in subsistence are traced, including agriculture and domestication of plants and animals. It is these changes that are seen as paving the way for larger social communities, and ultimately the developments which then followed. With our concept of linear time, we see ourselves as the result of these developments: ‘modern societies understand themselves as standing at the end of sequences of development’ (Thomas 2004: 90–1), with urbanism and the city-state often perceived as the eventual outcome of developmental sequences.

Population pressure has been seen as a key driver of change. In a recent edited volume by Bocquet-Appel and Bar-Yosef (2008a), the Neolithic Demographic Transition has been studied across multiple regional and temporal ranges. It is recognized that a key factor leading to population growth is sedentism, communities settling down in one place rather than living a mobile way of life; this sedentism predates farming and agriculture (Bocquet-Appel and Bar-Yosef 2008b: 4). As past communities began to spend longer amounts of time in the same place, larger settlement sites began to emerge, along with the adoption of agriculture and the domestication of animal species, drawing together larger populations of people than previously seen.

Alongside sedentism, the development of agriculture is usually viewed as a central and seminal change, possibly ‘because it marks a boundary between the human occupation of a “natural” world and a world in which humans have gained control over the material conditions of their own existence’ (Thomas 2004: 94). Therefore, the

adoption of agriculture is often given primary importance in many interpretations of the Neolithic, and the origins and spread of agriculture remain a prominent topic of research; for example, a recent special edition of *Current Anthropology* is dedicated to the topic 'Rethinking the origins of agriculture' (Cohen 2009).

The development of agriculture was traditionally understood to have spread from the Southern Levant region northwards, through North Mesopotamia and Southeast Turkey (Watkins 1998: 1), continuing into Northwest Turkey (Thissen 1999) and into Europe. Various models have been drawn up that take into account the spread of agriculture, such as a 'centre-periphery' (Watkins 1998: 2), or polycentric, peer-polity, multiple-centre and macro-regional models (see Rollefson and Gebel 2004), with a core dispersal into Europe (Özdoğan 2008: 143), and it is now becoming more accepted that agriculture developed in several locations rather than as a single spread of activity.

The adoption of agriculture and domestication of animals and plants are often still viewed as abrupt developments: 'the stresses, dislocation, and impact of such rapid changes in lifestyles, with increasingly larger populations in permanently occupied settlements must have been considerable' (Goring-Morris 2000: 106). Yet the time span of the occurrence of many changes suggests a gradual rather than dramatic change: Neolithization 'took place over a span of several thousand years, with variable emphasis from region to region' (Hole 2000: 191). It can be questioned whether such changes had a dramatic impact on day-to-day life. Willcox suggests that the cultivation of plant populations 'took place gradually over a long period and independently in each region' (2004: 64). As each generation adapted to gradual changes, the impact of what appears from our vantage point to be a considerable transformation was more likely to be experienced as a gradual shift, especially as old practices (such as gathering and hunting) worked alongside, rather than against, agriculture. Presumably the change happened so slowly so as to be absorbed into daily practice. As Belfer-Cohen and Bar-Yosef state in relation to the journey to sedentism, it was 'a bumpy ride along a course that obviously was not planned, and its consequences were unforeseen' (2000: 20). Surely the same is applicable to agriculture, as people adapted to circumstances, not perceiving the eventual development from agriculture to city-states. This is a proposition that is becoming more widely recognized, with Belfer-Cohen and Goring-Morris (2009:

669), for example, suggesting that the perceived changes may be as much a reflection of what is archaeologically visible, rather than the steps of innovation; most changes only become visible to us, leaving material traces, once they are stable and accepted.

Whilst agriculture was undoubtedly a key development, it was still practised alongside other forms of subsistence. It is also recognized that many sites which have similar cultigens and domesticates remained vastly different from each other, suggesting that cultigens are not a satisfactory tool for comparison (Özdoğan 2004). Furthermore, it is recognized that 'the Neolithic', if such an entity existed beyond our archaeological labelling, consisted of much more than agriculture, but rather encompassed a range of 'cultural assemblages' (Özdoğan 2004). However, the search for origins began to place a stronger emphasis on tracing the processes of becoming Neolithic, or 'Neolithization', that is, a closer examination of the 'cultural values that are shared by all Neolithic communities, regardless of their subsistence pattern or of their environmental setting' (Özdoğan 2004), with an emphasis on large-scale comparisons between sites. The mapping and tracing of the 'composition of cultural assemblages' (Özdoğan 2004) could also lead to the mapping of 'tribal territories' (Bar-Yosef 2004: 25), grouping together sites according to criteria such as architecture, ceremonial centres, and material culture, including stone tools, along with modelled skulls, figurines, and other imagery. This would then aid our definition of cultures and groups of people (Bar-Yosef 2004: 25), and from there, developments can be traced. The next chapter discusses some of the shortfalls with such a culture-historic approach; not least that it simplifies the data, and directly equates people and their movement with clusters of artefacts.

North Mesopotamia was traditionally considered to be a periphery in the Neolithic process, with the cores from which it originated located in the Levant or South Mesopotamia. However, as suggested by Stuart Campbell (pers. comm.), the driving force behind this may be due primarily to processes of discovery. Watkins has proposed that rather than the influence of agriculture spreading from a Levantine core, Southeast Turkey and Northern Iraq were themselves part of the 'innovatory centre' (Watkins 1998: 3). Although dealing with a later time period, Frangipane has also suggested a similar hypothesis regarding the spread of culture from Southeast Anatolia, where the earliest palace is argued to have been situated at Arslantepe in 3350 BC, suggesting this area as a forerunner to Mesopotamia, rather than

vice versa (see Frangipane 2001, as well as discussion of the spread of the Ubaid in Carter and Philip (eds) 2010). This is an argument that is supported by an analysis of available research on the Tigris–Euphrates basin (Northeast Syria, Southeast Turkey, and Northern Iraq), which has concluded that urbanism occurred along separate trajectories, although not totally independently, in Northern and Southern Mesopotamia, between c.4400 and 2000 BC (Ur 2010: 47).

Such trends have been set against a background of changing subsistence, with a growing emphasis on domestication and agriculture taking over from hunting and gathering, but changes like these clearly reveal more than attitudes towards food and subsistence; they incorporate a changing attitude to the landscape and the environment, as people's interactions with animals and the land around them are altered. Along with changes in agriculture and subsistence, a change in mentality has become recognized as a feature of the Neolithic, argued by Cauvin in *Naissance des divinités, Naissance de l'agriculture: La Révolution des Symboles au Néolithique (The Birth of the Gods and the Origins of Agriculture)* (1994). Cauvin has argued that Near Eastern Neolithization, taking place over a period of three millennia, consisted of economic, technological, and ideological components occurring 'progressively in a determined order', evidenced through 'irrefutable stratigraphic fact', such as sedentism occurring before domestication (Cauvin 2000: 237). Cauvin argues that symbolism reflects changes to a Neolithic lifestyle, based on 'human mentality rather than subsistence economy' (Hermansen 2004: 34). That is, changes were cognitive as much as they were practical. The presence of perceived skull, bull, fertility, and mother-goddess cults has been taken as evidence for unified progress, with assumptions of universal meanings (Najjar 2002: 106–7).

However, not only is the notion of a linear pattern of development disputable, it is also difficult to confirm the universality of meaning and symbolism. As has been noted by Christensen and Warburton (2002):

we can see that settled communities which may have had roughly similar economies —e.g. 'Ain Ghazal, Basta, Çayönü, Nevalı Çori, Çatalhöyük—chose radically different types of symbols. The differences were thus 'cultural' (and possibly conscious choice) rather than 'social' and 'economic' (and possibly deterministic) each contributing in a different way to what followed, although none of the forms survived intact (2002: 164).

Whilst there are certain commonalities, in practice, they were evidenced in a variety of ways, with the plastering of skulls, for instance, practised using different styles and substances and placed in different contexts of use and deposition, suggesting that whilst there are common trends, there are also distinct differences in interpretation, meaning, and practice. Whilst it is encouraging that subjects of study are broadened beyond subsistence, it is still notable that there is a preoccupation with tracing roots and origins, with a linear and structured development often assumed. This extends also to the search for the roots of our social systems and development of hierarchical social structures, the foundations which enabled the development of urbanism and city states: 'the historical records, and by reference the archaeological evidence, document a global shift from egalitarian to non-egalitarian or complex societies that finally led to the emergence of chiefdoms and states' (Bar-Yosef 2001: 2, quoted by Hemsley 2008: 10).

It has been argued that the development of societies follows common models of societal progression such as those proposed by Fried (1967) and Service (1962). Drawing on social evolutionary frameworks, societies were seen as developing in complexity over time as they increased in size from egalitarian, ranked societies, and state societies (Fried 1967). A categorization of size and organization was suggested by Service, with bands, tribes, chiefdoms, and states (1962). This is a system that has held its influence in studies of complex societies, including *Specialization, Exchange, and Complex Societies* (Brumfiel and Earle (eds) 1987), and with particular focus on Near Eastern archaeology, a dedicated edited volume *Chiefdoms and Early States in the Near East* (Stein and Rothman (eds) 1994). Albeit that by the mid-1990s studies of chiefdoms had developed considerably, becoming more nuanced and analysing variability between different types of chiefdom organizations (Earle 1987), there is still a focus on tracing such social structures and investigations which 'allow us to move further in deciphering the origins of chiefdoms and the ensuing emergence of states' (Bar-Yosef 2004: 26). Sites are situated on their rung on a ladder of social development and organization, with direct relationships perceived between ritual behaviour, material culture, and social hierarchy. For instance, Kuijt hopes that 'archaeologists, prehistorians, and anthropologists, will develop new insights into the specific links between ritual, magic, and Neolithic social organization' (Kuijt 2002: 88), with research into ritual behaviour frequently

relating to social complexity, especially when dealing with mortuary practices (Byrd 2005 and references within; Hemsley 2008: 11).

While the study of the development of hierarchies may be important—seen as fostering an understanding of how modern societies were constructed—it often dominates over many other avenues of interpretation, particularly when studying mortuary practices, where priority is given to the ties between mortuary archaeology and social stratification (or egalitarianism) rather than exploring other avenues of research, such as concepts of identity or attitudes towards death and the dead. Through focusing on the human body as a means of interpretation, we can reprioritize the person in our interpretations, and move beyond the search for the development of social organization.

Ultimately, as the Neolithic is composed of many aspects—subsistence, pottery, lithic technology, social stratification, sedentism, and architecture, for instance—it is difficult if not impossible (and arguably even futile) to debate its origins—even if these are multiple—and its spread (Watkins 2003). Moving beyond a search for origins, impractical due in part to the highly varying evidence, regional variability can be examined, along with concepts of individuals and agency in the past (Hole 2003; Finlayson 2010). Methodologically, rather than beginning with large-scale frameworks and working from the top down, beginning with the small scale and working from the bottom upwards produces different results and recognizes variations between sites and within sites. In terms of studying the Neolithic of the Near East, a bottom-up approach can encompass the variety of local expressions of the Neolithic, taking into account individual communities, and even individual agents within them (Hermansen 2004: 33; Finlayson 2010), aspects which are usually lost in top-down models which search for systems, diffusion, population movement, core and periphery explanations, and so on.

The problem with labels

With the inherent problems in our chronologies outlined above, archaeological phases still offer an essential means of organizing the past, providing a vital communicative tool for archaeologists. It is easy to become lulled into treating the chronological and typological cultural groups as real entities in the past, though they were not

relevant categories for the people living through the changes we are studying.

Once labels, along with the assumptions they carry, are applied, it is difficult to alter the way that sites are interpreted and thought about. As Peltenburg (2004b: 20) notes when discussing the role of Cyprus in our chronological ordering, 'labels condition thinking'. Both Campbell (1998; 2007) and Watkins (1992) have argued that ideas concerning origins of 'cultures' should be reassessed, a sentiment echoed by Akkermans and Schwartz in relation to the Pottery Neolithic, where they note that whilst the boundaries between the groups we are studying are blurred rather than sharply defined, they are still often debated within a culture-group framework (2003: 101). Campbell sums up the situation well when he reminds us that 'the answer to the popular question "when did the Halaf start as a cultural phenomenon" should probably be "in the 20th century AD"' (2007: 2). When discussing our labels for these cultural entities, 'it is critical to recognise that these terms have their origins not in the distant past that we seek to understand but in the history of 20th-century archaeology' (Campbell 2007: 1).

Behind the debates over the labels we use, important research is undertaken into the changes that were taking place and the ways that people lived, rather than simply focusing on the categorization and correct labels *per se*. It is the past lives that we are ultimately trying to understand. The decades of research into chronological patterns have provided a valuable platform and framework, especially when it is recognized that the use of culture-groups is a means to an end rather than the end of research. Whilst the terminology is problematic, when the period names are used as tools for categorization rather than as a means of interpretation, then the labels retain a useful function (Campbell 2007). Certainly, big changes did take place in the period we are studying, and it is therefore useful, even essential, to have a way of categorizing these developments.

We have seen that the Neolithic of the Near East is divided into its chronological and typological categories, according to the large-scale frameworks of increasing domestication, sedentism, and emerging social complexities. Whilst the drawbacks with these have been recognized, for ease of archaeological consistency they are employed here, although they are intended as tools for classification rather than actually corresponding to cultural units in the past. The next section will outline the main chronological periods of study and discuss the

main sources of evidence, focusing on mortuary remains, and including other avenues of evidence where applicable.

CHRONOLOGICAL PHASES AND MAIN SITES

This section provides an outline of the main chronological phases, the key sites, and a description of the mortuary practices that are evidenced. It begins with the background of the Natufian period, directly preceding the Neolithic. The Neolithic period is subdivided into Pre-Pottery Neolithic (PPN) and Pottery Neolithic (PN), with the former further subdivided into the PPNA, PPNB (Early, Middle and Late phases) and PPNC (or the Final PPNB). The Pottery Neolithic period is categorized differently in the north and south of the region, and then continues into phases named after their find-sites, such as Hassuna, Samarran, and Halaf. Whilst there are differences between the Levant and Anatolia, and a separate categorization system has been established for Anatolia (see Özbaşaran and Buitenhuis 2002; Asouti 2006: 94), for ease and consistency the Levant dates can be broadly correlated to Anatolian evidence and are used here (see Hodder 2006b: 20).

Table 2.1. Chronological phases (after Kuijt and Goring-Morris 2002: table 1; Byrd 2005; Akkermans and Schwartz 2003: figs 3.2, 4.2).

Period	Approx. dates (BC)
The Natufian	12 500–10 000
PPNA	10 000–8550
EPPNB	8550–8100
MPPNB	8100–7300
LPPNB	7300–6750
Final PPNB/PPNC/Early Pottery Neolithic	6750–6300
Pottery Neolithic/Late Neolithic*	6300–5200

*This period encompasses the Halaf period, also categorized as being in the Chalcolithic period by some sources.

The Natufian, c.12 500–10 000 BC

The period which sees an increase in sedentary behaviour is usually termed the 'Natufian', lasting from approximately 12 500 BC to 10 000 BC,

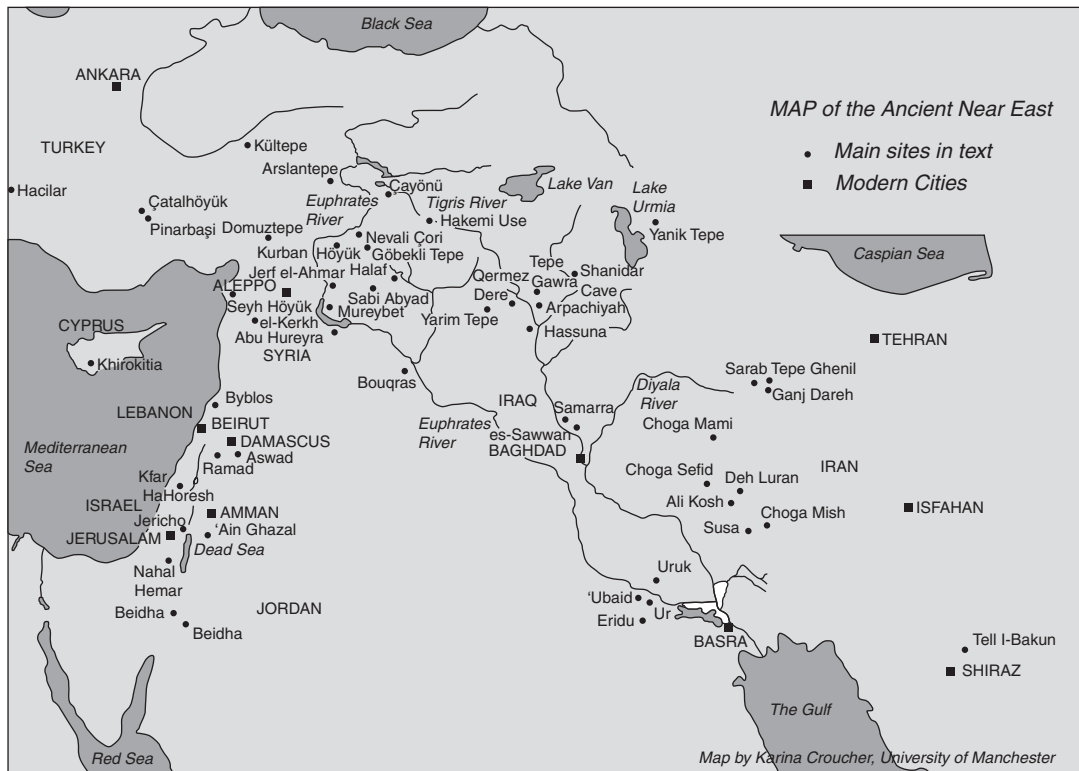


Fig. 2.1. Map of the region showing key archaeological sites (Karina Croucher).

predating the Neolithic, and usually divided into the Early, Late, and Final Natufian (Valla 1987; Byrd 2000: 69). Many settlement sites became occupied for longer periods of the year, or even permanently, by some members of the community, probably residing alongside seasonal occupants. The increased habitation of sites is often seen as providing the conditions for agriculture and the domestication of plants, as long-term investments were made, which linked people more permanently to places in the landscape. Hunting and gathering were the primary means of subsistence, although people's relationships with their environments were changing, as animals, primarily dogs, began to be domesticated.

Continuity between the Natufian and Neolithic can however be debated, evidenced at some sites such as Mureybet in North Mesopotamia (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003: 31, 50), whilst at many sites in the Levant there is often a separation of more than 1000 years between Natufian and Neolithic settlements (Boyd 2006). This raises the problematic issue of the role of studying the Natufian for the purpose of understanding the Neolithic. Boyd rightly argues that the Natufian should form the focus of study in its own right, rather than simply being viewed from the Neolithic backwards. The situation is therefore an uneasy one: admittedly, it is flawed to study the Natufian as simply a forerunner to the Neolithic, yet it is also problematic to study the Neolithic without considering background contextual information from the Natufian, especially as continuity is evidenced at some sites, particularly those in North Mesopotamia. As a reassessment of the Natufian is beyond the scope of this book, it will therefore fall into the position of being studied for contextual information for the Neolithic; ongoing reassessment of the Natufian period will have a greater impact on our understanding of this period in its own right, and on any potential symbolic continuity between the Natufian and the Neolithic periods (as argued by Goring-Morris and Belfer Cohen 2002, 2010).

Burial practices during the Natufian period include primary articulated burials, often scattered with the mineral red ochre, and adorned with jewellery made from shell and other materials. Burials were frequently found in association with buildings; however, there is a growing acceptance that burials pre-dated the structures that overlay them, rather than being buried within them (Boyd 2006). Sedentism and permanently occupied settlements, or burials within settlements, are more frequently evidenced during the Early Natufian (c.13 000–1150)

than the Later Natufian phases (c.1150–1050), although the notion of sedentism may be overstated for many sites as evidence for permanent structures does not necessarily equate to permanent settlement (Boyd 2006). The period was one of change, in the landscape and in traditions, where acts of construction ‘allowed a different way of inhabiting the social landscapes of the Early Natufian’ (Boyd 2006: 175). Societies were changing as landscapes were marked out and altered.

Evidence for the Natufian is usually derived from the Levantine region and North Mesopotamia, although there are excavations of comparable material in Anatolia (i.e. at Pınarbaşı: Baird in press). Primary burials are seen at many sites, including Shanidar cave (c.9100 BC), with the remains of 29 people recovered from 26 graves, representing both sexes and all age groups. Evidence of cranial modification has also been found on two of the skulls, a practice of permanently altering the shape of the cranium which will be discussed in chapter 4 (Meiklejohn et al 1992: 84; Bienert 1991). At Nahal Oren, a late Natufian cemetery has been discovered, with a large hearth situated adjacent to the burials (Goring-Morris and Belfer-Cohen 2010: 14). The hearth was a large feature (with an external diameter of 120 cm), constructed of polished, flat, white stones. Around 50 burials were excavated, relating to two Natufian phases, with attention paid to clearing the area, constructing walls, and often placing stones around or under the graves. Most of the burials were oriented with the head to the north, most commonly placed on their sides in a contracted position. There were often two or three skeletons in one grave, although individual burials were most common. Most skeletons had their skulls intact, although in some cases they had been removed. There were occasional grave goods and decorations, including small, burnt and polished gazelle horns described as being of high quality, shells and broken stone artefacts, and some small perforated stones (Noy 1989).

In some instances, after the body had been buried for some time the cranium would be removed, and there are frequent finds of skulls, crania, or parts of crania, as well as fragmentary, secondary, or incomplete burials. For instance, a collective burial was found at the Early Natufian cave site of Erq el-Ahmar, with one fairly complete skeleton with the cranial remains, and fragmentary mandibles of six others (Neuville 1951; Bienert 1991), and burnt cranial fragments have been recovered from Wadi Hammeh 27 (Edwards 1991: 146; Valla 1995: 176). The excavation of skulls or skull-less inhumations

becomes more frequent in the Later Neolithic at Hayonim cave (Belfer-Cohen 1998) and Nahal Oren (Valla 1995: 176).

The burial of humans with animals, or parts of humans and animals, is also seen at many sites in the Natufian. At 'Ain Mallaha, (also called Eynan), an adult female had been buried with her hand placed on a two- to five-month-old canine puppy; there were also dog mandible fragments recovered from across the site (Davis 1989). A fox mandible had been placed next to a piece of skull that had been cut and polished (Goring-Morris 2005; Perrot and Ladiray 1988: fig. 32, pl. XVIII).

Burials in the Final Natufian do not differ markedly from those in the following PPNA period, closely associated with under-floor burials in dwellings; however, investigations are still underway, and Bocquentin notes strong local and regional traditions within the Natufian rather than a unified picture (2007: 76–7). The above examples provide a brief background to some of the themes that will be explored in greater detail through Neolithic evidence in later chapters, with the fragmentation of bodies in the mortuary domain of humans and animals, as well as human–animal relationships, relationships with the environment, and the removal and further treatment, or burial, of skulls and crania.

The Neolithic

The Natufian period described above is characterized as being primarily mobile with increasingly sedentary behaviour and small groups of people living together who are mainly dependent on hunting and gathering for subsistence. The Neolithic is ascribed to the subsequent period, characterized by the domestication of crops and animal species and communities becoming permanently settled in the landscape, which facilitated an increase in birth rate and rise in population levels (Bocquet-Appel 2008b: 4).

As already discussed above, the Neolithic period is divided into the 'Pre-Pottery Neolithic' and the 'Pottery Neolithic', with the Pre-Pottery Neolithic (PPN) further subdivided into the Pre-Pottery Neolithic A (PPNA), the Early, Middle, and Late Pre-Pottery Neolithic B (EPPNB, MPPNB, and LPPNB), as well as the PPNC, often also referred to as the Final PPNB phase. A great deal of debate has focused on defining the individual phases of the Pre-Pottery

Neolithic, and there is disagreement over the exact nature of the phases. For instance, it is questioned whether the PPNB is simply a continuation and elaboration of PPNA practices and sites, with the existence of the interceding EPPNB period c.8550–8100 BC contested (i.e. Kuijt and Goring-Morris 2002: 382), and likewise, debates over whether the PPNC should instead be referred to as the Final PPNB or the Pottery Neolithic (see Asouti 2006: 94 and references within).

The periods are broadly distinguished by increasing site size and architectural developments, accompanied by the increase of domesticated species and increasing populations, reaching a summit during the LPPNB with the emergence of ‘mega-sites’, large agricultural villages of previously unknown proportions, with an apparent decrease in the numbers of smaller surrounding settlement sites. By this time, the range of domesticated animal species widened to include pigs and cattle alongside sheep and goats. The Final PPNB or PPNC is regarded as a period where there is a decline in site sizes, with a hiatus in habitation originally hypothesized by Kenyon (1957). The abandonment of sites and population dispersal have been attributed to over-exploitation of the environment during the LPPNB (Köhler-Rollefson 1988; Rollefson and Köhler-Rollefson 1989; Köhler-Rollefson and Rollefson 1990, and suggested by Kirkbride 1968: 263–4; see D. Campbell 2009, 2010). This is a claim disputed by recent research which argues that the causes of abandonment of sites at the end of the LPPNB are unrelated to the environmental impacts of previous generations (D. Campbell 2010). The notion of collapse is crucial here; in reality the dispersal of populations can be viewed as a means of adaption and innovation rather than degeneration and decline.

The Pre-Pottery Neolithic A (PPNA), c.10 000–8550 BC

The earliest Neolithic phase, the PPNA, sees settlements becoming more structured and occupied for longer periods of time, including year-round occupation. Hunting and gathering continued, along with the consumption of cereals and legumes, with some evidence of the early stages of cultivation. Architecture primarily consisted of circular structures, subterranean hollows up to a metre in depth, with roofs supported by surrounding posts and walls often constructed of mud bricks, sometimes with stone foundations.

There were larger, communal building projects such as the tower at Jericho in the Southern Levant, a monumental construction over 8 m high, built of stone, with a stone wall that enclosed the 2-ha site (Naveh 2003). There were also monumental constructions of shrines or monoliths at Göbekli Tepe in Southeast Anatolia, a site that will be discussed in detail in chapter 4. Many settlements contained communal buildings, larger than domestic units, such as several buildings at Jerf el-Ahmar, which also contained benches, engraved stones, and installations of animal remains (Stordeur 1998, 2000a). There is also evidence of large communal buildings at Wadi Faynan (WF 16), with one building, 22 m in diameter, demonstrating that large-scale architectural projects occurred across the region, from the Levant (WF 16) to North Mesopotamia (Jerf el-Ahmar) and Göbekli (Anatolia), during the PPNA, early in the Neolithic, preceding rather than postdating most agricultural developments (Mithen et al 2011).

The majority of sites where mortuary evidence is available reveal primary inhumations, some with crania removed. Frequently, burials were placed beneath the floor in houses, although it is difficult in some cases to confirm whether these were all intentionally placed beneath structures still in use, or after abandonment, due to unclear stratigraphy as a result of houses being rebuilt over older stone foundations (Hemsley 2008: 43 and references within; Goring-Morris 2000). However, in some cases such as at WF 16, evidence of the deliberate deposition beneath the floors of houses is much clearer. In one instance a sub-floor burial had been placed with its head resting on a stone pillow, resulting in the head protruding clearly into the domestic plaster floor above (Mithen and Finlayson 2007: 483; Hemsley 2008: 122). Recent excavations at WF 16 reveal a pattern of sub-floor burials (Finlayson 2010), along with other treatments of the dead. Burial 32 contained ten large fragments of crania, stacked carefully above a burial, which had its skull removed and the long bones from the left leg and right tibia crossed over in the place of a skull (Finlayson et al 2009). A further find of a piece of polished and pierced human skull has also been recovered from the site (Bill Finlayson and Sam Smith pers. comm.).

The site of Jerf el-Ahmar in the Northern Levant has also been meticulously excavated under the directorship of Danielle Stordeur, providing a high standard of detailed information. A primary burial, with its skull missing, was recovered on the floor of a circular house, covered with burnt roof debris. The body, of a fifteen-year-old female,



Fig. 2.2. Bucrania installations, Jerf el-Ahmar (Danielle Stordeur).

was returned to and the skull removed (fig. 6.8). The positions of the legs and arms are unusual, as they were splayed. A further three skulls were recovered from an exterior oven. A subterranean building has engraved stone benches, and a further building, EA 47, contained parts of three aurochs skulls and horns (fig. 2.2) and a further complete aurochs skull which was buried with a necklace of sun-dried clay beads and a limestone pendant (Stordeur 1998, 2000a; Verhoeven 2000: 62; Akkermans and Schwartz 2003).

Links between animals and architecture are also seen at Mureybet in North Mesopotamia, a Natufian site that was continually occupied into the early PPNA. The jaw of a large carnivore had been sunk into the wall next to a sunken hearth, a pattern repeated with wild cattle horns in other buildings. Human remains included a cranium and long bones, which had been buried beneath an oven in a building where one of the earliest known wall paintings had been found. Outside the same building, an incomplete skeleton was recovered from a pit (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003: 52). There were three cases where a skull had been placed near the junction of a floor with a wall and covered with red clay (Bienert 1991: 10). Similar incorporations of skulls have also been found at Netiv Hagdud, containing a cache of three skulls and cobble-covered installations (Kuijt 1994: 182; Hemsley 2008: 41).

The site of Jericho, already mentioned due to its tower, also revealed primary burials and skull removal, practices which continued into the PPNB, discussed below. Further skulls have been recovered from a cave site, Nahal Hemar, in the Southern Levant, dating to the PPNA-B, although exact chronological details are difficult to ascertain. Twenty-three skulls and three vertebrae were recovered from the cave. Six of the skulls had a net-like pattern of collagen applied to the cranial vault (Arensburg and Hershkovitz 1988; Yakar and Hershkovitz 1988; Bar-Yosef 2003: 76). The site is believed to be a ritual repository, with masks and bone figures also recovered. It is one of the rare examples where some differentiation appears to have taken place according to gender, with the treated skulls thought to be male, a topic returned to in chapters 4 and 5. Six skulls (two of which were accompanied by long bones), were placed on the floor of a house prior to its destruction at Qermez Dere in the Northern Levant (Watkins 1990a; Watkins et al 1989).

Primary inhumations, which had been buried in a tightly flexed position, were recovered from the Neolithic settlement at Abu Hur-eyra in Northern Mesopotamia. These had been buried beneath the floor in houses, in abandoned buildings, and beneath courtyards, in addition to the burial of bundled remains of secondary burials (Moore and Molleson 2000: 278). Around 40 per cent of the burials contained grave goods, including beads, and flint and bone tools. In addition, a charnel house contained the remains of at least 24 people resulting from at least three episodes of deposition, with remains in varying states of decay. Within the same building, another burial feature (Pit 144), contained 25 to 30 people, interred together after considerable decay (Moore and Molleson 2000). The site is commonly referred to when discussing gender (see chapter 5, this volume), where the work of Theya Molleson has revealed potential gender-based activities at the site (1994, 2000).

In Central Anatolia, a PPNA landscape included Pınarbaşı (Baird forthcoming), where animal bones encased in plaster have been recovered, and Boncuklu Höyük (Baird 2008), a recent excavation, with burials beneath the floors of houses and with painted plaster a feature of some of the earliest buildings at the site. These sites are in the immediate vicinity and immediately pre-date Çatalhöyük, with many of the same themes emerging in the use of plaster, as well as human and animal remains, and architectural instalments. Further to the east, at PPNA Ganj Dareh in the Zagros region, over 70 burials, of

both sexes and all ages, were excavated. The corpses had been covered with slaked lime, which would have accelerated decomposition. Most burials were placed beneath the floor in houses. Cranial modification through binding is evident in some cases, and there are figurines, although these are fairly shapeless in form (Smith 1983; Meiklejohn et al 1992).

Whilst primary articulated burials dominate the PPNA mortuary records, many of these had been decapitated, and there are frequent finds of isolated or caches of skulls and crania, as well as some fragmentary and secondary burials. This is a broad pattern, which continues into the following PPNB period.

The Pre-Pottery Neolithic B (PPNB), c.8550–6750 BC

The PPNA and EPPNB are usually continuous, rather than notably separable phases at most sites, with trends begun during the PPNA continuing into the PPNB. A wider range of plants were cultivated, and herding of sheep and goat was practised alongside hunting and gathering. Settlement sizes continued to expand and architecture developed; stone foundations were frequently built and multi-roomed, rectangular and sub-rectangular structures were increasingly common. The period also sees an increased use of lime plaster, a technology that required knowledge and resources, used for architectural purposes, including the plastering of floors above burials, and in mortuary practices, with its application to skulls of the dead (Garfinkel 1987; Clarke forthcoming). The range of domesticated animal species widened to include pigs and cattle, with many settlements becoming ‘fully agricultural societies’ from around 8000 BC onwards (Stordeur 2010). Some sites had expanded to become large Neolithic towns, or ‘mega-sites’, by the end of the 8th millennium BC in the Levant; these included Wadi Shu’eib, Basta, Es-Sifiya, ‘Ain Jammam, al-Baseet, and ‘Ain Ghazal (Rollefson and Kafafi 2001; Gebel and Rollefson (eds) 1997).

Most of the human remains that have been recovered from the PPNB are primary articulated burials located beneath the floor in houses, although many sites also reveal additional mortuary practices, including skull treatment and secondary burials. For some, mortuary treatments became more elaborate, or at least are better preserved, enabling us to study them in greater detail. One of the most notable forms of mortuary practice is the plastering of skulls, where a face

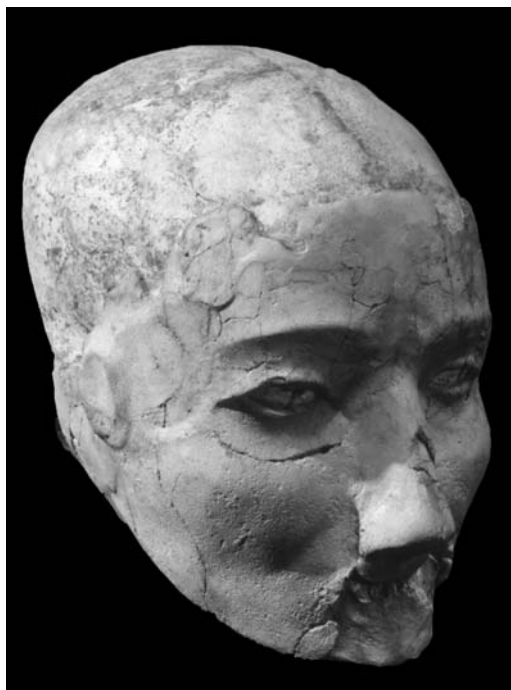


Fig. 2.3. Plastered skull, Jericho (Kenyon Jericho Archive held at UCL).

would be recreated on the dry skull or cranium, using plasters of lime, mud, or gypsum (fig. 2.3). There have been over 90 of these excavated to date, mostly from PPNB Levant contexts, although there have been recently excavated examples dating to the later Neolithic in Anatolia. The plastered skulls will form the basis of discussions in chapter 4, and so will be referred to only briefly here. In addition to plastered skulls, there are frequent finds of non-treated skulls as well as decapitated burials, primary inhumations, and secondary burials.

Hundreds of burials were excavated from the large settlement site of Jericho. Of 491 recorded burials, 309 were primary articulated inhumations, 200 of which had been undisturbed. Most of these were buried beneath the floor in houses or in courtyard areas. The remaining 109 had their crania or parts of the cranium removed; 86 had their crania, and a further 23 had just the back part of the cranium (calvarium), removed. Many of these burials also had other bones disturbed or removed, with 57 of the 109 disturbed primary

burials remaining completely intact other than their crania. Primary burials were recovered from across the site, and belonged to both males and females of all ages (Kurth and Röhrer-Ertl 1981: 228, 433). It is argued that, unlike secondary burials, primary burials were 'almost always in some recognizable association with some buildings' (Kurth and Röhrer-Ertl 1981: 433, 435). The association between the dead and location continued with the occupation of houses; if the level of the floor in a house was raised by a considerable amount, it was common to retrieve the skull and rebury it higher up, closer to the new floor level, or for a new burial to be interred (Kurth and Röhrer-Ertl 1981: 436). The position within (or beneath) domestic structures varied, although they were not placed at entranceways where they would have been repeatedly walked over (Hemsley 2008: 123). It appears to have been important to keep the dead physically close to the living; the living lived their lives in the rooms above their buried descendants, returning to the remains of the dead if their skull was to be removed or for a new burial to be placed beneath the floor.

The remaining 182 burials at Jericho were secondary, including 85 crania (Kurth and Röhrer-Ertl 1981: 433). Thirty-three skulls were recovered singly, with a further ten mandibles found separately (Kurth and Röhrer-Ertl 1981: 228, 433). Other skulls were reburied in groups; 52 crania were buried in this way, comprising a total of 12 groups of skulls, dating from the PPNA and PPNB. The skulls had been deliberately and carefully placed, usually either in clusters or rows, although one group had been thrown into a pit without the same attention (Kenyon 1981: 77, pls 50–59; Moorey 2001: 31). Evidence of further treatment was visible on 14 of the skulls, all dating to the MPPNB, 12 of which had been plastered and five also painted, and two were painted without evidence of having been plastered (Kurth and Röhrer-Ertl 1981: 436). In all cases, the vault and occiput (the back part of the skull) remained un-plastered (Kurth and Röhrer-Ertl 1981: 437). As well as decapitation, other dismemberment of the body often occurred. One burial (F1 6A) was missing its pelvis, and the whole of the lower-right leg had been lifted from the knee to the foot and replaced back into the grave the incorrect way around so that the foot was close to where the skull would have been, with the leg and foot still articulated at the time. The mandible had been discarded close to the left knee (Cornwall 1981: 398–9). It is difficult in this case to tell whether the arrangement of bones was deliberate or as a result of the removal of the cranium, and

there is a general observation that frequently there had been a disregard for the remaining bones during skull removal (Cornwall 1981: 401). Other burials demonstrate the intentional arrangement of bones, such as a group of burials (group 6b), which had been disturbed when the crania were removed, and the long bones neatly arranged, with care and respect afforded the remainder of the body, even if carried out expediently (Cornwall 1981: 400–1).

Not surprisingly, skull-less burials are found frequently. At Hatoula in the Levant, three adult inhumations were found, two of which had been decapitated. The skeleton with a head present was male (Bono-gofsky 2001a; le Mort 1989: 134). Skull-less burials were also found at Nahal Oren in the Levant (Noy et al 1973). There have been over 30 burials excavated from Yiftahel in the Levant, including primary inhumations, some of which are collective. One female had been crushed by a falling roof and her head had later been removed, and there were also other burials which had been decapitated, as well as burials of skulls, often with other bones (Braun 1985; Lamdan 1983). Three plastered skulls have also been recovered from the site so far (Khalaily et al 2008).

Isolated skulls and skull-less burials were also found at PPNB Abu Gosh (Perrot 1967) and at PPNB Levant Beisamoun, where two plastered skulls were also recovered, one of which had been painted with a reddish-brown pigment and had been recreated with a 'sleepy' appearance. One of the plastered skulls was female, and they are both thought to be comparable in appearance to the masks from Nahal Hemar and Khirbet Duma (Goren et al 2001; Ferembach and Lechevallier 1973; Bienert 1991). Skull-less burials were also found at Wadi Shu'eib in Central Jordan, a poorly preserved 'mega-site' that spanned the PPNB, PPNC, and PN, but which was badly damaged by the construction of a road. There have been 12 burials excavated, containing the bodies of 21 people. As well as the burials, a plaster female statuette was recovered, measuring around 25 cm (Simmons et al 2001). Five of the burials were multiple, dating to the LPPNB, with one of these burials also including the secondary interment of an adult with a child. Of the remaining 13 adult skeletons, only three had crania (or cranial fragments) present, a pattern repeated with child burials, where only two of the six had evidence of crania present.

At PPNB Basta in the Levant, there were primary and secondary burials, in addition to skull-less burials and isolated skulls (Bienert 1991). One burial was particularly unusual as it had been buried in a

flexed position, upside down, with the soles of the feet facing upwards. Also from Basta, a finely worked pendant of green marble, possibly depicting an elongated skull, was recovered, which also appears phallus-like when viewed from an alternative angle. The ambiguous nature of such figurines is often seen in the region, and is a topic that will be discussed in chapter 6. A limestone mask was found, which was in such a poor state of preservation that it has been speculated that it was subjected to intentional rough treatment. Holes around its edges may have been used to tie the mask into place or to insert adornments such as feathers or straw (Hermansen 1997: 334). A further mask has also been recovered from Khirbet Duma in the Levant (Goren and Segal 2001).

At Nemrik 9 in Southeast Anatolia, graves contained complete skeletons, usually in a foetal position variously orientated, as well as skulls or fragments of skulls. Some had undergone violent deaths, suggested by the arrowheads recovered. Stone figurines were also recovered (Kozłowski 1989: 27). In the EPPNB at Mureybet in North Mesopotamia, there were some inhumations beneath the floor in houses, as well as human skulls placed on floors or plinths within buildings (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003: 52).

Three skull caches have been found at Tell Ramad in the Levant, which included eight plastered skulls, as well as fragments of a statue which had been packed in plaster and put into a plaster-lined pit. The skulls belonged to five adult females, two adult males, and one thirteen- to fifteen-year-old male. A further 23 statuettes, missing heads but with unusually thick necks, were interred in a pit. These were accompanied by 23 plastered and partially painted skulls, suggesting that the statuettes had been used for displaying the skulls (De Contenson 1971; De Contenson et al 2000; Bienert 1991; Garfinkel 1994), as will be discussed in chapter 6.

At many sites, mortuary practices appear to have been concentrated in or around particular buildings, whether house-type structures or larger, communal-type buildings. For instance, at the recently excavated EPPNB site of Tell Qarassa North (Ibáñez et al 2010), an abandoned building was a focus for deposition of the dead. There were 24 burials from 18 funerary contexts recovered, from both within and outside the structure. The burials were usually placed in a foetal position, on their sides, along an east–west axis, facing east. Whilst many conformed to this pattern, there were also secondary burials, collective and individual, as well as skull removal and skull

burial (Ibáñez et al 2010). The building was also a focus for other items, including caches of milling tools and polished axes. There were also ornamental objects, such as pierced shells, and what are described as schematic mud tokens (labelled 'pawns' at Tell Aswad), and clay figurines, including a rare, male, seated figurine (the top half of which is missing). A carved rib bone had been inscribed with a depiction of two human faces (Ibáñez et al 2010).

At the end of the PPNB at Ba'ja in the Southern Levant, interments were located beneath the floor in houses. There were many collective burials placed in burial chambers beneath the floor, representing repeated interment events, with older burials often moved aside to make space for new ones (Gebel and Hermansen 2000). Parts of necklaces, a mother-of-pearl ring, and various stone tools, including a pressure-flaked dagger possibly deliberately broken into three parts, were recovered from one burial chamber (Gebel and Hermansen 2001); another had beads and arrowheads, a flint dagger, and a bone hair ornament; and a further chamber contained 12 arrowheads, three of which had been placed along a human femur (Gebel et al 2006). Two burial chambers also contained animal bones in addition to human remains. Red pigment was frequently used, scattered over the bodies and on top of limestone slabs which covered the chambers, and in one case, a fragment of a stone bowl or plate containing pigment had been placed on top of a burial (Gebel and Hermansen 2003).

The remains of more than 38 people have been excavated from a structure at Dja'de el-Mughara, 'the House of the Dead'. These included primary burials, as well as some secondary and displaced remains, including crania and long bones (Coqueugniot 1999). Four figurines were also recovered from Dja'de, one was a chalk figure with outstretched arms decorated with ochre, another was incised on a long bone, a third on a metapodial bone, and the final one was of calcite, with only the legs found. In addition there were incised stones, one of which appears to be a micro-phallus. There were also small, flat, pierced pebbles, clay beads, some rare pearls suggesting contact with coastal regions, and red and green rocks. The site appears to have been abandoned after the PPNB, and then briefly reinhabited during the Pottery Neolithic, pre-Halaf period (Coqueugniot 1999).

One of the most prominent examples of the relationship between a particular building and mortuary remains is from the PPNB in Anatolia, where the 'Skull Building' at Çayönü Tepesi contained the

bodies of over 450 people, mostly secondary burials of skulls or long bones. The building remained in use during various rebuilding phases for hundreds of years, and is the topic of a case study in chapter 6, where issues of fragmentation are discussed. There were other communal buildings at Çayönü Tepesi, but the Skull Building remained the primary focus for mortuary events during its lifetime.

Other sites have constructions that evidence communal activities, often described by archaeologists with the all-encompassing term 'ritual'. Whilst some of these do not contain burials (or at least they have not yet been excavated), common themes make them relevant here, including performance and display, frequent associations with animals or parts of animals, and anthropomorphic representations. At Hallan Çemi in Southeast Anatolia, a settlement site had plastered platform areas and arrangements of animal crania (Rosenberg 1999). 'Cult buildings', with life-size or larger sculptures of animals and people made from limestone were excavated at Nevalı Çori, some of which are described as having a 'totemic' quality (Köksal-Schmidt and Schmidt 2010: 74). Over 665 figurines were recovered from Nevalı Çori, mostly broken (as is the case with most other clay objects at the site: over 1200 in total, including miniature vessels, discs, beads, pendants, and spherical items). The figurines were often broken at their strongest points, suggesting deliberate rather than accidental breakage. Two types of human figurines are found, seated females (of which there are three types) and standing males (the most frequent group, with 179 pieces), (Hauptmann 1987, 1990; Bienert 1991; Morsch 2002). As well as the figurines and burials, anthropomorphic pillars have been recovered from within 'cult buildings' at Nevalı Çori (Hauptmann 1987, 1999). There have also been isolated skulls and skull-less burials, usually beneath houses, recovered from Nevalı Çori. The skulls were buried in clusters, with two always facing each other (either a man and woman or a woman and child), and sometimes with long bones. No vertebrae or mandibles were present. There is some possible evidence of cranial modification. There were also shrine areas at Höyücek in Southwest Anatolia from which over 100 baked-clay figurines, traditionally termed as 'mother-goddess' or 'idols' were recovered, some with bone heads and some displaying bodily decoration, including lines across the chest and pubic triangles (Duru 1999: 178). Baked-clay figurines have been recovered from Kuruçay in Southwest Anatolia (Duru 1999: 176), and Sarab in the Zagros, where finds included many clay figurines, both human and

animal (Broman Morales 1990), including two showing possible cranial modification (Daems and Croucher 2007).

Standing stones are also found at PPNB Basta in the Levant. For instance, one subterranean structure that measured 109 m² contained a large, shallow stone bowl and a monolith over 1 m high (Byrd 1994: 656; Hemsley 2008: 42). Burials were interred within abandoned buildings, such as Building 41, which contained seven burials (Byrd 2005: 33).

Probably the most famous of such 'ritual sites' is Göbekli Tepe (discussed in chapter 4), dating to the PPNA—MPPNB, and situated in the hilltops above modern-day Urfa in Southeast Anatolia. Here, megalithic 'shrines' have been uncovered featuring monumental 'T-shaped' pillars, sculpted with people and animals. Depictions include reptiles, bucrania, water birds, and wild boars (Hauptmann 1999; Schmidt 2001, Schmidt 2005).

In addition to larger communal buildings, smaller structures were also frequently used for burials in the PPNB, often beneath the floors of inhabited houses. For example, at MPPNB Tell Halula in Northern Mesopotamia, crouched burials were consistently found beneath the floors in houses. Over 114 burials have been excavated to date, with most houses having five to 13 burials beneath the floor (Guerrero et al 2009). DNA research has been undertaken on the human remains from Halula consisting of 66 samples taken from 50 different burials originating from 12 houses across eight archaeological levels. From these, samples from seven houses were suitable for DNA analysis, with research concluding that individuals within the same house, and between houses, were genetically related (Fernandez et al 2008). The results show promise for further DNA analyses on other sites.

On a smaller scale, at Ali Kosh (PPNA/EPN), 14 burials were recovered from beneath the floor in houses, including a female with evidence of cranial modification who had been buried with a foetus (Hole et al 1969: 42). Over 40 burials were recovered from the PPNB levels of Tell 'Ain el-Kerkh, mostly from beneath floors or next to walls. Sixty per cent of these were infants under about a year of age. The remains of a human infant, a pig infant, and other faunal remains were interred in a pit beneath a pise building, interpreted as a foundation deposit. A flint point was also recovered from this pit which excavators suggest may be indicative of sacrifice (Tsuneki 2002).

Also in Anatolia, 70 burials, mainly tightly flexed, primary burials laid on their right-hand sides or sometimes extended, have been excavated from the PPNB site of Aşkılı. They were most commonly recovered from beneath the floors of houses, with 55 per cent showing signs of burning. One skull along with charred animal bones was recovered from a storage bin, from within the same building as a shoulder bone from a large mammal. Some secondary burials were recovered, often from pits. All ages and both sexes were represented, with a high mortality rate among twenty- to twenty-five-year-olds. One example of trepanation was recovered, and cut marks could be seen on a further cranium. Many of the females wore copper and bone beads about their necks, and one female had a deer shoulder blade placed at her left shoulder (Esin and Harmankaya 1999). Here, the focus is once again on smaller structures for burial, rather than larger communal buildings.

The burial of animals, or parts of animals with people, is seen most prominently at the site of Kfar HaHoresh in the Levant, and will be discussed in chapter 6. This is a 1–2-ha site, excavated under the direction of Nigel Goring-Morris. This PPNB site is somewhat different from the others discussed as at present there is a lack of domestic architecture at the site. Given this lack of evidence of everyday settlement activities alongside its mortuary record, the site is thought to have been primarily a place of burial and treatment of the dead (Goring-Morris et al 1998: 2; Goring-Morris 2000: 107–9). Mortuary remains repeatedly incorporate humans and animals, including primary and secondary burials, along with evidence of cranial removal in some cases. The site is still under excavation and interpretations are still developing. However, Kfar HaHoresh is a site that will change interpretations of PPNB mortuary practices, specifically with regard to understanding human and animal relationships during the period.

Phases at the site of Tell Aswad date to across the PPNB showing changes in funerary practices. During the site's earlier phases, human remains were associated with houses, and later they were placed in dedicated funerary areas. The earlier burials in houses feature the construction of burial mounds associated with architecture, both inside and outside buildings (Stordeur and Khawam 2008: 564–5), constituting features which would have meant that the dead remained 'visible' to the living, both hidden and visible at the same time (Stordeur and Khawam 2008: 577). Burials were consistently

contemporary with occupation rather than abandonment of houses (although there were exceptions). In one house, cranial remains had been placed during occupation, and the secondary burial of a child had been placed in a niche within a wall; in another house, cranial remains had probably been placed when the house was abandoned (Stordeur and Khawam 2008: 572). Animal remains were also sometimes treated comparably, with half a goat bucrania enclosed within a small mound against a wall (Stordeur and Khawam 2008: 573). During the later phases of occupation at Tell Aswad, mortuary spaces become removed from the living, interred in separate locations, with burial grounds dating to the MPPNB and LPPNB (Stordeur et al 2006). Each burial ground was begun with the placement of four plastered skulls (which are discussed in chapter 4). The plastered skulls are arguably among the most spectacular finds from the Neolithic period, which is due to their preservation as much as to the skilled crafting of the faces (e.g. fig. 2.4). They were recovered from two caches; one cache, dating to the MPPNB burial ground, had plastered skulls with the body of an adult (fig. 6.1), the other, LPPNB, had an infant burial placed among the nest of plastered skulls (Stordeur and Khawam 2007). Alongside the remarkable plastered skulls, there were over 50 other burials also excavated from Tell Aswad,



Fig. 2.4. Plastered skull from an MPPNB cache, Tell Aswad (Danielle Stordeur).

including primary, secondary, and multiple burials (Stordeur et al 2006).

Situated on the Zarqa river in modern-day Central Jordan, ‘Ain Ghazal—one of the ‘mega-sites’—has undergone extensive excavation since its discovery in 1982. The construction of the Amman—Zarqa highway has been responsible for much of the deterioration of the site, which is thought to have been continuously populated for around 2000 years, with four main occupation phases (Rollefson 2000: 165–6). It began as a small site of around 2 ha, expanding towards the end of the Middle MPPNB (c.8300–7500 BC) and the beginning of the LPPNB (c.7500–7000 BC), increasing in size to around 10 ha by the early LPPNB, reaching 15 ha by c.7000 BC, with a likely population of around 2500 by this time (Rollefson and Kafafi 2001). The increase in population is interpreted as being the result of migration, supported by evidence of a decline in numbers and the abandonment of smaller surrounding settlements.

Mortuary practices included primary interments—many decapitated—(fig. 2.5) and caches of human skulls some of which were plastered (fig. 2.6). As with other Levantine sites of the same period, the number of burials (81 recovered from MPPNB levels) is too low to represent the whole population, suggesting the deliberate



Fig. 2.5. Primary inhumation, with cranium later removed, ‘Ain Ghazal (Gary Rollefson).

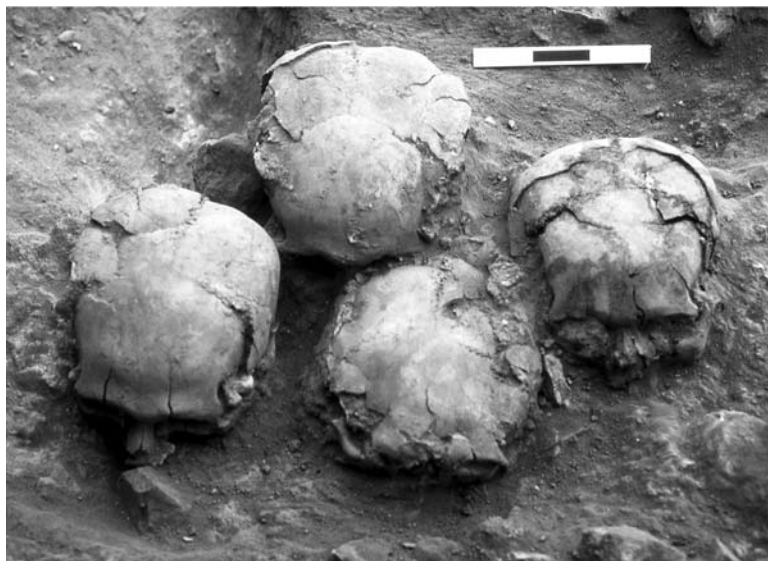


Fig. 2.6. Cache of crania, plastered and un-plastered, 'Ain Ghazal (Gary Rollefson).

selection of those buried within the site (Rollefson 2000: 169). At 'Ain Ghazal, those buried were often decapitated, found beneath floors and in courtyards. There were also courtyard burials with their skulls intact and infant burials (Rollefson 1986: 50). 'Trash' burials accounted for a quarter of the non-infant burial population. These were afforded much less apparent ceremony, where corpses were discarded into small, often shallow pits, within midden deposits (Rollefson 2000: 170). The level of infant mortality was about 30 per cent of those recovered, with those under the age of about twelve to fifteen months often interred with their skulls intact, interpreted as foundation deposits (Rollefson 2000: 170). In one case, two infants were buried above a cache of four plastered skulls (Rollefson 1983: 35), a theme that was also seen at Tell Aswad. Infants older than about fifteen months were routinely decapitated (Rollefson 2000: 170). There were six plastered skulls recovered from 'Ain Ghazal which are discussed in chapter 4. Plastered statues have also been recovered, again the topic of later chapters, in addition to over 150 clay animals and over 40 human figurines from MPPNB levels. Some

of the figurines from 'Ain Ghazal will be discussed in chapter 5 concerning gender, and in chapter 6, on human–animal relationships.

Some buildings on the site date to the LPPNB, and are thought to have served a communal function, differing from the usual structures found at the site. These are often referred to as 'non-domestic buildings', and two of them are described as 'temples' (Rollefson and Kafafi 2001). Situated at the eastern area of the site across the river from the main settlement buildings, they were not especially large (between 20 and 36 m²), and among their features were three standing stones, a floor altar, an anthropomorphic standing stone, and a red painted hearth that was surrounded by seven stones.

Evidence from Cyprus

The above sites are situated in Anatolia, the Levant, and Mesopotamia. It is now generally accepted that Cyprus should be included within our parameters of Near Eastern research (see Peltenburg 2004a). Contributions on Cyprus are now commonly included within edited volumes covering the prehistory of the region (for instance, Clarke 2005; Córdoba et al 2008; Bolger and Maguire 2010; Finlayson and Warren 2010). This is due to the vastly comparable material that is excavated, showing particular parallels with Levantine evidence.

The recently excavated site of Ayia Varvara Asprokremnos (AVA) is dated to and contains comparable material culture to PPNA sites, including Jerf el-Ahmar and other sites in the Levant (Manning et al 2010). Large circular buildings containing pillars or standing stones in the PPNB site of Kalavassos-Tenta have been likened to those from Göbekli Tepe and Nevalı Çori (Todd 2001), a building tradition also seen at Shillourokambos, with curvilinear structures, raised stone platforms made from ash and stone, and deep shafts/water wells. There were also multiple human burials, with skulls removed and cached together, recovered from a cave adjacent to a well-shaft (Galili et al 2001: 96). In one burial, an adult male of late years had been placed above the cranial fragments and long bones of at least three people (Guilaine and Briois 2001: 45). A figurine head from the Shillourokambos intriguingly appears to represent a human–feline hybrid (Guilaine and Briois 2001: 51).

The same building traditions continued into the late PPN in Khirokitia, where cranial modification was also practised (Angel 1953; Alpagut 1986: 156; Peltenburg 2001). Burials here were primary,

single inhumations in pits, with some pits further embellished with pebbles (le Brun 2001: 115–6). A recent re-analysis of cranial modification in Cyprus reveals that it becomes an increasingly common practice throughout the 8th millennium, with intentional modification, rather than a side effect of cradle-boarding, suggested in many cases (le Mort 2007). Cranial modification through cradle-boarding is also seen at the EPPNB-contemporary site of Kissonerga-Mylouthkia, a site with evidence of early farming as well as being among the earliest to use wells, including the deposition of human remains within them. One well-shaft contained the human skull of an adult male with associated mandible. The person had undergone cranial modification, most likely through cradle-boarding. Further down the well were other post-cranial bones. It is suggested that the body was brought to the well in a decomposing, but still partly articulated state. The shaft had apparently been infilled intentionally. Along with the human remains were the remains of one mature and at least eight immature sheep, and two mature and 12 immature goats, complete and unbutchered. Further wells also contained intriguing deposits, two pig heads in one, and a substantial number of goat horn cores in another (Peltenburg et al 2001, and see also Peltenburg et al 2003). The deposition of animal remains is a topic that will be discussed in the following chapters repeatedly; whilst this publication is not directly about animal remains, we will see that they are often integral to studying human identities.

*The Early Pottery Neolithic: Final LPPNB/PPNC,
c.6750–6300 BC*

There have been fewer sites identified for the LPPNB/PPNC period, and consequently evidence is fairly ambiguous and difficult to define, leading to debates over categorization (see Asouti 2006: 94; Özbaşaran and Buitenhuis 2002; Akkermans and Schwartz 2003: 102; Kuijt and Goring-Morris 2002: 366). The debate is in part a reflection of differing means of categorization, as well as regional variations between Anatolia, Mesopotamia, and the Levant.

During this period, there appears to be less effort invested in constructing domestic structures as well as a decline in hunted species, with subsistence now almost totally domesticated. This period of transition between the Pre-Pottery and Pottery Neolithic is often argued to be one of collapse and depopulation, with previously

uninhabited regions becoming more populated, as people dispersed (Özdoğan 2008: 143). However, a reordering of populations does not necessarily relate to 'collapse'; viewed differently, such reorganization can be seen as a means to adapt rather than a negative factor. The decline and eventual abandonment of 'Ain Ghazal and other sites in the Levant are usually attributed to local ecological factors, surmising that the landscape was no longer able to support these previously unseen population levels (Rollefson and Köhler-Rollefson 1989; Rollefson et al 1992), a position which has been disputed (D. Campbell 2010: 181).

There is little evidence of mortuary practices dating to the LPPNB/PPNC. At 'Ain Ghazal—other than the five earliest PPNC examples—burials were recovered from courtyards rather than from beneath the floor in houses. Many of the burial pits from this period also included pig bones, a species that was probably domesticated by this time (Rollefson 2000: 178). From PPNC levels at 'Ain Ghazal, two separate interments of crania have been recovered; these had not undergone further treatment. There is an increasing number of secondary burials, which by this period almost equalled the number of primary interments excavated.

In the north of the region in Central Anatolia where the chronology differs slightly, one of the most densely populated Early Pottery Neolithic sites was Çatalhöyük on the Konya Plain. Thirteen building levels have been identified, dating from around 7400–6000 BC, with those post c.7000 dating to the Ceramic Neolithic (Hodder and Cessford 2004; Düring 2008). Hundreds of burials have been excavated from the site, representing all age groups and both sexes, most of which were single, primary inhumations placed in a contracted position beneath platforms within houses, with just a few secondary burials excavated from the site (Russell and Düring 2010: 74). The burials excavated between 1995 and 1999 (Andrews et al 2005) reveal a population 'under stress': a high infant mortality rate, poor growth, and small stature of adults, with those born during the winter months also potentially suffering from a lack of sunlight, smoke inhalation, and the consequences of vitamin D deficiency (Molleson et al 2005; Molleson 2007a). A plastered skull was also recovered from Çatalhöyük, where it had been buried after some period of use and display, cradled in the arms of an adult female (Hodder and Farid 2004), figs. 2.7a and 2.7b.

(a)



(b)



Fig. 2.7. Plastered skull in the arms of an adult female, at Çatalhöyük (a) photographed in situ (Çatalhöyük Research Project, photographed by Jason Quinlan) and (b) reconstruction drawing (Çatalhöyük Research Project and John Swogger).

To the northwest in Anatolia, Pottery Neolithic sites include Hacilar, with isolated skulls recovered from around hearths or from courtyard areas. Anthropomorphic vessels were also recovered from the site (Oates and Oates 1976; Mellaart 1970), although the authenticity of some examples has been questioned (Aitken et al 1971). At Ilıpınar in Northwest Anatolia, over 50 primary burials have been excavated, mostly children or young adults; they were interred in a flexed position on either their left- or right-hand sides and were grouped together in a 'burial ground' behind houses. Two decorated figurines were also recovered (Roodenberg 1999). At Mentese Höyük, also in Northwest Anatolia, there were two phases of occupation. From the first phase, nine primary interments were recovered, three of which were adults and six juveniles, all buried in pits. Teeth-wear suggested basketry work, and osteoarthritis indicates hard manual labour. They also suffered from a shortage of iron and general nutritional deficiency. There were frequently animal bones within graves. From the second phase of occupation, 11 primary interments were recovered: three juveniles, three adult females and five adult males. All but one child were lying on their right-hand sides, varying from extremely to slightly flexed positions. Two had associated pots, and one child had a necklace of stone beads (Alpaslan-Roodenberg 2001).

The Late Neolithic: Pottery Neolithic, c.6300–5200 BC

The Pottery Neolithic can be interpreted as continuing until late in the 6th millennium BC, further subdivided into phases, and predominantly based on pottery styles and material culture arising from the excavation sites of discovery, with differences between Anatolia, Mesopotamia, and the Levant becoming more distinct. In North Mesopotamia, the Hassuna period (c.6300–6000) and Halaf periods (6000–5200) are phases named after the find-site of particular pottery and material assemblages. Overlapping these periods, the site of Samarra gives its name to the Samarran period (c.6100–5800; see Cruells 2008 for a discussion on the difficulties of dating these periods), a period also recently termed the proto-Halaf (ibid.; Cruells and Nieuwenhuyse 2004).

Burial practices do not differ extensively from earlier examples. At some sites, burial continues to take place beneath the spaces of the living, and there are frequent finds of isolated skulls and crania.

However, there is increasing evidence of grave goods, including personal ornaments. From Tell Hassuna, there were more than a dozen primary burials of infants within jars, frequently buried with small drinking cups. One pottery vessel contained the remains of probable twins (Lloyd and Safar 1945: 268). As well as primary burials beneath the floors in houses, two adult skeletons had apparently been discarded in grain bins, one of which was missing its skull, with a further skull recovered from a rubbish pit situated close by (Lloyd and Safar 1945: 256). At Yarim Tepe I, during the Hassuna phases of the site, adult burials were rarer, usually within buildings, although often only represented by partial remains. There were also many primary infant burials (Merpert and Munchaev 1993a). At Telul eth-Thalathat in Mesopotamia, two burials, one an infant, were associated with potsherds. The infant also displays possible signs of cranial modification (Molleson and Campbell 1995: 50; Campbell 1992a: 173). The association of burials with broken pottery can also be witnessed at Hakemi Use, where ten primary burials have been excavated so far, mostly infants and juveniles. Pottery vessels and potsherds accompany the burials, as do obsidian tools and decorations including ear plugs, labrets, and stone beads (Tekin 2005).

Samarran sites include Tell es-Sawwan in Mesopotamia, where over 200 primary burials were excavated, with a high proportion of infant burials (for a re-evaluation of the mortuary evidence see Campbell 1995). Grave goods were common, including stone vessels, figurines, beads, flint and obsidian blades, stone balls, and animal bones, although there is a notable lack of pottery vessels. There were also some empty graves, which may have been intentionally body-less rather than simply eroded (Campbell 1995: 31). The increasing use of grave goods can also be seen at Tell Songor A in Mesopotamia, where two burials were excavated, one of which was accompanied by four vessels, the other by many grave goods including vessels, a figurine, an alabaster object, and a stone quern (Campbell 1992a: 172). At Tell Sotto in Mesopotamia, six articulated infants had been deposited within vessels. A ten- to fourteen-year-old, thought to be male, had been dismembered and deposited in a pit, and two infant secondary burials had also been placed in pits (Bader 1993). Whilst these sites mentioned above offer fascinating information, they are not pursued further in this volume due to their dates of excavation, which resulted in fewer available details than those excavated with more recent detailed methods of collection and recording.

In the Southern Levant, the Pottery Neolithic (PN) is often referred to as the Yarmukian, followed by periods termed Jericho IX and Wadi Rabah. There are fewer sites dating to these periods and consequently less information on mortuary practices. The Yarmukian period is characterized by incised herringbone pottery, its flint industry (including serrated sickle blades and small arrowheads), and figurines with 'coffee-bean' shaped eyes (Kafafi 1993: 101). Figurine examples include those from Horvat Minha (Munhata), Kfar Giladi, and the site of North Tel Aviv; those found in the latter site were painted with red ochre and had elongated heads or hoods (Noy 1968). One of the largest assemblages of these figurines is from Sha'ar Hagolan (Garfinkel 2004; Garfinkel et al 2010). Additionally at this site were primary interments, one from beneath a cairn, another from within a house which also contained flint tools, animal bones, incised pebbles, and stone statuettes which may have been associated with the burial (Gopher and Orelle 1995). There are some Yarmukian levels that continued from PPNC 'Ain Ghazal, and burials have also been discovered at the underwater site of Atlit Yam in the Levant, dating to c.6100–5600. These were primary burials, although there were also some secondary interments. There is an under-representation of children, probably due to preservation conditions (Gopher and Orelle 1995).

During the Halaf period, primary inhumations again dominate the mortuary record, such as those recovered from Ras Shamra in the Northern Levant, with a number of complete, primary inhumations—mainly infants and children—laid contracted on their sides. There was also one skull recovered (Akkermans 1989: 81). A similar pattern can also be seen at Kharabeh Shattani in North Mesopotamia, with adult primary inhumations of both males and females, as well as the interment of a skull and long bones, although this may be feasibly related to later disturbance. Two inhumations were adorned with girdles/garments of bone, stone, and shell beads (Watkins 1987: 227; Baird et al 1995; Akkermans 1989). Primary burials were excavated at the Halaf site of Boztepe in Anatolia. There were three complete and one fragmentary burial; all were placed on their right-hand sides in a foetal position, facing north, within pits thought to be unrelated to the architecture. Burial 1 had a decorated squat jar, and Burial 2 had a suspended stamp-seal recovered from close to the humerus, as well as a miniature collared jar positioned behind the ribcage (Parker and Creekmore 2002).

A similar pattern of primary inhumations in pits, this time mostly children, is seen at the Halaf site of Chagar Bazar in North Mesopotamia. They were oriented east–west and most contained pottery vessels. A painted clay figurine was also recovered. There were also several cremations (Mallowan 1936: 18; Campbell 1992b).

Halaf inhumations have been recovered from Cavi Tarlasi, with 18 inhumations, mainly children, along with two adult males, each interred with a child. As with the above examples, pottery vessels sometimes accompanied the bodies, and one stone figurine has been recovered (Akkermans 1989: 82; Matthews 2000: 103). Further primary inhumations include those from Kurban Höyük in Southeast Anatolia, where a female buried in a flexed position showed evidence of cranial modification (Alpagut 1986: 150), and Kutan in North Mesopotamia, with a primary inhumation interred with a painted bowl and spindle whorls (Matthews 2000). At Yümük Tepe in Anatolia, primary interments of one adult, one child, one headless adult female, and one female skull were recovered from the Later Neolithic levels; from the Halaf levels, the remains of five primary inhumations were recovered from beneath the floor, all of which had suffered from disruption and violence after their burial. A mass cremation was also uncovered at the site. A further adult had been interred and covered with red pigment (Garstang 1953).

At some sites, separate cemetery sites provide evidence of an increasing separation of the living from the dead. For instance, at Sabi Abyad, there are several cemeteries located in abandoned areas of the site. One dates to 6200–5850 BC and contained exclusively older children and adults, with no infants or babies. These were mostly primary inhumations (fig. 2.8) flexed on one side, although there are many burials which do not conform to this pattern, described as ‘deviant burials’; the evidence from Sabi Abyad is currently being studied at Leiden University under the direction of Peter Akkermans (Akkermans pers. comm.; Akkermans 2008).

Over 240 skeletons have been recovered from Tell ‘Ain el-Kerkh, dating to c.6600–6100 BC. In common with those from Sabi Abyad, the cemetery site is in an abandoned area of the settlement. While most are primary inhumations there are also some secondary burials (fig. 2.9) and cremations. Both sexes and ages from pre-birth to over fifty are represented in the cemetery (Tsuneki 2011: 2). Evidence of cremations have also been found at Tell Kurdu in Southeast Anatolia,

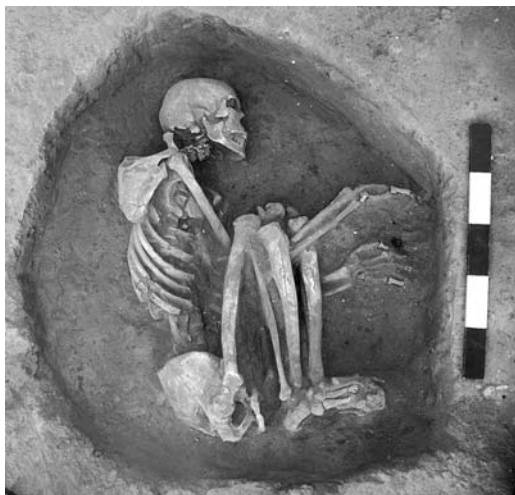


Fig. 2.8. Primary inhumation, Sabi Abyad (Peter Akkermans, Sabi Abyad Project).



Fig. 2.9. Secondary burial, Tell ‘Ain el-Kerkh (Akira Tsuneki).

where burnt skeletal remains had been interred in a pit along with a broken jar (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003; Yener et al 2000).

Whilst there is a general predominance towards complete, primary burial, there remains a significant number of secondary burials at most sites, including skull removal and further treatment. For instance, at the site of Domuztepe, a feature termed the ‘Death Pit’

contained the disarticulated and further fragmented remains of around 40 people (Kansa et al 2009b); this is discussed further in chapter 6. Comparable features are under excavation currently at Sabi Abyad, where several such pits of human remains have recently been discovered (Akkermans pers. comm.).

At Yarim Tepe II's Halaf levels (although see Campbell 2007 for a discussion of the problematic dating of the site), there were also cranial and secondary burials as well as primary interments. There is also evidence of the deliberate breakage of items in the mortuary area of the site, including an anthropomorphic vessel and zoomorphic pottery vessel in the shape of a pig, which were found smashed in a pit, as well as numerous broken pottery and alabaster vessels (Merpert and Munchaev 1993c; Steven Bell pers. comm.). At the neighbouring mound of Yarim Tepe I, a Halaf-period cemetery contained mostly primary burials, except for the secondary burial of human bones with gazelle bones, and a large aurochs skull, discussed in chapters 4 and 6.

From the site of Girikihacıyan in Anatolia, three primary and one secondary burial were excavated, the latter represented by just five rib fragments and the left humerus. Two of the primary burials were interred in a contracted position on their left-hand sides. These were a male of between twenty-five and forty years of age, a female child aged six to seven, and the third, a child of around three years of age buried in an extended position (Watson and LeBlanc 1990: 121–2; Akkermans 1989: 82).

Multiple burial types can also be seen at Arpachiyah in Mesopotamia, including primary fractional and secondary, as well as four skulls which had been placed within ceramic bowls (Mallowan and Rose 1935; Hijjara 1997: 77; Campbell 1992). Skull removal and selection can also be seen at Köşk Höyük in Central Anatolia, where 13 of the 19 skulls recovered have been plastered and some additionally painted (Özbek 2009), such as the skull of a twenty-one- to twenty-four-year-old female, which had been plastered and painted with red ochre (Mellink 1992: 126; Bienert 1991). Skull removal was also practised at Şeyh Höyük in Northern Mesopotamia, including the modified crania of three females (Senyurek and Tunakan 1951: 431–45; Yakar 1985: 308).

The practice of cranial modification (which will be discussed in chapter 4), seen during the PPNB, is also evident in figurines and pottery decoration (Molleson and Campbell 1995; Daems and

Croucher 2007). Figurines with elongated heads have been recovered from Köşk Höyük (Bienert 1991) and from Tell Bakun A in the Fars Province (Herzfeld 1932: 13, fig. 1; Daems and Croucher 2007). Two stylized figurines were found at Tell Maghzaliyah (Bader 1993); painted clay figures have been excavated from Tell Aqab in the Northern Levant (Matthews 2000: 94), from the Pottery Neolithic levels at Tell Kashkashuk in North Mesopotamia (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003: 143–4), and Hakemi Use in Anatolia (Tekin 2002).

Following on from the Late Neolithic/Chalcolithic eras, there are intriguing mortuary remains at many sites. Settlement sites become larger in size, and at many, monumental constructions begin to take the form of organized temples during the Ubaid period, predominantly in Mesopotamia and Anatolia. While the details are beyond the scope of this chapter, mortuary practices of the Neolithic appear to continue into the later periods, with evidence of secondary burials still occasionally emerging alongside a pattern of increasing uniformity in mortuary practices, leading into the early historic periods.

CHRONOLOGY IN CONTEXT

The discipline of Near Eastern archaeology is at an exciting stage at present, with many decades of research providing a valuable foundation and knowledge base for the investigation of alternative interpretations and insights into this crucial period in human development. This chapter has outlined some of the main features from archaeological sites in the Neolithic Near East. Whilst the overview is not all-encompassing—not least as the dynamic nature of archaeology ensures that new discoveries and new interpretations are repeatedly made—the evidence provides a foundation for further discussion, which can shed light on aspects of identity, relationships between the living and dead, and understandings of the human body.

The evidence paints a picture of diversity in mortuary practices, although with common strands running through. For instance, decapitation of burials and further treatment of skulls is seen from the Natufian until the Halaf periods, although revealed through different practices, and undoubtedly with diverse meanings and intentions. There is also an apparent trend through time towards burial grounds which are segregated from living spaces, evidenced on an intra-site

level at Tell Aswad, and on a broader scale through cemeteries in the Later Neolithic, such as at Tell 'Ain el-Kerkh and Sabi Abyad, a topic to which we return in later chapters. The following chapters will discuss trends and practices in greater detail, investigating the evidence using a small-scale approach.

The traditional approach of analysing large-scale patterns is, in part, a result of the domination of processual and culture-historic approaches within the discipline, a factor that will be discussed in chapter 3. Through looking at individual sites and features on sites, constructing a picture from the small scale upwards, the following chapters build up a more in-depth and nuanced understanding of past behaviours, asking new questions which complement traditional areas of research. Rather than focusing on economy, subsistence, or hierarchy, other themes are pursued to reveal different insights into the past; using the human body as a focal point for interpretation, themes of personhood and identity can be explored. This provides insights into people's perceptions of their bodies and their identities, as well as information about concepts of life and death; the role death played in relationships among the living, as well as perceptions of their environments, and the animals and people within it. Such an approach incorporates themes of agency, materiality, and embodiment by considering people's relationships with each other and their surrounding worlds.

The next chapter will explore some of the theoretical means by which the evidence is approached, as well as providing a brief history of archaeological theory, specifically with relation to mortuary archaeology. It will also provide an introduction to the themes covered in chapters 4, 5, and 6; gender, ancestors, and personhood.

Interpretation and Practice

DEVELOPMENTS IN ARCHAEOLOGICAL THEORY AND PRACTICE: THEIR IMPACT ON NEAR EASTERN ARCHAEOLOGY

Before commencing with an analysis of mortuary practices in the Near East, it is essential to situate this study within the broader framework of archaeological theory, method, and practice. While there are numerous resources available to students unfamiliar with the general development of the discipline (see for instance Trigger's (2006) *History of Archaeological Thought* or Johnson's (1999) *Archaeological Theory*), there is little that covers Near Eastern archaeological practice in relation to the main developments in archaeology. Therefore, a brief overview of the main theoretical trends in archaeological practice—culture-history; New Archaeology, processualism; post-processualism; and the impact these theoretical approaches had on the study of the Neolithic Near East—is provided here. This background will then lead into a discussion of current archaeological practice in the Near East, where interpretation and recent excavations are becoming more theoretically informed. To begin with, this chapter will discuss culture-history and its role in Near Eastern archaeology.

Culture-history

During the eighteenth century, antiquarian travellers visited many sites in the Near East. By the nineteenth century, interest in the treasures of the region had developed into a trade that furnished European museums with artefacts, fostering an attitude of ownership

over foreign artefacts that would be considered unethical by today's standards. The scale of the acquisitions is exemplified by the movement of monumental architecture and sculptures, transported wholesale through extraordinary feats of engineering, to European museums from the Near East. Examples were the Nineveh Palace of Ashurnasirpal II, transported by A. H. Layard in 1842 to the British Museum, or the sculpture from the Palace of Sargon II, delivered to the Louvre in Paris in the 1840s.

The British Museum had already been in existence for more than 100 years when, in 1884, the Pitt Rivers Museum opened in Oxford following Pitt Rivers's donation of thousands of artefacts to the University. He was already a pioneering archaeologist of his time following his excavations of Cranborne Chase in central southern England (Pitt Rivers 1898), and the way in which he organized his museum collections also became influential. Pitt Rivers's excavations differed immeasurably from the treasure-hunting expeditions referred to above, with an attention to detail uncommon for the time. The museum was ordered according to Pitt Rivers's typologies, a classificatory system inspired by military order which categorized the development of objects, with the mapping of artefacts onto cultures, tracing their developments temporally and geographically. At around the same time anthropologists, such as E. B. Tylor, were beginning to argue that cultures could be recognized as discrete entities, seeing cultures as 'that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society' (1871: 1).

The emerging concepts of 'culture-groups' were influenced by social evolution and the theories of philosophers, biologists, and researchers of the time, including Charles Darwin, who wrote *Origin of Species* in 1859, and Herbert Spencer, who argued for 'survival of the fittest' (1864). The concept of social evolution, alongside biological evolution, became influential, impacting on government policies of the time on both sides of the Atlantic. It was believed that just as human species developed biologically, they also developed socially, with cultures eventually developing into the equivalent of modern Western industrialist societies. Those peoples around the world who were not yet industrialized were perceived to be lower down the evolutionary scale. Furthermore, Spencer argued that individuals could pass on traits genetically, such as industriousness and frugality, or laziness and immorality, and therefore those 'unfit' levels of society should be allowed to become extinct rather than be given

aid from the government, thus in keeping with the natural 'evolution of civilization' (Spencer 1867).

The idea of culture-groups as distinct cultural packages was used by Gustav Kossinna (1911), who attempted to trace the homelands of Indo-Europeans. Although he died in 1931, his works influenced Nazism, with his ideas used to argue for the recapture of the original territories of the Germanic peoples. As archaeology could be seen as a tool to trace the development of cultural groups through time it was used, or, rather, misused, to trace the Germanic peoples and their ancient homelands, with evidence often falsified in support of Nazi propaganda (Arnold 1990; Arnold and Hassmann 1995; Veit 1989).

Kossinna's ideas were adopted in Britain by V. Gordon Childe, who rejected the racist connotations, and used the work of Kossinna to focus on the idea of historically traceable culture-groups which were identifiable archaeologically (Childe 1925). However, Childe's notion of archaeologically traceable culture-groups still maintained the superiority of certain cultures, such as the Indo-European language groups: languages that were understood to enable greater mental competency (Childe 1926). Childe's research changed the face of archaeology in Britain, with the identification of culture-groups that are still used today, if cautiously.

Childe's research went on to have considerable impact in the Middle East, as it was from here, Childe argued, that European culture originated (Childe 1928). Consequently, Europeans had greater claim to the region than Arab inhabitants. It is not difficult to see how archaeological discourse contributed towards foreign policy and attitudes toward the Near East; the background of social evolutionary theory, along with the belief in the spread of cultures, made concepts of ownership and rights over the Middle East more politically acceptable.

The period between the two World Wars saw an expansion of visitors to the Middle East, aided by the Near Eastern Railroad (called the 'London to Baghdad', 'Berlin to Baghdad', or 'Bordeaux to Baghdad' Railroad, depending on the controlling country of the time; see Thomas 1990: 4). The combination of the archaeological theories of culture-groups, with the acceptance of a Western 'ownership' of the Middle East, saw archaeologists begin large-scale excavation projects, including Max Mallowan's excavation of Nimrud, Sir Leonard Woolley's excavations of Ur during the 1920s and the neighbouring site of Tell 'Ubaid. Excavations were funded by institutions such as the

British Museum, the American School of Oriental Research (ASOR), and various universities and societies of the United States, UK and Europe, along with private donations. This increase of archaeological activity between the wars in many respects changed attitudes to the purpose of excavation, with a realization of the importance of studying past people, rather than simply collecting their artefacts: a change welcomed by Childe at the time (1928). Thus artefacts were viewed as products of a particular culture-group; of their shared ideas, beliefs, and behaviours, which were seen as communal attitudes and norms, rather than individual choices. Changes occurred therefore as ideas and values evolved, which could be traced to centres showing stronger unity in material culture. Mortuary practices were embedded into the idea of culture-groups, seen as another indicator of cultural practice, group norms, and beliefs.

Aside from the furnishing of Western museums with artefacts, the excavations produced a classificatory system for archaeology in the Near East which is still largely in place today. The categorization of sites according to culture-groups, such as the 'Ubaid', the 'Halaf', or the 'Hassuna' periods, was established in common with wider contemporaneous archaeological practice. Periods and sites with similar material culture were named after the site where they were first found; the material culture typical of the site of Tell Halaf, the decorated pottery, circular tholoi structures, figurine, and seal-types became termed the 'Halaf culture', indicative of the 'Halaf' culture-group and their temporal and spatial location, and likewise for other cultures/periods, such as the Hassuna, Ubaid, and Uruk. The terms used to identify these perceived cultural groups have been critiqued in the previous chapter; suffice to reiterate that the terms should be used with caution and recognized as tools for archaeologists, rather than seen as real entities within the past. The acceptance of culture-groups has been challenged as limited (i.e. Akkermans and Schwartz 2003: 101; Campbell 2007), although there is still an understanding of the direct reflection of movements of people via their material culture (for instance, Özdoğan's discussion of the spread of agriculture into Europe (2009), or the spread of pottery via the movement of women, Forest 2006). However, these studies are more sophisticated than traditional, straightforward models, aimed at understanding social change rather than simply mapping the movement of people, following a processual theoretical approach.

New Archaeology and processualism

Following World War II there was a resurgence of archaeological activity, aided in part by aerial photography undertaken during the war, which led to the identification of new sites and the commencing of new archaeological projects. However, ideas were changing, and the previous culture-historic approaches were criticized for only documenting and mapping changes in societies rather than attempting to understand how and why such changes occurred. Lewis Binford (1962) became a driving force behind New Archaeology, which sought to understand change rather than simply record its progress. He argued that human action resulted in cultural change and took place in a systemic manner, influenced by external factors, such as environmental or climatic conditions. Binford also asserted that archaeology should be more scientific in its approach, rigorously testing hypotheses of human behaviour with models derived from anthropology, and tested through the process of excavation. Cultures, he argued, comprised sets of interlinking systems, be they social, economic, or religious subsystems, which interacted with broader systems such as climate, demographics, or environmental processes. It was argued that changes to these systems could be mapped and traced through computer-like modelling and testing. The processes behind change could be understood and thus archaeological interpretation developed into a period of processualism or New Archaeology.

As use of both objects and tools was the means by which humans could overcome their environmental conditions, changes in material culture were seen as direct indicators of change in other systems, such as the availability of hunting or plant resources. However, different aspects of an artefact's use needed to be evaluated, including the technological, ideological, and social subsystems behind an object: artefacts were more than functional; they were the products of the combinations of subsystems behind their manufacture and use. Through an analysis of material culture, and by understanding the systems behind their making, a picture of past society could be built up (Binford 1962: 219).

Processual archaeologists argued that people react in particular ways according to their circumstances, therefore laws of human behaviour could be observed and tested, in order to determine the ideological and social subsystems behind them. Hypotheses about

patterns of behaviour could be drawn from social anthropological observations, with the study of other culture-groups offering a resource for analogous behaviour. Such hypotheses could then be tested against the archaeological record. Attitudes to fieldwork changed as excavations were now seen as hypothesis-testing processes rather than simply exercises in the collection of artefacts.

Binford argued that while anthropology could be used to access these laws of human behaviour, archaeologists were more privileged, because not only could they draw on observations of contemporary societies, but they had the whole development of the human race available for study (Binford 1962). Archaeology was now viewed as a component of anthropology—the study of other cultures—except that in the case of archaeology these cultures were in the past rather than the present. Continuing legacies of this approach are the joint anthropology and archaeology departments in many universities, predominantly in the USA.

As human behaviour was understood to be dictated by the various systems and subsystems of the world, so individual action was viewed as inconsequential, with groups and systems dictating behaviour. Consequently, there was no particular motivation to investigate individual people in the past. Likewise, other areas of past lives were largely overlooked, such as gender roles or sexuality, primarily because they were assumed to be governed by universal, natural laws. This is an area to which we return later in this chapter and in chapter 5.

New Archaeology and the study of mortuary practices

New Archaeology's approaches to mortuary practice have left a legacy that has shaped the study of funerary archaeology and, in Near Eastern archaeology, has produced a framework that is still largely in place today. In accordance with the models of processes and natural behaviour, mortuary practice was perceived as revealing quite specific information about the deceased and their communities, and primarily understood to be a direct indicator of social organization and social stratification.

Many studies drew on the social evolutionary frameworks outlined above and then developed into more structured frameworks during the 1960s. Service (1962) saw society as developing through a system of bands, tribes, chiefdoms, and states, and Fried (1967) simplified

these developments into changes from egalitarian society, to ranked society, and finally state societies. These systems of social change were seen as key developments of human societies, and mortuary practices were one route to detecting them in the past. This work was supported by anthropologists' research, such as that by Timothy Earle, who studied non-industrial case studies, such as Polynesian chiefdoms (1987).

Three main studies were particularly influential in asserting the relationship between burial practice and either hierarchy or social equality. Arthur Saxe (1970) produced a thesis entitled *Social Dimensions of Mortuary Practices*. His work was typically processual in testing a total of eight hypotheses to discover rules behind disposal practices and their relationship to social organization (Saxe 1970: 3). Each individual, argued Saxe, was 'a coherent social personality who not only engaged in relationships with other social personalities but did so according to rules and structural slots dictated by the larger social system' (1970: 4). In an edited volume *Approaches to the Social Dimensions of Mortuary Practices*, Brown (1971) aimed to analyse the aspects of social behaviour that lay behind burial practices. Within Brown's volume, Lewis Binford's (1971) 'Mortuary Practices: Their Study and their Potential' used anthropological mortuary data to observe laws of behaviour and their relationship to social stratification. Drawing on these works, Joseph Tainter (1978), in 'Mortuary Practices and the Study of Prehistoric Social Systems', wrote that Binford's results 'confirm beyond serious contention the argument (still rated sceptically by some) that the variability in mortuary practices must be understood in terms of variability in the form and organization of social systems, not in terms of normative modes of behaviour' (Tainter 1978: 107). At this point a clear distinction can be seen to emerge, with a move away from the normative modes of behaviour found in culture-historic approaches, to an understanding of the underlying social systems that produce the archaeological evidence.

The impact of these studies has remained long-lived (see Chapman et al's (eds) 1981 edited volume on *The Archaeology of Death*, reprinted in 2009, containing chapters based on the works cited above). There was, it was argued, a direct relationship between the way that someone was buried and the role that they had held in society, including their wealth and social status. Beyond this, information could also be gained about the society more broadly, accessing details about how

hierarchical or egalitarian a population had been. For instance, objects in graves could be viewed as direct indicators of the deceased's wealth, and could be viewed in relation to the grave goods from other graves in the cemetery, or those from contemporary sites, with social differences during life reflected in mortuary interments. Examples of traditional approaches to wealth and hierarchy in this vein include interpretations of the Copper Age cemetery at Varna (Chapman 1991), or Shennan's interpretation of the Cemetery at Branc in Southwest Slovakia (1975), where a clear relationship is described between grave goods and social hierarchy. In the latter, debate is sparked over whether wealth is ascribed (inherited) or attained through actions during life, with wealthy female burials causing debate for models of wealth acquirement (Shennan 1975: 285–6). Artefacts within the graves, it was argued, directly reflect social status, whether related to wealth, gender, age, or a combination thereof (a subject to which we return below). Studies continued to adopt this framework into the 1980s (e.g. O'Shea 1984), seeing burial practices as reflecting social status and mortuary behaviour.

New Archaeology in the Near East

The approaches of New Archaeology have had a huge and lasting impact on Near Eastern archaeology. The change from approaches that simply mapped past cultures to those which attempted to understand social change has resulted in a new understanding of the processes of 'Neolithization', discussed in the previous chapter. As changes during the Neolithic are often perceived as leading to city-states and, ultimately, a modern world, the quest for tracing and interpreting these changes is understandable. As discussed by Thomas: 'archaeology concerns itself with long-term sequences of change, which spin themselves into a series of universal narratives', with archaeology concerned with 'the construction of the kinds of narratives that provide foundations for the nation-state' (2004: 53). Research has focused on understanding the social changes in the context of a large-scale evolutionary framework of change, alongside environmental and climatic conditions, and systems of economies, subsistence, and trade. Such systems are seen as providing the conditions for the Neolithic and, ultimately, the changes that lead to city-states and urbanism, hinging on increasing social stratification and complexity. Mortuary practices are seen as a component of these

changes, providing evidence in line with the work of Binford, Saxe, and Tainter, which elucidates social complexity, whether hierarchical or egalitarian. However, as will be discussed later in this chapter, such direct mapping of status and burial practice is flawed.

Research into social complexity usually draws on concepts of wealth to assess the level of hierarchical organization. Models of social evolution such as those by Fried, Service, and Earle usually include the acquisition of wealth alongside increasing power; it is the accumulation of wealth which helps to make these stratifications appear archaeologically detectable based on, for instance, inequalities in architecture, grave goods, or long-distance traded items, or in more recent interpretations, the presence or absence of ritual behaviour. Archaeologists can look for such differences—whether in house size, status goods, or mortuary practices—as a window into the wealth of particular groups or individuals in society.

Excavations at Jericho during the 1950s, directed by Kathleen Kenyon (1957), revealed caches of skulls which were viewed as indicators of growing complexity and increasing social status, evidenced through their selective skull treatment and reburial. This treatment of skulls often forms the basis of interpretations based on ancestor cults (Cauvin 1994; Bienert 1991; Wright 1988), an area that will be considered in greater depth in the next chapter. Whilst opinions are beginning to shift, a perception of the direct relationship between mortuary practices and social stratification is still held by many researchers. For instance, Rollefson (2000: 183) has argued that the different types of ritual practice at PPNB 'Ain Ghazal reflect social status and a four-tiered hierarchy, ascending from figurines to burials, plastered skulls and plastered statues, reflecting different rungs of social hierarchy and access to ritual power. Figurines were widely available, argued Rollefson, whereas burial was available to only a few people and plastered skulls afforded to fewer still, with painting and modelling of skulls even further restricted. The plaster statuary, found buried in caches at the site, was regarded as the highest rung of the ritual ladder. The issue of social complexity and ritual behaviour has been further explored recently by Kuijt, who has argued that the plastered skulls are both a means of creating an appearance of egalitarianism, whilst also marking out individual selection and hierarchy (2008a).

Whilst the search for increasing hierarchies is understandable and credible, given the relative rarity of such practices, it is still notable that many routes of interpretation lead to discussions of hierarchy and social complexity, and frequently at the expense of other areas of research. Furthermore, it is modern Western perceived notions of wealth that are portrayed into the past and sought archaeologically, with institutionalized hierarchies or displays sought through property and accumulation of wealth, and through the control of resources.

In a special section within *Current Anthropology*, 'Intergenerational Wealth Transmission and Inequality in Premodern Societies' (Bowles et al 2010), recent research has taken a refreshing approach to concepts of wealth among different social groups. While the accumulation of material items is a familiar indicator of wealth, the researchers have recognized that this approach is extremely limiting, especially when applied to different types of social groups, such as hunter-gatherers, pastoralists, or horticulturalists. They suggest that wealth is often acquired through relational means, such as through networks and exchanges, or through embodied or somatic wealth such as weight, health, reproduction, knowledge, and skills. Whilst relational, somatic, and material wealth are undoubtedly linked (Smith et al 2010c; Flinn 2010), this research provides a more nuanced insight into the topic than previous research that focused on material prosperity alone. It is not the case that those who do not display material wealth are more egalitarian. Rather, it is that inequalities are revealed in different ways, through differences in somatic or relational wealth, which was often related to types of subsistence. For instance, pastoralists and farmers are more likely to display material wealth than horticulturalists or hunter-gatherers, with many horticultural groups, for instance, for whom wealth is somatic, 'stored in human bodies and channelled into growth, reproduction, and immune function' (Gurven et al 2010).

The impact of this research for Near Eastern archaeology is that archaeologists need to look increasingly beyond material indicators of wealth when discussing social organization. But further problems lie, however, within the definitions of groups and categories, an observation also made by Gurven et al (2010), who observed that 'not all horticulturalists fit the same traditional labels popularized by Service (1962: i.e. band, tribe, or chiefdom) or those popularized by Fried (1967: egalitarian, ranked, and stratified societies). Many

horticultural groups are fairly egalitarian and autonomous but show more status differentiation than foragers' (Gurven et al 2010: 52). In reality, people rarely conform to our categories of study; many groups that are deemed to be horticulturists, for instance, also foraged, and vice versa (Kelly 2010). As Asouti (2006: 120) observes, using mutually exclusive categories to describe subsistence patterns in the past offers us limited results and simplifies the evidence; we need to recognize the period as a time of changing relationships and group interactions.

Anna Belfer-Cohen highlights the role of social memory in the transference and continuity of inequalities. She rightly draws attention to the principle that such changes are only visible archaeologically once they have become accepted and normative (2010; Belfer-Cohen and Goring-Morris 2009). This is a significant point to remember: archaeological visibility often requires many generations of action and, therefore, may render invisible many innovative changes that aren't subsequently adopted.

Given the particular developments in a Near Eastern context of sedentism, agriculture, and, ultimately, the earliest city-states emerging from the region, there has been less motivation to look beyond the search for developing social hierarchies, a theme that has historically dominated the study of archaeology in the region. Flannery (1998: xvii) called for the continuing 'commonsense use of social evolutionary theory', with the acceptance of external systems and pressures, and internal processes, causing social evolutionary changes. Asserting that 'explanatory, processual, evolutionary archaeology is alive and well in the southern Levant', Flannery accuses many archaeologists of falling 'prey to archaeology's latest messianic cult, that anti-science, anti-materialist, anti-comparative movement calling itself post-processualism'. Perhaps his ridicule comes in part from the theorizing and self-reflexivity that have been a component of post-processualism, a topic that will be discussed next. However, as it is hoped this book will demonstrate, it is possible to combine post-processual interpretation with fieldwork, data collection, and rigorous analysis of data. Furthermore, post-processualism has brought about a new freedom to explore previously unquestioned areas of past lives such as personhood, gender roles, and sexuality, and has also encouraged new understandings of mortuary practices, including the role of the mourner, and the impact of funerary rituals on living members of the community.

Post-processualism and interpretative archaeology

As is evident from the previous section, New Archaeology is still widely practised today, and has many proponents worldwide. However, during the 1980s, many archaeologists began to see shortfalls with processual archaeology, including processual approaches to mortuary practices. At a general level, archaeologists began to question some of the foundations of New Archaeology's assumptions. Are there really universal laws of human behaviour that cause people to act in certain ways? Is material culture a direct result of these laws and systems? Can the same results be produced by a number of different actions and models? And what about the role of individuals: are the assumptions made about families, gender, and 'natural order' really universal?

Archaeological practice

Post-processualism began a self-reflexive process in the discipline. It sought to understand the link between archaeologists and the interpretations they made. It soon became clear to many that rather than observing 'facts' in the archaeological record, the observations of archaeologists were influenced by their own theories, historical situations, and personal experiences, and thus the processes of excavation and interpretation are subjective. Whilst we might like to think of archaeology as a scientific recording of evidence, in reality archaeologists make choices when excavating. Decisions include which particular types of artefact are recorded as special objects, given a 3-D location and a find number, which objects are recorded as a batch, and which objects are overlooked. For instance, whether 'natural' objects are treated in the same way as worked artefacts or discarded; a river pebble or piece of quartzite for instance, whilst 'natural', can still be meaningful, intentionally collected, used, curated, or disposed of.

As well as making choices about what artefacts to keep, record, or discard (and these choices must inevitably be made or potentially generate an unmanageable excavation and post-excavation process), an excavator's experience will lead to observance of different artefact types and distributions in accordance with experience; for instance, a lithics analyst will undoubtedly find and recognize more worked stone than a faunal analyst might. The recognition of different features might also depend on experience as well as conditions. For

instance, the type of light, time of day, and weather conditions can affect the visibility of archaeological features (Ashley 2009), and the state of mind of the excavator also plays a role; tiredness, illness, or even a hangover can impact on the excavation process. Combining these factors with excavation budgets, time constraints (in rescue archaeology this is pertinent, but also with many research digs confined to a few weeks between university semesters), and supervisor/digger/volunteer ratios, it is easy to see how the excavation site is affected by a range of factors, all of which can lead to varying levels of observation, retrieval, and recording, and inevitably influence the final interpretation of the site. Added to these factors, personal theories about the site inescapably feature in interpretations (Hodder 1997; Richards 1995). Final interpretations of a site may be influenced by the proposition put forward in grant proposals, or may be a factor of experience; we are more likely to recognize aspects with which we are familiar in the archaeological record, and aspects that are alien to us may remain unrecognized or misunderstood.

Whilst the final report of an excavation is expected to offer an explanation of the site, parts of the site where there was not a clear picture may be overlooked, with the report naturally focusing on areas where a stronger interpretation can be made. These decisions and processes do not arise out of an intent to deceive, but are natural consequences of the excavation and publication process and the factors which bear upon it. However, archaeologists should be honest about just how scientific their excavations can be. Perhaps this is where Flannery (1998: xvii) interprets post-processualism as being 'anti-scientific'; rather than being against science, post-processualism calls for an honest appraisal of methods of collection and recovery techniques. Nor does it call for an abandonment of data collection and analysis. Near Eastern archaeology, in particular, is a case in point here; often there are huge amounts of material to process, yet this does not mean that we should not recognize flaws in data recovery, or that such data cannot be employed to investigate areas of archaeology previously overlooked by New Archaeology.

Further influences on archaeological practice include the conditions and circumstances of excavation, including socio-political contexts, which are particularly pertinent with Near Eastern archaeology. An in-depth discussion of the problems and politics of the Middle East is not possible here, other than to observe that the modern context for excavation and research is frequently one of political

unrest and turmoil. Israel and Palestine have faced instability for decades, and we are familiar with the situation in Iraq where war and conflict have led to a breakdown in stability, and hostilities and looting have caused the devastating, irreversible damage and destruction of many archaeological sites. The effects of looting have been documented and discussed with relation to both Iraq (chapters within Stone and Farchakh Bajjaly 2008) and Palestine (Yahya 2010), a practice driven by demand that will only be halted with sufficient legislation, policing, and attitude change. This is beginning to happen, although change is slow. Whilst the situation for archaeology may be critical, the situation is far from clear cut; as important as archaeology is, there are life-threatening issues that must take priority.

The political situation also impacts on a practical level on our distribution of knowledge and understandings of find-sites. To state the obvious, there will be fewer excavations in war zones(!). Furthermore, communication between scholars is restricted, with insecure environments producing extra challenges for researchers (as one conference delegate stated at an international congress of Archaeology in the Ancient Near East meeting, 'What use are computers if I cannot get to my office without my life being threatened?'). Visa problems also hinder colleagues from many countries in the Middle East attending scholarly conferences; an example is the recent *Overcoming Structural Violence* congress in Ramallah in 2009 (see Hole 2010), an event which gave a valuable voice to Palestinian researchers but the location of which meant that scholars from Israel were unable to attend; and colleagues from Iran and Palestine (amongst others) face repeated and serious restrictions on their movement to international conferences. However, advances in the internet and computer resources, where available, are offering some options; for instance, young researchers have started up a 'Next Generation' project based around the social networking site Facebook as a forum for participation and communication (Sands and Butler 2010). It is hoped that archaeology can be one route to facilitate cooperation and communication in the region (Levy 1998: ix; Fahel 2010).

Areas where larger building projects are subjected to archaeological investigation will also impact on our understanding; for example, dam or road projects may lead to artificially high concentrations of finds in some areas. Conversely, the absence of activity in other areas may often be mistaken for lack of evidence, rather than lack of excavation. Israel, formed in 1948 following World War II, currently

remains one of the most studied countries in the region archaeologically, yet its archaeology currently faces an additional threat through the construction of the Israeli wall (Taha 2010). Construction of the wall, described officially as 'Israel's Separation Barrier' began in June 2002, and is thought to have a planned length of around 650 km. It currently consists of a series of fences and a 25-ft-high concrete wall, and includes trenches up to 2m deep, watchtowers, sniper towers, and accompanying roads (Parry 2003). The wall has been constructed largely without prior environmental- or archaeological-impact assessments (Rjoob 2010: 84). As well as having a detrimental effect on the archaeology of the region, the building of the wall has disrupted cultural landscapes, both tangible and intangible (Rjoob 2010). The importance of intangible pasts is becoming increasingly recognized through publications (such as edited volumes by Ruggles and Silverman 2009, and Smith and Akagawa 2008) and through UNESCO protection; intangible elements of culture include songs, crafts, and oral histories, all of which are gaining local recognition, and hopefully, in time, heritage protection (Al-Jubeih 2010, discussing Palestine). Cultural heritage relates to whole landscapes rather than individual sites and monuments (Iwais et al 2010: 111), and modern-day borders often do not reflect past divisions of land, disrupting cultural landscapes.

Aside from construction of the wall, the destruction of archaeological sites is taking place through a number of factors that are common throughout the whole of the Near East, such as road building, urban expansion, agriculture, environmental factors, and looting (Iwais et al 2010). However, archaeology probably faces its greatest threat from agriculture and urban spread, causing the vast destruction of unrecorded archaeological material. Such factors inevitably have an impact on our overall understanding of the region.

More indirectly, excavation is influenced by available finance, including the political motivations of countries to fund fieldwork expeditions. Conflict can also impact on the communication of knowledge. During a personal visit to the Smithsonian Institute in 2006, I witnessed that a display on ancient Mesopotamia had been removed from public view. The exhibition space was dedicated to 'Early Civilizations', but the Mesopotamian frieze had been hidden behind a new wall, with Mesopotamia represented by a few cuneiform tablets instead. Whilst the rational explanation should be refurbishment of the display, the lack of signs to this effect, which

were seen throughout the museum with notices advising of refurbishment or display changes, were notably absent. The gallery also featured maps painted onto the walls next to displays, which showed the ancient territories mapped onto their modern locations. However, where the previous map of Mesopotamia had been, a new map had been bolted over the top, which detailed only ancient place names—Iraq, Iran, and Syria were omitted. The indication is, sadly, a covering over of knowledge about the importance of the archaeology of the region to the history of human civilization. Undoubtedly, obscuring the archaeological riches of a country under attack makes strategic sense; however, it is unsettling to witness a manipulation and miscommunication of knowledge in this way: a stark reminder of the socio-political role that archaeology frequently unwittingly plays.

Archaeological narratives

Whilst a site's meaning should be debated and contested, it is still fundamental that interpretations are based on the data collected and the knowledge gained, for it is this which separates archaeological interpretation from storytelling. However, there has been a move in archaeology recently to inject some imagination back into archaeological narrative, albeit based on the material artefacts recovered. Archaeologists can now be seen as having a duty to communicate a more lively and engaging narrative of the past (Matthews 2003: 191; Tringham 1991, 1994: 342, 350). The greater focus on interpretative choices places post-processual archaeology in a position that enables the onlooker to 'view, visualize, imagine and participate in the interpretation of the built environment of the past' (Tringham 1994: 342). With particular reference to Near Eastern archaeology, Roger Matthews suggests that 'the future of archaeological interpretation lies increasingly in narrative and images' (2003: 190), where the 'very anonymity of the peoples of the Mesopotamian past' should 'oblige us to resurrect them and to consider their daily practices, fears, beliefs', even if only tentatively. He asks, 'is there not an onus on the archaeologists to deliver visions of the past that transcend traditional boundaries and territories?' providing 'narratives that tell us and our audiences and public how it might have been' (2003: 190). Accounts that consider more emotive narratives of the past are emerging in Near Eastern Archaeology (i.e. Stordeur and Khawam 2007; Jones 2008; Tsuneki 2011: 1; Croucher and Campbell 2009),

and narrative accounts are becoming much more commonplace in archaeological texts since Tringham's (1991: 124) exploration of this medium (e.g. Skeates 2010; Weiburg 2007).

With its reflection into archaeological interpretation, post-processual archaeology has become known as, or developed into, 'interpretative archaeology', as the title of the *Reader* edited by Julian Thomas (2000b) suggests. Or perhaps more appropriately, 'interpretative archaeologies', since post-processualism incorporates a range of different, dynamic archaeological approaches, rather than being a coherent 'movement', and interpretations can be multiple. The process of interpretation has been described as a 'hermeneutic cycle' (Johnson and Olsen 1992), an ongoing interpretative process. Our interpretations of the past are based on assumptions; we automatically assign meanings to things and often assume facts about the way people in the past thought and acted. Although we cannot get away from this, we can ensure that the meanings and assumptions assigned are made recognizable as part of our interpretative processes. Our interpretations are not final, however, but are fed back into the analysis and are built on, to produce new interpretations. Whether a final 'truth' exists can also remain elusive, as any situation is open to interpretation and is dependent on experience. This is a concept with which we are familiar from our own lives, and when for example two protagonists of an argument are asked about their situation, they will almost certainly provide different accounts and perspectives of the events that have taken place. So where does the truth lie? In a combination of experiences, or somewhere between the two; or does it lie in the minds of those experiencing the events? To some extent, then, if a situation is understood differently by all those present, what hope can we have as archaeologists to understand the 'reality'? Of course, we may objectify the past with the clarity of distance, but still we look from a distance through our own lenses and see past events, inevitably, clouded by our own judgements.

To further muddy the picture let's think about the role of science. We usually believe science to be both objective and 'truthful', which, to some extent, it is. However, the ambiguity involved can help us to deconstruct what we think of as 'facts'. Throughout our recent history we have seen various scientific 'truths' or understandings overturned. This has ranged from how the body works (blood circulation, whether particular stimulants or foods are healthy or otherwise—smoking was once believed to aid health as it relieved stress, and

debates still continue about the health benefits versus the risks of eating eggs, because of cholesterol), or understandings of the solar system, or of evolution itself (anecdotally, at school I was taught that the line of descent from ape to man was via Neanderthals, which are now understood to be a different species rather than our evolutionary descendants). The more we learn—from the everyday facts concerning diet to the broader cosmos—the more it becomes apparent that what we previously understood as ‘truths’ were not always so reliable after all. The reality is that, even with science, so much is down to interpretation, and whilst there may be some hard and fast rules, there is also much ambiguity. This is where ‘relativism’ might be seen as relevant in archaeology, where ‘conceptions of truth and moral values are not absolute but are relative to the persons or groups holding them’ (*American Heritage Dictionary* 2009). Perhaps a way forward is to accept the role of interpretation with a healthy amount of cynicism. But how does this affect our interpretations of the past?

It is fair to say that our interpretations of the past will always be influenced to some extent by our experiences and perspectives, no matter how objective we aim to be. Johnson argues that we ‘see data through a cloud of theory’, meaning we can never look at data without employing theory, even if this is unintentional or subconscious. However, this does not mean that we should just accept that biases are okay; we should acknowledge them, try to recognize what our own biases might be, and where possible, think beyond them. This is an area where ethnographic research can be extremely valuable as it can offer information about entirely different ways of viewing the world: everything from understandings of time and landscapes, to what it is to be human. It is areas of research such as these that have highlighted just how different perspectives of the world can be, prompting archaeological research into areas assumed previously to be governed by natural laws of behaviour, such as experiences of gender and sexuality, family units, and even understandings of time and the cosmos. Ethnography provides insights into the ‘diversity of human experience’ (Thomas 2000a: 658). Yet it is essential that it is used with consideration, without falling into the trap of anthropological analogy (Ucko 1969; Wylie 1985). Simply because the same types of artefacts or architecture might be found does not mean that the societies were comparable in other ways. Ethnography does provide alternative understandings and insights, however, which can

enlighten our interpretations as well as question our assumptions; 'an awareness of the diversity of human experience can alert us to the specificity of our own condition and the prejudices that arise from it' (Thomas 2000a: 658).

Material culture

It is not just with the post-processual, self-reflective approach that ideas were changing; different perspectives were emerging about fundamental aspects of archaeology, including material culture in the past. Rather than simply being a direct reflection of a society and societal processes, material culture could be taken out of its regular context and actively used and manipulated by groups or individuals. An excellent example of this is Dick Hebdige's (2006 [1979]) work on youth subculture. Hebdige discusses the use of the safety pin, which was designed to fasten nappies (diapers), yet during the punk movement of the late 1970s and early 80s, safety pins were worn through pierced ears and on clothing, contributing to feelings of shock and unease by those in mainstream society (if such a thing exists). Thus we see that an item can be actively employed beyond the function for which it was designed and intended: as a means to manipulate reaction, influence power relationships, and as a form of non-verbal communication. A further example of this is the use and misuse of the swastika. Originally used as a symbol with positive connotations (e.g. Subramuniaswami 2000: 125), it was appropriated by the Nazi Party. Today it symbolizes far-right beliefs for many Neo-Nazis. It is clear that the meanings behind material culture change and can be manipulated, whether they are practical, utilitarian items, or symbolic ones, or more likely, incorporating aspects of both.

Material culture does not passively reflect people and identities but can be actively used in identity construction and communication. Messages can be communicated and identities can be reflected through the use of material culture, although there needs to be a common understanding in order for this to work. There is a language and grammar behind the symbolic use of items, and while the meaning behind something may be arbitrary, it requires mutual understanding to be meaningfully comprehended. For instance, a wedding ring is meaningful because we understand the symbolism and the expected behaviours that accompany the wearing of one. In the case of the safety pin, the messages communicated to the general public

are different to the signals sent out to those that conform to the same fashion, where group-belonging and identity are strong motivators.

The symbolic meaning of material culture was discussed by Ian Hodder, who was to become one of the main proponents of post-processual archaeology. In *Symbols in Action*, Hodder (1982) studied the peoples of the Lake Baringo area of Kenya. He observed a complex system of communication through the use of calabashes, ear flaps, beads, and other body adornments to communicate age, status, marriageability, and many other aspects of identity. However, it was clear that in order to decode or read these symbols, the language of this non-verbal communication needed to be understood. Meaning depended on context and situation, and thus the concept of 'contextual archaeology' gained credibility. Ultimately, material culture is meaningful, including unrecognized and unintended meanings. Furthermore, meanings are dynamic and changing, and the relationship between an object and its context is two-way; the presence of the object will have an effect on the context.

In the same way as there can be multiple, contested, and unintended meanings behind objects, the same can also be seen with interpretations and uses of archaeological monuments and landscapes. For example, a monument such as Stonehenge has multiple interpretations. Archaeologists are still debating its meaning: from a place of healing following recent excavations by Darvill and Wainwright (Darvill and Wainwright 2009), to a place for ancestors (Parker Pearson et al 2009; Parker Pearson and Ramilisonina 1998), or potentially a site for both (Timothy Darvill pers. comm.). Yet, today, it has come to represent a different meaning for its various stakeholders (Bender 1993). For English Heritage, Stonehenge is a World Heritage Site that needs to be protected and a tourist destination that requires management; for archaeologists, it remains a focus for academic study; for modern-day Druids, it is a focus for religious attention. All of these present-day uses are removed from the direct intended uses of its creators and the millennia of reuse and reinterpretation of the monument. Such debates open up the potential for alternative narratives concerning the past, with various stakeholders, and different schools of thought within archaeology, constructing multiple narratives about past events. It is essential for archaeologists today to recognize the claims of communities and other stakeholders, a stance from which alternative narratives are often created, arising in different interpretations. The multiplicity of meanings and alternative

interpretations are becoming accepted in archaeological discourses. There are also challenges being made to some of the fundamental aspects of identity, which are often taken for granted.

New avenues of research

Assumptions that were previously made about certain aspects of life are now being challenged by archaeologists, such as gender, family relationships, and sexuality. Previously, such areas were assumed to be universal, dictated by laws of human behaviour, or they were under-studied on the grounds that they cannot be empirically 'found' (Thomas 2000b: 3; Wylie 1992). This is an area that will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 5. However, it is important to highlight how there has been, although for the most part unintentional, a legitimization of the current Western *status quo*, through its portrayal as universal and historical (Gatens 1992; Moore 1994). For instance, living in family units, male and female gender roles, and heterosexuality are portrayed as being 'natural', and assumed to be present in our archaeological interpretations. Research is now challenging these areas of study, where alternative models and methods of living have proven to be 'norms' through ethnographic case studies.

The role of social evolution also comes under greater scrutiny with post-processualism. As discussed earlier, social evolutionary approaches are skewed in favour of a social hierarchy, which placed the modern, Western individual (usually white and male) at its pinnacle. However, modern industrialism as a societal ideal can be challenged, and it can be argued that capitalist societies can learn from more egalitarian and less industrialized societies. The modern industrialist need not occupy the top rung of the social evolutionary ladder by default. In addition, societies can be dynamic and do not always progress in a linear fashion towards industrialism. Thus, viewing a trajectory of social evolution can be flawed, as well as judgemental towards other lifestyles, ways of being, and understandings of the world in non-industrial communities. Such growing awareness has been a component of a post-processual view of the role that archaeology plays in the legitimization of particular ideals and concepts in the present, including modern values with regard to sexuality, gender, and family roles.

As well as a rethinking of gender and family roles, there has been a fundamental re-evaluation of personhood, of what it is to be human

in the world. For an excellent and thorough investigation of this theme, see Chris Fowler's *Archaeology of Personhood* (2004). Fowler's work draws together some of the different perspectives of personhood and analyses their use in archaeological interpretation. Ethnographic research demonstrates that even our notions of being an individual are historically situated and not universal. Relational identities, based on concepts of dividual, partible, and permeable personhood, for instance, demonstrate that a person's identity can be complex, dependent on relationships with others and material things, the environment, and animals, in a holistic understanding of the world. This will be discussed further in chapter 6, but it should be highlighted once again that if a person's identity is intimately entwined with, for instance, certain material items, their placement within a grave, breakage, fragmentation, and circulation necessarily alter our understanding of the role of grave goods and their relationship to social status and social organization.

Inspired by anthropological debates, recent archaeological interpretations have put forward new considerations concerning the body. The role of individual action is recognized as important, returning *people* back into archaeological models of the past, and acknowledging the role of individual motivations, actions, and subversions; people were able to act on and affect their environments, rather than being controlled by the norms and the systems and subsystems they lived within (Dobres and Robb (eds) 2000). The meaning of agency and its application to archaeological interpretation have changed over recent years, from a broad consideration of 'peopling' the past, to issues surrounding capacity and intentionality to act. Recently, influenced by studies of personhood, it has become recognized that agency need not be constrained by concepts of individuated persons, and can be multiple and collective (see Robb 2010). Through considering human agency, the past becomes a more lively and engaging place, although agency does not simply reside with human intentionality. Material agency and people's engagement with their material worlds necessitate that we are affected by material things; they act back on us (Ingold 2007; Cobb 2006/7). However, people are embodied; they have a social body with a site of lived experience (Joyce 2005). An archaeology of the body has moved beyond the Cartesian separation of mind and body (*contra* Shillings 2008), with an evolved interest in and consideration of the embodied person. For

more about current theories relating to the archaeology of the body see Joyce 2005 and Borić and Robb (eds) 2008.

Post-processualism and mortuary archaeology

Alternative perceptions of personhood, the body, and identity were particularly relevant to mortuary archaeology, where many of the assumptions made about the past were now being challenged (see Mike Parker Pearson's (1999) *The Archaeology of Death and Burial*). This included new understandings of mortuary practices and a study of the relationships between the living and dead in archaeological studies. It was realized that archaeology needed to gain a better understanding of the relationship between mortuary rituals and social structure rather than simply assuming that mortuary rituals reflect social structure (Barrett 1990: 181).

Rather than simply an insight into status and social complexity, it is now accepted that mortuary archaeology can offer new insights, beyond the study of grave goods. New analytical techniques provide information about the past that was previously unknown, on diet, labour, and skeletal stress during life, for example, as well as the meticulous attention paid to depositional and contextual information. Not only can mortuary practices tell us about the deceased, they offer unique insights into changing attitudes towards the human body, both in life and during death. This is a topic discussed in Parker Pearson's *The Archaeology of Death and Burial*, mentioned above, a volume that remains a valuable publication for archaeologists interested in mortuary practices. Crucially, mortuary practices reveal information about the living, those that mourned or buried the dead, as well as about the deceased themselves.

Funerals are times when the positions of the living are renegotiated. People's roles change, and the funerary process is one step in the renegotiation of changing identities (Thomas 1999: 127; Parker Pearson 1999: 32). They are also enacted for the benefit of the living rather than for the dead, although this perspective depends on views of an afterlife. Nevertheless it is the living that decide on the funeral; the grave goods, clothing, and adornments of the dead, together with a range of other decisions that need to be made depending on the intentions and requests of the deceased, but ultimately their implementation relies on the will of the living (Barrett 1988: 31; Parker Pearson 1999: 32). Funerals, then, are active arenas where the

negotiation of the changing status of the living is carried out; they are transformative.

Funerary displays can be actively manipulated—they may not reflect the actual situation of the life of the deceased—but be controlled by those directing the burial. For instance, Queen Elizabeth I in sixteenth-century England sought to temper the impression of wealth and the opinions of the ruling class by controlling the funerals of aristocrats and elites (Strickland 1990: 23). As well as creating impressions of wealth, funerals can also be manipulated to mask wealth; a study carried out by Parker Pearson (1982: 201) into Church of England burials saw that ideals of equality were displayed that were often in contrast to the individual's wealth during life. Thus rather than a reflection of status, mortuary practices can actively mask status and identities. Even in terms of the persona represented, many dead people are dressed in suits or in their best clothes before being placed in their coffin, when in reality this does not accurately reflect that person's everyday role. As funerals can be used actively in identity negotiations, the processual viewpoint of them indicating social status and organization becomes flawed; if they are being manipulated, then they are unlikely to represent the actual situation. Furthermore, when other motivations behind burial practices are examined it becomes clear that there are many motivations behind the disposal of the deceased, some of which suggest avenues of interpretation previously assumed to be untenable.

Studies of mortuary practices now consider the mourner, and relationships between the living and the dead, rather than just the deceased (Parker Pearson 1982: 112; Barrett 1990). Such widening of perspectives involves a study of emotion in archaeology, itself a relatively new focus for archaeological research. Sarah Tarlow has observed that 'the critical question of how the action of depositing a dead individual, with or without particular grave goods, was understood by those involved is generally not even asked' (1999: 12). She asks that 'given the impact that emotions have on our lives, why are they so seldom considered in academic discourse in general and in archaeology in particular?' (1999: 30). Once attention is drawn to this it seems incredible that we rarely discuss emotions such as grief and fear in relation to mortuary practices. However, the situation is beginning to change now, with research addressing the role of emotions and the mnemonic nature of senses (i.e. Harris 2009; Croucher 2010/11; Croucher and Campbell 2009; Jones 2004; Boellstorff and Lindquist

2004; Harris and Flohr Sørensen 2010), themes that have been recognized in anthropological research since the 1980s (i.e. Stoller 1984; Seigel 1983; Rosaldo, M. 1984; Rosaldo, R. I. 1984, and more recently, Svašek (ed.) 2005).

It should also be noted, however, that whilst an archaeology which reintroduces people back into the past necessarily needs to acknowledge the role of emotions in structuring and shaping experiences of past events, our own emotional experiences cannot be placed into the past. Attitudes and experiences of death and mourning are diverse, with grief experienced and expressed differently according to culture and personal influences. So, whilst the study of emotion is important, it is also essential to recognize that feelings and emotions are culturally constructed and that our reactions are not then universal (Tarlow 2000).

We have already seen in the introduction to this book that reactions to death are diverse and culturally contextual; archaeology can provide insights into some of these past experiences, many of which reveal vastly differing attitudes to the dead from those we experience today. The information that can be derived from burials has led to a growing recognition of the archaeological importance of human remains, a situation that is the reverse of excavations in the past. The lack of importance attributed to skeletal remains is historically common, with human remains often being poorly recorded, not conserved, and frequently lost from archives. Priority was usually given to objects found in graves at the expense of recording or understanding details about the human body in mortuary contexts. This raises obvious problems when dealing with mortuary archaeology, leading to a pattern of inconsistent results. There are many examples throughout this book where data has been unavailable, and it is for this reason that many of the case studies are drawn from excavations that have taken place during the last two or three decades, when the importance of human remains has become more ubiquitously recognized.

Furthermore, our understanding of grave goods is moving beyond interpretation of them as indicators of wealth and status. For instance, Melanie Giles (2008; forthcoming) has discussed the use of grave goods as potentially reflecting relational identities in the Iron Age, and comparable research into the Bronze Age in Britain has been undertaken by Joanna Brück (2004). The concept of relational identities is an important factor that will be discussed frequently

through the remaining chapters. It largely arises from ethnographic studies that highlight alternative perspectives on individual identity (Fowler 2004). Whilst this will be considered in greater detail later, suffice to highlight here that material objects within graves have a range of meanings beyond simply status indicators, reflectors of roles during life, or evidence of wealth (or lack of it). The role of the mourner needs to be actively considered in the placement of objects accompanying the deceased. The relationships between the living and the dead, and the need to re-order relationships between the living after the death of a member of the community, are also pivotal in mortuary behaviour.

Understanding mortuary practices in these ways offers new understandings of death, burial, and relationships between the living and the dead. Processual approaches traditionally focus on fairly fixed foci of interpretation; in Near Eastern archaeology this is primarily the search for social stratification and increasing social hierarchy, or subsistence techniques and domestication. Post-processual archaeology has led to a range of new areas of interpretation and means of understanding the past, including methods such as phenomenology, and through studying the archaeologies of personhood, gender, identity, and ethnicity, for instance. Post-processualism has also challenged archaeologists to think beyond the projection of their own experiences into the past, and to think about and be responsible for the narratives they produce.

However, whilst self-reflection has enabled critique of archaeological practice and interpretation, it can still be problematic to find new methods that will produce different results. This has been a particular issue with field archaeology. It is now accepted that the ways in which excavations are carried out affect discoveries and influence how the past is interpreted. Yet, in reality, it is difficult to change methodologies and to 'dig differently'.

Digging differently?

It is now accepted that preconceived ideas about archaeological sites influence methods of excavation and interpretations (Hodder 1997). This has led archaeologists in recent decades to pay greater attention to the excavation methods employed, with the development of new excavation, recording, and analytical techniques and methodologies,

which have changed the priorities and the outcomes of many excavations, a process seen globally with archaeological research. One of the best known sites for attempting to overhaul the methodology of excavation is Çatalhöyük on the Anatolian plateau. The site was originally excavated by Sir James Mellaart in the 1960s, whose methods used large-scale clearances to reveal a site with clustered housing and 'shrine' areas, with painted walls depicting hunting and vulture scenes, and figurines which sparked the goddess debates (discussed in chapter 5). Following the 1960s, excavation ceased until Ian Hodder became site director, with the excavation managed and run on a day-to-day basis by Shahina Farid. It was decided that new excavation methods focusing on reflexivity, better communication, and the small scale would be practised within a twenty-five-year excavation plan (Hodder 2000). Rather than the large-scale approach, the site would be painstakingly excavated with meticulous attention to detail, and while this has been a slow process this approach has undoubtedly provided unprecedented results, revealing information about past diets, lifestyles, and activities. The everyday, rather than simply the spectacular, was recognized as important, and the results, whilst still being analysed, currently fill many excavation volumes (most recently Hodder (ed.) 2007, 2006a, 2005a, b; see also Campbell 2008a for a review of recent volumes, addressing the volume of data and publication style). As well as the attention to detail, which has in itself prompted and enabled the development of archaeological analytical methods, Hodder has been determined to provide a multi-authored interpretation of Çatalhöyük on many levels. He recognized that greater interaction was necessary between specialists and excavators, involving regular site visits by specialists, and the establishment of a computer resource for logging observations, interpretations, site diaries, and specialist reports. A platform has also been given to different narrative voices surrounding the site, complementing the interpretations of archaeologists with the voices of artists, anthropologists, local populations, and various movements such as the goddess community. Perhaps one of the most welcome initiatives, at least for students of archaeology, has been the availability of site records via the internet. This opens up information for immediate assessment and interpretation, no longer undertaken only by the director or specialists (although these voices are treated with greater authority). Underlying the methodology has been the role of self-reflexivity: of the excavators and specialists, of the language used (the loaded nature of terms such

as 'house' or 'shrine', which immediately attribute a meaning to the features being described), openness about the archaeological process, and an attempt to 'do things differently'.

Approaches such as those employed at Çatalhöyük have affected excavation and archaeological practice elsewhere (although it should be noted, that for many, these changes were already in flux, rather than simply being inspired by Çatalhöyük). A greater recognition of the role of excavators has been encouraged through ethnographies of excavation (Edgeworth 2003, 2006; Everill 2009), part of the reflexive view of archaeological practice. There have also been notable efforts to give excavators a more prominent voice in final excavation reports, including the recognition of student diggers, a previously often hidden, yet essential, component of research excavations (Croucher et al 2008: 53). Yet the most fundamental recent change to archaeological excavation is perhaps the appreciation of the small scale, working from the bottom up. The small scale then feeds into the bigger, broader picture, rather than the large scale dictating small-scale observations and interpretations. As a student working on a dissertation project, I was surprised when reading reports from the 1930s and 1940s that site directors would repeatedly dispute the archaeological data they were finding due to its incompatibility with their contemporary theories about the dates of various culture-groups. I think we need to take a lesson here from New Archaeology's scientific approach, and remember that one of the fundamental aspects of scientific research is the expectation to be proved wrong; that theories can be overturned, and our ways of thinking about a given topic can be fundamentally altered. The same applies to archaeology; our theories can and will be overturned and rewritten according to new archaeological evidence. We therefore should not let the theory drive the conclusions we make. However, our interpretations should be theoretically informed, whilst still remaining attentive to archaeological data and detail.

Modern excavation and analytical techniques are enabling detailed and rigorous analysis of archaeological data, focusing on the small scale, working from the bottom up in drawing analyses and interpretations. For instance, sampling, spatial analysis, and archaeobotanical data at Jerf el-Ahmar (Stordeur and Willcox 2009) have enabled new insights into the role of domesticated plants in communal activities (Asouti and Fuller forthcoming), analysis of pottery use and production has revealed insights into daily lives at Sabi Abyad

(Nieuwenhuys et al 2010), and faunal and osteological analysis has provided information about human and animal burials at Çatalhöyük (Russell and Düring 2010) and evidence of cannibalism at Domuztepe (Kansa et al 2009b). These are just isolated cases among many where skilled analysis, combined with new ways of interpreting the evidence, is providing alternative archaeological interpretations. These observations of the past are focusing on the small scale rather than starting with the large scale. It is such studies that this book both draws on and contributes to, providing new narratives about people's relationships with their worlds during the Neolithic Near East.

This chapter has provided a brief introduction and overview to the main theoretical developments within archaeology over the last century. Today, in the UK, many archaeologists would consider themselves to be post-processual in their approaches, although there are still many processual archaeologists in the UK, USA, and Europe. Archaeological thought is by no means united and there are a multitude of approaches, all of which provide different interpretations, as well as valuable critique and debate. Whilst this book is written from an interpretative perspective, it is with an acknowledgment that theory needs to be wedded to data, and the Neolithic of the Near East provides a wealth of opportunities for doing so. The next three chapters deal more directly with the archaeological data, beginning with the 'skull cult', before discussing gender and then personhood, in order hopefully to offer new avenues of interpretations of the Neolithic Near East.

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4

The Materiality of ‘Ancestors’: Plastered Skulls, Statues, and ‘Stone Gods’

INTRODUCTION

The previous chapters have outlined the available evidence of mortuary practices from the Neolithic Near East. Plastered skulls are among the most enigmatic and evocative human remains that are excavated. These are skulls and crania which, after decomposition and removal of flesh, have had faces made from plaster modelled onto the facial region of the skull, recreating a ‘fleshed’ and lifelike appearance. Many were then also painted, and paint was also applied to some non-plastered skulls. This chapter will discuss examples of plastered skulls, beginning with the processes involved and circumstances of deposition, before discussing their role in interpretations. This chapter will also discuss the role of the skulls within a broader imagery of ‘ancestors’, including large anthropomorphic pillars at Göbekli Tepe, and plastered statues recovered from ‘Ain Ghazal and other sites, as well as the focus on the face—or hiding of the face—with masks, recovered from sites including Nahal Hemar and Jericho. Repeatedly, plastered skulls have been associated with the veneration of ancestors, a problematic term that will be discussed in this chapter, along with the phenomenon of the ‘skull cult’.

Through a re-analysis of plastered skulls, new avenues of interpretation reveal much more about the skulls than their traditional roles in interpretations of hierarchy and social complexity. The plastered skulls are affective: they influence and evoke emotion. They also demonstrate a close link between the living and the dead, blurring boundaries of person and object, as well as showing that the dead still maintained a meaningful role in the lives of the living. Death was not the end:

another stage of life began with the plastering of a skull; a new life cycle involving curation and display, before reburial and a further period of death, and finally taking on new roles in modern-day museum displays and laboratory analyses.

PLASTERED SKULLS AND THE 'SKULL CULT': HISTORY, PROCESS, AND INTERPRETATION

What are plastered skulls and where are they found?

There have been over 90 plastered skulls recovered from the Neolithic Near East, with the first examples excavated under the direction of Kathleen Kenyon at Jericho (Kenyon 1953). They were originally thought to be a phenomenon exclusive to the MPPNB in the Southern Levant, recovered from Jericho, 'Ain Ghazal, Tell Ramad, Beisamoun, and Kfar HaHoresh. However, plastered skulls have since been excavated in Anatolia, including Pottery Neolithic Çatalhöyük and the Late Neolithic site of Köşk Höyük, and in North Mesopotamia, at Tell Aswad. Of the 73 plastered skulls documented by the late 1990s, 42 were analysed by Michelle Bonogofsky (2001), research which remains the largest investigation into the plastered skulls to date.

Plastered skulls were created through a process that involved several phases. The most common practice appears to result from primary articulated burials beneath the floor in houses during the PPNA and PPNB in the Levant. The burial would be dug back down to after the onset of decomposition, a period of at least several years, and the skull, or more often the cranium without the mandible, would be removed. Many of the skulls and crania were later reburied, often in caches after a period of use, curation, and/or display. Many show evidence of wear, demonstrating some use between retrieval and reburial. A minority of these skulls underwent further 'treatment'. Paint, plaster, or both, would be applied, with shells often placed in eye sockets to recreate eyes. When plastered, a layer of lime, gypsum, or mud plaster would be placed over the face, recreating a 'fleshed' appearance out of the plaster (figs 2.3 and 4.1).

Often, it is the face of the cranium without the mandible that is decorated in this way; thus our term 'plastered skulls' is misleading, since it assumes presence of the mandible, which was not frequently

the practice. Not least, there would have been practical problems in holding the mandible in place once the joining tissue had been removed or had decomposed, however, an artificial mandible was sometimes incorporated. The removal of tissue was essential; had the skulls not been in a dry, clean condition, the plaster and paint would not still have been adhered to the skulls all these millennia later. On many of the skulls the plaster had been applied in several layers.

Stylistically it can be argued that the skulls are of a general 'aesthetic': the eyes were emphasized, frequently outlined with 'eyeliner' or replaced with shells; prominent cheekbones were modelled, with shallow rather than plump cheeks; the nose was usually slender and straight, with thin lips (e.g. figs 4.1a, 4.2, and 4.3). Even when recreated on the crania rather than on the skull, these traits can still be observed, and plastered statues from 'Ain Ghazal display the same features. Masks recovered from Jericho and Nahal Hemar also draw attention to the eyes, making them the most prominent feature of the masks. The plastered skulls were often covered in a coloured wash of reds and browns, adding skins tones to the appearance. Some skulls were only painted, while others received treatment such as stripes across the cranial vault (fig. 4.2), an area that was usually left untreated. Potentially, hair, headdresses, or wigs may have been applied to the plastered skulls: organic material that has not survived in the archaeological record. Some faces, including some of the plaster statues at 'Ain Ghazal, have marks that indicate tattooing, which suggests that some were made to be distinctive or individualized, perhaps imitating the appearance of individuals during life.

The plastering of skulls required a significant amount of skill and ability; these were accomplished artisans, producing outstanding works, which demonstrate not only their artistic abilities but also their skill in using the materials. When applied in layers, the properties of application and drying would need to have been understood. Pigments used in the painting of skulls, including red ochre and more rarely cinnabar, required preparation before application. Depending on the type of plaster used, whether lime, gypsum, or mud; different processes were employed, with lime plaster requiring a very high-temperature kiln, and application close to the time of production. It is not always possible to determine which type of plaster was used on the skulls. The examples from Tell Aswad creatively used mud plaster, whereas other examples, including those from Jericho and 'Ain Ghazal, are thought to use lime plaster (Clarke forthcoming). If several layers were applied, it is feasible that only the final layer would have been of lime plaster. The layering of



Fig. 4.1a. Plastered skull, Jericho (Kenyon Jericho Archive, held at UCL).



Fig. 4.1b. Plastered cranium, with cranial modification, Jericho (Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford).

plaster in this manner is also seen in the construction of plaster vessels (called 'white-ware'), which are frequent finds from the period (Nilhamn and Koek forthcoming). We know from these and from plastered baskets and floors, which were ubiquitous in the MPPNB, that the technology of plaster manufacture, whilst labour intensive, was also well known.

While stylistic trends are seen in the plastering of skulls, there are also notable variations in their modelling and features; examples from Aswad (fig. 4.3), for instance, have detailed eyelashes drawn onto closed eyelids with charcoal, whereas examples from Jericho use cowrie shells to recreate eyes (fig. 4.1b). The Aswad examples appear to have a 'sunken' look, with drawn-in cheeks, recreating an almost dead rather than living face.

The 'skull cult' and the importance of the skull

The notion of the skull cult was first discussed in relation to the plastered skulls discovered at Jericho during the 1950s (Kenyon and Tushingham 1953: 870; Kenyon 1957), and has been referred to in numerous publications and debates (including Cauvin 1994, 2000; Arensburg and Hershkovitz 1988a; Goren et al 2001; Bienert 1991; Wright 1988; and see references within Goring-Morris 2000: 107). It was originally assumed that the skulls represented older male ancestors (Strouhal 1973; Kenyon 1953, 1957; Rollefson and Bienert 1994: 20, the latter cited in Bonogofsky 2001: 2), a belief that has since been overturned by Bonogofsky's research (2001, 2004), who demonstrated that the skulls belonged to women, children, and men. The suggestion that teeth had been removed from the skulls to create an appearance of older age was also refuted by Bonogofsky's research. As well as plastered skulls, the significance of the skull or crania can also be seen through their frequent removal from burials, as well as caches and isolated finds of un-plastered skulls at many sites. There was a clear selection of this body part, removed and circulated, displayed, and/or further treated at many sites during the Neolithic. However, there are different manipulations of practices taking place; whilst there may be a common theme or trend there are many different instances of disposal, reburial, and treatment or decoration of the skull itself. Rather than a strict practice a general notion concerning the head and

the skull appears to have been in place at many sites during the PPNB that was either continued, or which re-emerged, during the Later Neolithic.

Artificial cranial modification

The importance of the head can also be seen with the practice of cranial modification, a method of permanently altering the shape of the cranium. In order to achieve this, bindings were applied to the head during infancy when a child's head is malleable and can be easily shaped. By intervening with the natural process the shape of the head can be dictated, but this must be done when the child is very young, from infancy, and for a sustained period, usually until around the age of two years. The process does not harm the child or impede brain development, as the cranium continues to grow, albeit in a prescribed direction. Head-binding can produce various head shapes and the effects can be dramatic, or more subtle, depending on the type and method of binding used (for cross-cultural examples, see Dingwall 1931, and for the Neolithic Near East see Arensburg and Herskovitz 1998a; Molleson and Campbell 1995; Daems and Croucher 2007; Lorentz 2008). The same process takes place through cradle-boarding, a means of childcare where the infant is bound tightly to a board. The pressure of the board against the soft head produces a permanent flattening of the back of the head; examples of this are common for Neolithic Cyprus (Lorentz 2002; Jones 2008: 92).

Artificial cranial modification is well-attested in Near Eastern prehistory, with the earliest examples dating to Neanderthal sites of Shanidar 1 and 5 (Trinkhaus 1982), and Neolithic and Chalcolithic examples from Jericho, Khirrokita, Byblos, Seyh Höyük, Eridu (Meiklejohn et al 1992: 83, 86; Kiszely 1978: 7; Özbek 1974), Tell Arpachiyah, Tell Madhur, Telul eth-Thalathat and Kurban Höyük (Molleson and Campbell 1995: 50). Of 206 well-preserved skulls from Jericho, 28 were artificially modified. Cranial modification was seen in all areas of the site at Jericho—practised on both males and females—without any relation to gender, although some spatial differentiation relating to the type of cranial modification has been noted (Kurth and Röhrer-Ertl 1981: 439) suggesting a link between body practice and identity with relation to dwelling, or at least burial locations. In general, there are few patterns between gender and cranial modification within examples from

males and females recovered, and although Lorentz (2008) notes some gendered distinctions may be present at some sites, the sample is too small to be conclusive (Daems and Croucher 2007: 15).

The fact that many plastered skulls are also cranially modified, such as the example in fig. 4.1b, may suggest that particular individuals were chosen at birth to fulfil particular roles during life, concluding with their skulls being selected for post-mortem removal and plastering. An example of cranial modification from Jericho has been recently discovered as a result of a CT scan on a plastered skull in the British Museum; the cranial modification was not immediately visible to the naked eye (Fletcher et al 2008). That the modification was not prominent may add further support to the idea that there was a choice during infancy concerning who would be marked out for particular treatment. Such persons may have been considered particularly significant in terms of lineage, although mortuary treatment, no doubt, also related to other factors and accomplishments during life. The picture is not clear cut, as many modified skulls were not plastered, and vice versa. There is also a need for further CT scanning of skulls and crania; if cranial modification is not always visibly obvious after death it would easily have been disguised during life also, suggesting that particular knowledge would be required as to its existence, rather than that it was visually distinctive. Whilst the picture is complex, this research adds to our understanding of lineages, a topic that will be returned to later in this chapter.

Plastered skulls and their contexts: some examples

This section will describe briefly the main sites where plastered skulls have been excavated, including Jericho, Yiftahel, Tell Aswad, Kfar HaHoresh, Beisamoun, Ramad, and 'Ain Ghazal for the PPNB, and the Pottery Neolithic sites of Çatalhöyük and Köşk Hoyuk.

Jericho

The first plastered skulls were excavated at Jericho dating to the MPPNB (Kenyon 1957). Twelve skulls had been plastered; of these, five were also painted, and a further two were painted without evidence of having been plastered (Kurth and Röhrer-Ertl 1981: 436). In all cases, the vault and occiput (the back part of the skull)



Fig. 4.2. Plastered skull with painted cranium, Jericho (Kay Prag, photo by Cecil Western).

remained un-plastered (Kurth and Röhrer-Ertl 1981: 437). Of the seven painted skulls, there are three differing styles of painting. Some have streaks running laterally across the cranial vault, as can be seen in fig. 4.2, and one of the males has radial lines from below the nose possibly depicting a beard; the remainder have flattish colours applied, which were probably originally a pink or reddish colour (Kurth and Röhrer-Ertl 1981: 437–8).

Probably the most famous example of a plastered skull is from Jericho (fig. 2.3). This lifelike example demonstrates amazing skill and is rare in the inclusion of its mandible (Kurth and Röhrer-Ertl 1981: 437). Fig. 4.1b, now in the Ashmolean Museum, has been the subject of further analyses, which revealed that it was filled with locally available sandy material, and that the plastered face is made from marl with some burnt lime mixed in to give a whiter and harder

finish, rather than being of pure lime plaster (Goren and Segal 1995; Moorey 2001: 32).

Yiftahel

Recent discoveries of plastered skulls include those from the rescue excavations at Yiftahel in the Southern Levant (Khalaily 2008). The excavations have revealed large buildings, interpreted as communal in nature, dating to the PPNB. One building contained at least 30 burials, some with their skulls, others without, as well as an almost complete set of red deer antler on the floor of the building (which will be discussed in chapter 6). There was a high level of skill in stone-working at the site, evidenced by a cache of miniature and small green-stone axes, found on the floor of a building, and several serpentine green axes placed close to the burials (Khalaily 2008: 7). Other finds included anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figures and incised pebbles. A workshop area was used for making stone tools, and several caches of flint and bone tools were recovered from both this and a neighbouring building. In another area of the site an infant had been buried close to a flint point, and another burial included an adult man and woman, buried in what is described as an embrace, along with a juvenile (2008: 7–8). A later burial dating to the end of the PPNB or early PN contains an adult female, buried in a flexed position, with a standing stone placed above her skull. This may relate to remembrance of the burial place, perhaps with a more practical, although unfilled, aim of intended return to remove the skull at a later time.

Three plastered skulls were buried in a pit in an open area north of Building 501, placed facing west, in a row. All three are adults, although they are still being analysed to determine their age and gender. The two skulls at either end of the rows had only their eye-orbits plastered, with mother-of-pearl and flint fragments found in the eyes of these two badly preserved crania. The reflective qualities of the fragments of mother-of-pearl and flint may have been intended to give a glint reminiscent of light catching the eye (Khalaily 2008). The middle cranium had shells that represented the eyes, and a full, modelled face, including nose, mouth, chin, and cheeks; the lower jaw had been recreated from plaster in the absence of the original mandible, suggesting a desire to create an accurate portrayal of a head, rather than distorted facial features.

Tell Aswad

The site of Tell Aswad in Northern Syria has produced what are probably the best-preserved examples of plastered skulls, demonstrating remarkable skill and attention to detail (fig. 4.3). The whole face is modelled in mud plaster, with attention paid to creating intricate features, such as the eyelashes, with charcoal. As discussed above, they have closed eyes and a shallow look. There have been two caches of skulls recovered from Tell Aswad. The oldest dates to the beginning of the LPPNB and consists of four plastered skulls which were placed as a foundation for a communal burial feature of at least ten people (fig. 6.1), (Stordeur et al 2006: 42). The plastered skulls were deposited as two sets of two, with a primary burial then added, followed by multiple further depositions. The burial pit was used through two phases of the funerary area; the funerary area contained over 50 burials, including primary and secondary, collective, and individual burials (Stordeur et al 2006: 41).

A slightly later cache also features a deposit of plastered skulls, marking further interments (Stordeur and Khawaw 2007). Five plastered skulls were placed in, along with the burial of an adult and an infant (fig. 4.3). The cache's first deposit was an un-plastered skull of a child around



Fig. 4.3. Cache of plastered skulls, Tell Aswad (Danielle Stordeur).

which were placed four plastered skulls. One of the skulls had been placed in an upright position on a modelled base, and its nose had been broken and repaired. The skull had been displayed during its life prior to reburial. The base enabled the skull to be positioned upright, and the damage to the nose suggests that the skull had been used or displayed and that it was then repaired rather than discarded after the nose had been broken. Another of the skulls, whilst having a modelled base, had been placed on its side in the cache. This skull used a slightly different modelling technique, and whilst having simply an incised line for its mouth rather than lips, it also had a carefully modelled nose. It too had been used—exposed and displayed—before burial in this context. A fifth skull was then placed partially above the child's and was then torn out, leaving behind red and white plaster. The body of an infant was then placed in the centre of the cache. The body of the infant had to be broken, however, although it was articulated, to fit into the space among the skulls. The cache was in an abandoned area of the site used as a burial ground. Kin affiliations between the skulls are yet to be determined.

Kfar HaHoresh

The MPPNB site of Kfar HaHoresh in the Southern Levant is particularly interesting for discussions around the concept of ancestors. Bonogofsky reports that as many as six plastered skulls have been excavated since 1991 at Kfar HaHoresh—although in varying states of preservation (2006b: 20)—with two of these well published. One of these was recovered from an oval installation, and the other from a lime-plastered pit, which itself was below a lime-plastered surface. A post marked the location of the cranium which was in direct association with a complete but headless gazelle carcass (fig. 6.5). At Kfar HaHoresh, continued co-mingling of human and animal remains is evident, suggesting that animals played a greater role socially than simply to be used as beasts of burden or for consumption; in fact the evidence indicates that animals were integral to perceptions of personhood, a topic that will be considered in greater depth in chapter 6. The plastered skull is modelled without the mandible, creating a shortened face although with comparable high cheekbones and slender nose, as noted for other plastered skulls.

Beisamoun

There are fewer details available for the plastered crania at Beisamoun in the Southern Levant. Two plastered skulls, facing east, were recovered from beneath the antechamber of a house. They were both adults; one was probably a female aged over sixty-five, the other was too badly damaged for analysis to be conclusive. These skulls were also accompanied by an isolated tibia, and the plastered faces had a sleepy appearance (Bonogofsky 2006b: 17; Ferembach and Lechevallier 1973).

Tell Ramad

Twenty-seven plastered skulls were recovered from PPNB Tell Ramad, excavated between 1965 and 1966. They had been placed into three caches and included adult males and females, as well as juveniles (Ferembach 1969; Bonogofsky 2006b: 16–17). Within one of the skull caches, a large white dish and plaster statue fragments measuring up to 30 cm in length were found (de Contenson 1967; Ferembach 1969). A red earthen figurine was found in another cache (Ferembach 1969). There were often other human bones included with the caches of skulls, including clavicles and leg bones. Animal remains were also frequently included (de Contenson 1967; de Contenson et al 2000; Bonogofsky 2006b: 16). In one of the caches (with the plaster statue fragments and white-ware bowl), the skulls were separated by plastered and painted clay balls (de Contenson 1967: 20, pls 1–3; de Contenson et al 2000).

‘Ain Ghazal

Twelve crania have been recovered from the MPPNB period at ‘Ain Ghazal in the Southern Levant. They were all recovered from beneath the floor in houses. Some had been buried without further apparent alteration, including the cache of skulls in fig. 4.4. The skulls faced east, and were aged between eleven to their mid-twenties, with the oldest over sixty years of age; all had been placed in a sub-floor pit, and were recovered from the same room that had six sub-floor decapitated burials (Rollefson 1986: 50, pls II–6; Rollefson et al 1999). In an adjacent room, a further skull had been apparently forgotten and partially destroyed during a floor resurfacing episode.

This particular skull had been covered in a bitumen-type substance (Rollefson 2000: 171), and had been sanded/abraded at some point (Bonogofsky 2001b: 143).

Six of the 12 crania excavated from 'Ain Ghazal had been plastered, and some additionally painted, such as one example with closed eyes inlaid with bitumen and coloured with a pink pigment (Rollefson et al 1999: 101; Griffin et al 2001). One plastered skull (skull 88-1) is particularly impressive, demonstrating a high-level of workmanship (Simmons et al 1990) and 'truly outstanding artistic quality' (Griffin et al 2001), seen in fig. 4.5. It was recovered from an unclear context, but is thought to have been from a courtyard pit (Rollefson 2000: 171; Simmons et al 1990). Further skulls were treated with the application of pigment to stain the bone rather than the application of plaster. One such example, stained with red pigment, was found fragmented



Fig. 4.4. Untreated skulls, 'Ain Ghazal (Gary Rollefson).



Fig. 4.5. Plastered skull from 'Ain Ghazal (Gary Rollefson, photo by Hisahiko Wada).

on the floor of a burnt-out house; it is likely to have broken after falling from the place where it was on display (Rollefson 2000: 171).

The fragmentary and worn nature of the plaster on many of the skulls suggests curation and handling prior to their deposition. For instance, a cache of four skulls had been buried, and of these, two had small plaster patches and bitumen 'eyeliner' decoration remaining on the skull, although no further plaster was recovered from the pit, indicating that it had been damaged elsewhere and that the skulls were then buried rather than repaired (Rollefson 1983: 35, pls IV-1,2; Rollefson 2000: 171). Two infants were later buried above this particular cache in a courtyard. This may suggest a deliberate choice to bury the infants in the location of the skulls, indicating memory or knowledge of the deposition of the skulls.

Pottery Neolithic plastered skulls

All the examples above have been dated to the MPPNB. For many years, plastered skulls were assumed to be a phenomenon belonging to this period. However, the picture is far more complex, evidenced by the recent excavations of plastered skulls from 7th-millennium

Çatalhöyük and 6th-millennium Köşk Höyük, both situated in Anatolia, and more than 2000 years later than their Levant counterparts. Yet there are still comparable themes, including evidence of curation and display.

Çatalhöyük

At 7th-millennium Çatalhöyük, the earliest Anatolian plastered skull to date was found in the grave of an adult female; her body cradled the skull (fig. 2.7). This was a complete skull that had been plastered and covered with a red pigment. It is described as having been used for display prior to burial, and was buried in a deteriorating state. It has also been moulded in several layers, which included layers of cinnabar painted onto the plaster (Hodder and Farid 2004; Hodder 2006b: 23). This is an unusual find for the region, even within Çatalhöyük where there have been over 500 burials excavated, this is the only example found of a plastered skull. Its depositional context leads us to wonder about the relationship between the female burial and the skull, as well as the motivation for taking it out of circulation and use at that point in time.

Köşk Höyük

The Çatalhöyük plastered skull is already much later than its PPNB counterparts. Excavations at Köşk Höyük in Anatolia have pushed evidence of the practice much later still, to the mid-6th millennium BC (Özbek 2009), up to 3000 years after the earlier PPNB examples. We need to question whether this is evidence of continuity or a separate incidence, yet either way, it is a significant find. Nineteen human skulls have been excavated so far from Köşk Höyük, belonging to adult males and females, and one child's skull. Thirteen of these had their facial features recreated with clay and painted with red ochre. There were also two headless skeletons, one belonging to a fifteen- to sixteen-year-old, the other to an adult female. The skulls were laid on or wrapped in matting, and were often buried in groups. One such group of five skulls was excavated in 2005. These five skulls had been placed in a row, with the outer two covered with plaster, and the middle three left untreated. They had been placed carefully on the plastered floor of a house, facing eastwards, surrounded by a small

ridge, and were accompanied by three vessels and a headless figurine (Özbek 2009).

The modelled skulls show attention to detail in their reconstruction. One particular skull is described in detail by Özbek (2009: 381). The skull had been given a clay base, and the face had been recreated with a clay layer almost 8 mm in depth, modelled to mark the eyes, ears, nose, and mouth in meticulous detail. The eyes, described as 'large and prominent' give the appearance of falling asleep or close to death, almost closed, with attention paid to depicting the eyelids. The nose is straight and well defined, with a slight mouth, and prominent ears (Özbek 2009: 381). The face had then been coated with red ochre (Öztan et al 2007). In common with the plastered skulls from PPNB Levant, the top and back of the head remained untreated.

Due to the preservation conditions, the photographs of the skulls do not communicate the details as vividly as the accounts given by Özbek; but the details described must be compared to those from Aswad, with the meticulously modelled closed eyes and eyelashes, straight nose, and delicate mouth. Whilst it is difficult to ascertain over this time period and geographical distance, the similarities in stylistic choices are striking.

As with the earlier examples, the Köşk Höyük and Çatalhöyük skulls demonstrate evidence of having been on display and of taking a performative role before their burial. For Köşk Höyük, the headless figurine that accompanied three of the skulls may have been incorporated into these performative events, and the clay modelled base and the post-mortem damage to the skulls support the conclusion that they were used for display prior to burial. A strong theme seen in the plastered skulls is the role that is played by performance; this is a topic to which we return below, after a few general observations about the plastered skulls.

Plastering and un-plastering

The plastering of skulls involved a set of practices that entailed not only the plastering itself, but also the removal of plaster from the skulls. Research on one of the skulls from 'Ain Ghazal has revealed that marks originally thought to be caused by defleshing were consistent with sanding rather than muscle removal, especially as the marks were located on the frontal bone, an area without muscle attachments (Bonogofsky 2001: 142). The skull had been plastered,



Fig. 4.6. Plastered faces, 'Ain Ghazal (Gary Rollefson).

as fragments of plaster were still adhered to the skull. The sanding process could either have been to prepare the bone surface for plaster or to remove the plaster, and whilst initially one's instinct is to assume the former, the recovery of plastered 'faces' from 'Ain Ghazal confirms that the plaster was removed from skulls and carefully curated (fig. 4.6). A cache of three 'faces' was found, which at first appeared to be plaster masks or statue heads, but after further inspection they were identified as plastered faces which had been created on skulls and then removed, evidenced by bone impressions on their interior surfaces (Rollefson 2000: 171). The discovery of these plastered 'faces' raises new issues for the discussion of plastered skulls, confirming that as well as the application of plaster, at least some of the skulls also had plaster removed. They may have then been replastered, or in the case of the examples discussed above, left un-plastered. This adds a dynamic new phase to the plastered skulls, which, it seems, underwent accumulative processes. This supposition is also supported by the plastered skulls where many layers of plaster had been used, suggesting multiple phases of plastering.

As plaster removal was also performed, it is evident that plastering was not always a permanent feature. It is possible that the skulls were no longer considered appropriate for the treatment, or it may have been a process of negating their identity, or removing whatever identity had been given to them by plastering. Perhaps we are witnessing a process of making them 'ordinary' again; a reversal of status. Or it could be that the skulls were still significant without plastering. They may have been replaced by other deceased members of the community whose skulls were then subsequently chosen for treatment, with the 'life cycles' of multiple skulls recognized concurrently.

There is a repeated association between plastered skulls and unplastered skulls, frequently buried together. At 'Ain Ghazal, clusters of skulls included both treated and untreated skulls, as did caches at Jericho, and the later site of Köşk Höyük. Two of the plastered skulls at Yiftahel had just their eye orbits plastered (or at least preserved). It is clear that not all of the skulls selected for later use, display, and reburial had been plastered or had had their plaster removed, as evidenced by the numerous skull caches and isolated skulls buried without further treatment.

This selection of skulls without plastering can be seen at many other sites in the region, a topic that will be returned to in chapter 6. Skulls are removed from graves during the PPNA and throughout the PPNB. During the Late Neolithic, at many sites, there is a similar focus on the skull or the head, and this includes the head during life: skeletal evidence for cranial modification (discussed earlier in this chapter) has been found at Tell Arpachiyah (Molleson and Campbell 1995), Şeyh Höyük, and Hakemi Use, and the practice is suggested in depictions on pottery at Domuztepe and Sabi Abyad (Akkermans 1989, fig. IV; Molleson and Campbell 1995; Daems and Croucher 2007), and in figurines from Sabi Abyad (Collet 1996: 405), and Hakemi Use (Tekin 2002). The skull during death was also selected for separate burial at Domuztepe, where an articulated skull belonging to a young adult female was interred close to, but later than, a feature termed the 'Death Pit', in which over 30 skulls were buried (chapter 6). The selection of skulls during the later Neolithic often included their deposition with pottery vessels, a tradition that Goring-Morris suggests may echo PPNB practices of placing skulls and other body parts within plastered vessels or baskets. The articulated, decapitated skull at Domuztepe had also been placed in a plaster-lined basket. At Köşk Höyük, there were three jars within the cellar of a house; the largest vessel contained a cranium belonging to a female, probably under twenty years of age (Özbek 2009: 383). This is strikingly similar to skulls buried within pottery vessels at Tell Arpachiyah (Hijarra 1978). There appear to be particular associations with pottery vessels and the deceased, a topic to which we return in chapter 6.

The choice of removing skulls is also seen at the site of Çayönü Tepesi in Anatolia, in a building aptly named the Skull Building (which is also discussed in chapter 6). Here the skulls of over 450 people were recovered in a building whose phases of construction spanned at least 800 years from the PPNB onwards (Özdoğan and

Özdoğan 1998). The skulls were mostly arranged in rows, alongside stacked long bones. They had been placed in the building in varying stages, evidenced by differential effects on the skulls of the fire which marked the end of the building's use (Özbek 1988: 129). Whilst no plastered skulls have been found at Çayönü Tepesi, the site is frequently considered to be a part of the wider 'skull cult', due to the predominance of skulls and crania within the Skull Building (Bienert 1991: 15; Cauvin 2000 [1994]: 89). Yet it is clear that there were vastly different practices taking place at Çayönü. The Skull Building itself, apparently, was not used for everyday domestic tasks but was a place where the dead were processed and deposited. At Çayönü, the Skull Building was used in a performative way, with events apparently focused on the stone slab located in the south of the building, which might have included the killing and/or processing of the dead, both human and animal. Whilst much earlier than Domuztepe and Köşk Höyük, the site does show a long-standing pattern of post-mortem skull selection, expressed in different ways through time from the PPNB to the Later Neolithic periods.

Who were the plastered skulls during life?

Traditional interpretations

It is generally accepted that the plastered skulls were a means of venerating ancestors (although see p. 131 for a more in-depth discussion), marking lineages in some cases, tied to particular locations and places. At the Pottery Neolithic site of Çatalhöyük these practices are seen to have culminated in what are described as 'history houses' (Hodder 2009a), which were loci for veneratory activity over a long period of time, in some cases many hundreds of years (Düring 2008: 609), and whilst not directly relating to plastered skulls, aside from the one example, burials, plastered animal bucrania, and wall paintings are focused around particular household locations. For the PPNB, the location of plastered skulls within dwellings suggests that the dead were kept close to the living, used and displayed within living spaces. It is certainly the case that the plastered skulls were marked out in specific and special ways, reserved for a small number of the dead.

While the notion of ancestors is problematic, it is relevant to the discussion of the practice of plastering skulls, particularly as previous

assumptions that they bore a relation to an elderly, male image were overturned when it was discovered that many of the skulls belonged to women and children (Bonogofsky 2004). Particular lineages or persons may have been identified as ancestors; a role that may have been decided during life rather than after death. This did not depend on the reproductive age or capacity of the person, as plastered skulls included the young who would not have procreated, so it seems that categories of veneration or ancestor were not exclusively linked to parenthood, fertility, or age and gender (Fletcher et al 2008; Stordeur 2010), as is often assumed (Bonogofsky 2004; Parker Pearson 2009). The evidence has caused researchers to refocus on the meaning of the category of ancestor, which frequently includes women and children, rather than only elder, male, ancestral figures.

It had been argued that teeth were removed from skulls in order to achieve a more aged appearance before plastering took place (Strouhal 1973; Arensburg and Hershkovitz 1988a; Goren et al 2001). However, Bonogofsky's analysis of the plastered skulls concluded that tooth removal was not generally practised (2002). There may be some exceptions, such as the Late Neolithic site of Köşk Höyük where the plastered skull of a male aged between eighteen and thirty was missing teeth, although the molars and premolars were preserved in the skull's clay base, and a further young female adult, whose skull was otherwise untreated appeared to have had her teeth removed after death (Özbek 2009: 383). However, tooth removal was not practised on all of the skulls (just two of the 19), and it is feasible that in the former example the teeth did not survive *in situ* during skull removal, as suggested by the recovery of teeth with a primary headless skeleton at Köşk Höyük (Özbek 2009: 384), although Özbek concludes that teeth were intentionally rather than accidentally removed (Özbek 2009: 385). However, the late date of these skulls determines that we cannot use them to construct our interpretations of the earlier skulls, for which there is little evidence of intentional tooth removal; on the contrary, many skulls such as that seen in fig. 4.1b show that teeth frequently were preserved in plastered skulls. The cranium seen in fig. 4.1b has also been subject to artificial cranial modification, representing another practice that impacts on our interpretations of 'ancestors', and suggesting that selection for special treatment may have been made during infancy; the practice was not, therefore, dependent solely on later actions of the person during adulthood. However, there is not a clear correlation between special treatment of the skull after death and

cranial modification, as some skulls that have been cranially modified remain untreated after death (i.e. those in the tower at Jericho, Strouhal 1973: 246), and vice versa.

Choice of skulls at infancy suggests that kin affiliations may have been a motivation behind the selection of skulls. This is supported by dental evidence from Jericho (Kurth and Röher-Ertl 1981: 442; Bonogofsky 2006b: 17), and combined with cranial modification, indicates that lineage may have been important and emphasized. At Jericho there are two main caches containing 50 per cent children, one group of six, containing three children, and another cache of ten, including five children ranging in age. The skulls in the latter cache are thought to have been related to each other, evidenced through common dental and bone peculiarities (Kurth and Röher-Ertl 1981: 442; Bonogofsky 2006b: 17). These examples remain few in number, however, although further analysis on other skulls may provide more information about potential kin-ties. It is also feasible that relationships and lineages did not depend on blood relations, but other affiliations (Hodder 2009a) as well as capabilities and characteristics during life.

Arguments for violent headhunting practices put forward by Adams (2005: 185) and Testart (2008) have now been generally rejected, with little evidence for either warfare or violent behaviour during the Neolithic (see Belfer-Cohen and Goring-Morris 2009; Hodder 2009; Özdoğan's 2009 response to Testart 2008; Hodder 2005). Plastered skulls, however, are frequently interpreted with a predominant focus on their role in social hierarchies (i.e. Rollefson 2000), or as a means for enabling community cohesion, masking inequalities through communal action (i.e. Kuijt 2000b; Kuijt and Goring-Morris 2002).

It is clear that only a small percentage of the population had their skull or cranium removed post mortem, and still fewer had their skulls plastered or painted. We can speculate on the selection criteria. Ian Kuijt suggests that the persons whose skulls were selected were ritual practitioners during their lifetimes (Kuijt 2001: 94), and has more recently described those receiving treatment as likely to have been 'powerful community members and individuals in positions of leadership' (2008a: 177). Interestingly, although Kuijt acknowledges that young individuals were also selected for special treatment after death, he suggests that 'the original conceptualization of Neolithic plastered skulls was likely linked to specific individuals, such as elder

leaders or other people of importance' (2008a: 177). This may be valid, although the inclusion of the skulls of the young problematizes this somewhat. Furthermore, there need not necessarily be a direct relationship between ritual specialists and their roles of legitimacy in matters outside 'ritual' (Christiansen and Warburton 2002: 170). It is interesting that our immediate assumptions about people of importance relate to concepts of leadership and power. Whilst this may be the case, given the lack of further evidence for hierarchy and the ages of those with plastered skulls, it could be questioned why these were the dominant criteria for skull selections.

The equation of ritual action with hierarchy has also been made by Rollefson, who has argued that ritual behaviours at 'Ain Ghazal represent a four-tiered hierarchy (as discussed in chapter 3). He sees that ritually charged material culture can be used as a means of examining social organization and the emergence (or otherwise) of elites, in this case indicating restricted access to different types of 'ritual' artefacts that ranged through: easily accessible figurines, available to all; a restricted privilege of burial; further-restricted access to skull treatment; and finally, the plaster statuary at 'Ain Ghazal (to be discussed later in this chapter), regarded as forming the highest rung of the ritual ladder. Rollefson proposes that this hierarchical ordering of ritual behaviour demonstrates 'the organization of social behaviour on a day-to-day basis' (2000: 183), perceiving that ritual activity clearly and neatly reflects social order.

In contrast, Kuijt and Goring-Morris argue that the evidence suggests egalitarian social organization, although with competitive differences maintained between individuals and households. They argue that equalities will always exist, and that attempts at displaying equality are simply masking the real situation (Kuijt and Goring-Morris 2002: 421), suggesting that 'material differentiation among individual burials in the MPPNB may be linked to the intentional homogenization of community members at times of death, and, by extension, the existence of social and ritual mechanisms designed to minimize real and perceived differences within and between households and communities' (Kuijt and Goring-Morris 2002: 419).

Kuijt has also argued that competition was likely to have existed at a household level, with some households asserting individual authority (Kuijt 2000b: 155); although whilst we see competing and cooperating households, the rise of an elite is prevented (Kuijt 2000b: 159). Ultimately, these arguments suggest that rather than viewing the

period as a network of egalitarian communities it is more accurate to suppose that there was a coexistence of inequality within a broadly egalitarian system. Through acknowledging the coexistence of hierarchy and egalitarianism, Kuijt argues that we can move away from the labelling of societies, and look at 'the development of realistic and comprehensive models of cultural dynamics, including the possible pathways to power and authority in Neolithic communities' (Kuijt 2000c: 314).

Aside from the observation that the argument put forward covers all bases—equality, and hierarchy, display and masking, individuals, communities, and elites—it does show that the situation is likely to have been more complex than the models and frameworks traditionally used to describe the period allow. My proposition in chapter 3, concerning the dominance of the motivation to search for growing social hierarchy in our interpretations, is evident here. Moving beyond traditional models with focus on interpretations of hierarchy and social stratification, the evidence also provides a wealth of information about attitudes to the dead, about the dead body, 'ancestors', and the role of the dead in the lives of the living, topics that allow for investigation beyond assessing the level of social hierarchy in order to explore other aspects of life, and death, during this period.

Other possibilities?

Other suggestions for the choice of particular skulls are equally valid, if less familiar, in our interpretations of the past. The time of death may have been a considerable factor, particularly if death occurred at a particularly auspicious time or notable period or season. Circumstances or cause of death may have played a role in determining the reuse of the skull post mortem. Perhaps some types of death required action beyond burial or other disposal of the corpse. Particular qualities of a person (not necessarily related to power or leadership) may have influenced the recovery and plastering of skulls, including particular traits, knowledge or skills (such as patience, communicative abilities, imagination, or understanding of the environment).

Another determining factor may have been strong emotional ties between members of the community, and a desire to keep them close after death. Such emotive responses receive little attention in archaeological interpretations, however, and may be indicative of the inherent heteronormative nature of the discipline as discussed in

chapter 5. It somehow feels that archaeologists might have found it easier to accept the idea of dominance and leadership in their interpretations rather than to explore the possibility of any number of a range of skills and attributes, which were probably more likely for the communities under discussion here; people were integrated with their environments, with strong links between humans and animals, and an emerging understanding of new technologies that enabled the creation of new objects and artefacts among interrelated networks of people, animals, and things. There is perhaps more likelihood that a person would be venerated for their ability to understand and relate to stone, animals, plants, or the dead—it may be these persons who were chosen to remain particularly close to the living—retained, reused, and eventually reburied, to contribute to the cycles of life and afterlife.

The individual identity of the skulls can also be considered, not necessarily as accurate representations of the deceased, but whether a communal or idealized representation was communicated through them. It has been suggested, from close examination of many plastered skulls, that the modelling was not intended to recreate the living face (Bonogofsky pers. comm. discussing plastered skulls of Kfar HaHoresh and Jericho). If this is the case, then it seems that it was not the ‘individual’ during life that was being recreated through the plastered skulls; in fact, the absence of the mandible makes accurate representation problematic. Yet, for other examples, such as those from Tell Aswad, the faces appear intriguingly lifelike. It seems that replication of the actual face of the deceased was not necessarily intended for all the skulls, and was certainly not all that was important about the plastered skulls. Rather, particular concepts and ideas may have been embodied in the skulls, to be communicated through the removal, treatment, display, and use of the cranium. The skull or cranium remained relevant without the remainder of the body for a particular period of time before reburial; which rarely focused on the ‘individual’ interment of plastered skulls, but saw them deposited in close association with others, be it other skulls, human remains, or animal remains. We begin to see how identities were closely entwined with other beings, with the plastered skulls meaningfully deposited in relation to others.

Research into decomposition has shown that while it is difficult to determine the exact period of time it would have taken for the skull to become defleshed, it is likely to have been a period of a few years, with skeletonization taking between one and three years in a temperate

environment (Rodriquez 1997). However, this is dependent on a number of factors, including the degree of decomposition on burial (the further along the process the speedier the decay will be, the more prompt, and the slower the process), as well as depth of burial and climate; a body buried in a warm environment can skeletonize as rapidly as one left exposed in a milder environment (Clark et al 1997: 159, and see Knight 1991 and Janaway et al 2009). The head is also usually the first part of the body to lose its flesh. Whilst a number of factors determine how long after burial the skull would become defleshed, it is certainly feasible, and even likely, that the artist would have known the owner of the skull during life.

OTHER EVIDENCE: PLASTERED STATUES, MASKS, AND STONE ANCESTORS

The discussion above has focused on plastered skulls, including speculation about whose they were, and a suggestion for alternative selection criteria. Further observations will be discussed at the end of this chapter, including issues of display and performance, and variations within the archaeological material we are studying. Before this, there are several other categories of evidence that are relevant. These include the plastered statues from 'Ain Ghazal, with markedly comparable features to the plastered skulls, as well as the comparative use of plaster. A further aspect is the masks recovered from Nahal Hemar cave and Jericho, for while the masks were used for covering the face they, like the skulls and statues, focus attention on the eyes. Finally, the monumental stone pillars from Göbekli Tepe will be considered, where, I will argue, concepts of ancestor, person, and stone merge ambiguously, because whilst not plastered skulls, they can be considered as components of comparable beliefs and practices. First, the plastered statues from 'Ain Ghazal will be discussed.

Plastered statues

In addition to the plastered skulls and faces, a further category is often considered to belong within this group of symbolic representations.

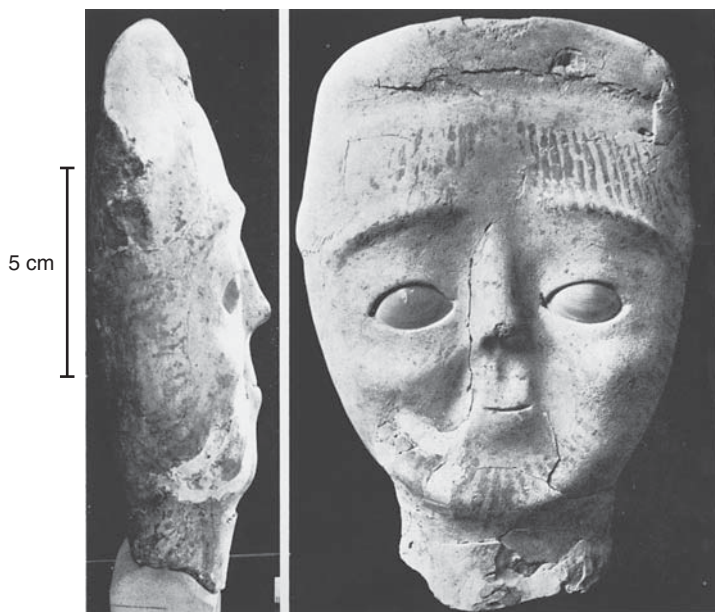


Fig. 4.7. Plaster statue, Jericho (after Kenyon 1960: pl 15).

Plastered statues have been found at the Nahal Hemar cave, 'Ain Ghazal, Jericho (see Moorey 2001: 33), and Wadi Shu'eib (Simmons et al 2001). Headless, plastered torsos have been recovered from Tell Ramad, and it has been suggested they were used as stands for skulls (de Contenson et al 2000; Simmons et al 2001); a comparable motivation may be apparent at Kfar HaHoresh, although poor preservation makes it unclear whether the remains in a pit are from plastered torsos or busts, but analysis is ongoing (Goring-Morris 2005: 97). Plastered statues are frequently too badly preserved for in-depth analysis; the best preserved examples are from 'Ain Ghazal and Jericho, portraying the same emphasis on the eyes, pronounced cheekbones, and straight, narrow nose, as seen in plastered skulls. The Jericho plastered statue (fig. 4.7) also depicts a beard and has shells inserted for eyes. It is flat, and was intended to be viewed face-on, an aspect of display that will be discussed below.

Two caches of lime-plastered statues have been recovered from MPPNB 'Ain Ghazal. The statues had been made by covering reed-bundle frames with plaster. The head, torso, and legs were modelled

separately before being assembled. After assembly, and having been covered with plaster, paint was applied, depicting features that include the nose and eyes, and for some statues, marks that appear to be tattoos.

Both caches were laid in pits, at least one of which had been dug into the floor of an abandoned house; the context for the other cache remains difficult to ascertain, due to the complex stratigraphy (Rollefson 1986: 47). It is significant that they were placed beneath the floors of abandoned structures rather than inhabited houses, segregated from the living in their disposal, and notably, contrasting with the places chosen for the burial of plastered skulls.

The first cache of statues recovered dates to the MPPNB. The cache consisted of the burial of over 25 human statues and busts, including 13 full-bodied statues and 12 one-headed busts. These range from 35 cm to 100 cm in height (Schmandt-Besserat 2001), examples of which are shown in fig. 4.8. Males, females, and, possibly, children are represented. Gary Rollefson, the site director, comments that 'at least two statues can be interpreted as being associated with birth or fertility' (2000: 171), due to the representation of breasts on two figures, and pudenda on another (Rollefson pers. comm.). The second cache, of seven less well-preserved statues, dates to the MPPNB–LPPNB period. Included in the cache were three two-headed busts, and two fragmentary heads.

There is emphasis on the head, which is disproportionately large, as are the eyes, which are set wide apart and lined with bitumen, and appear to stare back at the viewer (Schmandt-Besserat 2001). Some of the smaller busts have also had their eyes dusted with a green powder, and in addition, the figures were treated with ochre and then polished to give a smooth finish (Rollefson 2000: 172). The figures are flat (only 5–10 cm thick), and apparently intended to be viewed from the front, with their feet able to support their upright display (Rollefson 2000: 172). The face-on intention behind the display of these plastered statues is also evident with the flat construction of the statues from Jericho (Kenyon 1960: 54) and Wadi Shu'eib (Simmons et al 2001: 27), with the latter example, however, differing in having a featureless face and being placed within a burial.

Whilst the busts have a fairly uniform appearance at first glance, further inspection reveals that some attention was given to individual markings, such as face- and body-markings perhaps representing tattooing or painting, and suggesting that body decoration was practised

at the time. It is also possible that particular persons were being represented through these statues. As bodily decoration was important enough to be featured in the portrayals, it seems reasonable to assume that such decoration was a significant aspect of non-verbal communication at the time.

The two-headed figurines have been the topic of discussion (see fig. 4.9); Rollefson argues that they are a product of the changing nature of society at the time, a period of perceived upheaval, with the abandonment of smaller farming villages, and an increase in the size of 'Ain Ghazal. Rollefson suggests that the statues 'reflect[s] a

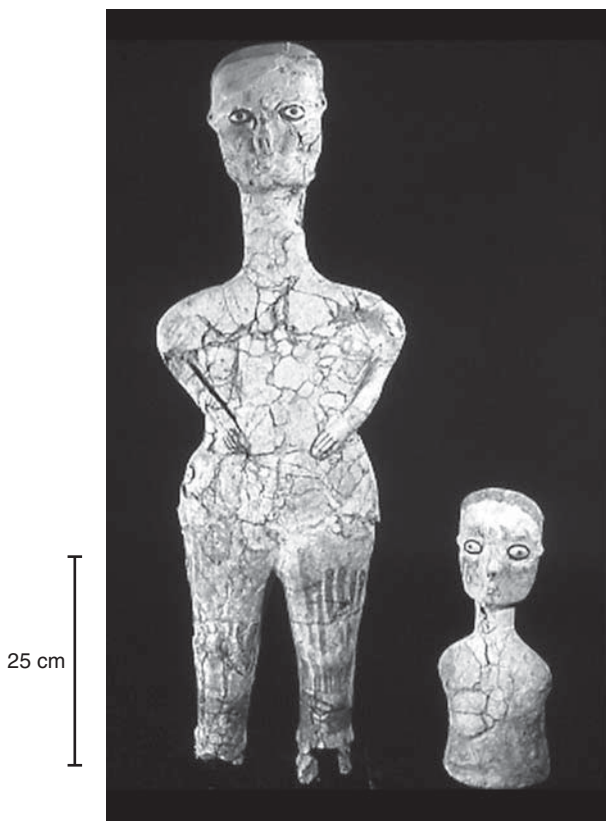


Fig. 4.8. Plaster statues, 'Ain Ghazal (Gary Rollefson, photo by Peter Dorrell and Stuart Laidlaw).

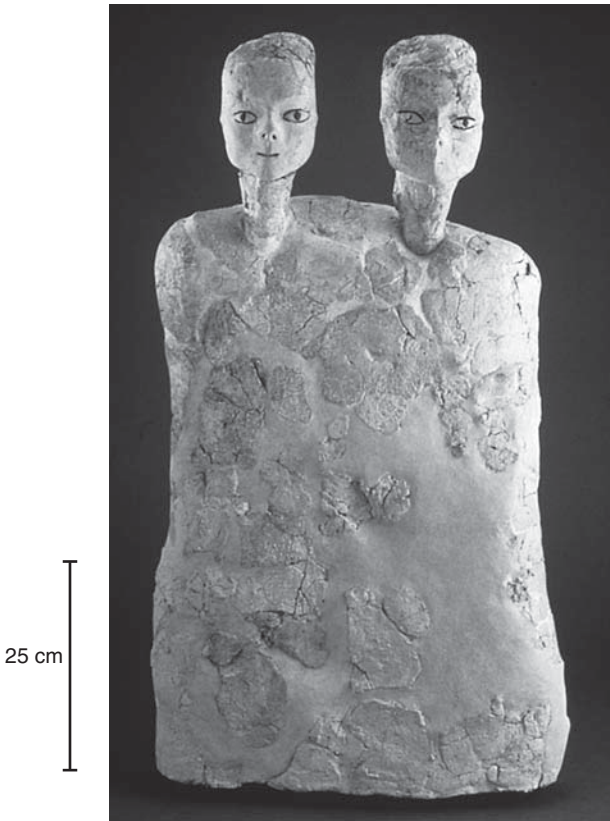


Fig. 4.9. Two-headed plaster statue, 'Ain Ghazal (Gary Rollefson, photo by John Tsantes).

symbolic consolidation in the 'Ain Ghazal settlement of two or more related lineages or clan populations formerly spatially segregated, either as separate farming communities or as farmers and steppe/desert-dwelling hunters, or both' (2000: 185). While this is interesting speculation, the dominant interpretation is again assumed to relate to agriculture and subsistence, which may well have been part of the motivation, but there are many other unions which could be represented here—indeed if it is a union that is being depicted—it would not have to relate to separate clans, but could equally relate to close kin being reunited, sexual unions, or even trade partners, or allies. Any of these are as likely as the union of farming/herding/dwelling

communities. There are other equally feasible and compelling interpretations for the two-headed figures: perhaps they are a representation of conjoined twins: quite literal representations. Or it may have been intended that the figures were viewed when placed behind others, thus a practical motivation, as the shared body would be hidden. Clothing may have performed a similar effect of hiding the joined bodies. There may have been a more symbolic merging of identities, or the figures could represent some idol concept. Although these interpretations are speculative they do yet offer additional possibilities beyond a direct relationship with subsistence and the merging of lineages and clans.

While clearly there are similarities between plastered skulls and these plastered statues, not least in the material used, there are obviously many differences. As Schmandt-Besserat has observed, the eyes on the statues are wide open, in contrast to the closed eyes of many of the skulls (2001). There are different spheres of use and storage, with the skulls being placed within architecture that was being used, and the statues stored or deposited in pits in abandoned buildings. Whilst the statues may have a more lifelike appearance with their open eyes, unlike the plastered skulls they were not buried or stored in areas for the living.

There is a shared performative aspect with the plastered statues; constructed to be viewed face-on, with flat feet supporting their display. The importance of display and performance is also suggested at Nahal Hemar, where in addition to the plastered statues, crania and masks have also been recovered.

Nahal Hemar and masking

The plastered skulls discussed in this chapter have generally resulted from broadly comparable practices; plastering of the facial area, usually on crania without their mandibles. However, other treatments of the skull were also in existence, including evidence from the cave site of Nahal Hemar believed to date to the PPNB, although plundering of the cave and animal activity make exact phasing difficult to determine (Bar-Yosef 2003). Twenty-three skulls, or fragments of skulls, along with three vertebrae, were the only skeletal remains recovered from Nahal Hemar (Arensburg and Hershkovitz 1988b: 51). Of these crania, six had remnants of a substance applied to the

back of the cranial vault, forming a net-like, diamond/criss-cross pattern (Arensburg and Hershkovitz 1988b: 53). The substance was originally described as bitumen, and later reinterpreted as animal collagen (Bar-Yosef 2003: 76; Bower 1997). Its application may account for signs of burning apparent on a number of the skulls, although it is difficult to confirm whether the burning was accidental or intentional, as other items in the cave had also been affected by fire, such as flints and bone implements (Arensburg and Hershkovitz 1988b: 53). It may be feasible that the tools were used in the application of the substance, especially as traces of asphalt were found on some blades (Bar-Yosef 1985: 11). The lithics recovered from the cave are particularly unusual, with a cache of 550 pointed blades without cores or debitage (Goring-Morris and Belfer-Cohen 2001: 260).

The excavators did not report evidence of long-term occupation of the cave, but there was evidence of vegetal food from local regions found there, suggesting either storage or perhaps food to accompany gatherings (Bar-Yosef and Alon 1988: 28). The excavators suggest that due to the lack of evidence of nearby sites, the cave may have been a 'sacred locale' for the surrounding regions (Bar-Yosef and Alon 1988: 28). The remains of foodstuffs suggest that plant foods played a more important role in so-called ritual activities than they have previously been given credit for. Whilst the role of animals is commonly debated, plant foods are usually discussed in a way that simply views them as subsistence, rather than acknowledging that they may have played a more in-depth role in ritual activities (a subject that is currently being researched by Asouti and Fuller forthcoming). In chapter 6, alternative world views will be discussed, where experiences of the environment can conflate the importance of categories such as person, plant, and animal, as all elements of the world are viewed as important and connected. In such cases, plants may have been as significant in people's understandings of identity as other people, animals, and places in the landscape were; such understandings of the world view all aspects of the environment as animated and significant, and the choice over which foodstuffs to eat or store may hold greater implications for the interpretation of sites than is usually credited.

Of the crania whose sex is identifiable at Nahal Hemar cave, including all of those with bitumen on their crania, all are male (Arensburg and Hershkovitz 1988b; Bonogofsky 2003: 5), some having reached the age of at least between forty-five and fifty years.

However, many of the skulls are of indeterminable sex, and some are from younger examples, including several children (Arensburg and Hershkovitz 1988b: 50–3). There does not appear to have been any attempt to remodel the faces of the skulls, although it is difficult to conclude whether this is due to preservation (Yakar and Hershkovitz 1988: 62). It is feasible that modelled facial elements may also have been removed, as discussed by Bonogofsky in relation to ‘Ain Ghazal (2001).

There were two limestone masks recovered with the skulls at Nahal Hemar, which may have been used with the skulls in place of modelled faces. One of the masks was broken, with only the lower half of the mask deposited in the cave. It consisted of a lower jaw and chin, with 12 teeth incised into the mask. The other mask was almost complete, although it was found in 12 fragments, some of which showed signs of burning; the mask was broken prior to the fire, which occurred during one of the Neolithic phases of activity (Bar-Yosef 2003: 76). The mask was decorated with radiating lines and asphalt traces with hair imprints around the mouth/chin and hairline (see Bar-Yosef 2003 for a full description of the mask and others found in the region). The mask was perforated around its circumference, suggesting that either it was tied onto the face or skull or that it had feathers and other decorations attached to it (Bar-Yosef and Alon 1988: 23–7). In common with the plastered skulls and statues, the masks at Nahal Hemar accentuated the eyes. They might also be viewed as conceptually comparable to the plastered face; covering the surface of the bone or skin with a new layer. Four other masks have also been recovered, thought to date to the Neolithic, and detailed by Bar-Yosef (2003); three of these are items in museum collections without provenance, and the fourth, which was broken during manufacture, is from Basta in Southern Jordan.

Masks: what do they mean? Ethnographic examples

The use of masks holds implications for the portrayal of identities as masks often hide identities as well as creating them. Numerous ethnographic examples of masks provide rich and detailed examples of the roles they can play, with uses varying from theatrical to funerary, some of which will be discussed here. A variety of materials can be used (including feathers, leaves, wood, and metal) and masks can be worn in a variety of ways; as well as covering the face they can

be worn on top of the head, on the shoulder, upper arms, and temples, for example (Mack 1994: 29, 35). Masks both create and hide identities, and often it is aspects of hiding that are most discussed. The term masking—or masquerade—relates to disguise, and often, pretence or deception (Mack 1994: 35) with intent to conceal identity. As John Mack notes, 'the term "mask" implicitly acknowledges human agency, that which is masked or concealed; but the resulting masquerade has a presence even if everyone is well aware that masking is, after all, only someone dressing up' (Mack 1994: 12). Masking can be a powerful tool both providing impact and focusing attention.

For example, in ancient Egypt the mask was worn not to conceal identity but rather to raise the wearer to the level of divinity, often needed in the face of illness or disease, or to ensure a safe passage into the afterlife (Taylor 1994: 171). Death masks such as that of Tutankhamen are well-known artefacts, but this, among others like it, represents an exception because most death masks were mass-produced and standardized and did not replicate the individual features of the deceased. The mask was used to aid safe passage after death, and also to protect the deceased from attempts of decapitation in the afterlife (Taylor 1994: 174, 178), with the body remaining an important aspect of the identity of the deceased.

The use of death masks by attendees at funerals is also well documented. Roman examples discussed by Ian Jenkins describe how a death mask was made from a wax cast of the deceased. It was then worn during the funerary procession by a participant who had practised imitating the deceased. After the funeral, masks were placed in an open cupboard in the house and reused at future funerals (Jenkins 1994: 166) to ensure the deceased was remembered. The Asmat people of New Guinea (a people that used to practise head-hunting) make a mask of the deceased, again worn during the funeral. The mask wearer impersonates the recently deceased, believed to facilitate the last appearance of the dead to their communities, after which they are chased into the men's house where they depart for the spirit world. Here, the masks help to stress the continuity of life into death. Furthermore, the mask wearer becomes committed to the deceased, adopting the children of the deceased person that they have imitated (Starzecka 1994: 69).

Funerary rituals are just one of many rites of passage, and there are numerous examples of masking during initiation rites (for example, Starzecka 1994: 75; Mack 1994: 17). Mack discusses rites of passages

such as those practised by the Chokwe of Zaire and Zambia during male circumcision rites where it is believed that the initiates die to be reborn as adults in society. The masked figure, shrouded in secrecy to women and the uninitiated, protects and guides the initiates through this process (Mack 1994: 17–19). Seasonal cyclic events are also sometimes marked by masks, seen even today in European contexts at festivals and carnivals rooted in ancient pagan traditions; seasonal junctures and dangerous, transitory times are acknowledged (Poppi 1994: 201), including harvest events (Poppi 1994: 201; Irvine 1994: 132).

However, whilst these are examples of the use of masks at times of transition, the wearing of masks is often accompanied by a belief that the mask wearer is not simply ‘dressing up’, but is actually assuming the identity of some other being, be that a deity, idol, animal, or spirit. Masks, then, are complex items, often paradoxical in that they both conceal and transform identity (Poppi 1994: 194).

In many shamanistic societies the mask plays an important role in transporting the being of the shaman to other realms, and in the adoption of animalistic characteristics, where the shaman is transported from ‘the natural to supernatural plane’ (Reilly 1995: 375). In Olmec societies, other rituals are known often to have accompanied this, such as blood-letting, where ‘blood was a magical substance opening the portal between the natural and supernatural cosmic division’ (Reilly 1995: 380). The shaman, while in a trance-like state, was believed to communicate with the supernatural world (Reilly 1995: 374).

Although masks focus the attention of the viewer, they are often not the central or most important feature of the festivals and ceremonies of which they form a part, but rather are a feature of a broader assemblage of ritually significant items (which might include costumes and instruments, for instance). The materials used may themselves be of significance (such as the type of wood, feathers, or textiles), (Mack 1994: 107–8). By studying masks in isolation, one is liable to lose much of their context and significance. However, they are still often treated as separate from their assemblages. For instance, masks displayed in museums frequently lack the rest of the costume and other paraphernalia that accompany ethnographic examples. Such displays demonstrate the changing meanings and usage of objects, a topic discussed with relation to one particular mask from the Nuxalk of British Columbia, Canada (Seip 1999). In its original

context, the mask was a highly sacred object that was never viewed without the rest of the costume or outside the performance of which it was a part. The situation changed through three main factors: smallpox, missionaries, and the banning of potlatch; the smallpox epidemic reduced the population by up to 80 per cent, missionaries and government officials outlawed indigenous ceremonies, and the banning of potlatch meant that mask-wearing privileges were not passed on. Ethnographers and collectors arrived, recorded, and often removed artefacts from such 'dying cultures'; the masks were collected to illustrate mythology, as well as to learn about carving. The masks' value changed further when, in the 1920s, they began to be viewed as examples of 'primitive art' worthy of display in art galleries. The artists, previously unknown and secret, became important. Today in the region masks are carved for display, with the carvers' identities revealed. Rather than wanting to know the associated stories, the questions asked of the mask by viewers concern 'how much it is worth in dollars, who made it, where it came from and potential future value' (Seip 1999: 282–3). Often little reference is made to the original meaning of the mask in a museum collection, and the indigenous inhabitants feel frustrated, both by the display itself, and by the restricted access to such items of their past (*ibid.*).

In this case, the mask's importance depended on the performance for which it was intended. Sound, music, dance, and costume were vital parts of performance to give the mask context. It is this whole concept of performance that should not be overlooked when examining the role masks may have played in the past. Masks are important aspects of many rituals and ceremonies, and as such, they can be used as mnemonic devices and symbolic communicators.

Masks: Nahal Hemar

Given the multiple possibilities of use and meaning, a consideration of context is essential when discussing masks. Specifically for the examples from the Nahal Hemar cave, therefore, we should consider the wider contexts that must have surrounded their use. The surrounding evidence provided by carbonated seeds suggests that food consumption was an aspect of the activities taking place. Although it is difficult to determine whether this took place at the same time as the wearing of masks, the excavators suggest that the cave was used

for the storage of ritual and mundane items, rather than inhabited on a daily basis (Bar-Yosef 2003: 76).

While we cannot draw parallels from the ethnographic evidence discussed above, we can observe that performance persistently plays a fundamental role in activities where masks are used, and while at times a mask may be hidden or stored, it comes into focus in a performative context at least once during its lifetime. With the breakage and wear on the limestone masks from Nahal Hemar, it is likely that they were not used for a single event. Rather than simply the final deposition within the cave itself, we might think about the performative aspects of the events that were taking place. The masks may have served to hide or create identities, or both, and may have incorporated rites featuring both the living and deceased as suggested by their interment with the skulls. The masks are also likely to have served as symbolic communicators: mnemonic devices that helped confirm and manipulate societal beliefs and practices. If interred broken, this may have related to the desire for safe disposal, perhaps to allow some associated spirit to depart or as a part of their cycle of use, which apparently came to an end with their deposition in the cave.

Fragments of four plaster statues were also recovered from the cave at Nahal Hemar for which plaster was sourced from the Mediterranean shore (Goren et al 1993: 127), suggesting communication and interaction routes. One of the statue fragments, a head fragment, displayed the same net-like pattern as the skulls from the site (Bar-Yosef and Alon 1988: 20), suggesting it was a part of the same practices responsible for the skulls placed within the cave, although it is unclear whether the skulls and statues were interred as a single event or over a longer period of time. The statues were deposited in the cave as fragments (Goren et al 1993: 127), evidently broken elsewhere, or perhaps the remaining fragments were removed. The location of the missing parts is unknown; they may have been deposited elsewhere or been left behind at the site of breakage. It is also feasible that fragments could have been removed and circulated or curated. If these were perceived of as 'valuable' items (note the term 'value' is not used in our modern sense of wealth), then fragments of them may have been retained, perhaps because they were perceived as being imbued with certain properties. A common perception that complete items were of greater importance may not have been relevant in these contexts as only

fragments remained, but evidently this did not inhibit their collection and placement in the cave.

Four bone figurines were also recovered from Nahal Hemar. Faces had been carved into the bone with ochre, asphalt, plaster, and pigments used for decoration, including highlighting of the eyes and depictions of beards (Bar-Yosef and Alon 1988: 21–2), and as all four figures had beards, they are interpreted as male. Rare comparable examples of incised bone faces from 7th-millennium Höyücek in Anatolia (Duru 1999) have been interpreted as being used for insertion into the necks of figurines and compared to possible examples from Çatalhöyük (Hodder 2001: 110), perhaps to indicate changeable identities or states of being, in the same way as masks evoke similar 'notions of shifting or fluid identities' (Talalay 2004: 150, 145). More recently a mammal rib bone carved with two faces has been found at Tell Qarassa North (Ibáñez et al 2010). The use of bone for sculptures is particularly interesting; one has to consider whether the origin of the media was important, a question that will be returned to later in this chapter and in chapter 6, when the importance of materiality and the source of raw materials is discussed.

The excavators also conclude that the image of an older male was important at Nahal Hemar. Bearded images on the figurines and masks, along with the selection of male skulls for modelling, are argued to 'suggest that the "founding fathers" were attributed a revered status' (Bar-Yosef and Alon 1988: 28). The concept of 'founding fathers', however, is situated in modern contexts, not necessarily applicable to material from Nahal Hemar. The male image does seem to dominate at this site, however, which is a topic to which we return in the next chapter.

Performance

The assemblage recovered from the cave at Nahal Hemar sets the scene; there is little evidence of permanent occupation although there is evidence of storage and consumption of grains and food. There are stylistic elements that pay tribute to the essences of trends and practices, seen in the plastering of skulls, and plastered statues seen at other PPNB sites. The overall striking theme at the cave involves performance. The masks were designed to be worn as a fundamental component of the costume, but whether they were worn by a living

person, the skulls, or both is unknown. Other components of costume and decoration recovered from the cave included a headdress; further headdresses and/or hair attachments are suggested by the collagen substance on the back of the skulls and the patterns on the plastered statues. There were numerous beads recovered from the cave, many made of wood that had been painted with red oxide or green malachite, and others made from green stone, sea shells, and clay, the latter painted green or grey (Bar-Yosef 1998: 12). The manufacturing technique of the beads was standardized and the source of pigments that coated them indicates that they were made at one place (the Arabah Valley), and 'aimed predominantly at providing lustrous, glittering objects' (Goren et al 1993: 127). The lithics recovered from the cave may also have played a performative role, whether used in reality or in mimicry.

Human representation was an important feature of whatever events surrounded the deposition at Nahal Hemar as evidenced through skulls, masks, plaster statues, and figurines. There was also an animal-shaped figurine, thought to have been a rodent (Bar-Yosef 1998: 13). It is also significant that many of these items were fragmented, broken during the Neolithic rather than as a result of later plundering. But parts of these are missing also, such as the incomplete masks, which may be the result of modern plundering but could also suggest that parts had been removed, perhaps circulated, or deposited elsewhere. Their fragmentation may have distributed their value beyond the cave setting, among participants, or given to those who were unable to participate; fragmentation is a topic to which we return in chapter 6.

At Nahal Hemar we see the inclusion of parts of human skulls, with equivalents modelled and decorated in bone and plaster; fragments of plastered statues and limestone masks, as well as beads, knives, and plant remains. Deliberate choices were made to include this selection of material. The objects had seemingly been removed from the immediate spheres of the living and placed in an arguably remote location, either intended as a final place of deposition, or with the unfulfilled intention of retrieval of the deposited items at a later time.

As well as the acts of final deposition of these items at Nahal Hemar cave the skulls, statues, figurines, and other items comprised the remains of performative events, including those surrounding their deposition. In addition to the acts or events surrounding their deposition at the site, the objects represent the accumulative performances

of their production and transportation, often being brought from significant distances. Raw materials included minerals for beads, flint for tools, plaster for the skulls, the substance covering the backs of the crania, the seeds and vegetal material, instruments for starting fires, bone for the painted figures, and, of course, the remains of the crania of the deceased. Networks of relationships, between people, the dead, and things, were brought together, and while masks and skulls are important elements of all of this, they only formed a part of the bigger picture. The connections between people and material culture will be discussed next, where relationships and concepts of ancestors transcend humans alone to incorporate stone and anthropomorphic representations.

Ancestors

So far, this chapter has discussed plastered skulls and interpretations about their connection with ancestor veneration. However, the term ancestor has probably been used a little freely up until now, and deserves further consideration next, following which the stone monoliths at Göbekli Tepe in Anatolia will be discussed, focusing on the way they merge the categories of person, stone, and ancestor.

It can be argued that the term 'ancestor' is used too regularly. Whitley (2002: 119) warns that 'there are too many ancestors in contemporary archaeological interpretation, and they are being asked to do too much', with the label being used without definition or any real understanding of its meaning. Whitley suggests that the term ancestor needs to be defined; what is meant by 'ancestor' that distinguishes it from the 'general dead'? Not all burial practices are ancestral and becoming an ancestor, at least in most ethnographic examples, requires a period of transition: a rite of passage (Whitley 2002: 122). There is also debate about whether ancestors are considered as 'individuals' or in a more collective manner.

Whitley has a fair point here; not all the dead are likely to be ancestors. He argues for a period of transition and a rite of passage. Such a rite of passage requires transformation, from one type of person to another (after Van Gennep 1960). If we want to be strict with our classifications, the plastered skulls would enter into this category as they demonstrate a transition from one type of being to another, and we are fortunate that this involves a physical, archaeologically detectable

change, through the plastering of skulls. The period of burial might be seen as one of liminality, before the recreation of the identity of the deceased, through plastering. We might also view all recovered skulls as having undergone this liminal period, with transformation into a skull—dry bone—rather than fleshed corpse. Whether this makes all of the skulls ancestors is difficult to know; certainly it is feasible, and this would still conform to Whitley's argument that these do not represent all of the dead population. If we want to categorize the skulls in this way, then the label 'ancestor', according to Whitley's definition, does seem appropriate. For want of a better label, I have used ancestor here, but I am cautious. I do not think that ancestor means the same thing in all circumstances and places. The plastered skulls were once-living members of the community whose bodies (or parts of bodies) were transformed and reused after death in a meaningful way by living members of the community. However, this may not have been perceived as a permanent role as they were frequently removed again from the domains of the living before being reburied, out of sight once again.

Returning to Whitley's warning concerning the recognition of individuals versus the term ancestors used collectively, it is perhaps fair to conclude that this is a contextual matter; for the material we are studying, different concepts were relevant in different places and times, rather than there being a universal understanding. At sites such as Çayönü Tepesi, the remains of the dead were deposited in the Skull Building over hundreds of years. Comparable depositions of multiple interments can also be seen at Dja'de and Ba'ja, although on different temporal scales. A common factor is that the remains are interred in multiple events, with former burials being pushed aside or disturbed by later burials, or with isolated or articulated bones being interred, including skulls and long bones. The accumulation of the dead in this way, without seeming importance placed on the separation of remains of discrete persons, suggests that a communal remembrance is a more probable scenario. This contrasts with evidence provided by plastered skulls, where isolated skulls are selected and treated, displayed, and often reburied, but while they may be reburied in multiples, they are still recognizable as separate entities even after some period of time. Their differences are perhaps further emphasized by the addition of individual markings and decorative elements, suggesting that particular features are being used to differentiate

between them. This is a practice seen with the plastered statues also, many of which display tattoos or body painting. It is interesting that many of the plastered skulls have been recreated with a 'sleepy' appearance, such as one of the plastered skulls from Beisamoun (Goren et al 2001). Furthermore, the skulls at Tell Aswad not only depict closed eyes but also appear sullen, perhaps even indicating that the fleshed corpse is being recreated. However, it is important not to get too carried away with notions of individual identity. As ethnographic examples demonstrate, even isolated skulls may be remembered as generic 'important people' rather than by a direct reference in terms of a name or personal story (Boyd 1995; and e.g. Reina 1962). Perhaps what this discussion brings to light, as much as attempting to define differences in 'ancestor' categories, is our modern perception of the importance of the individual, a debate to which we return in chapter 6. If we begin to move away from notions of individuality and indeed of the importance of 'humanness', our interpretations may be more open to include other categories, such as the ambiguous stone pillars at Göbekli or Nevalı Çori, or the later anthropomorphic clay vessels seen in the region (discussed in chapter 6). The next section considers the 'ancestral importance' of other, non-human entities. In particular, it will focus on Göbekli Tepe, a PPNA site in Anatolia, although there are also implications for other sites in the region.

Stone gods? Göbekli Tepe

The site of Göbekli Tepe is one of the most astounding finds of our times. A huge monumental arena, divided into segregated shrine enclosures (fig. 4.10), it is situated in the hills above modern-day Urfa in Southeast Turkey and located close to stone sources on a limestone ridge, although visitors to the site would have faced a considerable hike to reach the hill-top location (see Schmidt 2006). Klaus Schmidt is directing excavations—a phenomenal feat—that is still underway; consequently, final conclusions cannot be drawn at this time, but observations can be made on the material excavated so far. Interpretations of Göbekli focus on its 'ritual' activities at present, as settlement and domestic features, such as ovens and fireplaces, have not yet been excavated (Schmidt 2004: 103; although see also Ted Banning's recent article (2011) for an alternative perspective,



Fig. 4.10. Göbekli Tepe, aerial view of shrine areas (Klaus Schmidt, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut).

suggesting that the shrine areas may also have been inhabited as houses.).

The massive undertaking of labour to quarry, transport, carve, and erect the pillars would have required a mass gathering of people over a considerable period of time, prompting the suggestion that the site may have been a catalyst for the domestication of plants. This changes the way that the development of agriculture has been viewed, with the domestication of plants brought about through the accumulation of people, rather than vice versa (Hauptmann 1991/92, 1993; Schmidt 1999: 14, 2002: 25). Schmidt suggests that the labour involved in the

construction and maintenance of Göbeklii is 'indicative of a complex, hierarchical social organisation and a division of labour involving large numbers of people' (2004: 103, and reasserted in Schmidt 2011).

Göbekli Tepe is composed of large shrine areas, or enclosures, each of which usually includes 12 large monoliths, with a further two upright monoliths at the centre of the enclosures. Many of the pillars are characteristically T-shaped (fig. 4.12), and onto them are carved



Fig. 4.11. Monolith, Göbekli Tepe (Klaus Schmidt, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut).

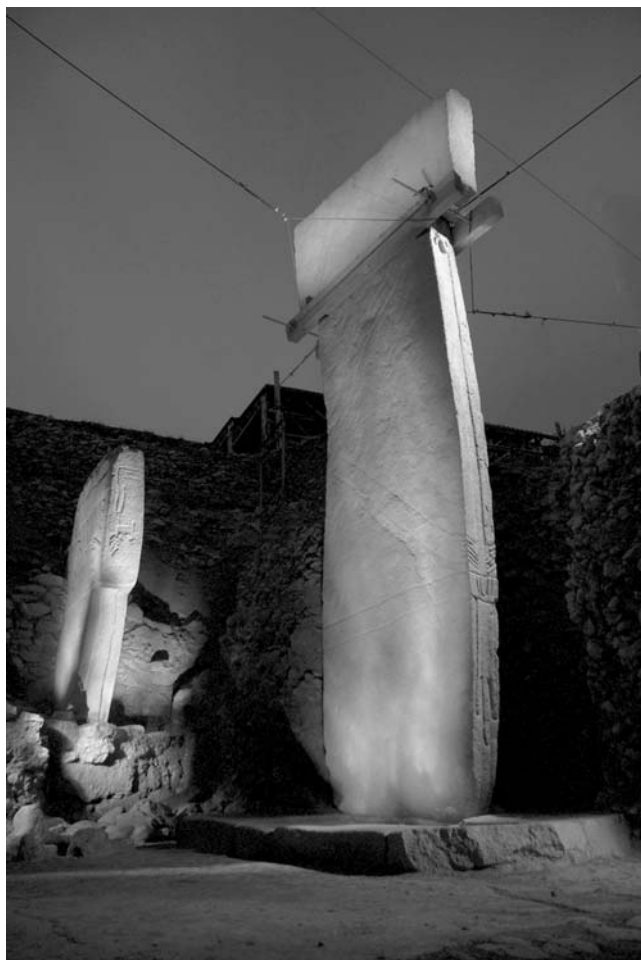


Fig. 4.12. Anthropomorphic monolith, Göbekli Tepe (Klaus Schmidt, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut).

depictions of animals, and, albeit rarely, people. There are two reported phases of Neolithic activity; Layer III dates to the PPNA/EPPNB, the earliest finds discovered so far, and Layer II, with smaller enclosures, dates to the EPPNB/MPPNB. There is a change in style between the levels; the Layer III enclosures include fewer human and a greater number of animal depictions and have larger pillars which weigh as much as 15 tons each, measuring up to 5.5 m in height compared to a height of 1.5 m in Layer II (Schmidt 2011).

Each enclosure usually comprises 12 pillars, interconnected by walls and stone benches. The monoliths at the centre of each of the enclosures are usually larger in size and of a higher level of workmanship than those around the edges. The pillars are quarried from local stone sources; the stone naturally breaks linearly, and one pillar found at a nearby quarry measures 7 m in length. Other stonework has been recovered from Göbekli Tepe, including small stone figurines (Schmidt 2003: 3), animal sculptures (Schmidt 2004: 97), a large limestone ring measuring 60 cm in diameter, a 'U-shaped' monolithic entrance (Schmidt 2005: 17), and large limestone plates; their exact purpose remains unknown (Schmidt 2004: 99). The excavated remains so far comprise only a small percentage of the overall area of the site, with at least 20 enclosures identified by geophysical survey, with an estimated 200-plus pillars; a truly awe-inspiring setting.

Merging of human, animal, and stone

The monumental pillars at Göbekli Tepe are carved with an array of animals, including snakes, wild cattle, bucrania, cranes, boars, ducks, crocodiles, foxes, gazelle, wild ass, and other quadrupeds, as well as insects and spiders, many of which are life-size. A few of the carvings are of humans, but these are rarer than animal depictions. There are also geometric shapes, including 'H' shapes (Schmidt 1999: 12, 2003: 4, 2004: 103). While many of the carvings at Göbekli Tepe depict animals there are also some naturalistic, accurate, and skilful three-dimensional representations, such as the example seen in fig. 4.13. Göbekli, rather than standing alone, is situated in a landscape of comparable monuments, carvings, and statues, many of which have only recently begun to come to light. For instance, animals are also depicted on the stones at the nearby site of Karahan Tepe (Çelik 2000b) where T-shaped pillars are decorated with a rabbit and other mammals, as well as snakes. Comparable anthropomorphic statues and pillars are also mentioned in the discussion below.

There is no doubt that the carvings at Göbekli Tepe entailed significant expertise, investment of labour, and skill in stone sculpting. Yet there appears to be a deliberate ambiguity in many of the carvings. For instance, the pillars themselves can be seen as anthropomorphic and human-like. Many of the large monoliths at Göbekli Tepe have arms carved across their stone bodies, with hands depicted



Fig. 4.13. Carved animal, Göbekli Tepe (Klaus Schmidt, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut).

at their waists (fig. 4.11 and 4.12), ‘representing stylized humans’ (Schmidt 2011: 921). These are reminiscent of comparable statues discovered at Nevalı Çori (Hauptmann 1999) and a statue now on display in the Urfa museum, excavated from the vicinity of the city (Çelik 2000a: 4). In addition to the monumental pillars from Göbekli and Nevalı Çori, a smaller example has been recovered from Gaziantep in Anatolia which is around 59 cm tall, although the legs are missing, and it bears arms comparable to its larger counterparts; intriguingly, this has two faces back-to-back, although they were not created at the same time, with the second face added at a later date (Çelik 2005: 28).

The discovery of the arms on the pillars at Göbekli supports their anthropomorphic interpretation. The placement of the arms suggests that the T-shaped top of the pillar represents a head, and on some examples, such as that from Kilisik in Anatolia (Verhoeven 2001: fig. 9; Hauptman 2000), a nose can be seen on the front of the head. The monuments show the merging of body and stone in ambiguous creations. If we choose to think of these stones as ancestors, we can see that they had undergone a transition, from quarried stone to upright person. If they are indicative of people, then representations of significant persons were created here. Yet there is an undeniable

ambiguity between categories of person and stone at Göbekli. Had the sculptors intended to create realistic representations, they clearly had the ability to do so (see fig. 4.13), yet a choice was made to keep these 'beings' ambiguous, with the merging of human form and stone. Perhaps the pillars represent a more amorphous category of 'ancestors'. The stones can also be viewed as bestowed with agency through the acts of their creation.

It is not only human bodies that are represented in this way; animal legs, recreated in the same way as the arms depicted on the pillars at Nevalı Çori and Göbekli, have also been found on a stone pillar at Karahan Tepe (Çelik 2000b: 7). The recent find of a 'totem-like' stone pillar from Göbekli (Köksal-Schmidt and Schmidt 2010) demonstrates the merging of humans and animals; the pillar combines the head of a large animal (bear, lion, or leopard, although with the face broken in antiquity), with human-like limbs, comparable to those seen on the T-shaped pillars at Nevalı Çori and the Göbekli. The limbs hold a human head, with the upper body, arms, and hands present, and the arms rest above what is either a depiction of a birth or a phallus. There are also snakes present on the pole (Köksal-Schmidt and Schmidt 2010). The object is comparable to an example from Nevalı Çori, which incorporates human and bird figures (Hauptmann 1991/92, 1993). These objects not only merge categories of person and stone, but humans and animals are also intermingled; Schmidt likens the images to mythological representations of hybrid beings and Chimera (Köksal-Schmidt and Schmidt 2010), mythical ancestors, or other-worldly beings (Schmidt 2011: 930).

Stone: qualities and use

The qualities of stone should also be considered here; for example, stone is often thought to represent immobility, permanence, and mass (see Robb 2009 for a comparable discussion of European Stele). Stone, it has been argued, provokes a link between the substance and ancestors, recalling notions of permanence and presence. This is a subject that has been explored by Parker Pearson and Ramilisonina (1998) in relation to Stonehenge in the UK, drawing on Madagascan views of stone, with the properties of stone, its strength and enduring nature likened to features of ancestral symbolism. Mountains are frequently perceived as housing spirits and ancestors, with mountainous rock strengthening a tie with ancestral imagery through

its source (i.e. Taçon 1991, 2004), and the significance of a source frequently influencing choices of raw materials (i.e. Brumm 2010).

To many, stone is perceived as cold and hard; however, the sensory and haptic nature of stone is also relevant: stone both absorbs heat and is cold at low temperatures, with both sensations felt when the stone is touched (Thomas 2004: 206). In addition, the roughness or smoothness of the surface can be felt, which itself changes through natural exposure as well as by polishing and abrading (a topic discussed with relation to stone axes in Cooney 2002: 95; and carved stone balls in MacGregor 1999). The properties of stone and skin might be compared: both are able to absorb and conduct temperature; touching stone or skin can communicate heat or cold, and the marking of the surface of the 'skin' of the stone may echo practices of body decoration (Croucher et al, in prep.). Seen in this light, distancing our own culturally constructed views about the 'nature' of stone, the creation of beings out of this substance seems more credible.

The images themselves when viewed by flickering torchlight may have appeared animated and been considered alive too. The appearance of the images would also change according to the time the day, whether in shade or sunlight. Rather than considering stone to be inanimate, changes in light and temperature suggest that it could be perceived as dynamic, in a changing state, rather than in a constant one. Acts of carving may have been thought to give form to something that was already believed to be within the stone, a topic often debated in relation to rock art or the making of stone tools (Cooney 2002: 95; Borić 2007: 98). Just as people grow, so aspects of the environment can also be considered to be alive; the Irian Jaya of New Guinea believe that stone boulders grow and that their raw materials are living and have intentionality (Stout 2002: 704; Coward and Gamble 2010).

The processes of production could themselves have been seen as necessary for acquiring ancestral benevolence. With stone-working, 'the skill required to work stone is not simply a property of the isolated individual, but resides in a complex of social relations with the living and the dead'; it is handed down by ancestors (Coward and Gamble 2010). Comparably, in Maori tradition, the weaving of fabrics is seen as a process that brings the ancestors into the presence of the living (Henare 2005). Whilst clearly we cannot compare ancient Anatolia with Maori traditions, at Göbekli it appears that the processes of production held greater significance than the final product;

the stone was brought to life, embodied, through the processes of making. The notion of capturing sound through the process of striking a surface is seen as significant in tattooing, where the temporary openings made in the skin during the process capture chants, protective spells, and incorporate clan and lineage records and narratives (Gell 1993: 57; Kaeppler 1989: 168). The processes of inscribing the body and the land are linked through the methodology of striking and altering their surfaces, the incorporation of sounds and chants, the visual alteration of the surface, as well as their tactile properties.

That these images were perhaps not as important as their creation—or at least access and viewing were not—is also suggested by the totem-like pillar described above, which was recovered from its location embedded in a wall at Göbekli Tepe (Köksal-Schmidt and Schmidt 2010), a situation comparable to that at Nevalı Çori. The figures carved on the pillars may have been restricted from view; many were built into walls or built so close to them that movement around them or viewing would have been hindered. It may be the case that the intended viewer was not always the human, as they may have been created for the benefit of a deity, force, or an aspect of the cosmos. Whatever the case, contexts of display were not the main motivation for many of the images once they had been completed, and production may have been of greater importance than the final completed image.

Göbekli monuments were not just visual markers but were also components of a sensory landscape. The processes of quarrying, transporting, and erecting the stones would have created an audible landscape; during production, the striking of rock would have been heard from some distance, contributing to the soundscape (a topic discussed with relation to rock art by Ouzman 2001; Rainbird 2002).

As well as the monumentality involved in the construction of Göbekli, the closure of the monuments would have been significant and labour-intensive events, although it is usually the means of construction that receives greater attention in archaeological interpretations. The shrine areas were filled in with an estimated 300–500 m³ of debris, which, significantly, consisted of settlement debris rather than sterile soil (Schmidt 2003: 7). The accumulation of debris would have required effort, planning, and community involvement, as would the acts of deposition involved. Perhaps a scenario existed whereby the shrine areas were constructed and used for a short period of time, after which, the settlement debris that had accumulated was used

to fill in the structures. If this was not the case, then given the lack of available settlement debris so far identified at Göbekli, significant transportation of the infill material would have been required. Whatever the case, the closure of these monuments was in itself a significant event, requiring a large number of people, and also potentially forming an integral aspect of the performance and events surrounding Göbekli.

Comparably, the destruction of the Skull Building at Çayönü Tepesi would likewise have been a significant event, affecting and structuring the immediate lives of those around it. The building was burnt down before being buried beneath a thick layer of pebbles (Özdoğan 1999: 51), acts requiring a significant amount of motivation, organization, labour, and resources. The burning of architecture after abandonment is a subject that has been discussed in relation to later 'Halaf' sites, including Sabi Abyad's burnt village, and Tell Arpachiyah (Campbell 2000: 72; Verhoeven 2000: 77). The destruction of a building through burning would have been highly visible, certainly observable, seen and smelt from many miles away. The burning of a building in this way would have been a communicative act, sending out clear messages to inhabitants of the surrounding area of the final 'death' of the building. This event itself reinforces the importance of the building being destroyed. It would have been an emotive and impressive event, with the building's closure in this manner providing a public focus for the negotiation and structuring of relationships among inhabitants. The role of performance is repeatedly suggested in the evidence relating to the creation of these sites, their use, as well as their destruction. These would have been events that shaped the lives of participants, creating memories, networks, and ties between people, the dead, and often animals and things.

DISCUSSION: PERFORMANCE, MEMORY, AND ANCESTORS

This chapter has discussed the phenomenon of plastered skulls, as well as plastered statues, masks, and the large anthropomorphic pillars. This brings together a variety of media involving different processes, methods, and meanings. However, particular themes are suggested by

the evidence, in particular the roles that display and performance take, and also the links between the living and their networks, including the dead, material culture, and animals. In addition, the performative roles of these as artefacts today will be considered as this chapter draws to its conclusion.

Performance and display

The role of display is clearly emphasized with many of the plastered skulls. While some apparently were intentionally buried, they frequently showed signs of wear and damage, indicating their active use prior to burial. This is demonstrated at Tell Aswad, 'Ain Ghazal and Yiftahel, for instance, and in the later skulls from Köşk Höyük and Çatalhöyük. Other skulls were left in their original locations of display, such as at Köşk Höyük and some of those at 'Ain Ghazal. Some of the plastered skulls from 'Ain Ghazal and Tell Aswad had bases created out of clay, which enabled them to be displayed in an upright position, as did examples from Köşk Höyük (Özbek 2008) with clay bases and others with modelled plaster bases (Özbek 2005), and a group of five plastered skulls that had been placed on a mud pedestal (Özbek 2005). Whether the plastered skulls were permanently on display or were used only during particular occasions is unclear; however, it is evident that these skulls were actively used, curated, and displayed rather than being kept in a pristine state.

The evidence from Tell Ramad adds a further dimension to the possibilities for display, where a cache of 23 plastered statues with flat-topped, headless necks are thought to have been used to support the plastered skulls that were recovered with them (De Contenson 1971; Bienert 1991; Garfinkel 1994). The plastered statues with slim profiles from Jericho and 'Ain Ghazal were constructed to be viewed face-on, and in the case of 'Ain Ghazal, their preserved feet show that they were flat to support the upright display of the statues. Although not as well preserved, comparable purposes could be proposed for finds of plastered statues and torsos at Nahal Hemar, 'Ain Ghazal, and other locations discussed above. There appears to be a strong association between the plastered skulls, plastered statues, and the role of display and performance, and the performative qualities of

masks can be considered in this context too, used for display before their deposition in the cave at Nahal Hemar.

There is evidence of a repeated pattern of use and damage prior to deposition, seen in the plastered skulls, statues and masks, suggesting that they were not simply hidden away, but were actively used, at least on occasion. Similarly, the performative aspects of the monumental pillars at Göbekli speak of display and performance, although these qualities seemed to focus on construction rather than a final, 'finished' outcome, with carvings embedded into the walls of the enclosures, hiding or at least partially hiding them from view.

Performance can be a key component in creating and maintaining identities, whether individual or communal daily practices of everyday life (Bourdieu 1977) or repeated but occasional events, acts of performance embed and communicate messages about identity. The performances of plastering and using skulls reinforces relationships between the living and deceased ancestors, as well as renegotiating the positions and relationships of the living in society. In the long term, performance can communicate knowledge through generations of inhabitants, by the repeated acts that take place, including mortuary practices. Turner argues that such actions often work as mnemonic devices, storing 'information about the major structural values of a culture' (Turner 1968: 2, 5). These acts do not need to be understood on a mnemonic or an individual level but on a societal and communal one, with such actions providing structure for society, negotiating relationships between the living and the dead and between other living members of the community (Schechner and Appel 1990; Turner 1968).

The performances involved in retrieving and plastering skulls and creating the monoliths would have created and embedded memories for the individuals involved, and played a role in structuring identities, both individual and communal. Thus the aspects of display and performance witnessed here suggest mnemonic events that were not only significant in the lifetimes of participants, but reached beyond individual life cycles, creating and supported by collective social memory through time.

Links with the dead

The skulls were in some way still a part of the lives of the living, used either on a routine basis, or probably only on occasion, as events

dictated. Whatever status the owners of the skulls held during their lives, their remains were significant after death, actively manipulated through the plastering and decoration applied, and included in the life events of living members of the community. Such activity reveals as much about attitudes to the dead as it does attitudes regarding hierarchy and status, contributing to an understanding of the roles the dead played in the lives of the living. The dead were actively changed; plastered and painted, often on multiple occasions; and they were kept, displayed, looked at, and handled. They are not simply windows onto social organization but demonstrate that concepts of 'being dead' did not involve the permanent removal of parts of the body from society. Death did not mark the end of the body's engagement with the living world, but rather marked a new phase of activity and interaction with the living.

Burial beneath the floor in houses reveals that the deceased were kept close to the living, even if they were not visible. This suggests some desire to keep the dead within the household; they may have been considered active members of the household beyond death, perhaps seen to influence decisions, and play an active role in the events and consequences of the living. Then again, the motivation behind this practice may have been one of memorialization—remembering the dead—rather than perceiving the deceased as taking an active role or agency in life; it might also relate to a belief about the world outside the household: perhaps it was considered inappropriate for the dead or perhaps the dead were perceived as unsuitable for the exterior world. Returning to the bodies of the deceased is evidence of the intervention of the living in the processes concerning the dead; the dead were not simply left, but were physically returned to. It is feasible that several visits may have been required before the skull or cranium was finally removed; this was certainly the case at the later site of Domuztepe, where prior to the removal and replacement of a femur, a grave had been dug into on several occasions. However, at Domuztepe, there appeared to be a much more active engagement with the bodies through processing, defleshing, and, possibly, consumption of the deceased. Likewise at Kfar HaHoresh, the evidence suggests the handling of fresher or at least articulated body parts of both humans and animals.

There is a difference in the treatment of corpses that had been buried and returned to at a later date, and those that had been subject to direct post-mortem manipulation of the body, including cutting,

defleshing, and disarticulation. Chapter 6 will return to this topic. The fleshed head undoubtedly provokes different reactions and feelings to that of the dry-bone skull (see Croucher and Campbell 2009). Both the features and the flesh of the fleshed decapitated head are a reminder of the person the head belonged to, whereas for defleshed skulls and crania, a more ambiguous identity is inherent in the skull. The recreating of a new 'flesh' through the addition of painting and plastering, however, creates or recreates a face, a recognizable feature that 'humanizes' the bones, returning skulls to 'life'.

Decapitation leaves behind the remainder of the body, which is retained in primary locations beneath the floor in houses, and consequently it remains in close proximity to living members of the household although out of sight and immediate contact. The practice also suggests some kind of marking or means of remembering the location of the skull, which would also have served as a reminder of the person buried, and the death and burial they had received. Whilst archaeological interpretations usually focus on the skulls, the headless skeletons receive little comparative attention by archaeologists. There is not usually a direct observable correlation between the headless skeletons and the skulls (although this may be due to under-investigation in some cases), and whilst skeletons receive less attention, they also carry messages about identities and behaviours towards the dead. Chapter 2 discusses numerous sites where headless bodies have been excavated, and in many cases, they were left undisturbed once the skull or cranium had been removed. In other cases, the body was disturbed, and in some examples different parts of the body were either removed or manipulated, such as at Jericho and Domuztepe, where leg bones had been replaced the incorrect way round. Often, the body was covered back over, especially when it lay beneath the floor of a house, suggesting that the body remained meaningful and in close proximity to the living, although not in active use, in contrast to skulls. In other examples, the remains of the longer-deceased were pushed aside for newer interments, such as at Ba'ja and Dja'de, suggesting that the fresh interments were the primary concern. One of the most prominent examples where the remainder of the body has been revealed archaeologically is at Jerf el-Ahmar, where a splayed, headless female takes prone position in the destruction of a communal building (fig. 6.8); yet the body remains in this setting while the skull was later removed. Links between the living and the dead are enhanced through the performances of skull removal and treatment,

creating and evoking social memory through interactions within the mortuary domain.

Differences between and variety of practices

While some burials were decapitated, many others were left intact. Most of the population were treated in other ways, however, disposed of in a manner that so far has revealed little archaeological trace to be detected. The skulls or crania, once recovered, were treated in a range of ways including plastering and/or painting (see Goren et al 2001 for technical differences). Choices were made about the level of decoration and treatment afforded the skulls, with differential modelling, and a variety of painted and washed colours used, as well as 'cosmetic features', bitumen eyes, or simply plainer plastering. There was not a common method of treating skulls, but a variety and range of practices that included the type of plaster used, whether lime, gypsum, or mud, requiring different methods of production. Furthermore, we know that in some cases the plaster was removed from skulls. It may be feasible that some skulls that appear to not have been plastered had been plastered previously and the layers removed. The plastered face, without the skull, was also considered important, with delicate handling and careful reburial demonstrated. The motivation for removing the plaster is unknown; it is possible that the skulls were no longer considered appropriate for the treatment, or that removing plaster was a method of negating their identity, removing whatever identity had been given to the skulls by plastering. Perhaps we are witnessing a process of making them 'ordinary' again; a reversal of their interim status. Or for some, they may have been replastered. The varied condition of the skulls demonstrates that not all of them were used or curated in the same manner; some were handled for longer periods of time, or had been exposed to less careful curation, and different lengths of time would have elapsed before deposition. Even the inclusion or exclusion of the mandible is a significant factor in the final outcome of the plastered skull and in the use or retention of body parts.

Many skulls, both plastered and un-plastered, had been reburied and deposited in a specific and careful manner, such as those from Jericho (Kurth and Röhrer-Ertl 1981: 436), Kfar HaHoresh (Goring-Morris 2000) and Nahal Hemar (Arensburg and Hershkovitz 1988b;

Bar-Yosef and Alon 1988), in contrast to others, such as further examples from Jericho, recovered from trash deposits (Kenyon 1981: 77, pls 50–9; Moorey 2001: 31). Whatever their treatment initially, for some skulls, their significance may not have been permanent, and some, such as examples from 'Ain Ghazal, were left at the original location of display where there is evidence that one skull fell to the floor in a house where it had been left. Strouhal (1973: 231) also describes the plastered skulls as 'originally placed at some important spot in the house', where, after the house had been destroyed, they remained in the ruins. The location of the reburial of skulls also varies from trash deposits, residences, and courtyards, to a cave context at Nahal Hemar. Kuijt (2000d: 95) notes that at 'Ain Ghazal, burials of skulls focus around the residence, both in interior and exterior areas. However, whilst these locations may be spatially close to the house, there may have been a strong conceptual difference between the two foci of interment: one set buried within the internal, private boundaries of the structure, others in external courtyard areas, likely to be places affording greater access and movement than within houses, and feasibly entailing a more open and accessible focus of the interment.

The point at which a skull was reburied represents a change in the skull's curation: was the intention to take the skull back out of use; had it undergone a second 'death'? The importance of individual skulls may have changed or circumstances may have prescribed these actions; if the intention had been to use the skull for a particular event or purpose there may have been a limited period of use, or they may have been replaced by newer plastered skulls or circumstances may simply not have warranted the need for a skull to be used. It is possible that many of the plastered skulls had been buried with the intention of later exhumation, or even de-plastering, in a process akin to the initial removal of the flesh. There may have been a conceptual comparison between the removal of the flesh and the removal of plaster. This whole process has implications in terms of identity, or negation of identity, where replastering events may have played a role in the removal of or reinforcing of identities as multiple layers of plaster were applied. Whatever the reason, plastering was not a permanent feature in all cases; it may have been applied to skulls for a specific event or performance or been applied before the skull was to be used at a particular time. It seems that the role skulls took was not permanent but transitory, with transformations of identity

and status taking place through treatment of them. There were several stages in the 'life cycle' of skulls, from interment and retrieval, plastering and/or decoration, before removal of the plaster and final reinterment, with perhaps other episodes of burial or disuse in between.

Whilst a general pattern can be observed in the location of the dead, it is apparent that a range of different ways of dealing with the dead was practised, with choices over whether the skull should be removed, and decisions about its further treatment, display, and later reburial. Activities were not uniform but rather a variety of different individual events contributed to the bigger picture of skull treatment. Particular treatments may have related to roles during life, or individuals may have been chosen at birth for their paths during life (and death), a proposition supported by the practice of artificial cranial modification and the selection of these skulls for later post-mortem treatment. We may be witnessing a variety of episodes and practices that were carried out at certain times according to certain situations. There may have been a range of options available at particular times: for example, choices would have been made as to whether the skull should be recovered or not; a further decision would have been taken to plaster it, then decorate it or not, or replaster it; then whether to display, bury, or circulate it; whether to then remove the plaster or not, and so on. A predetermined path or steps in the process may not have existed, rather the actions could have been down to a dynamic set of choices and actions, dependent on context and situation. It could also be that particular identities were not permanent, but transitory, with transformations of identity and status taking place through the treatment, and re-treatment, of the skulls.

There is a mergence of substance and bodies in the plastering of skulls, a process that involved skill, aptitude, and knowledge, including an understanding of the technologies associated with the use of plaster. A comparable mergence of substance and bodies can be argued for Göbekli where bodies were created out of stone, and while not actually incorporating the living body, the stone may have been considered alive or an embodiment of life at least for particular occasions; comparably, they too were buried when their period of use came to an end. Both plaster and stone require manipulation through very different types of technologies: knowledge of plaster production and application and the quarrying and sculpting of stone. In both cases considerable knowledge, skill, and expertise were required to create these objects, and whilst these may seem to us to be very

different practices, their crafting and creation may not be so dissimilar especially if through the creation of plastered and stone skulls and bodies concepts of ancestors were evoked.

Skulls and other objects through time

The interconnectedness of the materials discussed above is apparent, with plastered skulls, statues, and masks forming a common theme across the Levant, and earlier carvings at Göbekli seen as part of a network of comparable sites in Anatolia, with recent discoveries confirming that such sites were not created in isolation. These form common interpretative threads through ancestors, symbolism, and display (as argued by Stordeur 2010). It is evident that these events were manipulated and experienced differently, rather than being part of a single entity, and that they were components of a more complex web of connections. Rather than trying to find an origin to these patterns of behaviour, Foucault's (1971) 'genealogies of practice' seem more appropriate here, an approach that follows the ebbs and flows of practices and discourses, without the search for origins. Traces of practices can be examined without tying them into a linear developmental structure or returning to the common theme of the development of social stratification.

While there is a commonality of practice, there were no doubt differences in meaning and context; the variations in skull treatment, alone, tell us this much. Rather than suggesting that one belief system or several systems were in place (as suggested by Kuijt and Goring-Morris 2002: 420, who discuss the 'intensity and stability of the belief system(s) in operation'), there are many variables in practice; beliefs were understood in different ways and the diverse range of practices reflects this. Rather than a rigid system (or systems) of belief, there are comparable trends such as display, relationships between the living and the dead, and an interconnectedness with animals and the environment. Thus we can study differences as well as similarities, both geographically and through time. Time is a further consideration in interpretations of MPPNB ritual, introducing memory to the discussion, whether individual or social.

Kuijt discusses individual memory in relation to skull treatment, asserting that individual identities are replaced by communal ones from the point of death over time. Skulls, Kuijt argues, are at first used

as a means to remember particular individuals who then fade from individual memory, at which point, individual identity is relinquished. Whilst Kuijt's approach is welcomed for moving beyond discussions of social organization, he makes several assumptions based on modern experience in his interpretations. For instance, he uses modern analogies of memory of the deceased to introduce a model for understanding the plastered skulls, stating 'after two or perhaps three generations, the memory of individuals becomes depersonalized and abstract. Rather than being conceptualized as known individuals, the dead are merged in an ancestral memory that is anonymous, homogenized, and collective' (2008a: 174). Yet this approach is questionable, as our own experiences of memory may not be especially relevant when considering plastered skulls, not least in as much as modern-day approaches to mortuary practices differ vastly from those of the material we are studying. Furthermore, whilst we may not retain memories of dead relatives beyond a few generations, this is not a universal situation, and there are many examples of communities which do hold a much longer trajectory of remembrance of the deceased. Although Kuijt (2008a: 175) argues that 'over time, however, memory is based on reference to the deceased, and being deceased is characterized as being remote and anonymous', given that frequently the skulls were kept and displayed in households where the deceased were often buried beneath the floor of the living, Kuijt is perhaps assuming notions of memory based on modern Western experiences of distance from the corpse and bodily remains. Given the physical and present reminders of the deceased in the PPNB it seems feasible that were it desired to retain memories of particular persons over a long time span this would have been possible. Whilst the dead might not have been personally known through life by new generations, their identity and relevance may still have been 'remembered' as knowledge was passed down to future generations.

Issues of memory discussed by Kuijt relate to the relatively short term; however, the consideration of long-term social memory is also a factor in this debate. The later occurrence of the plastered skulls during the Pottery Neolithic is intriguing. The practice may have developed independently. It is also feasible that we are seeing evidence of a long-term social memory, recalling events that happened much earlier in time. Perhaps our situation is a result of a lack of evidence; in reality, we only have a small amount of data with which to attempt to piece together how people lived throughout many

millennia and across vast geographical spans. A greater number of excavated sites may demonstrate that what we are seeing are rarer, more isolated incidences, or perhaps it will reinforce that there were similarities and reoccurrences of comparable practices, suggesting that social memory and communication extend far beyond individual generations and communities.

Perhaps at some sites particular treatments of the dead were only relevant periodically, beyond the scope of individual lifetimes with social memory dictating their occurrence, dependent on circumstance. Memory can be passed down through generations, with even the notion of individual memory argued to be redundant in a memorial web which relies on shared concepts of objects, places, events, and experiences to be created or recalled (Connerton 1989, discussing the work of the social theorist Maurice Halbwachs). Even today, not every member of society may have lived through an event such as a coronation, the end of a war, a massacre, or an untimely royal death, yet social memory is sufficient that society and its people know how to act when such events occur, even if such rituals have not been practised within the living memory of many individuals.

THE SKULLS TODAY

The above discussion has focused on potential meanings behind the skulls in the past, but it is also worth considering the role plastered skulls play today in modern archaeological contexts of interpretation and display. Plastered skulls are displayed in many museums worldwide, which while we can appreciate that this context is far removed from the original intention, concepts of display are still relevant. However, the 'artefacts' are rarely handled, except by experts, and their display communicates modern relationships with the past, rather than relationships between the living and the dead.

Items such as plastered skulls often exist as a category that is neither wholly person nor object. For many archaeologists, they may be objectified, treated as artefacts and sources of scientific knowledge, and yet, there is still a sense of awe and respect in the way the skulls are treated. Stordeur has described the excavations at Aswad, where the excavation of the skulls was a highly emotive experience; comparable experiences are retold by excavators at other sites (Kay

Prag pers. comm. discussing Jericho excavations). We are drawn toward faces, and these are, literally, 'faces from the past'. Viewing the plastered skulls often inspires wonder, and for some, a sense of a shared humanity.

Through excavation and the processes that follow, the skulls enter a new sphere of existence within modernity. Although separated by millennia, one common link is a desire to display the plastered skulls, whether physically or through photographs. Even during study they are often displayed, or at least they have been in the past; perhaps today preservation regulations may prevent this in many museums and laboratories, but for example, discussion concerning the analysis and conservation of a plastered skull from 'Ain Ghazal describes how it was displayed on a shelf in the laboratory (Griffin et al 2001).

In displays aimed at the public, the skulls in many museums attract significant audiences, and even when the skulls themselves are not actually on display, audiences appreciate the photographs that are published and circulated. Yet these modern displays are undoubtedly far removed from the original expectations of their owners/modifiers, raising the issue that is often repeated concerning the ethical treatment of human remains. With the plastered skulls it is clear that some level of display was intended and certainly facilitated by the addition of bases to the skulls, yet we do not know the context or audience for those displays. The antiquity of the skulls, together with the perceived lack of direct ancestry, means that it is unlikely a great deal of objection would result from their display; however, the display of human remains without consent is becoming increasingly contentious.

The material from which artefacts are made can play a role in modern-day expectations or acceptance of displays. Whereas human remains typically cause debate (and on occasion protest), other types of artefact elicit much less controversy; and not without reason. It is far easier to justify the display of stone or pottery, for instance, than it is to justify the display of human bone. Yet, in reality, stone or pottery artefacts may have been just as significant in the past as human remains, perhaps even akin to deities or ancestors themselves, as the stone pillars from Göbekli suggest. Our present categories relating to material may not have been significant in the past when concepts of ancestors may have been as deeply entwined with the stone and plaster as they were with human or animal bone. The categorization of human and object will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 6,

where greater consideration will also be given to the roles of animals as ancestors, thus conflating further our categories of interpretation.

This chapter has discussed the roles of plastered skulls, plaster statues, and anthropomorphic stone pillars. It has shown that insights can be gained from these categories of evidence, reaching beyond the search for status and hierarchy in the past, yet complementing traditional interpretations of the evidence. The role of the dead in the lives of the living is elucidated, even if such further relationships were not permanent; the monumental carvings at Göbekli—like the plastered skulls, plaster statues, and masks—were not intended to remain perpetually on view, but were temporarily displayed before being hidden away from both maker and viewer. By thinking beyond our categories of person and object, it becomes clear that our lenses for interpretation are limited by our perceptions. The evidence hints at the importance of the non-human—seen in the pillars, plastered statues, and figurines—a topic that will be addressed, along with human–animal relationships, in chapter 6. During this period what is becoming clearer is that relationships with the dead were heightened by incorporation into households, and agency was perceived through the embodiment of inanimate persons and objects, even if only temporarily. The dead, along with new technologies of clay and lime plaster, were physically manipulated, just as new material worlds were created, explored, and performed to leave tangible traces in the archaeological record, offering insights into this transformative period of human experience. Ultimately, perhaps what we see is the desire in the period for the living to make the dead accessible, recreated and resurrected through the plastering of skulls, and the curation of the dead close to their living kin.

Gender in the Neolithic Near East

INTRODUCTION: GENDER IN ARCHAEOLOGY

The study of gender and sexuality is an area of archaeological research which has developed since the late 1980s under the general approaches of post-processualism and interpretative archaeologies. During the early 1990s, archaeologists began to question some of the assumptions made about gendered identities in the past, recognizing that women and the roles they played were usually overlooked in archaeological interpretation. Previously, gender and sexuality were understood to have been governed by universal natural laws and, therefore, were considered unnecessary and problematic to study.

Often, the notion of gender is itself assumed to be straightforward; gender can be defined, although problematically, as ‘the cultural interpretation of sexual difference’ (Gilchrist 1999: 1), with gender categories mapped on to biological sex. Most of us live in societies that comprehend two genders and sexes: categories of male and female. Yet to really begin to understand gender and biological sex, these categories need to be critically analysed. It has been accepted for some time that gender is socially and culturally constructed; a topic Judith Butler broaches in *Bodies that Matter* (1993). Butler discussed how behaviours and gendered identities are learnt through life, and how they are embedded through action and performance. Furthermore, ethnographic research revealed that in many cultures there were different understandings of the male/female binary oppositions, with ‘third-gender’ categories, as well as different understandings of personhood, entailing incorporation of differently gendered parts as components of the body and identity. One of the most quoted examples is Marilyn Strathern’s *Gender of the Gift* (1988) which

discussed gender in Melanesia. Here, a person's identity was a construction of different components and substances dependent on interchanges with others. So a person's identity was relational, and included gendered attributes of both males and females within one body.

Similarly, while it is accepted that gender is socially constructed, biological sex, it can be argued, is also a social construct. Biological sex is often regarded in Western society to be a straightforward dichotomy between male and female. However, there are different ways of categorizing sex, whether through chromosomes, reproductive organs, or DNA, and it is apparent that there are bodies that do not fall neatly into the category of either male or female, and may even fall into a third-gender category. Whilst concepts such as third-genders and relational gendered identities cannot be transposed onto the past, they demonstrate that there are experiences of gender other than our binary male/female view. If we take this difference as a starting point—one that has taken many decades to arrive at—new interpretations of the past are enabled. We will return to the problematic issue of gendered identities following discussion of the history of the study of gender and sexuality in archaeology, including family and labour roles, and the implications of research into gender and sexuality for Near Eastern archaeology. Alongside burial data, this chapter considers figurines and anthropomorphic representations from the Neolithic Near East to provide insights into constructions of gendered identities.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND GENDER STUDIES: A BRIEF HISTORY

The feminist movement of the 1960s and 70s had a lasting impact on our approaches to the arts and humanities. However, it was not until the 1980s that the topic of gender began to be discussed and critiqued seriously in archaeological research. Until this time, discussions of gender in the past had been isolated from mainstream archaeological studies. More specifically, it was argued, there was an absence of women in our interpretations of the past, and when they were mentioned, they were automatically attributed subservient and

stereotyped roles. This was partly due to the assumption that gender roles, sexual behaviour, and the family were understood to be subject to universal laws of behaviour; the roles of men and women in the past, therefore, were deemed to be 'natural' and not worthy of additional study. Furthermore, changes and developments in society were understood to result from climatic, environmental, or other external influencing factors that could be empirically tested. Gender, regarded as difficult to test and measure, was relegated due to a lack of perceived importance and its 'untestability' (Thomas 2000b: 3; Wylie 1992). So there was a twofold motivation behind the lack of credible study on gender and sexuality in archaeology: the difficulty in empirically studying gender in the past and an acceptance that universal natural laws of behaviour dictated male and female roles and relationships.

As discussed in chapter 3, the development of post-processual archaeology began to challenge approaches to the past that had assumed such universal laws of behaviour, while also fostering a growing acknowledgement of the role of the individual. It encouraged the discipline to be more self-reflexive in its practices. Thus the dominant narratives, which previously had relegated women in the past to roles that were not recognized, began to be addressed. Simultaneously, the epistemological position of female archaeologists and scholars in the present became an issue for investigation. In 1984, Conkey and Spector wrote 'Archaeology and the Study of Gender', recognizing the absence of gender as a category of study in archaeological research, and specifically, that the roles of women in the past were rarely acknowledged in archaeological interpretations. By 1988, Gero and Conkey had organized a conference, *Women and Production in Prehistory*, bringing together many of the scholars that were to become essential contributors to the development of gender studies in archaeology. The conference proceedings were published in *Engendering Archaeology: Women and Prehistory* (Gero and Conkey (eds.) 1991), which remains one of the most influential publications on the topic. This volume focused on prehistory, with the editors arguing that 'a primary purpose for undertaking a gendered archaeology is to identify or assert the presence and activities of women in prehistoric sites' (Conkey and Gero 1997: 415).

A second conference and publication followed in 1989 at Chacmool, *The Archaeology of Gender* (Walde and Willows (eds.) 1991), which broadened the study beyond prehistory. The momentum

continued with the publication of the 1991 Boone conference, *Exploring Gender through Archaeology* (Claassen (ed.) 1992; see Claassen's introductory chapter for a further synopsis of the development of Gender Archaeology), followed by a number of single-authored and edited volumes on the topic of gender and archaeology (e.g. Claassen and Joyce (eds.) 1997; Wright (ed.) 1996a; Gilchrist 1999; Sørensen 2000; Donald and Hurcombe (eds.) 2000; Pyburn 2004).

Women in the past

A criticism of many early studies of gender is that assumptions were made about gendered roles of the past according to modern ideals and values, or at least the values of the 1950s and onwards. Gender was naturalized in the interpretations presented: 'gender ideologies work to appear natural, pre-given and eternal. For example, it is the natural order of things that men head households; that women are responsible for childcare; and that women do not wage war. We find these naturalizations of gender relations made explicit in the material world' (Moore 2000 [1994]: 317).

A case study to illustrate the assumptions and stereotypes about male and female roles can be found in D. L. Clarke's re-analysis of the Iron Age site of Glastonbury in Somerset, England. Originally excavated by Bulleid and Gray between 1892 and 1907, Clarke (1972) reinterprets Glastonbury as being composed of modular units. Each unit contained thirteen or fourteen built forms, with the modular unit replicated six times throughout the site.

Clarke attached social interpretations onto this spatial model of the site; each of the modular units, he argued, housed a polygamous family, with multiple females (Clarke 1972: 847). Each unit contained a 'main house' that produced a full range of artefacts, each of which was assigned a gendered use. A range of activities and/or storage purposes was represented in the main house, such as bronze-smithing, carpentry, wool-combing, spinning and weaving, cooking, and food production. The highest ratios of fine-wares to undecorated pottery were found buried beneath the floor, where human bones were also found. This area was interpreted as a communal working area with the work of both sexes represented, although dominated by male activities, or as having possible storage uses. Each modular unit also contained a minor house that was half the size of the major

house, and represented only female activities, such as wool-combing, spinning, food production, leather, and fur-working. The buildings associated with the minor house were argued to have been bake-houses and food production areas. Artefacts found included amber, glass, shale beads and bracelets, and trinkets, seen as being female items, and lead and tin spindle whorls, bronze tweezers, and a large proportion of undecorated domestic ware. The infant burials found here were seen to reinforce the interpretation of a female area. No 'male' objects, such as furnaces, crucibles, or weapons, were found within the area of the minor house. Clarke assigns gender-specific uses to many of the buildings, such as bake-houses. These buildings had irregular clay floors and displayed a 'longitudinal array of hearths and ovens', where the females were 'gossiping pleasurably in the comfort of this warm and dry micro-environment' (Clarke 1972: 821). Aside from the criticisms that could be made of his picture of domestic life, if the evidence is analysed, there would seem to be only one house that fits this purpose where there were three hearths built side by side. On all the other mounds, the hearths were rebuilt on top of one another, and cannot therefore be contemporary (Coles and Minnitt 1995: 185).

Clarke's social interpretations may be criticized for their portrayal of stereotypes. However, our criticism of Clarke's view is in part a reflection of the society in which we live today, where equality is encouraged. Clarke will have been affected by his own experiences and political views. Childe (1940: 235) expressed a similar view when he described the 'Glastonbury housewife' working at the new rotary quern and using antler bobbins. At the time there would have been few problems with assuming these labour roles, even with little evidence to suggest what tasks were undertaken by which of the sexes, or whether labour was even divided according to gendered roles. Childe also mentions the possibilities of invasion at Glastonbury, which could also reflect the political climate of the 1940s.

There is an automatic assumption of male and female items, based on perceived labour roles and an image of village life. Whilst it may be the case that later excavations have revealed a relationship between artefacts and genders, this was not known to Clarke or Bulleid and Gray. There is the usual assignment of gendered artefacts in Iron Age graves, although some male graves do contain beads (although not necklaces), and both genders wore finger and toe rings. However, the correlation of artefacts with gendered bodies suggests that whilst tasks

may have been gendered, this was not straightforwardly mapped onto bodies according to osteologically identifiable males and females; gender may have been assigned to some bodies based on their skills and attributes rather than biological sex (Giles forthcoming).

During excavations in 1911, beautiful reconstruction drawings were produced by Amédée Forestier, and published in the *Illustrated London News*. These images portrayed a picture of life that reasserted an idealized view, including gender and family roles as well as class and social hierarchy, with depictions of elegant male warriors, men engaged in a dice game, or family gatherings. The images represent an Edwardian ideal, rather than depicting life at Glastonbury during the Iron Age (Phillips 2005). The dominant figure in the picture is a male hunter who has just returned home. He stands with his face illuminated by sunlight, while a standing female in fine clothing offers him a drink. Other female figures in the scene turn towards him, most are in submissive poses as they are crouched on the floor engaged in cooking or other chores, wearing less fine clothes, bathed in shadow rather than light, and undertaking menial tasks. Not only are gender roles portrayed, but also class distinctions, recreating an ideological image of family life familiar to readers in 1911 (Phillips 2005). There was a tradition of such depictions of gendered family life, which was also projected back into the Bronze Age (see Brück's critique of the assumption that particular artefacts belonged to males or females (2005: 152)).

Clarke describes the society of the Glastonbury dwellers as patriarchal and polygamous, 'with a single principal wife in addition to others of subordinate rank' (Clarke, 1972: 847). This was seen as economically beneficial, where 'many hands were required for weaving, milking, shepherding. . . .' Clarke supports his theories of Glastonbury by placing emphasis on Celtic texts, where it is documented that the tribes lived in extended family kin-groups, with the exchange of women between extended family units (Coles and Minnitt 1995: 181). Although this may be documented in Irish texts, Glastonbury is situated some distance away, in Southern Britain. If Clarke is assuming the inferiority of females in the Iron Age, which he backs up with the Irish Celtic texts, then perhaps more recent evidence could also be brought into the argument. The Iron Age burials at Wetwang Slack in Yorkshire, which most likely pre-date Glastonbury, show a 'high status' cart-burial of a female (Hill 2002). Given the evidence for 'elite'

females, it may be the case that social structures in Iron Age Britain were not as clear cut as Clarke's model suggests.

Further research on Glastonbury has revealed a different picture of life at the site from that portrayed by Clarke. Coles and Minnitt re-evaluated the original site data in 1995 and found many inaccuracies in Clarke's and others' interpretations, including problems with the chronology of the site, artefact distribution, and spatial analyses of features such as ovens and hearths. Such re-evaluation of the evidence is a crucial step towards providing a different narrative about the site, and provides a stronger case for the different roles and lifestyles than simply a criticism of Clark's attitudes, and the politics of the time. Whilst his gendered interpretations may be critiqued, Clark's views were not out of line for the time and can be placed in a tradition of such portrayals of the past. His interpretations might be criticized, but his archaeological research was groundbreaking, playing a significant role in the development of field archaeology, with his use of distribution and spatial analyses recognized as pioneering (Russell 1996: 34). It is only with more recent reflection that the discipline of archaeology has become increasingly aware of the biases in archaeological interpretations.

Androcentric interpretation, practice, and epistemology

The above has seen how, traditionally, gender has been portrayed in archaeology according to stereotypical models. A culmination of post-processual viewpoints which encouraged a self-reflection in archaeological practice, combined with feminism and the increasing equality of women, led to the growing recognition that the discipline was essentially an androcentric one: that is, one dominated by and focused on males in society, both in the past and in the present.

Not only were the roles of males in the past given prominence in archaeological interpretation, but those studying the past were predominantly male too. The epistemology of the discipline of archaeology is inherently biased, because male ideals dictate archaeological practice. Gero used the example of the study of Paleo-Indians in America, where most fieldwork was conducted by men, and revolved around the Folsom point, a projectile point usually found in association with large game. Little attention was paid to other tool types, or even alternative activities to hunting. In Gero's words, we see 'males

studying what ancient men might have done' (2000 [1993]: 311). With such narrow questions, the broader issues of food production and preparation were largely ignored (*ibid.*).

A gender hierarchy was reinforced, which understood male tasks to be more important than female roles and activities: for example, the importance of hunting over gathering (although the assumption that these are male and female roles is also flawed, as will be discussed below). Even if hunting were predominantly undertaken by males, we have no real indication that it would have been perceived as more important than gathering or other types of food production (Gero 2000 [1993]). On the contrary, gathered crops were essential staples on which the whole society depended. The stereotypes and assumptions about the roles of males and females were not only applied to European prehistory and Paleo-Indians in America, but were implemented to explain many different cultures, and continue to be present in some recent publications. For instance, women are identified as cooks and weavers in Aztec, Inca, and Mesopotamian civilizations, who subsequently lost control over their products under state rule (Scarre and Fagan 2003: 46–7, discussed by McCafferty 2009: 26). Assumptions about subservience have been made frequently. For instance, it is suggested that graves rich in grave goods of males in the Branc cemeteries reflect wealthy male individuals, elites, and leaders whose wealth was inherited; this is due to the large numbers of rich graves of males of all ages, including in infancy (with infant graves problematically sexed by grave goods). It was not decided whether female wealth was hereditary or ascribed since there were fewer female infant graves, suggesting that either wealth was hereditary and these females had a higher survival rate in infancy, or that wealth was attained. For the latter, it is suggested that they reflect women who married into wealthy families. The slightly lower numbers of rich male to female graves are also suggested to represent polygamy (Shennan 1975). It is notable that so much importance is placed on the sexing of infants; in reality, it is almost impossible to clearly identify the sex of infants (Schwartz 1993: 59). The sexing of skeletons in general can be problematic and not without biases (Weiss 1972).

There has been an underlying acceptance that female power and influence are won through marriage; a proposition so inherent, that for many, the suggestion of female leaders would require extra archaeological 'proof'. This is true of most aspects of life which contradict expected normative values; such assumptions relating specifically to

Near Eastern archaeology will be discussed later in this chapter and throughout the book.

This interpretation of female roles derived in part from a projection of modern expectations into the past. Indeed, the situation mirrored archaeological practice itself with the relegation of female archaeologists, where the division of labour deemed natural at the time, inherent within archaeology as a discipline. The discipline was predominantly the domain of males, usually white, middle or upper class: a self-perpetuating demographic when those deciding on recruitment and promotion remained in this category. Whilst there were female archaeologists and scholars, they usually took up archaeological specialisms, what Gero described as 'archaeological housework': laboratory work, analytic work, such as use-wear and micro-wear analyses (Gero 1994: 40), and more often than not, making coffee (Cant 2009: 80). This sort of analytic research, undertaken in the main by female archaeologists, was perceived of a lower status than fieldwork, the latter being high profile and attracting funding. Thus females were 'reaffirmed as secondary citizens', both in the past and in the present (Gero 2000 [1993]: 313).

The division of labour in archaeology appears to be difficult to break: results of a study of archaeological career aspirations among archaeology undergraduates in the UK suggests that twice as many females as males were interested in pursuing careers in finds-analysis and post-excavation work. The motivation for this is as yet unstudied, but may relate to role models and aspirations, leading to a culture of expected norms and career patterns. The picture is changing, however, and universities have a significant role to play in embedding the right message; the numbers of graduates wishing to pursue environmental archaeology is now fairly equally balanced between males and females, perhaps as a result of higher priority being given to environmental archaeology at field schools (Croucher et al 2008: 16). However, the issue does not simply lie with which genders perform what tasks, but with the perceived value of those tasks.

The role of women in archaeology remains a matter for concern; often fieldwork is still considered to be the male domain, a masculist practice, and a 'rite of passage' to archaeological acceptance (Cant 2009; Gero 1994; Croucher and Romer 2007). A recent review argued that women have been 'systematically excluded from fieldwork, due

to societal views about roles appropriate to females, and ideas about their abilities' (Cant 2009: 81). Such situations, whilst more subtle now, have not totally disappeared from the discipline (*ibid.*), and Aitchison and Edwards's (2008) *Profiling the Profession* research suggests that the profession of archaeology is still dominated by a male workforce. The role of women in both academia and the profession remains an ongoing concern, which Pope (2011) attributes in part to the fast-tracking of Cambridge male graduates into senior academic positions between the 1950s and 1980s, when the discipline of archaeology was rapidly expanding. Concerns among young academics today are perhaps evident through the need for groups such as British Women Archaeologists (BWA 2009) and Women in Heritage (WIH) organizations in the UK, which not only fight for equal rights for women, but more generally, for acceptance of the demands of parenthood in academic and professional archaeology. Females are also historically less likely to direct excavations. This has an immediate impact on funding and publications, as fieldwork directly drives both these aspects, with a consequent effect on promotion (Bolger 2008c).

The dominance of male research has been perpetuated through technological, social, and literary research practices, all of which were controlled by the male domain. Females were rarely awarded funding, their research was rarely cited, and so the status quo was perpetuated (Gero 2000 [1993]: 311–4). Recent analysis of publications about Near Eastern archaeology has revealed that this pattern is still repeated today (Bolger 2008c: 351). And a look at employment in academia demonstrates that whilst at many universities the majority of students are female, this demographic is not reflected in lecturing staff; the pyramid of female participation narrows even further when the ratio of male to female professors is analysed: currently a ratio of 10:1 male to female (based on Pope 2011: 81). This is a pattern reflected in the wider heritage industry, as a preliminary report in 2007 by City University, London and DEMOS indicates (Holden and McCarthy 2007), research which prompted wider investigation by the Cultural Leadership Programme (Dodd et al 2008). When the statistics for the Cultural Heritage Sector are analysed, it is revealed that whilst 52 per cent of the Cultural Heritage workforce are female (Dodd 2008: table 4), the percentages for executives are 62 per cent male and 38 per cent female (Dodd 2008: table 6). This figure does not seem so problematic until the sizes of companies with female executives are compared:

companies with an all-female executive body make up 82 per cent of those businesses employing 0–4 members of staff, with companies employing larger workforces dominated by male executives (Dodd 2008: table 8). Thus female executives, where they are present, are predominantly situated in smaller organisations. There is also a notable under-representation of women at CEO level in Statutory Funding Agencies, with just 31.6 per cent led by females and 68.4 per cent run by males (Holder and McCarthy 2007). The studies by Holden and McCarthy and by Dodd and her colleagues confirm that the gender imbalances seen in academia are comparable to those in the broader heritage sector.

Whilst the discipline of archaeology has traditionally been androcentric, the picture is gradually altering as the biases within the discipline are recognized and critiqued, challenging both the epistemological and interpretative fields of practice within archaeology. It should be noted that it is not females alone that are driving this change; many male archaeological practitioners and academics are striving towards a more equal environment, altering the narratives and interpretations of our archaeological data. As Wylie recognized in 1991, it is the socio-political and economic conditions under which archaeologists work that lead to the acceptance of assumptions about gender roles. In short, it is the conditions of archaeological research in the present that dictate interpretations of the past (Wylie 1991: 37).

Heteronormativity, sexual identities, and Queer theory

Whilst it can be argued that approaches from the early 1990s ‘add women and stir’, or as Barbara Voss terms it, perpetuate the ‘hide-and-seek game of find the women’ (2009: 29), this research was an essential step in recognizing the importance of women in archaeological interpretations (see also Conkey and Williams 1991: 126; Conkey and Gero 1997: 415). Accompanied by feminist approaches, the movement began to challenge the androcentric nature of interpretations and the epistemological paradigms that dominated research and funding. The socio-political implications of perpetuating current morals and values to understand the past were also gaining recognition. This extended beyond gender, to consider sexuality and heteronormativity in archaeological research.

As Gatens highlights, 'the body and its passions, reproduction, the family and the individual are often conceived as timeless and unvarying aspects of nature' (1992: 291), a critique that is echoed by Gero (1993), Dowson (2000 [1998]), and others, and a stance that can be seen in the Western world today, where the past is used to legitimize the present. Likewise, heterosexual reproductive sexual behaviour is often considered to fall within the correct 'natural order' of things, and as such is therefore unquestioningly assumed and projected onto the past, a situation which often leads archaeologists to make unconvincing arguments about the past (Yates 1993: 46). In his research of rock art, Guthrie (2005) discusses the misrepresentation of female genitalia by Leonardo da Vinci, which he believes is based on the artist's homosexuality and consequent lack of experience of the female anatomy. Yet when comparable 'mistakes' were made in European rock art, Guthrie argues that the images were drawn by boys, without considering—even if only to dismiss the possibility—that they were likewise stemming from homosexual rather than heterosexual experiences (Dowson 2009c). Other archaeologists have been more open in their interpretations. For instance, Yates discusses prehistoric rock art in Scandinavia, and puts forward sensible interpretations for images which are convincingly depicting male sexual interaction (Yates 1993).

A further example of the position of heteronormativity in archaeology is highlighted by Thomas Dowson, who discusses Greg Reeder's reinterpretation of the Egyptian Fifth-Dynasty tomb of Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep where two men are depicted in a pose usually used to portray married couples; they are traditionally described as being brothers or twins rather than recognizing their possible intimacy. Reeder has been shunned by many for pointing out this clear problem in the interpretation. If indeed the two are brothers, then their depiction as a couple must lead Egyptologists to question the interpretation of heterosexual marriage applied to other examples; either that, or recognize the possibility that the depiction is representative of a same-sex relationship (Dowson 2008). As ever in archaeology, the interpretation that differs from the normative requires extra layers of evidence, unlike interpretations that meet normative approval.

The heteronormative nature of archaeological interpretation is now frequently challenged. This has included the recognition of homosexuality in the past, many examples of which can be found in Schmidt and Voss (eds) (2000). Many communities differentiate

between productive and reproductive sex, rather than homo- or heterosexual practice, with non-productive sex often perceived as healthy, entertaining, and relationship-forging, rather than being viewed in a derogative manner (Roscoe 1998: 10). In historical Yucatec Mayan vocabularies, it is sexual actions rather than sexual identities that are labelled (Joyce 2000a: 278). That the category of 'homosexual' is a modern one is also discussed by Casella, who assesses the role that sexual behaviour played in power negotiations and gift exchanges in a mid-nineteenth-century female penitentiary in New South Wales (2000). If sexual behaviours and categorizations are modern ones, it is clear that archaeology can play a role in challenging the assumptions of heteronormativity in the present, including homophobia, a topic that will be revisited later in this chapter.

A significant change accompanying research in this area has been the adoption of Queer theory within archaeology during the 1990s. However, as both Voss (2009) and Dowson (2009c) caution, Queer theory is not simply about the search for homosexuality in the past or any other category of 'sexual deviancy', as defined by our modern perceptions. Whilst the search for sexual 'others' is valuable, Queer theory is about much more than this. Queer theory should not simply challenge homophobia through the search for homosexuals in the past, but rather it should challenge the 'heteronormativity of scientific practice' (Dowson 2000: 163). The term 'Queer' acquires its meaning from its oppositional relation to the norm; 'Queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers' (Dowson 2009b, referencing Halperin 1995: 62). Queer theory is a way of thinking about the past that challenges the normative, and is therefore not restricted to homosexuality, but rather is applicable to 'any one who feels their position (sexual, intellectual or cultural) to be marginalized' (Dowson 2009b).

Queer theory in archaeology has increased in credibility and impact over the last two decades. A volume of *World Archaeology* was dedicated to it in 2000 (Dowson (ed.) 2000a), followed by another edition in 2005 (Dowson (ed.) 2005). The international conference held at Chacmool in 2004 was one of the best-attended events in the conference series (McCafferty 2009: 1), with the conference resulting in the publication of *Que(e)rying Archaeology* (Tereny et al (eds) 2009). The conference of the same title was addressed by Thomas Dowson, Yvonne Marshall, Geoffrey McCafferty, and Barbara Voss

as plenary speakers, who contextualized Queer theory in archaeology, reflected on progressions made and the further avenues left to explore, and highlighted the socio-political context of Queer theory in archaeology (see Tereny et al (eds) 2009). Voss, in her paper, referred to the US elections taking place at the time, which saw the re-election to office of George W. Bush. The elections sparked debate in the United States over same-sex marriages, where the past was repeatedly used to argue for or against the constitutional amendment which would see marriage defined as a union between a man and a woman, thus disallowing same-sex marriages. An advisor to Bush had declared, in defence of a change to the amendment, that they could not allow activists to 'thumb their nose at 5000 years of human history' (Saunders 2004: B11, cited in Voss 2009), with Bush arguing that 'monogamous heterosexual marriage was one of the most fundamental, enduring institutions of our civilization' (State of the Union Address, 20 January 2004 in Voss 2009: 33). Needless to say, there was huge opposition to this stance, with the Executive Board of the American Anthropological Association releasing a statement that 'the results of more than a century of anthropological research on households, kinship relationships, and families, across cultures and through time, provide no support whatsoever for the view that either civilization or viable social orders depend upon marriage as an exclusively heterosexual institution' (Executive Board of the American Anthropological Association 2004 in Voss 2009: 33). As Voss concludes (2009: 34), 'for better or for worse, archaeological evidence and interpretations are being mobilized as discursive resources in debates on public policy and human rights for sexual minorities. As always, the future is being constructed through perceptions of the past, and we are contributing to that process through our research, whether we intend to or not.'

The need to be responsible in archaeological interrelations is echoed by Rosemary Joyce in *Ancient Bodies: Ancient Minds* (2008a), who urges archaeologists to use and communicate the past responsibly. This includes a duty to demonstrate that just as inequalities based on gender were not inevitable in the past, so they should not be accepted in the present. The consequences of modern attitudes to gender and sexuality are brought home by Thomas Dowson's (2009a, b) sombre reminder of the killing of Matthew Wayne Shepard in October 1998. This brutal homophobic attack was a reminder that many challenges remain in the socio-politics of archaeology,

highlighting that prejudices must be challenged, and certainly cannot be founded on incorrectly constructed archaeological interpretations.

The marginalization of groups in society, and the support that marginalization often receives from state bodies, is also highlighted by Yvonne Marshall, who, in discussing the groups of female protesters at Greenham Common in Berkshire, England (1982–c.1991), highlights the continual marginalization of the protesters through current conservation legislation. The archaeology of the minority remains unprotected, risks being lost altogether, or negated through incorporation into the monument site of NATO missile silos, which the protesters dedicated so many years to opposing (2009).

It is easy to see how archaeology plays a role in the present through the legitimization of particular beliefs, values, and morals, with often severe consequences. When archaeologists are faced with interpreting archaeological evidence it is fundamental that they are aware of the responsibilities of interpretation, including those concerning the projection of modern Western ideals onto the past, encompassing family organization, gender roles, and sexual relationships, none of which should be assumed without being thoughtfully considered.

LESSONS FROM ETHNOGRAPHY

Whilst it may be natural for us to assume that what is familiar to us now was so in the past, we can draw on ethnographic studies to highlight how different human experience can be. Ethnographic case studies, however, should not be used as analogies for the past, but rather they should enable us to recognize the variety of human experience, both in the present and in the past. This section of the chapter will address key themes such as gender roles and family organization, gender identities, and third genders, and the deconstruction of binary opposites, which in itself leads to questions over our categorization of the biological sexes, male and female.

Gender roles and the division of labour

Ethnographic evidence provides alternative examples for the different ways that people can and do live, and have lived, their lives, and indicates that

child rearing and childcare were not always the sole domain of the biological mother. A woman's role does not necessarily revolve around reproduction and child rearing. It can be argued that the risk of assigning food procurement to either sex is problematic given the potential jeopardy of excluding able-bodied workers from food collection and production (Costin 1996: 134). Although ethnographic models that witness different situations cannot be applied to the past, they demonstrate that a variety of labour and childcare options do exist, and that labour divisions based on sex are not universal or inherent.

The link between biological functions of the body and subsequent gendered labour roles is a natural assumption for many archaeologists, requiring that women in the past were predominantly governed by the biological facts of pregnancy, lactation, and child rearing, leading to their roles as wives and mothers, along with a predominantly domestic sphere of activities (Voss 2009: 30). Such assumptions concerning women's roles have been discussed and critiqued in both anthropology and archaeology (i.e. Conkey and Spector 1984; Moore 1994; Hurcombe 1997; Sørensen 2000; Voss 2009). Although the reproductive role of women should not be overlooked or denied (to the contrary, Bentley (1996) argues that we need to place greater importance on the reproductive role of women), there is often an assumption that female representations are primarily related to birth and reproduction, with the inherent implication that this was and is the primary role of females in society.

Placing modern notions of gendered roles and labour divisions into archaeological interpretations simply creates a past moulded into the shape of our own modern, Western experience (and, significantly, experiences that are not shared by everyone). When ethnographic examples are studied, it becomes clear that there are alternative gendered identity categories, as well as many other ways of organizing childcare, the role of the mother, and female (and male) labour. It also becomes clear that a subservient role for females in society should not be assumed to be universal. In reality, gender roles were undoubtedly more complex and dynamic than is usually assumed. Based on research by Boserup (1970), Guyer (1991), Hewlett (1991) and Silverblatt (1988), Peterson in *Sexual Revolutions: Gender and Labor at the Dawn of Agriculture*, argues that 'women's relegation to the domestic, reproductive realm was a historically late phenomenon' (Peterson 2002: 141).

Barry Hewlett's review of childcare in 57 pre-industrial societies documents a range of alternatives to the model of mothers as the primary caregivers for children. These include using multiple and non-parental carers, as well as the roles played by other adults and children. Hewlett's study was conducted on a range of communities, including 20 mobile hunter-gatherer groups, 12 sedentary forager groups, 16 horticultural groups, and nine pastoralist/agro-pastoralist groups located in Africa, Alaska, Australia, Borneo, Canada, Greenland, India, Iran, Malaysia, Nepal, the Pacific, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Siberia, and South America (1991: 3–5). He concluded that only rarely 'does a child in pre-industrial society stay with his/her natural parents throughout the dependency period' (Hewlett 1991: 19, and cited in Peterson 2002: 140–1). As well as using multiple and non-parental carers, other childcare arrangements include using wet nurses to nurse infants, as well as examples involving step-parents and foster parents.

According to Hewlett's research, amongst many pre-industrial societies where there are many adults in a group and few children, the passing of childcare from person to person is common. Not only is the responsibility shared, but the child learns vital lessons about trust, non-aggressive behaviour, cooperation, and group behaviour (Hewlett 1991: 13). In some cases, the nursing of infants is also shared, taken on by any mother in the village (Cipriani 1966: 63, in Hewlett 1991: 13). Such situations are potentially more likely where there are multiple adults and a low fertility rate. In other situations where there is a higher fertility rate, childcare duties are often shared with grandparents (Hewlett 1991: 14). The role of children and their playgroups should also be considered. If multiple-age playgroups are used, then the older children care for younger ones, although usually within sight or sound of adults much of the time (Hewlett 1991: 18). The archaeologist Anne Pyburn recalls her experiences of such a system while excavating in Belize (2004: 16–18). She observed that childcare arrangements were rarely met by adults: it was normal for children to care for each other, with eight- to ten-year-old children caring for infants and five- to six-year-olds (or anyone close by) watching over toddlers. Adults rarely took part in this process, so time was freed to pursue other activities, including work. Different childcare models clearly influence the role of a woman as mother, and their undertaking of other labour roles. The traditional perception often held in the West of females being less able than men to carry out

heavy manual labour has also been contested, with females often undertaking the bulk of manual labour in many pre-industrial communities. Whilst at times, and mostly rarely, their work is hindered by pregnancy and childcare, their absence from tasks is usually covered by other women (Pyburn 2004: 18). Such a situation is described by Jean Briggs following her stay with an Inuit community. The heavily pregnant Inuit mother was able to help pack up home, move the sledge, and re-establish the new home, just a week before giving birth (Briggs 2005).

The role of women as one relegated to the domestic, reproductive sphere can be viewed as a relatively late historically contextual situation, rather than a natural position (Peterson 2002, citing Guyer 1991 and Silverblatt 1988). It has been argued that prehistoric sexed labour division was unlikely to have been as 'polarized, inflexible, or institutionalized as it is today' (Peterson 2002: 141, citing Leacock 1981).

There is ongoing debate about the sexual division of labour which is relevant to the early Neolithic (Gurven and Hill 2009). Whilst focused on earlier periods, there are debates over whether males hunted to acquire status or mates (although Gurven and Hill conclude that mono-causal approaches are not the solution, but that a variety of motivations would have existed). However, assumptions are made, such as that males are concerned with status, whereas signalling is not seen as motivation behind female activities (Ross 2009), or that the models do not account for other members of the community, such as children without parents or unmarried adults (Ragir 2009), aside from the assumption that it is the males doing all of the hunting. Ultimately, it is recognized that 'the sexual division of labor is not now, nor was it ever, static. Examples of men gathering and women hunting small game in different societies illustrate the flexibility of economic decision-making among foragers' (Gurven and Hill 2009: 69), a premise that is supported by Lupo and Kiahtipes (2009) and Kuhn and Stiner (2006: 954), although the latter go on to suggest that, on the whole, the division of labour becomes more marked with the onset of domestication. It is suggested, however, that greater attention should be paid to temporal and spatial differentiations (MacDonald and Roebroeks 2006). With regard to tool use, gendered assumptions should be questioned (Soffer 2006), and the fact that advances in technology enabled hunters to be greater distances from their kill would offer greater rather than fewer

opportunities for female hunters, without the same risks that many attribute to hunting (Waguespack 2006) and contra to suggestions that hunting was an enterprise that was too risky for women. This recent discourse suggests that the matter of the sexual division of labour is not closed and that the debate is likely to continue. However, it is important to recognize that the division of labour according to gender should not be simply assumed. More recent research, addressed specifically to the Neolithic (Peterson 2010), asserts that there is little evidence for the division of labour based on gender, correctly also highlighting the variability between sites, rather than a universal pattern being applicable across the Neolithic Near East.

Whilst gender roles are being challenged on one level, other archaeologists still appear to accept a 'natural order' in gendered categorization. Claassen (2009) argues that our gendered divisions relate ultimately to sexual selection, that is, selection of partners for mating. She sees that homosexuality has a role to play in this, but that ultimately, gender studies should be more aware of selection for mating. Claassen's assessment is surprising, given the recent literature on the cultural construction of gender and the growing importance of Queer theory within archaeology, which she seems to overlook. To posit all interactions back to mating not only overwrites decades of recent research, but also oversimplifies the human situation by simply relating gender relations to reproductive motivation. Clearly, reproduction is a fundamental aspect of survival for the human species and no one disputes that mating has a clear role to play in gendered relationships and identities, but to argue that all relationships ultimately come back to this premise is oversimplifying the situation and denies many different identities and experiences of gender and sexuality, with potentially hugely detrimental consequences. Claassen takes as her starting point the biological distinction between males and females, which, as will become clearer in the next section, is more complex than she acknowledges.

Third genders and binary oppositions

The traditionally ascribed gender roles have rightly been challenged in archaeological interpretation. Whilst it is important to recognize that gender roles are complex, our challenge can reach beyond them to consider the question about what male and female categories are,

and whether the binary opposition is universally relevant. Furthermore, just as gender roles are socially constructed, it is useful to ask whether biological sex also can be culturally interpreted rather than universally applicable. This section will consider the notion of a third-gender category, as well as discussing modern constructions of biological sex.

It has become apparent that gendered identities can be far more complex than a simple mapping of either 'male' or 'female' genders over biological sex. Studies such as Strathern's *Gender of the Gift* (1988) discuss gendered identities which were composed of aspects of both genders. In Strathern's case study, a body was a composite of differently gendered parts and substances; thus a simple male/female opposition did not fit the reality of gendered experiences. As well as the perception of differently composed bodies, gendered identities may also change at particular times during life. For instance, among the groups of the Mandara Mountains in West-Central Africa, ritual genders regularly differed from everyday gender, with the former dependent upon sibling and parental genders (David and Sterner 2009). Further, gender may be fluid in the sense that it has to be achieved, such as among the Sambia of Papua New Guinea, where actions are required to produce sexual identity. The body was not given its sexual identity merely dependent on biological organs, but rather through a series of cultural acts, which were seen to 'complete nature'; 'the true male sexual and anatomical identity can develop only through a process of draining off the femaleness of the body and acquiring the maleness of the body, through a series of ritual acts' (Yates 1993: 48–50).

As well as such composite genders, many ethnographers began to recognize third-gender categories, that is, people who were considered neither male nor female, but a separate gender. For example, among some North American Indian groups it was common to have *berdaches*, who were neither men nor women but occupied a distinct gender role within society (Roscoe 1998), referred to by contemporary societies as 'two-spirits' and often taking on gender roles of their biological opposite, a role defined by choice and mentality rather than physical or sexual characteristics (Gilchrist 1999: 61–2). Other examples of distinct gendered identities include the Byzantine eunuch, often castrated men, and the Indian *hijra*, a group which contained hermaphrodites, impotent men, and non-menstruating women (Gilchrist 1999: 59). Such examples of third-gender categories

demonstrate that gender and interpretations of biological sex can be socially constructed, and that binary oppositions of male and female are not always considered adequate categorizations (Wilkan 1978; Ortner and Whitehead 1981; Nanda 1990; Roscoe 1998; Gilchrist 1999; Hollimon 2001). However, it is also crucial to realize that as gender is socially constructed, third-gender categories are also differing and contextual, rather than being a universally recognized 'other' gender (Roscoe 1998; Dowson 2000).

The realization that gendered categories may not fit so neatly into binary oppositions of male and female has come alongside a broader realization that binary oppositions, beyond gender, are themselves often inadequate explanations for behaviour. Binary oppositions are often applied unthinkingly to the archaeological record, including dichotomies such as nature/culture, domestic/wild, and inside/outside. In some instances such dichotomies may be relevant, and we have seen examples of the ordering of architecture along these principles, such as observations on a Timor house (Parker Pearson and Richards 1994). The house was divided into male and female areas, the male area considered to be spiritual, and the female secular. Various domestic activities are related to the use of space and binary oppositions. Another example is Caroline Humphrey's discussion about a Mongolian yurt. These circular tents were divided into male and female areas, where male areas were associated with cleanliness and sacred activities, and female areas with 'unclean' activities such as food preparation and chores that were more domestic in nature (1974). Whilst there are some examples where binary oppositions work well as explanatory frameworks, they should not be unthinkingly assumed. The universality of binary oppositions has been disputed over the last few decades in both archaeological and anthropological discourse (see for example Ortner 1974; MacCormack and Strathern 1980; Moore 1988; Ingold 1988, 1996, 2000; Descola and Palsson 1996; Boyd 2004; Thomas 2004). These studies have emphasized that dichotomies such as nature/culture, domestic/wild, and male/female are culturally constructed and far from natural, universally accepted experiences. Furthermore, in reality, situations are likely to be more complex than they appear.

The inadequacies with male/female gendered categorizations have already been discussed. However, the basis of the biological male/female categorization can itself be challenged and the biological sexes of male and female have been brought into question. Problems were

noted by Foucault (1980), who reflected on the example of a nineteenth-century Parisian hermaphrodite, who was made to 'become' either male or female. Today, surgery and hormone treatment are used to 'correct' the sexual characteristics of anyone whose genitalia are ambiguous at birth. Rosemary Joyce's use of medical statistics suggests that in 1998, one to two in every 1000 newborns underwent genital surgery (2008a: 45). For some this is not so problematic, but for others, the consequence is that they never feel comfortable in their own bodies, a result that often leads to a lifetime of confusion, unhappiness, and in some cases, depression with suicidal consequences. However, accounts are mostly anecdotal, with little credible research into these experiences.

Such ambiguities at birth are often corrected because of the societal difficulties in accepting the ambiguity, even though it appears to be 'naturally' occurring and not uncommon. Yet our categories of male and female are so strong and deeply rooted that ambiguities are rarely accepted; even transgendered individuals, ultimately, are still encouraged to 'become' either male or female, even if this involves a sex change. In reality, anatomy, chromosomes, and hormones do not always form into two distinct 'packages' (Joyce 2008a: 45). An alternative proposal has been put forward by Anne Fausto-Sterling, who argues that we need to think of biological sex as a continuum, rather than binary opposites. So a person's sex and gender, rather than being explicitly 'male' or 'female' can be situated at any point along a scale of 'maleness' and 'femaleness', allowing for the ambiguities that are, in reality, biologically present.

The debates put forward above can be quite difficult for many to get to grips with; after all, we have been socialized to think otherwise. However, it is a brave archaeologist that accepts these concerns and takes them forward into their archaeological interpretations, questioning the natural assumptions that are made, and offering alternative narratives of the past—although crucially—interpretations that remain grounded in archaeological data.

This section has discussed critiques about assumptions of gender, considering the implications and problems that arise with use of the past to justify the present. We have also seen that archaeology itself is accused of being androcentric and heteronormative in its practices and interpretations. Whilst there is merit in critical evaluation of previous work it is a far greater challenge to provide new and alternative interpretations which challenge the hetero-, Euro-, and

androcentric nature of traditional accounts. The actual application of theories such as Queer theory to real archaeological data is essential in moving beyond the projection of biased ideals into the past.

However, Queer theories are often difficult to integrate into archaeological interpretation and practice because we are so fundamentally products of our own socialization. Consequently, discussions are usually at a theoretical level and are rarely applied to actual archaeological material. As Voss (2000: 186) discusses, whilst Queer theory citations were common in introductions to edited volumes and conference proceedings, they were rarely used in archaeological case studies, suggesting that Queer theory has been used predominantly to theorize the feminist archaeological project as a whole, rather than to interpret archaeological evidence. The integration of Queer theories and gender archaeology into archaeological interpretation is slowly becoming more commonplace, although it is far from ubiquitous especially within Near Eastern archaeology, a situation that was still largely true in 2010 (Bolger 2010: 514).

GENDER IN NEAR EASTERN ARCHAEOLOGY

Whilst gender studies have been gaining more prominence in archaeology generally, there had been a general lack of studies into gender in Near Eastern archaeology, with the exception of the study of the role of women during the beginnings of Early State Societies (Asher-Greve 1997; Pollock 1991; Pollock and Bernbeck 2000; Wright 1996b; Al-Zubaidi 2004). Prehistory remained under-represented until recently; the publication of *Gender Through Time in the Ancient Near East*, edited by Diane Bolger (2008a), is a recent example of authors who are redressing the balance, discussing gender more critically in their approaches to Near Eastern prehistory (see chapters by Bolger, Campbell, Croucher, and Daems). Susan Pollock's *Ancient Mesopotamia* (1999), whilst dealing with a later period than the Neolithic, is also a valuable example of the integration of gender archaeology into mainstream archaeological practice and publication.

This section will consider attitudes within Near Eastern archaeology on the topics already discussed in this chapter. Beginning with labour roles, it will discuss skeletal analysis as well as interpretations of gendered activities in the past, beginning with Çatalhöyük, where

narratives are actively attempting to address gender (as Bolger 2010 recognizes). It will also briefly consider figurine analysis; whilst this does not directly relate to mortuary practices, the analysis of figurines can provide key insights into gender construction during the Neolithic in the Near East. I will argue that we need to think differently about the past, without assuming binary oppositions or views on gender and family roles into our archaeological interpretations.

Gender roles

The issue of gender has always been prominent in interpretations of Çatalhöyük, in part due to the mother-goddess debates, which have surrounded the figurine evidence. Figurines from Çatalhöyük representing voluptuous females, including one on a throne flanked by leopards, are taken as evidence for the role of a mother-goddess figure made famous by Marija Gimbutas, who drew on artefacts from sites ranging from Çatalhöyük in Anatolia to Stonehenge in Britain (see Whitehouse 2000) to argue for a matriarchal social system in ancient 'Old Europe', which was later replaced by the patriarchal system with which we are now familiar (see for instance Gimbutas 1982, although it has also been argued on various online forums (i.e. Marler 2004; Allen 2001) that Gimbutas has been misrepresented, and was arguing for a situation of equality in the past rather than replacing patriarchy with matriarchy). Critiques of Gimbutas from archaeologists have been numerous (including Whitehouse 2000; Meskell 1995; Conkey and Tringham 1995; Tringham and Conkey 1998), although other groups contest the prominence given to the archaeological voice (Rountree 2007). Aside from concerns over replacing an androcentric approach with a gynecentric one, and problems in portraying the reproductive role of women as the primary role (Elster 2007: 105), it is now accepted that the archaeological evidence does not warrant or support interpretations of a mother-goddess.

Whilst gender has always been on the agenda for interpretations of Çatalhöyük, it has been criticized for the acceptance of male and female genders as binary opposites, including assumptions about the use of the domestic space. Particular rooms and architectural features have been assigned particular labels, such as 'kitchen' for areas which featured hearths and food-preparation areas. Whilst activities related to food production undoubtedly took place in such

spaces, the label has been critiqued by Hamilton (2000a), as it is accompanied by a particular image about the use of space, including gendered roles, which informed further interpretations about male and female divisions of areas within the house (Hodder 1990). Hamilton observed that whilst 'there is an intent amongst the team currently working at the site to question everything, the concept of gendered spaces based upon modern gender roles has not been widely problematized' (2000a: 99). More recently, gender has been viewed and used in a critical way at Çatalhöyük, recognizing ambiguities, rather than searching for simply males or females. This is an interpretative strand begun by Hamilton's research on the figurines, now under the study of Meskell and Naknamara, research to which we return later in this chapter after a brief discussion of the mortuary and skeletal evidence.

Recent interpretations of Çatalhöyük have asserted that there is little evidence for differential treatment and status of males and females (Hodder 2004, 2006a). There are no noticeable differences between males and females evidenced in use-wear on teeth (Andrews et al 2005; Boz 2005), they appear to be broadly comparable in the weight-load on bones (Molleson 2007b: 189), and had comparable diets (Richards et al 2003) although women were slightly plumper than men (Molleson et al 2005). Both sexes were treated equally in the mortuary domain (Hamilton 2000a), and beads have been found in the graves of both males and females (Hodder 2006: 212). Both sexes seemingly spent equal time inside dwellings, as evidenced by soot in the lungs, leaving black residue on their rib bones (Molleson et al 2005). This evidence has led to the conclusion that any differential status within society was not based on gender (Hodder 2006: 11).

The pattern seen at Çatalhöyük can be seen at other sites too. Skeletal analysis by Peterson has demonstrated that at many sites there is a lack of evidence for gendered division of labour (Peterson 2002: 145). Based on the sites of Abu Gosh, 'Ain Ghazal, Atlit Yam, Horvat Galil, Hatoula, Netiv Hagdud, and Yiftahel (2002: table 1.2), Peterson concluded that 'there is little available data that suggest significant differences in workload or activity between males and females during the Neolithic' (2002: 124). Peterson's analysis relates to a small sample size, so future research will build on her findings, increasing the available data set. Peterson's findings are comparable to conclusions from Çatalhöyük, which similarly indicate a lack of division of labour according to gender. However, this is not the case

for all sites, as Theya Molleson's analysis of skeletal remains from Abu Hureyra has demonstrated (1994, 1996). At this site, the evidence for females undertaking tasks includes grinding, impacting on the toes, spine, and knees of the female skeletons studied. Molleson concludes that at Abu Hureyra, women were responsible for much of the manual labour, including planting, gathering, and food processing. However, these results are not typical of all sites, and Molleson recognizes that they might not be representational of the whole site, as they were based on case studies from a small sample (Molleson pers. comm.). However, Molleson's results are commonly used to suggest that the division of labour was ubiquitous in the Neolithic.

For instance, Akkermans and Schwartz suggest that 'Men dominated in the field of hunting, and probably also in stock rearing, since they were not burdened with children and were less tied to their homes' (2003: 77). Whilst planting and gathering were considered to be female tasks, 'men would have assisted in the clearing of the land and in other work requiring great physical strength, or participated in the field work during times of stress' (ibid.). However, it can be argued that in many pre-industrial societies, much of the heavy workload is undertaken by women (i.e. Pyburn 2004). Whilst there is some evidence of skeletal differences from Abu Hureyra, that there was greater value placed on hunting is not substantiated by the evidence, although Akkermans and Schwartz suggest that 'perhaps hunting was valued more than farming, if only to motivate men to perform the often dangerous task' (2003: 77). It is interesting that the skeletal evidence is built upon to create a picture of gendered roles, including childcare and hunting, and that greater importance is attributed to male tasks, a pattern already discussed and critiqued earlier in this chapter. Whilst gender divisions may be evident at one site, they may not be ubiquitous for other archaeological contexts, and a value should not be placed on the different spheres of work. Rather than a personal criticism of these authors, their statements demonstrate the dominant perspective of male and female roles, and it is relevant to note that much of Peterson's research had not yet been published when Akkermans and Schwartz were compiling their volume. Interpretations are no doubt changing as further data becomes available, building up a more accurate picture of male and female roles, or a lack of gender division.

That gender roles are tied into subsistence is an underlying theme in Near Eastern archaeology, with agriculture described as imposing 'a new time schedule on females' work, possibly creating extra responsibilities for women during the sowing season, coupled with the effects of sedentism (i.e. an increase in the number of children, more restricted areas of gathering wild fruits and seeds, etc.) (Bar-Yosef 1998: 201) with men required to undertake 'long distance forays,' thus enhancing 'gender differences in activities' (Bar-Yosef 1998: 201, and see Bar-Yosef 2008: 319 for a recent, comparable account).

Gender division, in part, stems from the image of 'man the hunter', and although this model is widely critiqued (see Hager 1997: 5–7), it has historically dominated archaeological thinking when considering food procurement. The picture is one that has been perpetuated through many reconstruction illustrations and museum displays containing stereotypical images of gender roles and past lives, including males as hunters and females as carers (see Dowson 2009a; Gifford-Gonzalez 1993; Moser 1993). Although attitudes are changing now, gendered stereotypes are still seen in, for instance, Bar-Yosef who also draws on evidence from Abu Hureyra, describing 'women as gatherers', 'food processors and users of grinding tools' and males as probably felling trees and building with mud-bricks made by females (2008: 319; whilst referencing Peterson 1997, the evidence relating to an equal workload is apparently overlooked). With the cessation of hunting, the stereotyped male role becomes predominantly one of undertaking agricultural activities, whilst females are located within the domestic and household domain (Hodder 1990).

Whilst such attitudes towards gendered roles are changing, with a greater equality in valuing and assigning male and female roles in Near Eastern archaeological interpretation and discourse, many stereotypes are hard to break. The role of women in the past has recently been discussed by Forest (2006) primarily with relation to the Ubaid Period (c.5000–4300), additionally projected back into the Pottery Neolithic (Forest 2009). He attributes the spread of pottery as directly connected to the exchange of women. The presumption that pottery manufacture is the domain of women is taken from ethnographic evidence, although Forest is selective in the evidence he chooses. Furthermore, production of goods such as pottery is dependent on many processes, including clay collection and wood gathering for firing, making the process likely to be a communal one rather than simply resting with women, even if they had been the

primary potters (although even this is speculation rather than fact). Notably, in Forest's interpretation, women are not endowed with agency or their own capacity to move around the landscape independently of such exchanges, or even driving such exchanges. When the roles of women are seen to be subservient it seems there is little additional supporting evidence needed, a situation that would not hold if arguing for female domination during the period. For instance, the debates surrounding the notion of matriarchy (as discussed below), which are not accepted by the discipline, require additional evidence. Could it be argued that the same scrutiny should be applied to the assumption of the subservience of women?

Mortuary practices

Gender parity in mortuary practices is seen at many sites from a range of periods and across the regions under discussion. The removal of skulls was not dependent on gender or age, as evidence from numerous sites reveals, including 'Ain Ghazal, Yiftahel, Jericho, and countless others. Neither was the process of plastering skulls, as research by Bonogofsky (2004) has concluded.

This parity is not unusual for sites from the Natufian to the Later Neolithic, with later examples including Domuztepe, Tell el-Kerkh, and Sabi Abyad. At the newly excavated Late Neolithic Cemetery at Tell el-Kerkh there are roughly equal numbers of males and females identifiable from the 162 skeletons that are well enough preserved for analysis, with 33 adult males, 26 adult females, and a large number whose sex is unidentifiable, including the 48 per cent of the burial population that were not adults (Dougherty 2011: 27). The inclusion of labour-related grave goods is a topic for further investigation, with a potential gendered difference between knapped and woven objects found in graves (Tsuneki 2011: 7); although these are isolated examples and it is difficult to ascribe a definite gender pattern (Tsuneki pers. comm.). Whilst there may be some slight differences in grave goods, with slightly fewer females and children than males containing more than five beads, this still represents a small proportion (just three adult females and one adult male), with those containing fewer than five beads more or less equal in number (Masumori 2011). In addition to primary burials, there were secondary burials and cremations at Tell el-Kerkh, with no observable differences between males

and females; there were no discernible gender distinctions or correlations of grave goods apparent in the isotope analysis (Itahashi 2011). At Domuztepe, the Death Pit includes relatively equal numbers of males and females and all age ranges (Kansa et al 2009b). At Sabi Abyad, where several Neolithic cemeteries are now being excavated, there is little differential treatment between the burials of males and females, and grave goods, although rare, are not gendered (Akkermans pers. comm.). The evidence suggests that whatever gender divisions we might suppose were in place during life, these were not perpetuated in the mortuary arena, at least not in ways that are visible today.

Returning to the PPNB, the disarticulation and burial of body parts at Kfar HaHoresh were also comparable between males and females (Goring-Morris 2000: 114; Simmons et al 2007: 122) although the appearance of attained status for young adult males has been suggested (Goring-Morris 2000: 114), notably due to the plastered skulls modelled from male skulls. Further excavation will undoubtedly provide more evidence, but at present the sample is too small to be conclusive.

Whether power was held in the male domain has also been suggested for Nahal Hemar, with images of elder males seen repeatedly, including bearded images on figurines and masks, and the selection of skulls for extra treatment (Bar-Yosef and Alon 1988: 28). These are taken to suggest that ‘the “founding fathers” were attributed a revered status’ (Bar-Yosef and Alon 1988: 28), but concepts such as the ‘founding fathers’ are modern ones, and not necessarily applicable to the material we are studying here. At Nahal Hemar—a remote location that, notably, appears to be removed from everyday life—male representation is prevalent, which is in contrast to evidence recovered from settlement sites with their predominantly female imagery and focus (although this picture in itself has been contested; see the section below on figurines). We could conclude from the evidence that female representation was associated with settlement sites and the domestic domain, whereas the male image was more prominent in secluded, ‘ritual’ contexts. This would be a very neat picture. However, we are limited by an extremely small sample; there are few other sites comparable to Nahal Hemar known so far, and there are just two published male plastered skulls from Kfar HaHoresh. The evidence is not sufficient at this time to confirm this.

Imagery: masculine and wild

Images of males are repeatedly connected with wild animals, with questions such as 'Could it be then that PPNB human-animal linkages were an expression of the wild, dangerous aggressive dimensions of the domain of nature, where it was the men who hunted, as opposed to the domestic and more peaceful domain of culture . . . ' (Verhoeven 2002: 247, discussed by Bolger 2010: 516).

Recent excavations at Göbekli Tepe have added weight to the idea of a relationship between wild animals and masculine sexuality. A figurine shows a male with an erect penis (fig. 5.1); there are many other depictions of phalluses from the site, and this figure may also be replicated on one of the 'T-shaped' pillars with potentially two such figures facing each other (fig. 5.2a; Brian Boyd pers. comm.), perhaps suggesting male sexual interaction. This may relate to the repeated 'H-shaped' motifs found on pillars at Göbekli Tepe, as seen in fig. 5.2b. Some wild animals are also depicted with erect penises, such as a wild boar on one the 'T-shaped' pillars (fig. 5.3). Such imagery forms part of a growing focus of research on the wild and masculine, along with installations of wild animals' horns at Çatalhöyük (see Hodder 2006a: chapter 8; Meskell 2008; Hodder and Meskell 2011), a theme which appears in the earlier nearby site of Pınarbaşı (Baird forthcoming).

The binary opposition between males and females is repeatedly referred to in interpretations of the period. In particular, the imagery of Çatalhöyük is used to discuss mother-goddess and bull cults, with plastered features, bucrania, wall paintings, and figurines used by Cauvin to strengthen arguments for these cults (2000 [1994]: 238). His ideas are drawn upon by Forest (1994) to explicitly extract more from the male/female binary opposition, which then Verhoeven employs for his discussion of the imagery, arguing that there are 'human-wild-male' links (2002, also cited and critiqued by Bolger 2010: 516).

The topic is dealt with sensitively by Hodder in his *Leopard's Tale* (2006a), where associations are made with hunting and the wild, without directly attributing either to the male sphere. Hodder describes a 'prowess-animal spirit-hunting-feasting nexus' (2006a: 203), with an interrelatedness but tension between 'symbolism and social practices linked to hunting and baiting wild animals, as well as to feasting, ancestry, death and exchanges' and the 'sphere of domestic production' both of which are brought together in the house (Hodder

2006a: 235). There is still a perceived tension between the domestic and the wild, although interrelatedness is acknowledged. An association is made between the wild and sexuality, as some of the animals depicted in paintings have erect penises, as have some carvings at Göbekli (Hodder 2000, 2006a). However, most animal images do not include an indication of gender, the exception being a fairly small sample at Çatalhöyük of one boar image, ten deer images, and one cattle image (Russell and Meece 2005: 224). There are also wall paintings depicting sheep, as well as one that shows the gathering of crops (Hodder 2006a: 213). Hodder argues that 'however incorrect the

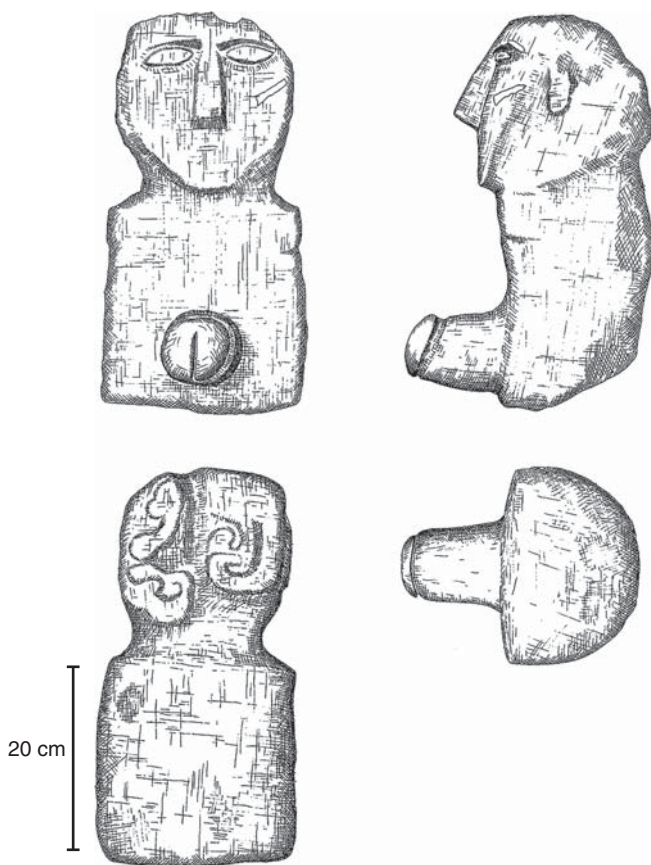


Fig. 5.1. Figurine from Göbekli Tepe (Klaus Schmidt, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut).

(a)



(b)



Fig. 5.2. a. Image on pillar; b. 'H' motif; both (Klaus Schmidt, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut).

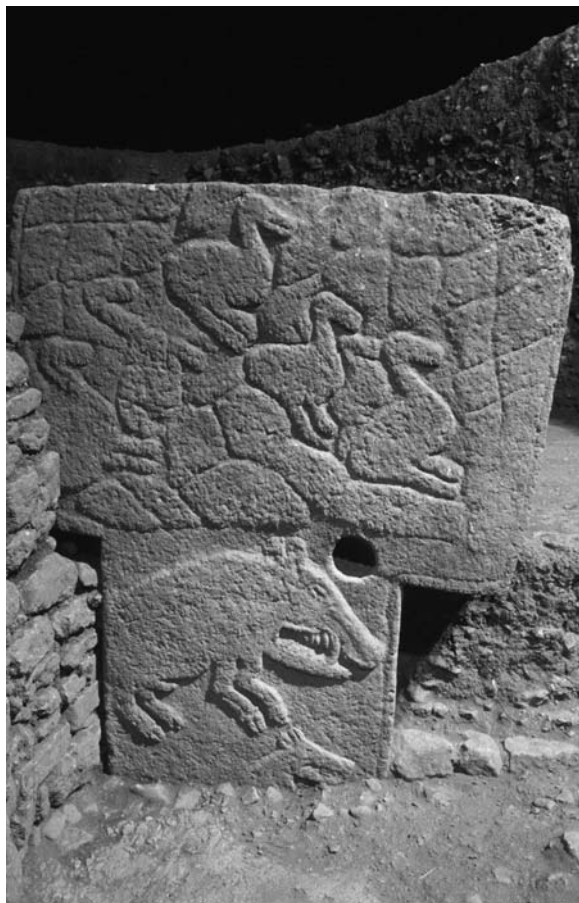


Fig. 5.3. Pillar, Göbekli Tepe (Klaus Schmidt, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut).

specifics, and however much variation on a theme, there seems to be good evidence for an overall social focus in much of the art on feasts, wild animals, sexual and other prowess, and hunting' (2006a: 204), a proposition taken further in Hodder and Meskell (2011) where they suggest dominance of male sexuality in Neolithic symbolism: a return to dualisms and binary oppositions in interpretations of the period, moving away from the equality and lack of sex-based difference suggested by Hodder (2004; 2006a) and discussed earlier in this chapter.

An examination of plant and animal evidence at Çatalhöyük by Twiss et al (2009), analysing one especially well-preserved house, observed that there were no distinctions made in the storage of wild and domestic resources within this domestic setting. Rather, wild and domestic resources were stored together, with a greater focus apparently on the distinction between hidden stores and the more public preparation of food. The strict binary opposition of domestic and wild is as problematic as that of male and female, with the evidence suggesting that ambiguities and the playing down of these categories may have been as relevant as distinguishing between them.

Throughout Hodder's book, hunting is repeatedly referred to along with aggression and the wild, although it is never explicitly described in relation to men. The role of leopards is highlighted by Hodder (2006a), which while featuring imagery at Çatalhöyük, does not make it into the faunal assemblage except for one solitary claw, which had been pierced and made into an pendant. This was recovered from the grave of a female who was cradling a plastered skull, a fascinating find, by which Hodder draws attention to the important female role; significantly, this is not one of 'nurturing' as the traditional images of a 'mother-goddess' suggest. Furthering this, the famous figurine depicting the female flanked by leopards has a round object between her legs, described by Mellaart as 'giving birth'; Hodder suggests that rather than a neonate, this appears to be a cranium, which is very credible. There is a link between females, skulls, and leopards seen in both of these finds attributed to 'the central but balanced role of women' (2006a: 261).

It could be argued that the idea of 'man the hunter' still pervades, even when not explicitly described in these terms; human-animal burials where the human is female, for instance, are never referred to as 'hunters', unlike their male counterparts. With the above examples from Çatalhöyük, and given the repeated association between the wild and hunting throughout Hodder's account (2006a), one has to speculate whether, had either the burial or the figure seated between the leopards in the figurine been male, they would have been assigned the status of hunters. I am being somewhat pedantic here and realize that I risk throwing the baby out with the bathwater, but the situation does highlight how difficult it is to perceive gender roles outside the stereotypes, and Hodder should be credited for moving beyond the explicit association between males, hunting, and the wild. However, Hodder and Meskell (2011) return to the notion of the binary

opposition between male and female in a recent publication. Here they argue for the primacy of male imagery and overtly male sexuality in the symbolism of the Neolithic: 'by "phallocentrism" we refer to the privileging of maleness as a prime cultural signifier and the centrality of masculinity (both human and animal) as a source of power and authority within the material and symbolic repertoire of the Turkish Neolithic' (Hodder and Meskell 2011: 237).

A comparable approach to the male/female binary opposition can be seen in Marc Verhoeven's interpretations of ritual and symbolism in PPNB Levant and Southeast Anatolia, with clear links made: 'human-wild-male' (Verhoeven 2002: 252): 'people were symbolically attached to the wild, to nature, and that this domain may have been regarded as generally male' (ibid). One has to question, however, how much this association comes from the projection of modern expectations onto the past, rather than from the archaeological record itself.

The evidence for the assumption derives from the imagery of wild, 'male' animals, the placement of animals in graves, and the association of human and aurochs blood. The bull in ritual contexts 'was both male and wild' and the blood residue at Çayönü is from aurochs blood associated with human blood (although debate continues over the sufficient preservation of blood on stone tools for analysis, see Brown and Brown 2011: 145–8, who argue that survival and analysis are not possible, contrasted with Hogberg et al 2009 for arguments that the right methods are needed). Verhoeven suggests that 'PPNB human-animal linkages were an expression of the wild, dangerous, aggressive dimensions of the domain of nature, where it was the men who hunted, as opposed to the domestic and more peaceful domain of culture, where women were symbolized as giving life and bringing fecundity' (2002: n. 252). It is also argued that 'the bull in general, and especially powerful and liminal elements like horns and blood . . . , were metaphors for male dominance, power and vitality' (Verhoeven 2002: 251).

While arguments about masculinity and male associations may seem tempting, not only do they simplify the artistic evidence, but they are not necessarily supported by archaeological evidence. There are several contentious observations to be made: first, not all animals depicted at Göbekli are male (or even necessarily wild and aggressive, such as the frequent duck and bird motifs); whilst many finds are from more recent excavations, Verhoeven argued that the images are of 'wild mammals, reptiles and birds, seemingly all male'; yet there is actually no explicit evidence that all of these are male, with actually

very few of the images displaying biological sexual indicators. There is also an association made between blood and males, without any real justification for assignment of this symbolism; it could be argued that there is a closer link with females and blood, given menstruation. There is an association made by Verhoeven of human and aurochs blood at Çayönü, yet there is no indication that either of the species was male. Furthermore, the blood residue also included blood from sheep (Loy and Wood 1989; Wood 1998), which is also conveniently overlooked.

For Çatalhöyük, recent analysis of horn cores has suggested that a preference can be seen in the choice of adult male horns for use in contexts of display and feasting (Twiss and Russell 2009), although they observe that 'bulls were not an absolute prerequisite for ritual activity, however, indicating that masculinity was not the exclusive factor in the site's taurine symbolism' (ibid. 30). The notion of the 'wild' was undoubtedly a prevailing aspect of life during the period, yet to relate this only to the male sphere is a simplistic interpretation of the evidence. There are also practical motivations behind the choice of adult male species: they are larger and produce the most prominent horns for display; they provide a much greater quantity of meat; their elimination from the herd removes some of the most dangerous animals, and fewer males are required for herd stability (Twiss and Russell 2009). We have already discussed above that there are few images, both at Göbekli and Çatalhöyük, which actually depict animals or men with erect penises, and there are some depictions of women displaying sexuality or even 'dominance' over the wild at these sites. Schmidt notes in relation to the anthropomorphic pillars at Göbekli that 'an indication of their sex is always lacking' (2011: 930), with a deliberate choice 'not to depict the eyes, the nose, the mouth, or the breast, vagina, or penis, if sex were to be indicted' (2011: 921). Yet interpretations of the period repeatedly return to binary oppositions, whether between male and female, or domestic and wild, rather than acknowledging complexities in the evidence, and indeed alternative interpretations of the evidence which are not solely based on simplistic dualities.

Gender, therefore, does sometimes manifest itself in representations, but are other avenues of interpretation being overlooked in the construction of binary oppositions? For instance, a concern with materiality—stone, clay, and plaster—in the creation of new material worlds: the ambiguity between person and stone seen at Göbekli in

the pillars; the use of plaster to recreate the faces of the dead; keeping the dead close to the living beneath the floor in houses; and in the shaping of figurines and vessels. Chapter 6 discusses alternative motivations for the human–animal relationships, which undoubtedly, were entwined and prominent during the period although there is little compelling evidence that these were inherently gender related.

A more balanced approach is seen in Danielle Stordeur's discussion of symbolism, where the human face replaces wild animals in the imagery between the PPNA/Early PNNB (c.9500–8200 BC) and the MPPNB (from 8000 to 7000 BC), suggesting that the person is growing in importance, and becoming central to belief and iconography (2010). Stordeur's approach suggests an alternative to the 'male=wild' proposition, to see the changing relationships between person, animal, and representation: themes to which we return in chapter 6.

Human representations: figurines

While gender remains a constant subject for study, and rightly so, it is apparent that much of our data does not fit neatly into either male or female categories. It is common for figurines to be ascribed a sexual identity based on the presence of breasts or a penis and to determine whether a figurine is either female or male respectively. It is also common to sex figurines based on an absence of these characteristics, making the subject 'either asexual, or as is more probable, masculine by default', a proposition put forward by Cauvin (2000 [1994]: 111) and rightly critiqued by Kuijt and Chesson (2007: 221). The use of figurines is also frequently determined on this basis, with the non-female figurines from 'Ain Ghazal suggested to have been used for other types of personal protection, possibly also used by men (Rollerfson 2000: 168). However, 'it is widely believed that the figurines from Çatalhöyük, and from many prehistoric sites, depict female bodies exclusively or almost exclusively. That is simply not the case. Even when just the human figures are considered, sex is not always shown, or is under rather than over stated' (Hamilton 2006: 210). This is supported in the research by Nakamura and Meskell, who note that figurines are not only often non-sexualized, but also have 'an emphasis on the nongenerative human form' (2009: 226).

Female fecundity was often thought to be represented in figurines, such as in Rollerfson's discussion of those from 'Ain Ghazal (2000:

167–8), originally suggested to have a protective function during pregnancy and childbirth; or the female figurine described as being ‘in a reclining position with one arm over a flat abdomen and the other hand wrapped across the face’ in an ‘anecdotal expression of grief at the stillbirth of a child’ (Rollefson 1986: 47; 2000: 168). The equation is immediately made with female roles and reproduction; however, the discussion of the figurines in Rollefson’s later work (2008) becomes more appreciative of the ambiguous nature of many of the figurines, recognizing biases in our interpretations (after Hamilton 1996).

Research by Aurelie Daems has suggested that many Near Eastern figurines represent different life phases and physical changes in a woman’s body over time (2008: 98) rather than simply relating to pregnancy. For Çatalhöyük, ‘the human figurines from the current Çatalhöyük excavations do not articulate the reproductive life cycle of pregnancy, birth, adolescence and death. We have found only one figure possibly depicting pregnancy and no examples depicting any of the other events’ (Meskell et al 2008: 148), although one figurine has a skeletal back and fleshed front (Hodder and Meskell 2011: 248).

Some figurines appear to depict male identities, whether the whole body is portrayed, or whether they are phalluses. Recent finds include a bearded male figurine from Çatalhöyük (Hodder 2009b), as well as other male figurines from the site. Further examples include painted bearded faces on small bone figurines at Nahal Hemar. There have been multiple finds of phalluses, which although not common, are recovered from a variety of sites and different periods in time (and the details here are not exhaustive). A large number have been excavated from PPN to PN transitional levels at Mezraa-Teleilat on the Euphrates in Anatolia. Ninety-four phallic pieces have been recovered, all carved from limestone, along with two standing figurines, 29 seated figurines (Özdoğan 2003), and two possible phalluses recovered from Yiftahel (Khalaily et al 2008: 7). Carved phalluses have been found at the PPNA sites of Wadi Faynan (WF16), Zahrat adh-Dhra’ (ZAD2) and Dhra’ (Kuijt and Chesson 2007). A stone phallus was also recovered from Domuztepe, dating to the mid-6th millennium BC. Although the sample is not large enough to be conclusive, it is possible that in some cases there was a choice of material in the male and female representations, with females often moulded from clay and the phalluses often carved from stone, although, clearly, this is not universal, and the distinction may be too simplistic.

It is useful nevertheless to consider the materials used for these objects as they would have had different properties and very different manufacturing processes. The vessels are constructed from clay whereas stone carving is a reductive process, and in many cases, the phalluses may have been carved from stone which already had a phallic or figurative look, perhaps indicative of a theme repeatedly seen in rock art: the processes of the subject emerging out of the rock (e.g. Cooney 2002: 95; Thomas 2004: 220). The importance of the source of materials is a topic to which we return in chapter 6.

The process of creating may have been as significant as the final product, either bringing out an image already seen as residing in the stone, or constructing an image through the manipulation of clay. The process of making, specifically of figurines, is considered by Joyce in Mesoamerican contexts (2003, 2008b); the maker engages with the plasticity of the clay, creating an image already embodied—and to some extent—given agency through its creation, use, and disposal. Figures are not merely representative, but can be affective through the processes of making and engagement.

In the case of phalluses, and other bodily parts too, there are representations of disembodied body parts (Belcher 2011). This suggests their isolation and removal as body parts: they were partible from their whole; they did not need to derive this meaning from their relationship to their bodies but were meaningful as separate (or separated) items. The same may be true of incised stones from the Later Neolithic in the Southern Levant, interpreted as vulvas (Gopher and Orrelle 1996). Yet these objects are open to many interpretations and may not have held the same ubiquitous meaning. The pattern that is emerging throughout is that whilst we may discuss ‘the Neolithic’, practices were not ubiquitous; they changed within sites themselves, as well as between sites, across the region, and chronologically.

While many figurines clearly depict sexual components, including phalluses, many figurines are also apparently unsexed. Others appear to combine sexes or are ambiguous. It is likely that many of the figurines, especially those that change or alter (described as visual puns by Daems 2008), may have had multiple meanings (Nakamura and Meskell 2009: 222–3). Such dual or ambiguously gendered figurines are worthy of brief discussion here, because while not directly relating to mortuary practice they do demonstrate the ambiguous nature of many gender representations, with implications for

understanding of both the importance (or otherwise) of gender and clearly defined gender categories.

Ambiguous and dual-sexed figurines

Many figurines appear to merge male and female characteristics. Such figurines can be problematic to catalogue and do not fit any category particularly well. When discussing Mesoamerican figurines, Rosemary Joyce advises that such examples naturally emerge as an alternative gender category, which may relate to Mesoamerican views on the development of gender over a lifetime, with gendered identity linked to age (Joyce 2002: 603). The problematic issue of categorization of ambiguous figurines is common, globally. Yvonne Marshall discusses a collection of stone figures from the Northwest coast of America in a collection by Wilson Duff. Although the figures are clearly ambiguous, they are catalogued and displayed in 'male' and 'female' groups. Such categorization denies the ambiguities explicit in the artefacts, which display the inseparability of the male and female form (Marshall 2000: 228–9).

Examples from the Near East have also been recognized. Alice Kehoe's research on figures from Tepe Sarab in the Zagros region demonstrated the ambiguity in the figurines usually described as female seated figurines, which, when turned 90 degrees, represent male genitalia rather than seated females. The usual label applied to these artefacts is 'figurine' rather than 'phallus', despite the clear problems with categorization of the former alone (Kehoe 1991: 129). Further examples of figurines like this can be seen at Netiv Hagdud (Kuijt and Goring-Morris 2002: fig. 5c; Bar-Yosef 1998: 198), all described as female despite their phallic nature, and an example from Çatalhöyük, described as a 'stone figurine with elongated head or neck' (Hodder 2005: 9) with no mention of its phallic nature. Many other figurines from Çatalhöyük are recognized for their ambiguous or phallic nature, described as 'phallomorphic' (Meskell et al 2008: 141).

Our reluctance to classify these objects perhaps says more about our modern inhibitions than it does about the objects we are studying; we come from a society which sees the naked female form as more acceptable than the male body, especially male genitalia, an attitude that is reflected in censorship laws and guidelines (Croucher 2008). It becomes easy to see how modern outlooks impact on

interpretations of the past—even the description and categorization of the artefacts uncovered are subjected to culturally constructed experiences.

These figurines appear ambiguous in their portrayals, merging categories of male and female. They were intentionally made this way; defining them as one gender was not the intention. They may portray the recognition of the importance of both genders, or may be representative of hermaphrodite or third-gender categories. It is also feasible that gender is being suggested in a way that is unfamiliar to us. For instance, the familiar signs on toilet doors may today appear at face value to be androgynous, the male figure missing any distinguishing features. Yet to us, today, the figures are highly indicative of gender due to the absence of a skirt (Lesure 2011: Fig. 10). A further proposal is put forward by Kuijt and Chesson (2005: 176, 178; 2007); they suggest that displays of gender or ambiguous or unmarked gender in Neolithic figurines are related to the masking or emphasis of individuals, and reflect social inequalities. Yet it seems that individuality was played down, and that relation to others is being portrayed. Whilst this may refer to social masking, this could be another example of the predominance of seeking the emergence or constraint of social complexity (discussed in chapter 3). While appreciating the return to the comforting familiarity of social inequality, Kuijt and Chesson's assessment of the ambiguity of figurines is a valuable demonstration of the growing acceptance in the discipline that gender categorizations may not be as straightforward as our binary oppositions allow.

At the site of Sabi Abyad in Syria, two distinct types of figurines have been recognized, dating to around 5900–6050 cal. BC (see Collet 1996: 403; Croucher 2008). Amongst other characteristics, some were moulded to emphasize the shoulders and breasts, in contrast to others which have incisions to depict the vulva, and an absence of breasts; Collet observes that 'it is the vulva instead of the breasts that is emphasized to indicate the female gender' (1996: 404). It is feasible that these figures indicate a different categorization or understanding of gender and sexuality.

As with the ambiguous figurines discussed above, it may be that different experiences of gendered identity were being expressed. They also highlight the problems with our categorizations, where figurines do not fit into our gendered categories.

Family organization and the problem with our labels

The discussion so far, concerning gendered ambiguities as well as the evidence of gender parity in mortuary practices, suggests that at many sites gender was not the primary or pervading category of social organization; at least there are not the clear divisions that suggest differential treatment during life or at death.

Related to the roles of men and women in the past are interpretations of family organization. The discipline of archaeology came of age during a period when the ideal modern Western family featured the male as the head of the household and the breadwinner, supporting his family, with the female as the primary carer and homemaker. Families lived in either nuclear families or extended family units. This way of organizing family life seems so natural that we do not dispute it, despite the reality that even today there are varying family arrangements, including single parents, cohabitation with siblings or friends, same-sex partnerships, or shared housing for particular periods during life. Yet it is the traditional, ideal family picture that is projected back into our past, most of the time unthinkingly and unconsciously. Whenever family arrangements are discussed for archaeological sites, they are usually framed in terms of either being nuclear or extended. The matter is seen as resolved; when Kuijt and Goring-Morris argue that our interpretations should move beyond the classification of households as either nuclear or extended in order to consider the economic roles of families and their contributions to complexity (2002: 430), it is notable that nuclear or extended families were the only types of arrangement to have been considered by the discipline. Akkermans and Verhoeven have argued that the site of Sabi Abyad was likely to have been occupied by extended family groups, a viewpoint based on the size and complexity of building units, which are too large for nuclear families (1995: 29). Whilst this interpretation is valid, it once again demonstrates the underlying assumptions that we are dealing with extended or nuclear family units as we understand them. This demonstrates how deeply embedded our understandings of social organization are that such living arrangements are not questioned. As Christensen and Warburton argue, archaeologists should recognize that 'there is no reason to assume that these people will have made those distinctions familiar and convenient to us: family, village, economy, society, government, religion, etc.' (Christensen and Warburton 2002: 171).

The nuclear family is seen to emerge during the PPN. Before then, it is argued, organization consisted of polygamous groups (Flannery 1972). This, in part, has been related to architectural changes: compartmentalization of houses, clusters for housing nuclear or extended family units, at a time when households were becoming economically autonomous and concepts of households were emerging (Watkins 1990b). However, the complexity of such household arrangements and their changes through time have been re-analysed by Flannery (2002), recognizing that shifts in community types were reversible and complex. As research by Hemsley has argued, the picture of the development of *increasing* complexity of house forms is doubtful, and variability in economic autonomy is as likely amongst and between contemporary communities, because it is developmental through time (2008: 328).

The idea of marriage is another aspect that is often assumed in archaeological interpretation. We have already seen that Forest (2006, 2009) attributes the movement of pottery to the exchange of women. Whilst movement undoubtedly took place, there are a lot of assumptions that are made along with this model, including female subservience and females as property; whilst this may have been the case, it should be examined rather than just assumed. Comparable assumptions have also been made in Bar-Yosef's suggestion, when examining the transition to agriculture, that perhaps forager women married into farming communities (2008: 321). The terminology used can carry assumptions that are perhaps unintentional. For instance, Kuijt discusses intra-site groups of people related by 'marriage and economic ties' (2008b: 597). Whilst I agree that there were these sorts of ties between people, it could be argued that the label 'marriage' carries various assumptions about behaviour and identity, including monogamous relationships and long-term stable partnerships, none of which is actually really evidenced in the material.

The labels used to describe the inhabitants of houses are accompanied by various assumptions about relationships and behaviours based on modern experiences; as Hamilton observes for Çatalhöyük, 'it is generally assumed that houses were lived in by groups recognizable as families in the modern world, and that houses would have been family property. Other options, such as houses built and used by larger groupings such as lineages, shared out according to need and re-allocated regularly, with varying uses and purposes, have been little discussed' (Hamilton 1998). Household is another label used regularly to describe the family unit, with a perceived economic function.

However, not all households are necessarily resident within one structure, and all those inhabiting a structure may not be part of the same economic unit (Hemsley 2008: 62–3).

Given the emerging complexities of the period, it seems strange that we immediately assume that family structures would not also have been dynamic rather than emerging as straightforward nuclear or extended family units, perpetuated across the region and period. There are other possibilities than nuclear families, including single occupation of houses, or individuals with siblings or offspring (see Hemsley 2008: 141, for a discussion of this in relation to architecture in Jericho). The semi-mobile nature of some groups suggests that occupation may have been more transient and temporary. Could the residents of houses have comprised companions rather than family units or sexual partners without a familial setting? Whilst architecture does confine people to living within groups at least some of the time, it does not dictate that those groups were composed of nuclear or extended family units as we understand them, or that they were permanently occupied by the same inhabitants. With the problems associated with the labels we use, the suggestion by Hemsley ‘to move away from predetermined concepts of nuclear or extended family groupings and ascertain simply, how many people could have inhabited houses’ (2008: 60) is a valid one, transferable beyond Hemsley’s case studies.

It is also feasible that buildings were intended for purposes other than primarily for human shelter and protection, including for storage of ‘foods, tools, ancestors and ritual knowledge’ (Hamilton 2000a: 98). The idea of houses serving as ritual repositories seems relevant for many sites, including Çatalhöyük. When burial patterns are examined, it seems that not all houses were treated in the same way. As Düring suggests for Çatalhöyük (2008), it is feasible that groups of people identified with particular households (in a broad sense), rather than individually relating to the space they inhabited.

The burial pattern at Çatalhöyük reveals that not all houses included burials, and that probably many houses contained more burials than residents. Hamilton (2000a) suggests rather than thinking of buildings as either ‘shrines’ or ‘houses’ that there were ‘lineage buildings’: buildings such as Çatalhöyük’s ‘Building One’ were the focal point for groups of people, particularly at times of birth and death, but also for communal gatherings. This would explain the greater number of neonates, as well as the large number of burials

in general within Building One, including the moving of bones and the incorporation of secondary burials, including skulls. There were also architectural embellishments such as wall paintings, platforms, and installations, as well as frequent architectural repair (Hamilton 1998: 8). However, not all members of the community were buried beneath the floor in houses (see Düring 2008, who suggests around 50 per cent may be an accurate estimation), suggesting that particular individuals were included for burial, but not according to age or sex. One suggestion is that the motivation relates to seasonal activities, with deaths at particular times of the year buried within buildings, coinciding with seasonal repair and maintenance (Düring 2008: 613). The proposition that buildings such as Building One were for larger groups of people than the immediate household is also supported by Düring as relating to lineage groups (*ibid.*); or as Hodder and Pels have termed these buildings, 'History houses' (Nakamura and Meskell 2009: 215), repositories of ritual and social memory. Continuity was important, with some rebuilt at least seven times, amounting to around 420 years of occupation (Düring 2008: 609).

When the evidence is considered, limiting our interpretations to define nuclear or extended households is problematic. I am not trying to dispute that people lived together in what we might term 'family units', it is just that we need to think carefully about what our labels involve; residential situations may not have been as neat or simple as an arrangement that can be defined clearly as a nuclear or extended family. There were more dynamic processes taking place that mirrored neither a neat family unit nor an order according to our gender ideals: people's engagement with places reached beyond the immediate to include broader social groups, which were not necessarily composed of nuclear families, extended family units, 'man the hunter', 'woman the gatherer', or any other number of misleading categorizations. Living arrangements may not have involved marriage, may not have been as permanent or stable as we expect, nor been tied to a particular space or location. Houses may have been occupied on a more dynamic basis, as well as or instead of by permanent occupants. Perhaps the seasonal episodes of reflooring were especially prominent if the occupants of the household changed. If the use of spaces was more fluid, this may account for the lack of burials within many houses. The dead appeared to play an integral role in maintaining the importance of particular buildings, marking the

prominence of certain places within communities for special treatment over the long term.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed and merged feminist approaches with the archaeology of gender, including reassessment of archaeological interpretations, as well as discussing epistemological concerns. The chapter has also included a critique and deconstruction of the binary oppositions of male and female. This may seem radical to some readers; to others it will be a long-acknowledged position. Whatever level of acceptance or cynicism is employed, it is hoped that if nothing else, thought will be given before assumptions are made about gendered identities, gender roles, family constructions, and ways of living in the past.

A focus within this chapter has also been women in the past. The 'add women and stir' approach has already been discussed and it should be noticed that greater attention is now being given to studying the 'masculine'. The phallus imagery discussed above clearly falls into this category, and it is encouraging to see discussions such as Meskell (2008), Hodder (2006a), and Mithen et al (2005) addressing this topic directly. However, as Arden (2009: 57) has argued, 'it is appropriate to turn the critical lens of gendered research to the most deeply embedded gender structures, such as the power relations of hegemonic masculinity, in order to see these roles as culturally constructed rather than inherent, as historically specific rather than inevitable, and ultimately perhaps, as malleable rather than essential'.

This chapter has seen how skeletal analysis, mortuary practices, material culture, and architectural analyses can provide alternative insights into gender and family roles. However, such research is still relatively new, and as such, this discussion is intended as a starting point rather than a final conclusion, with a great deal of research still remaining on the topic. One aspect that is becoming clear is that our gendered binary oppositions are not always clearly marked out in the material record we are studying. In many cases, including the skeletal samples from Peterson and mortuary practices at sites including Domuztepe, Sabi Abyad, Çatalhöyük, and Tell el-Kerkh, there is little differentiation in the treatment of males and females. This is a pattern

that is repeated for the plastered skulls, with other than the small sample from Kfar HaHoresh demonstrating little disparity of treatment between males and females. This is not the universal situation, however, as Molleson's finds from Abu Hureyra demonstrate, where manual labour was divided according to gender. As well as a lack of attention to gender distinctions in mortuary practices at many sites, there is also an active merging or absence of gendered characteristics. The merging of gendered characteristics in figurines, for example, may suggest alternative constructions and understandings of gendered identities, and even third-gender categories; at least this suggestion should not be ruled out, indicating that notions of 'family life' may be more complex than our nuclear/extended interpretations allow. Together with deconstructions of male=wild and female=domestic, it becomes clear that our associations of gender and gendered roles may not be the most appropriate way of describing the past. Perhaps the flaw is in trying to impose a rigid ideology for the whole region—including a basic binary opposition between male and female with all of the associated stereotypes, assumed behavioural patterns, and misunderstandings—and then attempting to apply it to ambiguous and dynamic notions of gender.

The evidence demonstrates the need for further investigation, using small-scale, bottom-up analyses to contribute to our knowledge, which will in all likelihood reveal further differences between sites, within sites, and between regions. To individually discuss each example where gender or ambiguity is shown in the material would take a book in itself, so this study is not complete, and the reader will find many more examples than those discussed here. At the moment, discrete interpretations of a common understanding and practice amongst, for example, all of the PPNA, PPNB, or Late Neolithic is unlikely, as differences emerge in archaeological records between sites. However, further analysis is needed before such a conclusion can be made about the larger scale of gendered identities in the Neolithic.

A factor that does commonly emerge is that gender was not necessarily always an important defining factor of identities. Gender may have been experienced as more dynamic and less structured. Gendered categories may also have changed according to age; certainly this would be expected with gender and sexuality changing throughout the life cycle. Whilst this chapter has focused on gender, it is important to recognize that gender is simply one aspect of

personhood. Identities are constructed out of other defining factors such as age, class, ethnicity, physical ability or disability, knowledge, and skills (Voss 2009: 30). These contribute to the broader experiences of identity, with various factors prominent during different times of life, or even contextually, on a day-to-day, month-to-month, or year-by-year basis. 'Society incorporates a kaleidoscope of potential identities, selected situationally for performance in specific contexts' (McCafferty 2009: 24), with identities constructed according to situation; the same person occupies many roles during life, with different aspects more prominent in different situations. Gender is just one aspect of a person's identity, itself relevant or irrelevant at different times. Furthermore, aspects of identity are relational, dependent on networks with others (people, animals, and things), with personhood being dynamic and transitional.

Perhaps the ultimate aim for gender archaeology is to be incorporated more fully into archaeological studies, rather than singled out for special investigation. This is a realistic optimism already practised in many publications, demonstrating a changing climate in research into the Neolithic Near East. A deconstruction of gendered categories, or an end to their acceptance without consideration, should be integral. Our methodologies should not depend on problematic sexual taxonomies (Voss 2009: 34). As Brück argues for the British Bronze Age, 'gender categories such as "men" and "women", if they existed, were not monolithic and unchanging entities into which people were firmly slotted' (Brück 2005: 150), but were instead discourses, transposable, negotiable, and not lacking in dynamic. Through deconstructing our basic categories, new interpretations which allow for ambiguous and alternative gender and sex, and studies of sexuality in the past can emerge, contributing to the broader encompassing theme of 'personhood', where gender is just one aspect of identity constructions.

Personhood, Identity, and the Dead

INTRODUCTION

Although biological, death can be socially determined, as discussed in chapter 1. The point at which death is perceived to occur can vary from culture to culture, and beyond actual physical death the deceased can still continue to play a significant role in the lives of the community in which they lived. Whilst for some societies forgetting the dead is encouraged, in others the dead are deemed to be present and active in the lives and decisions of the community. When investigating mortuary practices from the Neolithic Near East, we can see that the physical remains of the dead were often and repeatedly used by the living. Disposal of the body was not always permanent; burial, in many cases, can be seen as a transitory stage between life and subsequent use of the body parts of the deceased. Understandings of death were variable and fundamentally different to those we experience in the modern West today.

There is a wide range of ethnographic accounts offering insights into different attitudes to, and experiences of, death. Such accounts also reveal insights into the identity and personhood of the deceased as well as living members of the community. We have already seen in chapter 3 that archaeologists have understood mortuary practices in a variety of ways over the past fifty years, shifting their understanding of burial practices from a belief that burials reveal information about social status, to a growing recognition of other aspects of identity that can be gleaned from the mortuary record. These include the recognition of different experiences of personhood, driving the emergence of the 'archaeology of personhood' (Fowler 2004). This chapter will begin with a general discussion on bodies and personhood, before

discussing archaeological case studies from the Neolithic Near East. Theoretical developments within archaeology have informed this chapter, yet the themes covered, whilst pertinent to the broader theoretical discourses within archaeology, are data driven, taken from analysis of the archaeological record, rather than aiming to prove or disprove a theoretical proposition. However, the theoretical background no doubt affects the observation of particular trends and interpretations, as the hermeneutic, or interpretative, cycle continues.

Case studies will illustrate themes and ideas related to overall concepts of personhood and identity, taking a bottom-up approach to the data. Kfar HaHoresh in the PPNB Southern Levant will be used to explore relationships between humans and animals, including the role of animals beyond prey and food procurement. At PPNB Çayönü Tepesi in Anatolia, themes of dismemberment and fragmentation are investigated, as well as multi-sensory experiences of handling the dead, themes which are also considered through the Late Neolithic site of Domuztepe with the Death Pit. For Domuztepe, acts of consumption will be examined, including cannibalism, with the role of consumption playing a fundamental role in constructions and reflections of identity. These sites focus on the disarticulated and fragmented body, including a consideration of instances of cremation. As a contrast, complete bodies will also be considered, including the roles that material culture can play in maintaining and marking relational identities. The aim of this chapter is to use case studies to explore themes that take our interpretations beyond analyses of social complexity, and attempt to gain a clearer understanding of people's lives in the past, including their relationships with each other, their worlds, and with the deceased, aspects of personhood and identity will be investigated.

Bodies

Throughout this book we have been discussing the 'the body'. We know that our bodies are constructed out of a number of substances including skin, muscle, bone, blood, and organs. Our bodies reveal many aspects of our lives, such as physical health, diet, activity, abilities, and disabilities. They also change according to our age, behaviour, and experiences. Changes in diet and exercise can have an immediate as well as long-term effect on our bodies, especially

during childhood, when repeated strenuous activities or episodes of malnutrition often leave a lasting impression on the physical body and bone structure.

Our understanding of the human body continues to develop, most recently with research into DNA and the human genome. However, it is easy to see how without medical knowledge illnesses can seem inexplicable, often attributed to acts of witchcraft or interventions by the gods. In recent years, what constitutes 'the body' has also changed: transplants and prosthetics incorporate machinery, computers, or the parts of other animals and people into the body. The way that we perceive our bodies as working (or failing to work) has a significant relationship to the perception of our identities.

The body is also inherently biographical, incorporating and displaying changes through life; accidents and illnesses often leave their mark, as do changes in lifestyle. Some changes on the body are intentional, such as piercings and tattooing, cosmetic surgery and implants, with our bodies quite literally displaying aspects of our identity, or even manipulation of these factors, to hide certain aspects about our lives or to portray a particular image or persona.

As a vital component of who we are, our bodies are a site for communicating and constructing our identities. However, as we will see, the living body may not need to be present for a person to exist socially. Furthermore, the way that we perceive our bodies is culturally and historically situated, as well as varying according to personal experience. Aspects of life, such as religion and belief systems, may also influence our understandings and perspectives, including our expectations about death, what death means, and the 'correct' way to dispose of a dead body. Whilst there are multiple ways to dispose of the dead, for most people in the modern West the choice made is either cremation or burial, with the main variables occurring in the location of burials and deposition or the scattering of ashes. Significantly, as discussed in chapter 3, it is the living deciding on the details or who are entrusted with carrying out the wishes of the deceased. Burial in a church graveyard suggests a focus on religion during life, although burial in secular cemeteries is common even for those with religious beliefs, and vice versa; many atheists, for instance, have been laid to rest within church grounds, reflecting the beliefs of their families or communities, rather than their own faith or beliefs.

There are many ways of disposing of the dead which we might find abhorrent today, but it is important that these feelings do not intrude

on our interpretations of the archaeological record. Many practices such as defleshing of corpses, disarticulation of the dead, and even cannibalism, evidently did take place in the past. These practices were often deemed to be a demonstration of honour for the deceased rather than disrespectful, and they reveal different ways of dealing with death from those with which we are familiar in the modern West. Before returning to such practices in the Neolithic in the Near East, it is necessary to provide a brief overview of personhood in archaeological studies, developing the introduction to the topic in chapter 3.

Personhood

The dictionary definition of personhood relates to ‘the quality or condition of being an individual person’ (*OED* 2005). However, this definition is limited for archaeological and anthropological purposes, especially as it comprises the concept of the ‘individual’. Chris Fowler elaborates on the meaning of personhood, describing it as the processes of constituting, de-constituting, maintaining, and altering the person through social practices during life and after death (2004: 7). Fowler further distinguishes between different types of personhood, ranging from individual identities to relational ones. Whilst these are all culturally constructed, they do offer a framework for thinking differently about bodies.

Individual identity, the understanding that a person is bounded and indivisible, is a concept with which we are familiar in the modern West, and it is a perception that is often taken for granted as being the universal default. Individual identity is about a bounded, fixed self (although still subject to change during life). Individual identity can still exist as part of other concepts of personhood: ‘all people have individuality, but the shape that it takes, the desires that characterize it, and the value accorded to it vary immensely’ (Fowler 2004: 8).

Within our concept of individuality, we may still conceive of different aspects of identity within the person such as the Cartesian dualism of mind and body, or religious expectations, which include a soul. It could be considered that there are four broad concepts of mind and body relationships: dualism, the belief that mind and body are distinct and separate; materialism, the belief that only body or matter exists; idealism, the belief that only the mind exists; and

panpsychism/animism, the belief that mind and matter go together, and that matter is intrinsically sentient (Bienkowski 2006). Different concepts of the mind–body relationship affect understandings of the importance of the dead body, with the dualist and materialist understandings seeing the deceased body as an empty shell, and the materialist view that the body is simply a biological mechanism which ceases to be of value after death. However, in experiences of animism, sentience is attributed to all matter: people, animals, plants, and rocks. The dead body therefore takes on a different meaning and importance; rather than simply being a container, the person still exists, albeit in a transformed state, after death (Bienkowski 2006: 7).

Whilst these categorizations might be a useful means for thinking about different mind–body relationships, there is not necessarily a direct relationship between these and treatment of the dead. For instance, the practice of cannibalism could demonstrate that the body is meaningless and, therefore, a suitable source of nourishment, or it could express deep respect for the dead, and an understanding that by consuming the dead body the living person acquires part of that person's essence or identity. Whilst there is not a direct correlation between belief and treatment of the dead, one influences the other, and thus remains relevant when considering the world views of the people we are studying.

Relational identities

Relational identities can be seen to be equated more closely with animistic perspectives. Animism is defined as 'the attribution of a living soul to plants, inanimate objects, and natural phenomena' (OED 2005). In animistic societies, the world and everything in it are interconnected. People, animals, plants, rocks, and the landscape are all related and attributed with a spirit, life, feelings, and intentions. In such belief systems, everything within the environment is intimately connected; there is not a separation between nature and culture, as the natural and cultural worlds are parts of the same cosmos; people are entangled and interconnected with the world around them (see Bird-David 1999).

Relational identities can include individuality as one aspect of identity, but may also see the person as multiply authored, consisting of components that take their meaning from relationships with others. The body is therefore composed of these different elements,

which are created and given meaning through exchanges of substance, nurture, care, and education (Battaglia 1990; Strathern 1988; Barraud et al 1994); a person is made up of parts received from other people, through transactions, interactions, and communication. Furthermore, these parts can be further transferred to others, where essences are continually circulated, and the person is composed of aspects and essences of their relationships with others. Fowler uses the term 'dividual relationships' to describe this concept, a category which is itself broken down into examples of partibility and permeability. With partible identities, parts of a dividual person can be separated and given to others. This includes objects as well as substances, with each person composed of parts, objects, and actions of others in the community. As an example, Fowler (2004) describes the rearing of pigs in Highland New Guinea. A husband and wife rear a pig. The pig is composed of the food, care, and nurture that the owners give it; but it is not just their property, as the pig is considered to be a component of who they are; a product of their relationships. However, the pig can be removed and given away. Identity is partible; part of who you are can be separated and passed to someone else, so it is not just a pig that is exchanged, it represents the person and family that reared it. Exchanging the pig represents a union between giver and receiver, and the receiver then incorporates the pig into their own family; the pig still retains an essence of the giver beyond the transaction.

Permeability differs slightly from partibility, in that parts of a dividual person can be permeated by and can absorb the parts of others, so no parts are removed, but the body contains differing proportions of aspects of the person. Flows of substances and food compose a person, who contains differing proportions of substances, inherited from other people (parents, partners, and kin). As substances are exchanged, the proportions within a person alter. Partability and permeability are defined by Fowler: 'Partibility operates through isolating and extracting parts of the person, and permeability circulates qualities of substance between discrete yet pervious people. Both exhibit features different from the indivisibility that characterizes the western individual' (2004: 32).

So, what does this mean for archaeological studies? There are impacts on interpretations of bodies, objects, and human-animal relationships. For instance, different meanings are placed on objects if they are considered to be components of a person. Exchanges of

such objects in these contexts are usually considered to be gift exchanges, rather than the trading of commodities that we are familiar with. In the modern West, objects are alienable: ownership can be transferred, they can be bought and sold and ascribed material value; they are products and commodities separate from their makers. Gifts differ from commodities as they are inalienable (Gregory 1982): they retain part of the giver and subsequent givers after the act (and subsequent acts) of giving and exchanging. The relationships behind the exchange are as important, if not more so, than the object itself. This means that the objects are embedded in the relationships of exchange, rather than the item simply retaining material value. This is a topic discussed in the seminal publication by Marcel Mauss (1990 [1924]), *The Gift*, focusing on Polynesian examples of Kula exchange, where position in society was reliant upon the exchanges with others. Mauss recognized the expectation of reciprocity in gift exchange; giving a gift creates a debt and dependency and, therefore, a social bond that is represented through the gift items.

The understanding of 'objects' as separate from subjects, it can be argued, is a particularly Western perspective rather than relevant to many of the societies we are studying. That objects can be considered differently, as embedded in meaning, relational and affective, has been an increasingly popular area of study since the 1980s (i.e. Appadurai 1988; Kopytoff 1986) and continues within archaeology today (i.e. Jorge and Thomas (eds) 2006/7; Cobb 2006/7; Ingold 2007).

John Chapman (2000) takes this approach a step further in talking about enchainment and fragmentation. He argues that a fragment of an item can be used in place of the whole item, as representative of the object and of the relationships behind the exchange. Furthermore, just as objects can be broken and exchanged, so too can bodies (Thomas 2000a). Such thinking about breaking and fragmentation of objects offers new avenues of interpretation, which have led to an investigation into practices of fragmentation in the archaeological record, primarily within studies of British and European prehistory.

Within the Neolithic of Britain, communal graves and distributed bones suggest motivations of corporate and collective depositions and experiences of dividualized identities (Fowler 2001: 145). The evidence suggests that there were practices of dismembering, integration, and immersion as body parts were separated and circulated, and other parts substituted or reincorporated into burial contexts (2001: 158). Fowler suggests that these practices reflected and recited

notions of personhood and identity, as bodies were related to each other, the landscape, animals, and material culture (2001). Mortuary monuments were places of transformation, with human bone used to establish relationships between the living and the dead, and relate them to places in the landscape (Jones 2005: 213–4).

In a study of Bronze Age Britain, Joanna Brück has suggested that the treatment of houses, pottery, and quern stones was analogous to the treatment of human bodies. At the end of life, bodies were cremated and the bones were often ground up; bodies were deliberately fragmented or homogenized through this process. At times, especially during the Late Bronze Age, parts of bodies were also retained, with evidence for parts of skulls worn about the body as well as being deposited in non-funerary contexts (2001: 153). Brück argues that the processes of fragmentation were a key to understanding life cycles and concepts of regeneration, with the dead—including ‘dead’ pottery, quern stones, and houses—comparably and metaphorically treated through the transformative processes of crushing and burning. These processes of transformation behind certain technologies, such as metalworking and making pottery, included the use of heat as well as the breaking down of raw materials such as the temper used in pottery production, which was often made from other ground-down pots. Brück suggests that ‘the human lifecycle was compared with and understood in relation to such technological processes as pottery and bronze production’. Through the acts of crushing and burning, the transformative processes of cooking, cremation, metalworking, and potting were considered analogous during the Bronze Age (Brück 2001: 158). Furthermore, these processes enabled the circulation of objects and people, creating, reinforcing, and transforming social links through acts of exchange (2006: 93). The processes at play also suggest that distinctions between people and objects are more relevant to us now than they were during the Bronze Age (Brück 2006) when categories between people and things were blurred.

It is not just through fragmentation that insights into relational identities can be gained and it would be limiting to suggest a direct correlation between individual identity and the integrity of the body beyond death; many ethnographic studies reveal that even when a community has relational identities, the dead are often buried whole and complete. A refreshing study that tackles this issue is Melanie Giles’s analysis of Iron Age Britain. Giles suggests that relational

identities were expressed through the deposition of objects in graves, without fragmentation of material culture or the body. Objects placed in the graves represented the relationships between the living and the dead (Giles forthcoming). Networks may be reflected through burials, and whilst bodies may be whole, the placement of different objects, themselves embodied with different histories, cites the prehistoric body as a combination of elements that are represented by and constituted through artefacts (Giles forthcoming; Brück 2009).

Studies of personhood have also been incorporated into interpretations of other areas of prehistory, including Mesolithic Scandinavia (Fowler 2004), prehistoric Malta (Stoddart and Malone 2008), the Central European Bronze Age (Rebay-Salisbury 2010), and into medieval and historic examples in Europe, Australia, and the USA (Cherryson 2010; Tarlow 2008; Crossland 2009). In Mesoamerican research, studies of personhood have also been used as interpretative devices, with the distributed personhood of the Classical Maya involving the permeability of odours, breath, speech, and song (Gillespie 2008: 130; Meskell and Joyce 2003). Aspects of personhood are seen as constantly changing, particularly through life stages (Joyce 2000b), and the indexical relationships created between people and objects through the processes of making things has been discussed for early Mesoamerican figurine manufacture (Joyce 2007).

It is evident that the study of personhood in archaeology is not simply about looking for either individuals or dividuals in the past. Rather, it is about understanding and interpreting the transactions among people, between people and things, substances, buildings, animals, and other entities, as well as considering people's relationships with the dead and the wider cosmos, brought about through the transition of death (Fowler 2004: 160). Personhood is not a fixed or inherited quality, but emerges through relationships (Giles 2008: 343, after Brück 2004) and is dynamic and transformative. It becomes apparent that even today, whilst we may consider that we have individual identities, in reality there are components of relationality composing who we are. We are all products of our life experiences, and are shaped by those around us. Material objects do often carry considerable significance as they are imbued with sentimental meaning. We are an amalgamation of our experiences with others, even if this takes place in a less formalized way than studies on personhood suggest. It is essential that whilst there are blurred boundaries between dividual and individual concepts of personhood, we do not

assume that the past was filled with *nothing but* individuals (Bloch 1988). We should question our assumptions about individuality when analysing the archaeological data. Searching for a clear-cut 'type' of personhood within our archaeological case studies is limiting, attempting to pin down something that perhaps was never static. Instead, we can search for common strands that suggest which particular relationships were relevant, for perhaps short periods of time, or even relevant simply for the mortuary domain. The next section will address how studies of personhood can have a bearing on our archaeological interpretations of the Neolithic Near East, analysing relationships between people (living and dead), animals, and things.

PERSONHOOD IN THE NEOLITHIC NEAR EAST: IDENTITY-FORMING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PEOPLE, ANIMALS, AND THINGS

The evidence suggests that during the Neolithic of the Near East, identities were constructed around a web of relationships that focused not only on the living, but included the living and the dead, as well as entangled identities with animals and objects. It is unlikely that 'the individual' was perceived in terms with which we are familiar today. Rather, whilst individual beings may have been recognized as a component of personal identities, there was a communal setting to these relationships, including the processes during mortuary events, where identities were reconstructed around deconstructed bodies of animals, people, and things. Ties were further strengthened at particular sites through acts of consumption, uniting people in the creation of embodied memories. To put it simply, it appears that people were crucially aware of their relationships with each other, the dead, and animals, played out through the transitions that death brings about, and the necessity of 'dealing' with the dead. There was not a uniform practice throughout the region during the Neolithic, but different communities focused on different methods of disposing of the deceased, or even practised a range of methods within sites. Whilst the fragmentation of the remains of the dead provides a focus for the distributed person, this does not exclude whole bodies

as meaningfully related to the world around them. Complete bodies too can demonstrate the multiplicity of identities with the world, providing insights into changing concepts of life and death, and the relationships between them.

The next section will focus on the archaeological evidence from the Neolithic Near East, examining the insights that can be gained through thinking about notions of personhood in interpretations of the archaeological data. Using mortuary evidence and a focus on the body, we can investigate aspects of the identities of the inhabitants, living and dead, of past sites. Crucial information is revealed through the presence of incomplete bodies, with sites including Kfar HaHor-esh, Çayönü Tepesi, and Domuztepe providing key insights. Through the theme of fragmentation in the mortuary domain, relationships between humans and animals will also be examined, as will consumption and cannibalism, and the role of fire and cremation. However, it is not just bodies that can aid our interpretation. We have already discussed the role that objects can play in the construction of identity and negotiations of relationships; it is therefore crucial to consider the roles that particular types of material culture may have played, including items that were worn or carried, such as beads, labrets, and seals, and the insights that can be gained from this data when examining aspects of relationality, personhood, and identity.

The living and the dead: an overview of fragmentation in the mortuary arena in the Neolithic Near East

Taking a historical perspective of the Neolithic reveals that mortuary practices during the preceding Natufian period involved a growing association with place. Once interpreted as sub-floor burials, we now know that houses were often constructed above graves, with the grave pre-dating the structure above it (Boyd 2006). The locations of structures were significant, with some importance still assigned to the dead body within the grave. The dead were meaningful and retained a position within society, kept spatially close within the lives of those living above them. In other contexts during the Natufian period, there is evidence for the active manipulation of human remains, where they were not simply housed beneath the spaces of the living, but bodies were excavated and their skulls or crania removed.

People were frequently interred with animal remains during the Natufian, whether in fragments, or as whole bodies. This relationship

between humans and animals will be returned to below. Many burials included decorative items, including necklaces, shells, and beads, as well as red ochre, although the choice not to include items of adornment in mortuary contexts can also be seen (Boyd 2002). Whilst ornamentation might be considered to be simply decorative, it also symbolized relationships, and created links with places and locations. The items, frequently brought from coastal regions, were deposited in graves; taking an object that had been brought from elsewhere, potentially circulated, and likely to have been manipulated in some way (pierced for suspension, polished, or coloured with pigment), before it is worn about the body and then deposited with the dead, creates a link between source and destination, a topic that will be returned to later in this chapter. The decision of the living to remove these items from use and then place them with the dead suggests that a deliberate choice was made to permanently link the deceased to the objects placed with or on them: a permanent entanglement of object and person—at least until their later excavation—either as part of a prolonged process of removing parts of the body, or even by archaeologists many millennia later.

During the PPNA and PPNB we see the deceased body still associated with place, although the dead were often interred beneath the spaces of the living, rather than the living placing themselves over the burial. As in the Natufian, bodies were frequently left complete, and often returned to for their skulls. It is difficult to conceive that the skull became merely an object. Rather, we can see a meaningful demonstration of the continuing relationships between the living and the dead; whether perceived as the deceased ‘individual’ or with identities now focused on a more communal role, representing a communal spiritual or ancestral being. We have already seen in chapter 4 that the skulls signify the continuing role of the dead in the lives of the living; their removal indicates that the dead body did not need to be retained in its complete state. The body was transformed, with the reuse of body parts presenting continued and altered relational identities. Relationships between the living and the dead were not finalized upon burial.

The removal of body parts is an aspect of burials worthy of further exploration, revealing key insights into personhood and identity throughout the Neolithic. It should also be noted that human and animal bones are repeatedly excavated from most sites of the Neolithic Near East, most often resulting from the disturbance of burials

or from butchery of remains, so it is the intended depositions that are discussed here. With the extraction of the skull or cranium, a part of the body is isolated and removed, parted from the remainder of the body. After a period of use, the skulls were often reburied, sometimes in association with the remains of other people. For instance, the association of skulls with complete burials can be seen at the PPNB site of Tell Aswad, where the two caches of plastered skulls each marked the commencement of a burial area (Stordeur et al 2006; Stordeur and Khawam 2007). The burial area was well prepared with a fine-clay floor before the deposits were laid into shallow depressions. One such deposit of four plastered skulls had been placed with a collective burial, Burial 671, containing the remains of at least ten people (Stordeur et al 2006: 41–2), as can be seen in fig. 6.1. These included a primary adult with the skull missing (Burial 671–1), the partial skeleton of a secondary burial with some articulation (671–2), a skull (671–3) that had been placed together with and slightly after the plastered skulls and burial 671–2. Burial 671–4 is represented by some vertebrae, ribs, and a left humerus, with an earthen vessel placed close to the remains. A child of around one year old was a primary burial (671–5), and 671–6 was a primary burial of around ten to fifteen years of age and marked the last deposit in the collective grave. This last burial wore a necklace of 34 white circular beads, with a broken and extremely worn green stone tubular bead. In addition to this collective burial, a further 20 people had been placed in four graves (Stordeur et al 2006: 42–4). Those dying at different times and potentially different places were buried together, with mass graves, including primary and secondary burials, including isolated bones and crania. There were frequent openings of graves and handling of human remains, with great care afforded to the treatment of the dead (Stordeur et al 2006: 56). The later funerary area contained 22 burials, with the first deposits again marked by the placement of a cluster of plastered skulls (Stordeur and Khawam 2007). Within the nested skulls, an infant body had been placed; the infant was complete and had had to have its body broken to fit within the cluster of skulls (fig. 4.3). There was clearly a choice to deposit the body whole, or represent it only by the skull, and the mingling within the burials recalls the differences between the complete and disarticulated bodies.

While the ‘whole’ body was broken down through skull removal at some sites, this fragmentation often continued with the further fragmentation of the skulls themselves. Pieces of skulls were often



Fig. 6.1. Plastered skulls with collective burial 671, Tell Aswad (Danielle Stordeur).

retained and ‘used’ as well as selected for reburial. A piece of skull from PPNA Wadi Faynan (WF16) appears to have been polished and pierced (Bill Finlayson and Sam Smith pers. comm.), and pieces of skulls have also been found at PPNB Kfar HaHoresh, some of which had been burned (Nigel Goring-Morris pers. comm.), and one piece which had been drilled was redeposited in an intentional arrangement of human and animal bones (Simmons et al 2007). Much earlier examples date to the Natufian period, including the site of ‘Ain Mallaha, where a fox mandible had been placed next to a piece of cut and polished human skull (Goring-Morris 2005; Perrot and Ladiray 1988: fig. 32, pl. XVIII). At the other end of our temporal scale, skull fragments were selected for removal and circulation at the Pottery Neolithic site of Domuztepe, which will be discussed in more detail below.

At WF16, whilst the most common type of mortuary practice here was primary articulated burials, excavations have uncovered the burial of ten large fragments of crania. These had been carefully stacked like bowls and placed above a primary burial whose skull had been removed and replaced with the long bones from the left leg

crossed over the right tibia (Finlayson et al 2009). The skull, whilst removed, had been replaced with other parts of the body. The stacking of fragments of other crania reveals that there was a repeated practice, with the removal of parts of the body and the further breaking down of these parts. The partibility of these body fragments suggests that a meaning was embedded in them, which was relevant, even when away from the whole. There was not a reliance on the fragments being kept with the remainder of the body for meaning to be communicated. Their reburial represents a choice to remove them from use and circulation by the living, whether temporarily or permanently. At WF16, as at Aswad and other sites, the reburial of body fragments typically saw them placed in association with the bones of others, in a communal context, rather than deposited as isolated remains. Parts of bodies, including skulls, were often carefully deposited in relation to each other, and sometimes with a primary, although manipulated, burial. Whilst components of the body and identities could be removed, they could also be combined, placed in relation to fragments of other people, animals, and objects).

It was not only skulls that were selected for reuse; other parts of the deceased would often be manipulated. Burying, retrieving, handling, and reburying of the human body were all repeatedly practised at Tell Aswad (Stordeur et al 2006; Stordeur and Khawam 2007; Stordeur pers. comm.). The dead were repeatedly returned to; for many, death was not the end of their use and role in society. However, a variety of ways of manipulating the dead is commonly seen, with many sites revealing multiple mortuary treatments. At the PPNB site of Dja'de, for example, primary, secondary, and skull selection were common, including several cases of isolated deposits of crania recovered from beneath the floors of houses. However, a particular building was also selected for retaining the remains of the dead, called the 'House of the Dead' by excavators. The same function can be seen over three phases of the building, with the structure changing little over its lifetime and reconstructions. In many cases, the burial deposits were not sealed until later phases, and were thus reused over a long period of time. The burials were mostly of children and young adults buried in groups. One group of 13 individuals consisted of an adult female buried in a semi-flexed position, holding a child, and with her hand laid on a single cranium. A further group contained a

child's skull with the aligned long bones of at least three adults. In total, the remains of at least 38 people were deposited in and around the house. They had been buried over several phases, and many had previously been exposed to the elements, indicating secondary burial. Coqueugniot (2000) suggests that the secondary burials may have comprised semi-nomadic inhabitants who had died elsewhere, and that their remains, wrapped in mats, were brought to Dja'de. The subsistence pattern supports this, since resources from the wild had been exploited, although there were also likely to have been permanent or semi-permanent occupants.

The above material has considered the Early Neolithic and Natufian periods. The picture during the Later Neolithic changes, with some sites having primary inhumations within cemetery contexts. These will be discussed below. However, fragmentation of the body in the mortuary domain is evident at some sites. Domuztepe is one such site, which will be discussed as a case study later in this chapter. Other examples include the Halaf and Ubaid site of Tell Arpachiyah in Northern Iraq, where approximately one-third of all burials were partial and incomplete, with head, limbs, or ribs missing (Mallowan and Rose 1935: 35). A group of skulls had been placed within ceramic bowls (Hijjara 1978: 125), and an isolated, unpublished skull was recovered from the east side of the mound (Campbell 1992: 177). Particularly intriguing are the portable items recovered from Arpachiyah, described as models of finger bones by the excavators. A set of five of these models, made from white limestone, along with an actual finger bone, and a collection of other objects including both a female and a male figurine (the only male figurine excavated on the site), were recovered from the Burnt House in TT6, a building interpreted as being of ritual and high-status use (Mallowan and Rose 1935; Campbell 2000). One of the finger bones has a flat base, interpreted as a probable gaming piece (Mallowan and Rose 1935: 99). A further set of finger bones was also found in Grave 58, along with some barley grains with smashed pottery objects, and other items including an obsidian knife and a white stone pendant (*ibid.*: 43). The excavators speculate on the ritual use of finger bones, given their recovery as both an additional grave deposit and in the Burnt House. Whilst the prospect of these objects being modelled on finger bones is intriguing, especially against a background of interactions between the living and the dead and circulation of bones, perhaps even more thought provoking is that on further investigation, the models relate more closely

to phalanx bones of a ruminant, an animal about the size of a large sheep/goat upwards (probably at least dog-size), (Jessica Pearson pers. comm.). Yet they are associated with human finger bones (as identified by the original excavators), at least in the Burnt House.

Fragments of the body could be, and were, removed from whole bodies, and continued their biographies long after death throughout the Epipalaeolithic and Neolithic. They were, it seems, often redeposited in other meaningful contexts, frequently accompanying new, or marking old, burials. The practice suggests that there was a relationship or a link between the fragments of bodies and those remains with which they came to be interred. Identities were not statically assigned, therefore, but were transferable to parts which could be separated and exist without the whole. At some sites this pattern is extended with a greater fragmentation of the dead body. Three such sites are Kfar HaHoresh in the Levant, the broadly contemporary PPNB site of Çayönü Tepesi in Anatolia, and the Late Neolithic site of Domuztepe, also Anatolian. These will be discussed as case studies next.

As we have seen in previous chapters, it is difficult to unite the region in a common type of mortuary practice. Yet it is possible to perceive certain trends from among the evidence of some sites. Whilst many sites contain the burial of 'complete' bodies, many sites provide evidence of the active breaking down and disarticulation of bodies, as the above discussion has demonstrated. Different examples of fragmentation will be explored in the next three case studies; where, while there are common themes which will be discussed for each site, including fragmentation and circulation of human remains, there are particular aspects that will be the focus of each case study. For Çayönü Tepesi, the disarticulation and fragmentation of bodies take place within the 'Skull Building'. For Kfar HaHoresh, one of the most striking aspects revealed by the evidence is the relationships between humans and animals. At Domuztepe, issues of consumption will be considered, particularly cannibalism.

Case study: fragmentation at Çayönü Tepesi

Çayönü Tepesi is situated in the Diyarbakır region of Southeast Anatolia, and dates to the PPNB Period. The site has been excavated under the direction of M. and A. Özdoğan (see Özdoğan and Özdoğan 1998; Özdoğan 1999 for general overviews of the site, and Schirmer 1990 for a detailed discussion of the architecture). The site

as a whole is a crucial one during this period as it was continually occupied for several millennia, from the PPNA to the Late Neolithic, and evidences the adoption of agriculture and domestication of species. Of particular interest here is the Skull Building, which was one of a handful of buildings with a communal purpose: larger, containing evidence of non-domestic activities, and constructed at the eastern end of the site. Dating to the PPNB, the Skull Building was in use for around 1000 years, although reconstructed throughout this period with at least five building phases. The remains of the earliest building, termed BM1 by the excavators, consists of an apsidal wall, with the remainder of the building rebuilt over later phases. For most of its life the building was a rectangular structure, termed BM2, with phases a–c within it. BM2a is the latest phase (which was excavated first) and BM2c the earliest of the rectangular structures. Eventually the building was deliberately destroyed by fire.

It is clear that social memory or at least tradition played an important role throughout the use of the Skull Building. The building was reconstructed to the same plan and orientation, even though the orientation of buildings throughout the rest of the site altered uniformly during the different phases of the site. Practices within the building were repeated through time, with common themes including the placement of skulls in the building, the incorporation of aurochs bones, the fragmentation of the human body, as well as the digging of pits, the division of space, and choice of materials used in the building practices, all aspects that will be returned to later in this discussion.

The remains of over 450 people were recovered from within the Skull Building, mostly represented by skulls and long bones. The deposition of skulls began during the early phase of the building, during the Round House sub-phase of the site, when skulls were placed on the floor of the apsidal structure. During this period, burials were also common within abandoned areas elsewhere on the site, and beneath the floor in houses, in the foundations of the structures, or in the infills of abandoned buildings (Özdoğan 1999: 44, 47). The deposition of human remains, primarily skulls, continued into the use of BM2. Initially, three cellars were constructed under the northern section of the Skull Building during BM2c, and over a period of time, human remains were placed into these cellars. There was some selection over the placement of remains within the cellars, with the eastern cellar containing jumbled remains

whereas the western cellar had been ordered, with over 90 skulls arranged in north–south lines, facing either east or west, with stacks of long bones next to them (Özbek 1992). Other cellars were less well ordered than the western one, although they usually contained layers of skulls. An articulated leg had been placed in one cellar, and in another, there was the primary burial of a female aged around forty-five to fifty years, who had been of poor health (Özdoğan 1999: 51).

During the later BM2b and BM2a phases, the cellars were covered over with stone slabs, and the deposition of skulls continued in the rooms that had been constructed above them, with the human remains being gradually added over a period of time rather than being the result of a particular event. We know this due to the differential effects on the skulls caused by the fire at the end of Skull Building's life (Özbek 1988: 129). As the skulls had been deposited into the Skull Building at different times, they were in varying states, with some much dryer than others, which resulted in differential burning when the building was ignited.

Throughout the life of the Skull Building, the northern area became increasingly segregated and the southern area remained open to activity. Initially, the areas were separated by a step and standing stones, which became incorporated into a wall, with the rooms closed off from view from the south, eventually accessible only via a small doorway. The northern area was constructed out of stone, including the stone slabs that covered the cellars. In contrast, the southern area was repeatedly plastered, although with episodes of pit digging taking place, with the pits then plastered over.

The human body was repeatedly deconstructed at Çayönü. At least some of the processing of human remains took place within the Skull Building itself. A large (2 m² and 10 cm-deep) highly polished stone slab (fig. 6.2) had been placed in the southern area of the building. On this, and on a 10 cm-long black flint blade, were found human, aurochs, and sheep haemoglobin crystals (Loy and Wood 1989; Wood 1998), suggesting that cutting of flesh, at least, occurred in this space.¹ Whether killing took place in the space is

¹ Whilst the reliability of blood residue analysis has been questioned (e.g. Fiedel 1996; Grace 1996, and more recently Brown and Brown 2011), analysis is strongly defended by a body of archaeologists and scientists (Newman et al 1997), including analysis on identification of species of animals (Tuross and Barnes 1996) and recently discussed by Hösberg et al (2009). In the case of Çayönü Tepesi, even if blood residue results are used as supporting rather than



Fig. 6.2. Large stone slab, the Skull Building, Çayönü Tepesi, reconstructed in Diyarbakır Museum (Photo by Ellen Belcher).

difficult to ascertain, as blood would still be present in the body, at least for a few days until the blood vessels collapsed and the blood became incorporated into other bodily decompositional fluids. The idea of sacrifice is a dramatic notion seized upon by Lewis-Williams and Pearce (2005: 81–2), but in reality the evidence is not conclusive. When the skulls themselves are examined, many have their cervical vertebrae present, with cut marks that indicate that bodies were decapitated rather than the skull being removed after decomposition (Özbek 1988: 129; Loy and Wood 1989: 452). However, this is certainly not a uniform picture, and was not practised on all of those deposited within the Skull Building. Decapitation could also relate to post-mortem treatment of the body rather than a means of death. Furthermore, there is a general lack of evidence for violent causes of death at Çayönü (Özdoğan 1991: 6).

In addition to the remains within the Skull Building, there were human remains recovered from across the site in levels contemporary

conclusive evidence of the killing or processing of bodies, the findings are consistent with contextual evidence from the Skull Building.

with the Skull Building (Özdoğan 1999: 47). The Skull Building was in use over a long period, and throughout each phase, access could be gained to the human burials interred during the phase of use. Whilst this is not the accepted interpretation, we should not rule out the possibility that human remains were also removed from the Skull Building, or that other parts of the body aside from the skulls and long bones remained in different contexts of use or deposition; postcranial bones are certainly under-represented within the Skull Building (Özdoğan 2001: 2). The selection of body parts—namely skulls and long bones—extended to aurochs also; there are several aurochs skulls and horns deposited in the Skull Building, interred with human remains, or it seems, some displayed on walls (Wood 1998: 763; Davis 1998: 259); during the use of the Skull Building, aurochs are estimated to have provided at least 50 per cent of meat protein (Lawrence 1982; Davis 1998: 259). There is also an example of a dog burial and a boar skull with a male burial from the Grill Building sub-phase (Özdoğan 1999: 47).

Although there have been complete bodies recovered from Çayönü, these are thought to date to the later Cell Plan phase of the site, although c-14 dates are yet to be processed. The integral, whole body was not the focus of mortuary practices at the Skull Building. Rather, there was a breaking up of the body, with at least some bodily remains contained within the building, a permanent location at the east of the site, notably the area continually chosen for buildings of special or communal significance. Towards the end of the use of the Skull Building, an open area adjacent to the Skull Building came into use, the Plaza. At first a pebbled surface, the Plaza was renewed several times and expanded, incorporating standing stones and limestone slabs (Özdoğan 1999: 50), with a well-prepared earth floor eventually covering an area of at least 1000 m² (Davis 1998). Kept meticulously clean before each reflooring episode during its early phases of use, the Plaza eventually became used as an area for butchering and rubbish disposal (Özdoğan and Özdoğan 1998: 587). The open area was suitable for large gatherings, and eventually came to be used as a production area—might processing of the deceased also have taken place there?

It is debated whether those within the Skull Building were of a higher status (Özdoğan 1999: 51), a pattern seen with the control of buildings and construction by a social group, class, or ritual leader (Özdoğan and Özdoğan 1998: 591), although it is notable that with 450-plus burials, we are not witnessing the same levels of exclusion seen in the plastering of skulls or decapitation in the PPNB Levant. Whatever the selection criteria, burial in the Skull Building was not based on age or sex, other than being above about two years of age. This in itself reveals a different attitude towards, and treatment of, the bodies of infants.

It seems to be the case at Çayönü that identities beyond death entered a communal sphere, incorporated within the Skull Building, although individually represented by their skull, the most recognizable component of the body. The Skull Building might be considered a site of transition, moving the deceased onto the next phase; this was certainly the case for the physical remains of the dead, as they were broken down.

It was not just bodies that were broken. During one of the phases of closure, a clay plate, one of the earliest from the site, was deliberately smashed, marking the closure of one phase of the Skull Building. The plate was unusual as it contained ground-down bone as its temper; the bone had then been incorporated into the plate during production. The choice of inclusions in pottery vessels frequently appears to be the result of deliberate choices, selected for their colour, texture, shine, or symbolic value (Woodward 2008: 294). Whether grog (other pots), stone, or shell, the choices made frequently incorporate references to places, events, or other vessels; in the case of bone, its inclusion in pottery may reference particular animals, people, or feasting events (Woodward 2008: 295). A blurring of categories, between body and object, is also represented, as the vessel becomes corporeal (or bodily). Themes of regeneration are perhaps called to mind (*sensu* Brück 2001, 2006), with the incorporation of an old substance being used to create a new. This is then itself broken and taken out of use, and becomes incorporated into the Skull Building itself.

What does this tell us about personhood? Themes of fragmentation were relevant, practised on humans, animals, and other objects. The remains of both the fragmented plate and the human body were incorporated into the Skull Building; the latter probably after some selection process when, presumably, some parts were also removed,

retained, circulated, deposited, or disposed of elsewhere. Whether individual identity was regarded as important is difficult to ascertain, although the communal setting suggests that it was not so relevant to retain an individual conceptualization once the remains had been processed. The individual integrity of the body was not retained beyond death, it seems. And this process was not dependent upon age or gender, but rather, included a wide demographic range beyond infancy.

The living at Çayönü Tepesi

So far, this analysis has focused on the dead rather than the living. We know that whatever events took place must have involved the cutting of fleshed remains; there was a tactile and hands-on process involved in the 'care' of the dead, which no doubt would have been an immersive experience, shaping the lives of those undertaking the task. The processing involved blood, muscle, tissue, and bones; the fleshed state of remains is something we tend to neglect in archaeology, in part, due to the dry and sterile nature of the bones that we recover as archaeologists, at least in Near Eastern prehistory. Yet clearly the processes of deposition would have differed vastly from the remains we excavate: very bloody and possibly smelly; involving the use of tools and, no doubt, some hard work as well as presumably some kind of cleaning activity afterwards.

The motivations for the processing of the dead may not have been violent or disrespectful, emotions and motivations we might associate with similar practices today, but such actions could have been perceived as veneration of the dead. The processing of the dead may have been assigned to those with either positions of power or of servitude; particular knowledge and skills were certainly required. Perhaps this undertaking was accompanied by other privileges or duties. The people engaging in the processing of the dead may have been temporary actors, chosen according to the identity of the deceased, cause of death, or dependent on other factors. In contrast to scenes of violence and sacrifice, the events may have been considered compassionate, appropriate, or a means of forging the ties between the living and the dead, albeit transformative of both the living and the deceased.

Yet this processing of the dead, whilst immersive, was conducted within a building specially allocated for the task. This suggests that

the dead were not a daily feature of life, and were not kept as spatially close as in many burials at contemporary PPNB sites, where the dead were placed beneath the floor in houses. However, the Skull Building was a construction that demanded considerable effort: the labour and attention invested in the construction and maintenance of the building; the labour involved in the processing of human and animal remains; the quarrying and polishing of stone; the repeated plastering of the floor and the labour associated with that activity, as well as general maintenance against the elements—it all required significant effort—and suggests that the dead held an important and, perhaps, influential position within society. The Skull Building was suitable for a large number of people to congregate, with a maximum capacity of 150–190 persons seated on the floor (McBride 2011: 292), and considerably more if standing. This suggests that involvements with the dead maintained a community focus, and while the building was located in the eastern area of the site removed from areas of habitation, it was still situated within the settlement itself. The dead may have been removed from everyday life, but they were still located within the settlement site, rather than a separate burial ground or location elsewhere. The dead were still retained close to the spaces of the living, where communal gathering permitted the engagements between the living and the dead. The communal nature of events taking place is evident; aside from the space in the southern area of the building which would have facilitated the gathering of a large number of people, the presence of white-ware (plaster) vessels suggests that communal consumption activities took place as well (Özdoğan and Özdoğan 1993: 93). The fragments of these plastered vessels originated from large plates, suited to communal, rather than individual, consumption. Communal activities such as this may also have continued in the eastern area of the site beyond the use of the Skull Building, with the large open-air Plaza area a likely forum for communal activity for comparable purposes. This outdoor space had a maximum capacity of over 700 people (McBride 2011: 319).

The closure of the Skull Building, which was infilled and then burnt, would also have required collective effort. The burning of the building can be understood as performative. As well as being a highly visual event, smells, sound, and heat would have radiated, affecting those within the vicinity, with smoke and ash carrying further afield, communicating the event across a considerable distance. The

comparable destruction of a communal building, also burnt and buried, can be seen at PPNA Jerf el-Ahmar; the impressive, curvilinear structures, EA47 and EA30, were constructed in the ground at a depth of up to 2m, with wooden posts supporting an earthen roof; an impressive, labour-intensive feat. The insides of the buildings were covered with mud plaster and constructed with benches and compartments around the exterior of a central, open area. The buildings recall a communal function, as do their closures, when they were burnt and buried (Stordeur et al 2001; Stordeur and Ibáñez 2008). Skulls were found as foundation deposits beneath one of the communal buildings, and the death of a female occurred at the time of the destruction of EA30 (Stordeur 2000b). Whilst clearly there were many fewer mortuary interments, it is difficult not to draw parallels between the communal buildings, through their construction, collective use, and feats of destruction, and recall comparable buildings at PPNA Mureybet and Wadi Faynan, with an emerging tradition of communal work in architectural accomplishments.

To sum up, rather than focusing on the dead body alone, consideration of the experiences of the living creates a more in-depth interpretation of the events taking place. These events would have been transformative—not only for the dead—but also for the living, as the performances of processing the dead shaped lives and embedded memories. Just as the deceased are transformed through the events taking place at the Skull Building, so too were the living affected by these actions and processes. Processing of the dead may have created or reinforced relationships between the living and the dead, with relationships transformed from those experienced between living people. Such relationships might not seem so alien when the experiences of archaeologists excavating human remains are considered; the excavator, only inches away from the bodies they are excavating, perceives a particular closeness, empathy, or even a sense of stewardship towards the remains that are being excavated; the excavator is rarely unaffected by the experience (see Mitrovic 2008 for an account of the experience of excavating human remains; although Mitrovic's records are from extreme and traumatic circumstances the like of which, thankfully, few archaeologists are exposed to, the effect on the excavator is clear).

The disarticulation and defleshing of the dead at Çayönü were tactile, mnemonic experiences, which would have had an effect on the identities of the living, while also transforming the personhood of

the dead. The physical body was very obviously transformed, broken down, and fragmented into parts. The identities of the dead were altered through these practices, negating the individual body and attaining a new existence: bodily parts within a communal setting. This transition is easier to perceive through the notion of relational identity, with a collective and entwined identity with other members of the community, both living and dead. Identities were transfigured, altered, and placed in new associations with the fragmented remains of other bodies and transformed persons.

The themes of fragmentation and disarticulation discussed here, and the effect these practices had on the living, are relevant for the next case study of the broadly contemporary PPNB site of Kfar HaHoresh in the Southern Levant. However, rather than focusing on fragmentation alone, the case study will focus on relationships between humans and animals evidenced through the mortuary arena.

Case study: humans–animals at Kfar HaHoresh

Kfar HaHoresh is situated in the Southern Levant and is still being excavated under the direction of Professor Nigel Goring-Morris. Excavations have revealed at least six phases in a complex sequence, dating from around the EPPNB to the Late PPNB, c.8500–6750 BC (Goring-Morris 2008). The excellent preservation and excavation techniques are providing a wealth of information from which it is possible to begin to build up a detailed picture of depositional practices at the site. Although analysis is still underway, preliminary excavation reports enable insight into concepts of the body and human–animal relationships. I will argue that we can see an active deconstruction of the body in the mortuary arena, as part of a variety of mortuary treatments seen at the site. Furthermore, Kfar HaHoresh is unique in offering well-preserved and excavated mortuary remains that demonstrate that human–animal relationships constituted identities. The repeated associations in the mortuary domain reveal a role for animals which is, I argue, beyond that of prey and food production, conceptualized as closely connected to people in a world that saw humans and animals as interdependent, entwined, and interrelated.

Kfar HaHoresh looks out towards Mount Carmel and the Mediterranean, commanding an impressive view of the surrounding landscape (Goring Morris 2000: 107–9, 124). The apparent lack of architecture and settlement debris has led to the interpretation that

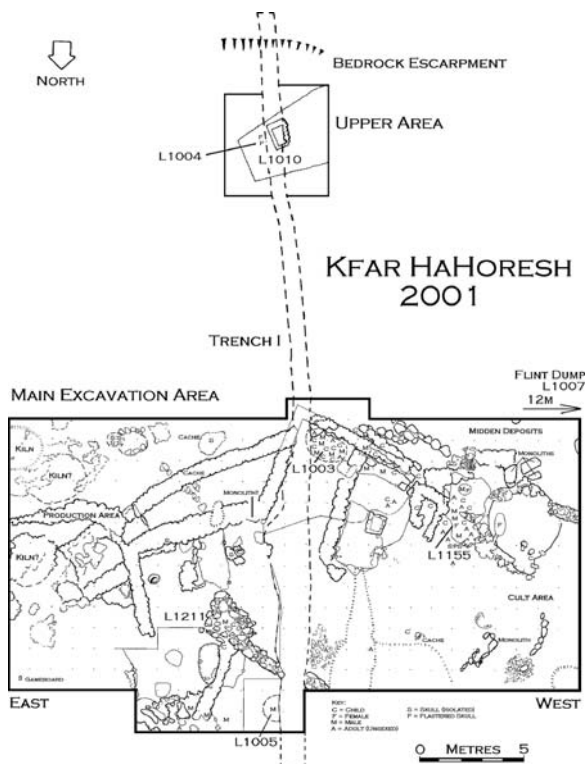


Fig. 6.3. Plan of excavated areas, Kfar HaHoresh (Nigel Goring-Morris).

the site was predominantly a mortuary location, used as a communal setting for inhabitants of settlements in the surrounding regions, probably on a periodical or seasonal basis (Goring-Morris et al 1998: 2; Goring-Morris 2000: 107–9).

Although termed a mortuary site, there is evidence for a variety of activities taking place. The site was spatially divided into separate activity areas (see fig. 6.3), among these, that with the most relevance here is the mortuary area, which comprised lime-plastered surfaces, low walls, cists, platforms, and three discrete clusters of human graves containing over 70 human burials excavated to date (Goring-Morris et al 2008). Adjacent to the mortuary area is a part of the site described as a ‘cult’ area, with plastered surfaces (many overlying grave deposits), installations, and walls, as well as standing stones which had been placed both in groups and singly (Goring-Morris

2008: 1907). Excavations on this area of the site are still underway, with a large platform area due to be excavated in the summer of 2011.

Surrounding the mortuary and cult spaces is a large midden area of around a metre in depth, which included hearths, roasting pits, and burnt stones, with accumulations of animal bones, which, it is suggested, represent the possible remains of feasting (Goring-Morris et al 1998: 3). Low, roughly constructed walls had been built to contain the midden, suggesting differential use of space within the midden area itself, and between the midden and other areas.

An industrial area of the site can also be identified, with evidence of the production of stone tools and plaster. This was located at the eastern side of the site, and included hearths, platforms, kilns, and numerous tools, especially scrapers, hammer-stones, and choppers, some of which were crude and others well made. The tools were manufactured on site and exploited local raw materials, although some were made from obsidian and rarer types of flint (Goring-Morris 2008: 1909). Evidence for plaster preparation includes a lime kiln, as well as numerous tools, especially pieces of ground stone with remnants of plaster adhered to them. This find questions traditional assumptions about the use of these tools, thought primarily to relate to plant processing and food production (Goring-Morris et al 1998: 3). The scarcity of bone in this area of the site reveals attitudes to the body: the deceased are kept away, in separate locations, a distance from the production area.

The archaeology of Kfar HaHoresh is complex, and further excavation and analysis will shed additional light on activities to determine whether the midden and cult areas may also have been occupation areas, which has implications for interpretation of the site as one that was only seasonally occupied. Although excavation is still ongoing, there are nevertheless themes emerging from the data, including fragmentation in the mortuary arena and deconstructing and reconstructing the bodies of both humans and animals.

Mortuary practices and fragmentation at Kfar HaHoresh

Mortuary practices at Kfar HaHoresh included primary burials as well as articulated and partially articulated body parts, and the secondary treatment of both human and animal remains (Goring-Morris et al 2008). The primary burials vary from supine to contracted, with the latter buried both on their sides and in sitting positions, often wrapped in mats or sacks (Goring-Morris 2005: 94). Some burials remained

intact: for instance, a burial in L1926 dating to the M/LPPNB saw a complete adult male aged fifty years or over, buried with his head propped up, and facing west. He was buried with a sickle blade, a shell, and a piece of reddened burnt clay; 60 molluscs nearby may also possibly relate to the burial (Goring-Morris et al 2008).

Of the primary burials at the site, 15 had their skulls or crania removed post mortem, a relatively common practice (Simmons et al 2007: 104), in addition to other manipulations and disturbances of the body that also took place at Kfar HaHoreh. What does this say about attitudes to the deceased body? It was not intended that complete physical remains were always kept together beyond death, with the deliberate breaking down of the whole body, through disarticulation, dismemberment, and defleshing. A contracted, articulated human burial had the cranium and mandible removed after decomposition, seemingly through a hole made in the plaster surface above the burial. This person was buried above a 1.5 m-deep pit, a feature referred to as the 'Bos Pit', which contained over 200 postcranial aurochs bones, many of which were partially articulated, belonging to at least two immature, and six adult, animals (Goring-Morris 2000: 110). A primary human burial, laid supine, with mandible present and cranium removed, had been buried above an earlier plastered surface which covered an untreated skull (Goring-Morris 2000: 110–13). As well as crania, mandibles were repeatedly selected for redeposition within mortuary contexts. Beneath one plastered surface were numerous human mandibles and postcranial parts; some were partially articulated and possibly associated with the remains of a gazelle (Goring-Morris 2000: 110–13).

At least 12 crania have been recovered from Kfar HaHoreh. Some had been reburied individually, others were nested in groups, or placed in graves with other secondary or postcranial deposits. The skulls were often placed within or on top of organic containers: mats, baskets, grasses, or textiles, a pattern that Goring-Morris notes is continued in the medium of clay at some PN sites (2005: 95). Plastered skulls have also been recovered from the site, in one case from a cluster of three skulls; at least one of which was plastered, with the outer plaster layers deteriorating at the time of reburial. A further plastered skull was recovered from a nearby clay-lined surface or bin, dating to a later sequence, and a third was recovered from L1004, in association with a headless gazelle (Goring-Morris 2005: 96). This latter skull was well preserved. The cranium was accompanied by an

arrowhead, and had been placed in a stone-lined, plastered depression. Furthermore, it was marked by a posthole which was situated above the skull (Goring-Morris 2000: 109–10, 113), marking its location. There is also a frequency of the deposition of pieces of skulls at Kfar HaHoresh, many of which had been drilled. For instance, a piece of skull which had been drilled soon after death was recovered from L1155, as well as phalanges (finger and toe bones) and a tibia, pierced at its proximal end (Simmons et al 2007: 116). There have been further skull fragments recovered from across Kfar HaHoresh (Goring-Morris pers. comm.), as well as the frequent recovery of mandibles.

As well as crania and mandibles, the deposition of incomplete bodies is repeatedly seen. A particularly striking example of a partial burial (L1804) dates to the EPPNB midden deposits, with the burial of a male of around forty to forty-five years of age, named ‘half-a-man’, due to the selection of bones represented. These included half of his left mandible, his right tibia and fibula, and part of the vertebral column, the burial being framed by the left ribs. The cranium was absent, as were the pelvis and many other parts of the body (Goring-Morris et al 2008).

A further two features of the site are of particular interest, involving a large number of processed and manipulated human and animal remains that demonstrate a specific selection and ordering of body parts, with different parts of the body chosen for selection or exclusion within mortuary features. The two features are L1155 and L1003, both of which will be described briefly below.

The deposit L1155 consisted of a variety of mortuary practices. It included primary, mostly articulated burials without skulls, a cache of three skulls, one of which one is plastered, and also partially articulated remains, some of which may be disturbed burials. In addition, there was a deliberate arrangement of bones and body parts, including limbs (the long bones of at least four people), skulls and mandibles, as well as gazelle remains. The body parts within L1155 were intentionally arranged in what is thought to be a depiction of an animal, about 1.5 m long (fig. 6.4). It was recognized from the outset that although the type of animal depicted may be unclear, ‘there can be no doubt that this was an intentional arrangement: the mouth was indicated by an upturned human skull and mandible, the nostrils by gazelle metapodia [part of the foot], the eye by a stone and a hoof by an upturned mandible. The bushy tail took on the form of an articulated human

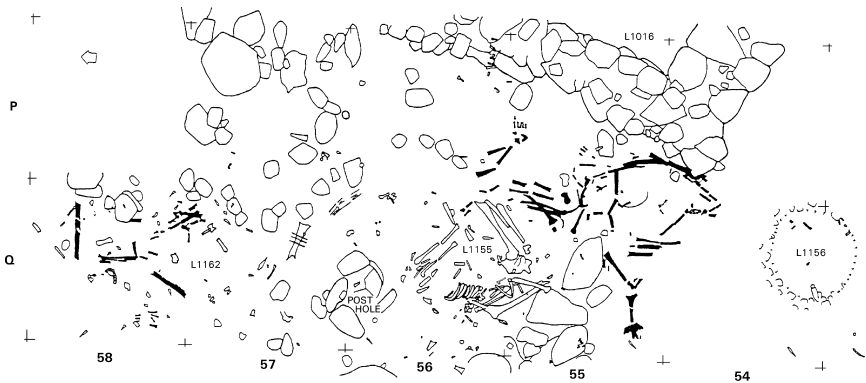


Fig. 6.4. Feature L1155, intentional deposition of human and animal remains, Kfar HaHoresh (Nigel Goring-Morris).

lower limb and foot' (Goring-Morris et al 1998: 1–2). The head, foreleg, and tail can be seen, although the belly and hind leg had been disturbed by a later, primary human interment. A stone-lined post-hole demarcated the location, with a wooden post providing a marker or totem. A small, circular patch of lime plaster overlaid the picture, with a human mandible at the centre (Goring-Morris et al 1998: 2–3). A red patinated chunk of flint, a line of sea shells, and a painted plastered human skull fragment were also associated, although it was unclear if they were part of the depiction. The area featured multiple mortuary events. Further excavation has revealed L1155 to comprise a complex sequence of densely packed burials, although it is still suggested that the depiction is unlikely to be a fortuitous arrangement, which would verify intentionality in the placement of bones (Goring-Morris 2005: 95) in a non-random arrangement (Horwitz and Goring-Morris 2004).

The deliberate selection and deposition of body parts can be seen in L1155, with not only fragmentation of the body, but re-association through deliberate deposition with the remains of other people and animals. Another deliberate arrangement which merges the remains of several people and animals is L1003, an ashy, kidney-shaped pit, measuring 1.5 m in length, which contained 'large numbers of mostly disarticulated human and some animal bones', which had been 'intentionally and specifically arranged around the edges of the pit...' (Goring-Morris et al 1998: 3). The deposition included 12 human

mandibles, articulated limb extremities, long bones stacked in packages, and, mostly, postcranial bones. A complete, articulated infant burial was placed with its head rested immediately beneath a bovid pelvis. Several grave goods were recovered, including arrowheads, a tranchet axe, a worked seashell pendant, a tiny polished pebble, lumps of yellow, orange, and red ochre (Goring-Morris et al 1998: 3), and a sickle blade and marine shells (Simmons et al 2008: 105). Two headless, primary adult burials were found lining the pit, one of which cradled a headless infant in their arms, and contained foetal bones in the pelvic region (Goring-Morris 2008: 190).

Whilst both features, L1003 and L1155, include the disarticulation and deposition of body parts and the decomposing of bodies, there are differences in the assemblages that demonstrate the varying treatment of the bodies within each of the depositions. They underwent different amounts of processing, and were exposed for varying lengths of time. From L1155, 6.22 per cent of bone had received additional treatment, such as cut marks, drill holes, hack marks, and burning. This is in comparison to just 0.02 per cent of bones from L1003. From L1155 there is evidence of cut marks to the skull and mandible consistent with the removal of blood vessels and the mandibular nerve, and cut marks to the elbow for disarticulation, and hack marks to the femurs and tibias. There is also burning of a parietal fragment from this area, and deliberate slicing of the metatarsal (foot bones) from L1155, and also from L1003 (Simmons et al 2007). The cause of death is evident on one of the skulls from L1155: a blow to the head with a blunt object. Another skull, whose mandible and maxilla (upper jaw) formed the mouth of the 'animal' in the depiction, had a hole drilled through it, although in the wrong place for trephination (Tal Simmons pers. comm.).

There is also a difference in the proportions of bones that had been modified through animal activity, with 0.02 per cent in L1003, compared with 7 per cent in L1155, demonstrating the different nature of these mortuary deposits, with the latter undergoing more exposure and disturbance from animals. L1155 underwent a greater degree of fragmentation than L1003, both as a result of human modification and post-depositional animal interference (Simmons et al 2007). The two Loci, L1155 and L1003, have also been compared to an assemblage sampled from other mortuary features, with results demonstrating that the other mortuary contexts had undergone much less processing than either of the two Loci, including less animal

disturbance, human modification, and weathering, with L1155 demonstrating the highest proportions of these (Simmons et al 2008).

The evidence clearly indicates that some bodily remains were processed after death, particularly those in L1155, the feature with the deliberate arrangement of bones. For this feature, the remains were not interred or covered over as swiftly as those in L1003, with a longer period of exposure adding weight to the interpretation of a deliberate depiction. If the depiction was deliberate, it would have taken time to construct and, feasibly, there was also a period of display, although it should be noted that the level of modification is still relatively low when compared with the assemblages from the next case study of Domuztepe. However, not all remains were comparably treated at Kfar HaHoresh, with many of those in L1155 undergoing a greater amount of post-mortem treatment and manipulation than seen in other depositions. Simmons and colleagues revealed that human modification of bone occurred predominantly on the head and limb bones, with the limbs and head receiving a greater amount of post-mortem and peri-mortem treatment. So, not only were the dead treated differentially, but parts of the body were also selected for different treatment.

Evidence at Kfar HaHoresh demonstrates that the integral, complete body was not always intended for the mortuary arena. That the bodies were so frequently disbanded after death may suggest a more communal attitude towards the remains of the dead, becoming components of the community of the dead as a whole, rather than representing individuality in the mortuary record. This did not only relate to human remains, but to animal remains too, or at least the remains of particular species.

Blurring of categories: human and animal—the personhood of animals

The repeated mingling of human and animal remains has already been introduced above, whether intentionally placed together in the depiction, or placed in close association to each other, such as the headless adult interred above the Bos Pit. But there are different degrees of association: in the Bos Pit, the human remains were kept associated with yet distinct from the animals, whereas the remains in L1155 are far more intermingled with each other.

There is a deliberate selection of species seen from the choice of human and animal remains at Kfar HaHoresh. Herded animals are

found in different contexts to hunted species; there were quantities of the remains of goat in some parts of the site, none of which was associated with grave contexts (Goring-Morris 2000: 113). There is an association between the remains of children and those of foxes, particularly fox mandibles (Goring-Morris 2005). One of the burials within L1155 was an articulated child burial aged around five to seven years, with its cranium missing. A large green and white bead had been placed in its mandible, and another green bead put next to the burial. A fox mandible had been placed close to the chest. In another burial (L1362), a fox mandible had been placed with the burial of a child's skull (Goring-Morris 2005: 98). Evidently, foxes were important creatures, included in mortuary features at Kfar HaHoresh and also depicted at Göbekli Tepe (Horwitz and Goring-Morris 2004).

The most striking example of the merging of human and animal bodies is the plastered skull (fig. 6.5a) buried with a headless gazelle (fig. 6.5b), referred to above. It would be difficult to suggest that concepts of personhood were not closely entwined with human-animal relationships at Kfar HaHoresh. The repeated deliberate association of parts of humans and animals suggests that there were close connections with animals. This may have related to experiences through life, or to metaphorical associations.

People's relationships with their environment and the animals within it, were no doubt in a state of flux as new strategies were explored, including herding and agriculture. The observation has been made that the animals interred with human burials are wild, namely gazelle and aurochs, which Goring-Morris has suggested to be especially significant in light of increasing animal domestication (Goring-Morris 2000: 115; 2005: 100): 'Could this be related to the psychological stresses resulting from the introduction of domestic animals, and the progressive abandonment of hunting?' (2005: 100). Goring-Morris argues that 'changes in the nature and division of labor associated with the beginnings of herding involving the reduced role of hunting are likely to have had a considerable psychological impact on those segments of the population most affected (the last of the big game hunters?)' (2000: 115).

While hunting was decreasing, it continued to play a role in the economies of many sites; particularly gazelle, which continued to form a significant component of species in many faunal assemblages. It seems that whilst hunting may have been declining, it still retained



Fig. 6.5a. Plastered skull, Kfar HaHoresh (Nigel Goring-Morris).

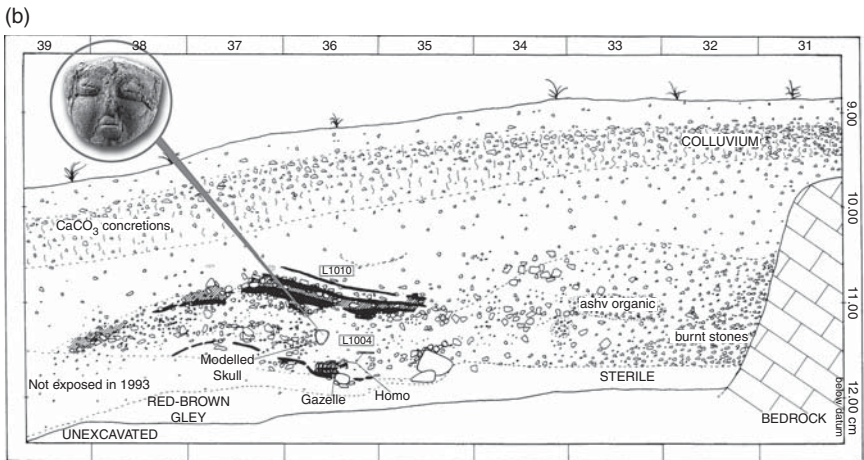


Fig. 6.5b. Section drawing of plastered cranium and headless gazelle, Kfar HaHoresh (Nigel Goring-Morris).

important symbolic value at Kfar HaHoresh, including the deliberate mingling of humans and animals in the mortuary domain.

The decrease in hunting has also been discussed in terms of gender relations, with the rise of domestication causing psychological tensions between the sexes (Goring-Morris 2005: 97), an issue that

Goring-Morris rightly notes is under-studied (2005: 100). Inherent in this, however, are prescribed labour roles according to gender, with the idea of 'man the hunter' and women in a domestic sphere, a topic that is addressed in chapter 5. This tension may be further demonstrated by the lack of any obviously female imagery, where the only figurines recovered have been stone phalluses (Goring-Morris et al 2008), although an incised pebble might feasibly represent female genitalia (see Goring-Morris et al 2008: fig. 6.4). It is also possible that imagery was constructed from wood and other organic materials which are now lost to us. Aside from the plastered skulls, which are a significantly small sample, there is little differentiation in the mortuary remains based on gender or age (Simmons et al 2007: 122), although further analysis by Eshed and colleagues (2009) suggests some domination of male burials (although a high proportion of those analysed were indeterminate).

The expectation of tension between the sexes does not appear to influence choice in the mortuary domain. The changes taking place in subsistence may also have been more gradual, causing less psychological stress or tension if occurring over a long period. There may also have been greater emphasis placed on agriculture; our interpretations focus on the importance of hunting, but the adoption of agriculture may have been embraced rather than perceived as a threat to traditional ways of life. For instance, the adult male buried with a sickle blade at Kfar HaHoresh may represent the symbolic importance of tools associated with agriculture. Recent research suggests the greater importance of harvesting tools seen during the earlier PPNA period, with the curation of these over many generations at the site of Zahrat adh-Dhra' (Goodale et al 2010). The importance of agricultural tools has also been discussed by Asouti and Fuller (forthcoming), who recognize a link between communal architecture and early evidence of agriculture. The intentional curation and meaningful deposition of tools have also been seen at Jerf el-Ahmar, where both sickle blades and arrowheads had been inserted into a plaster wall (Astruc et al 2003) and a cache of fifteen sickle blades was deposited after the closure of a building, with a 'heightened symbolic value of harvesting implements at Jerf during this transitional period (Stordeur and Abbès 2002)' (Asouti and Fuller forthcoming).

Whilst one interpretation for the inclusion of wild animals relates to hunting, it is possible to broaden this interpretation by thinking

beyond the roles of hunter/hunted for the animals at Kfar HaHoresh, and exploring alternative human–animal relationships.

Discussion: human–animal relationships

Our perceptions of animals from the stance of the modern West are heavily reliant on themes of dominance over the wild, with a motivation to tame ‘animalistic’ traits in humans, whilst controlling nature and the wild: ‘it is the proper destiny of human beings to overcome the condition of animality to which the life of all other creatures is defined’ (Ingold 2000: 62, describing and critiquing a Darwinistic approach to nature). The modern Western understanding of humans’ relationships with animals is set according to particular parameters where we are perceived as distinct and separated from them. This is in part due to our understanding of what it is to be human, with concepts of intentionality, consciousness, and agency constructing our human situation. Humans are understood to be ‘moral beings’ (Tester 1991: 44), responsible for their actions, and therefore set apart from (and above) other animals (Howell 1996: 127). For some, this relates to the possession of a soul, or the ability to logically conceptualize and communicate through language (Elder et al 1998; Ingold 1988: 3). Non-human animals are perceived of as ‘other’, lacking intentionality and responsibility, and motivated by instinct (although this has been debated; see Ingold 1988: 6–7). Furthermore, there is a hierarchy of species that sees humans at the pinnacle, often based on notions of intelligence, with some species higher than others. However, such perception and ordering of species according to qualities are culturally sanctioned, rather than relating to attributes of animals themselves; pigs, for instance, are often placed low in cultural hierarchies despite their measurable intelligence.

Animals are not viewed in this way in many ethnographic contexts with animistic beliefs, but rather are perceived as being entwined within the same cosmologies and ancestries as people. The environment, along with everything in it, is attributed sentience, feeling, and intentionality. For some, there are no universally perceived distinctions of opposition between categories of ‘human’ and ‘other’, and humans and animals can be viewed in very different ways to those dictated by our modern Western experiences. In animistic world views, sentience can be ascribed equally to animals and the environment as to people. Animals are not perceived as ‘other’,

but are given equal status to humans, attributed sentience, intelligence, intentionality, and personhood. Rather than viewed in terms of commodities to be owned and consumed, animals can be perceived as being akin to humans. The relationship is far more complex than one based on consumption and service. Often a reciprocal relationship is envisaged which is closely entwined with the cycles of life and death and the continuation of community, where the death of one being, whether human or non-human, is necessary for the continuation of new life (Arhem 1996: 189, 192). It may also be the case that transformations between people and animals can take place, with the person taking on animal attributes and inhabiting their worlds, a theory of 'perspectivism' discussed by Viveiros de Castro (1998). This way of viewing the world has been used to explore human-deer mutable relationships, and ambiguous bodily boundaries for Mesolithic Star Carr by Conneller (2004).

Whilst all animals may be considered important, the relationship between hunted animals and people can be especially complex. Although not all experiences are comparable, ethnographies from many hunter-gatherer communities suggest that relationships with animals usually reach beyond the level of hunter and prey. The animal is not simply a food source, but is attributed with sentience and intentionality. A relationship exists, with the living required to fulfil certain obligations to ensure the sacrifice of animals. For example, for the Cree of Northeastern Canada, the hunted animal must be treated with respect, with the correct procedures followed for butchering, consumption, and disposal of bones; the meat must be properly shared without wastage, and the animal should endure no undue pain or suffering. If those involved abide by these rules, the animal will be reincarnated, and present itself again to the hunters at a later time (Ingold 2000: 13–14).

Hunted animals are often perceived as being of a higher status than domesticated or herded animals, as they are viewed as possessing 'sentience, sociability, and intelligence—and a common mythical ancestry with humans'; they are understood to be the same types of beings as humans (Kent 1989: 11, 16). Yet, as archaeologists, we traditionally interpret animals in economic terms, viewing animals as commodities: food, property, labour, or raw materials (Kent 1989: 11). Rather than 'nature' or the 'wild' existing as separate from humans, for many the worlds of humanity and nature are the same, such as among the Koyukon of Alaska, where humans are intimately

related to their environments (Nelson 1983). The distinctions between nature and culture are not relevant, or even comprehended, in such contexts (Ortner 1974; MacCormack and Strathern 1980). The Western perspective of a hunter–prey relationship can often exclude a deeper understanding of sentience and reciprocity. With alternative types of personhood involved in the relationship between persons and animals, animals have a greater role than simply subsistence. As Levy (1995: 9) states, ‘animals are at least as important to think about as to eat’.

Many of our ethnographic examples are derived from contexts of shamanism or animistic societies (for example Bird-David 1999: 79; Dowson and Porr 2001: 172; Price 2001: 4; Shepherd 1995: 29; Midgley 1983). However, it is of equal importance not to assume the label ‘shaman’ onto our finds. For example, the female burial from the Natufian Hilzaon cave in Northern Israel has been interpreted in these terms due to the usual collection of animal remains interred with the burial, which included over 50 tortoise shells, bird wings, a leopard’s pelvis, and a wolf mandible (Grosman et al 2008). However, the label ‘shaman’ refers to a culturally constructed category that is not universal (Dowson 2007). Rather, human–animal relationships can be viewed in alternative ways without such labels being applied (Boyd forthcoming).

The merging of person and animal has been explored by Chantal Conneller (2004) with relation to Mesolithic antler frontlets; human and animal identities, especially deer, were mingled, at least during particular occasions. Comparable analysis has been made of carved boulders at Lepenski Vir, arguing for close connections between these artworks and the treatment of dead bodies (Borić 2005). For the Neolithic Near East, there may be equivalent examples of the comingling of human and animal bodies, with the material from Kfar HaHoresh providing some of the most fascinating insights into the potential relationships between people and animals (Croucher 2005a, 2006; Miracle and Borić 2008; Boyd forthcoming).

Animals, objects, and people at Kfar HaHoresh

At Kfar HaHoresh, it is feasible to consider that the mortuary features were as important for the deposition of animal remains as they were for human remains. As Goring-Morris notes, there are examples of almost complete wild animal carcasses associated with burials, all of which are headless (2000: 124), mirroring the decapitation of

humans. Across the site there are also mixed remains of humans and animals as well as groups of either just humans or just animals, all treated in a comparable manner, suggesting conceptual comparisons rather than a hunter–hunted relationship. Rather than the relationship between hunter and their method of subsistence, the evidence suggests a rather different and complex relationship. The wild animal is treated comparably to humans, and feasibly conceptualized in a comparative manner, rather than in the way animals are perceived in the modern West. The treatment of animals in the mortuary domain at Kfar HaHoresh may have represented real negotiations of kin and ancestry, rather than reactions to economic changes and subsistence strategies. That is not to say that what people were eating and how they were acquiring food were not important—we will see in the next section that consumption can be fundamentally important to identity constructions—but that the meaning extended far beyond subsistence to reflect beliefs and ideologies, which saw people and animals as intimately connected parts of their environments.

Rather than traditional interpretations which view animal deposits as either accompaniments to the human occupants of the graves or as indicative of hunting, the notion of animals as kin or related beings at Kfar HaHoresh can be viewed through these mortuary features which combine and mingle the bodies, or parts of bodies, of humans and (particular kinds of) animals. As suggested by Jones and Richards (2002: 50) in relation to Late Neolithic Orkney, the interment of the animals may be as significant as that of the person or people. They suggest ‘a metaphorical unity between people and animals’, where ‘just as human bones imply the trace of previous generations so, in precisely the same terms, animals are ancestors: they too once shared the world with people and, in the form of food, enabled humans to propagate. Animals are ancestors of, and are ancestral to, the human population’ (Jones and Richards 2002: 50). Rather than separating human bones and ancestors from animal bones as food remains, their comparable treatment and placement in Neolithic contexts in southern Britain suggests ‘a series of relations (both conceptual and practical) that existed between the two communities, human and bovine’ (Ray and Thomas 2002: 37). The tombs themselves may have been considered constructed as much for the animal dead as the human dead. Such comparable treatment of human and animal remains suggests an entirely different understanding of human–animal relationships to our own, where ‘for people in the past . . . the notion of “a

mere animal”, a creature that existed without social relations, cultural significance, and spiritual values, would have been all but incomprehensible’ (Ray and Thomas 2002: 38). As suggested by Ingold, animals and humans have a ‘mutually entangled history’, and as such, animals are regarded as ‘neither wholly ancestral, nor wholly economic entities—they are simply other forms of “people” whose lives have an important impact upon humanity in the Neolithic’ (Jones and Richards 2002: 50, referencing Ingold 2000: 77–88).

In addition to the human–animal relationships at Kfar HaHoresh, there is a pattern of human and animal remains being meaningfully deposited together throughout the Neolithic and Natufian periods, a topic which will be explored in a forthcoming publication on the topic (Boyd forthcoming). Recent excavations push the examples of such relationships back even earlier, with the interment of animal remains alongside human ones also seen during the Early and Middle Epipalaeolithic, a period that preceded the Natufian in the Levant. For instance, at Uyun al-Hammam a dog skull was buried in a grave along with a bone tool, and gazelle horn cores were found at Kharaneh IV, one either side of the skull of an adult male. The latter burial also had two stones intentionally placed over the lower half of the body (Maher 2010). From Uyun al-Hammam there is now also evidence of a human–fox burial, as well as the movement of body parts between graves, the use of ochre, and the placement of worked bone, stone tools, and remains of deer, gazelle, aurochs, and tortoise within graves (Maher et al 2011). During the Natufian itself, we see clear human–dog associations from ‘Ain Mallaha (Davis and Valla 1978), and another from Hayonim Terrace (Tchernov and Valla 1997), containing a grave with three humans, two dogs, and tortoise shells. There is also the inclusion of fox mandibles in graves seen during this period (Goring-Morris 2005). These are frequently focused on the remains of children and infants: Goring-Morris has noted an association between fox mandibles and child burials at Kfar HaHoresh (2005), an association which may, in part, relate to particular attributes, qualities, and abilities of particular species (Jones 2009).

As well as Levantine examples, Anatolian sites also reveal a pattern of intentional human–animal deposition. Sites include Çayönü Tepesi, where aurochs skulls are repeatedly found in the Skull Building. Elsewhere at the site, a dog burial with a boar’s skull and a human male were buried together (Özdoğan 1999: 47). During the site’s later occupation levels, associations continue, with the

deliberate deposition of four mandibles from large, wild pigs placed in the sub-floor southwest of the Cell Building (Redman 1983: 192), and from another cell, the lower jaw and tusks of boar had been carefully placed over two burials, ensuring the tusks remained in place (Özdoğan 1999: 52). The suggestion that these bones had been placed as meat is unlikely as mandibles provided a limited food source, suggesting that there was some other significance for their deposition with people. During this later period, the Cell Building sub-phase, there are growing numbers of sheep/goat bones within the faunal assemblage. However, they are recovered from separate areas to the bones of hunted animals. Area H, a cluster of houses set around a courtyard, had a large number of goat bones, whereas area AD, a group of cell-plan houses with no comparable courtyard, saw an abundance of aurochs and deer bones (Lawrence 1982: 188). Both of these areas were located in the western part of the site, away from the special buildings. We can see a choice of location dependent on species, which extends to the observation that domesticated animals such as sheep and goat do not appear in burial or special contexts at Çayönü (Lawrence 1982: 188).

At PPNB Aşıklı in Central Anatolia, a female burial was interred with a deer shoulder bone placed at her left shoulder, standing out amongst the other remains on the site where there were over 70 burials, mostly flexed primary burials, beneath the floor in houses (Özbek 1998; Esin and Harmankaya 1999). The late Neolithic site of Tell el-Kerkh reveals primary articulated burials, often with grave goods. One particular burial stands out: the body of an infant of under or around two months of age had been placed in the southwest corner of a pit, placed with an 11 cm-long flint point on its chest; at the centre of the pit was placed the body of an infant pig or boar, itself only around six months of age. The animal had been dismembered into parts, but placed together, along with its mandible, scapulae, and pelvis placed beneath its cranium. However, the absence of cut or burn marks indicates that it was unlikely to have been consumed or butchered. Other cattle, suid, and goat bones were placed at the eastern part of the feature; the latter appear to be the remains of feasting. Above the pit, a deer antler and cattle scapular had been fixed into the base of a wall (Tsuneki 2002). Human-animal relationships have also been investigated at Çatalhöyük, comparing artistic representations with actual faunal remains. This research has revealed that those animals that are more likely to appear in representations

are exactly the animals that are under-represented in the faunal assemblage (Russell and Meece 2005). Finds of animal remains incorporated into installations and treated with plaster have also prompted new discussions about people's interactions with animals and their landscapes (Hodder 1999, 2004, 2006; Russell and Meece 2005; Twiss 2006). Comparable finds of animal bones encased in plaster have also been made at Pınarbaşı, directly preceding Çatalhöyük (Baird forthcoming). There are similar trends in the Pottery Neolithic. At the site of Sabi Abyad in Northern Mesopotamia, from within the burnt village, clay shapes, which give the impression of clay animals or 'torsos' with holes for posts, were recovered. The holes at each corner would have supported 'legs'. The clay shapes contained horn cores from wild sheep (Akkermans 2008). We also see a selected part of an animal placed within a new context, given a new outer body. These are reminiscent of the plastered animal remains seen repeatedly at Çatalhöyük, where animal bones are incorporated into installations within particular buildings (Russell and Meece 2005).

Not only animals were selected for deposition with humans at Kfar HaHoresh, but minerals and other objects also. Some stone tools were selected for burial, including sickle blades and projectile points, representing both hunting and harvesting activities. For many items, there may have been a strong association with place and source, a concept that has already been discussed in chapter 4 in relation to stone. For Kfar HaHoresh, marine molluscs were commonly recovered, sourced from the Mediterranean and Red Sea, some of which had been ground down and pierced to make beads. There were also pieces of obsidian, obtained from some distance away, as well as coloured and polished pebbles that sometimes appeared within burial pits, as did pieces of malachite (Goring-Morris et al 1998: 3–4). Items such as pebbles are easy to disregard as occurring naturally, but they may frequently have been collected and/or deposited, and thus blur our archaeological categorizations of natural and cultural material. It is easy to see how such items were appealing—reflecting the light and pleasing to the touch. There may have also been a perceived significance gained from their source, a discussion seen with European stone circles (Richards 2004) and stone axes (Cooney 2002), with significance behind the source, and transportation of the stone used. Stone can also be viewed as engaging with people, interacting and talking to them during trance-like states, and significantly, for the Nayaka of South India, stones are brought back to houses to be

retained, where they are valued, and 'live' alongside the occupants (Bird-David 2006: 42). In Irian Jaya (now West Papua) the adze-makers' raw materials were seen as living subjects, growing and ageing (Stout 2002, in Coward and Gamble 2010, and see also chapter 4 of this volume). Where something originates from can embed further meaning and importance into the object. It may also be the case that particular minerals were seen as holding special qualities or properties (i.e. Lewis-Williams 2001: 31–2, 1981: 116; Robinson 2004: 96; Taçon 2004). This is often argued for ochre, known to have antiseptic properties and useful in the processing of animal hides, as well as containing medicinal and odour-controlling properties (Dubreuil and Grosman 2009; Velo 1984). Pieces of red ochre appear to have broader significance, however, as in addition to these uses, it is also frequently deposited within graves (including in the Natufian, where residue on a ground stone suggests use of red ochre with a pigment-preparation tool; see Dubreuil and Grosman 2009). As with the ground stone at Kfar HaHoresh, these tools had a broader remit than simply being used in food production. It is also likely, although difficult to prove, that red ochre was used to adorn the bodies of the living too. As well as red ochre, the use of plaster appears to have held particular symbolic importance during the MPPNB, used in burial contexts, including the sprinkling on burials at Kfar HaHoresh (Clarke forthcoming); this may have some parallels with the chalk platters that were placed in association with some graves (Goring-Morris 2005: 97). Lime production was likely to have been a seasonal event, most practical during the summer, avoiding damp and humid conditions where possible (Goren and Goring-Morris 2008: 795).

The inclusion of pigments and minerals within burials suggests that they were meaningful and significant, demonstrating that motivations and understandings of value were different from those perceived today in the modern West. Some depositions may have been accidental, worn in or on clothing, or included within the backfill of graves. However, many were apparently deliberately placed, suggesting that they had become meaningful objects. It seems that certain objects held specific properties, extending beyond our traditional categorizations and recognition of them as elements of the natural world; pigments, minerals, and shells were all brought into mortuary contexts.

This web of relationships extended between people, animals, minerals, objects, and with the environment, contributes to our understanding of life at Kfar HaHoresh, where there appears to

have been a strong association with place. We know that landscapes can be meaningful (Harris 2009; Lefebvre 1991; Feld and Basso 1996; Van Dyke 2008) and that mortuary practices add a further meaning to place ('place might be defined as the intersection of memory and landscape' Van Dyke 2008: 278), with mortuary instalments recalling memory and place. We see people returning to Kfar HaHoresh repeatedly, and marking their place in the landscape. There is a possibility that different mortuary areas, marked by the lime-plastered surfaces, may relate to certain social groups. DNA testing may reveal more on this subject in the future (Goring-Morris 2000: 115). In addition to plastered surfaces there is repeated evidence for markers in the form of postholes, indicating that the burial areas were monitored and locatable and often returned to, to include the interment of new remains (Goring-Morris 2000: 133). This suggests a link with place and location; people returned to marked locations to redeposit their dead (people, animals, and things).

The evidence at Kfar HaHoresh suggests that a person's identity was closely related to that of animals and the natural world. Indeed, such a concept as the 'natural world' was probably irrelevant, with little distinction between the people and other aspects of the environment of which they were part. However, this need not paint an idyllic picture; life and death were bloody, including a close relationship with the remains of the dead whether human or non-human animals, in addition to the effort involved in the transportation of the dead to Kfar HaHoresh. If, as Goring-Morris argues, the site was not one for occupation, then the dead must have been brought there, or died close by; however, evidence of settlement occupation at Kfar HaHoresh may still be excavated, and alter this picture. Nevertheless, the interpretation of people's engagement with animals, each other, and the environment is not altered by presence or absence of a settlement site; the associations were strong regardless of habitation location. The relationships between people, animals, and things did not depend on the whole body, but rather, parts of bodies could be interred together—in some cases to compose a composite body—such as in the cases of the headless gazelle with a plastered skull, or the depiction constituted from human and animal parts. Identity was closely related to association, whether with other adults, children, animals, or things.

Case study: the 'Death Pit' at Domuztepe

Whilst much later in time than either Çayönü or Kfar HaHoresh, the next case study of Domuztepe has common interpretative themes, including fragmentation of the body, the intentional selection of parts of the body for particular treatment, and the conceptual comparison of particular animals, in this case, dogs. Yet it is a further aspect that will be focused on here: consumption of the dead—or cannibalism. Acts of consumption can be a fundamental component of identity construction and reflection, so that the act of eating human flesh has particular potential implications for understandings of personhood and identity.

Situated in Southeast Anatolia, Domuztepe dates to the mid-6th millennium BC (c.5800–5475), (Campbell 2007–9: 127; Kansa et al 2009b: 160), the Later Neolithic, considered to be part of the 'Halaf' period (although see the discussion on the complexities of chronology in chapter 2). Domuztepe is a large site of around 20 ha, with excavations directed by Stuart Campbell and Elizabeth Carter, and a new phase of excavation by Stuart Campbell and Alexandra Fletcher. The site is one of the largest for its date, with an estimated population of around 1500 people at the height of its occupation (Kansa et al 2009b: 161). One of the most notable features on the site has come to be known as the 'Death Pit'.

The Death Pit was used over a short period of time, probably a matter of days or weeks, and contained the disarticulated and further fragmented remains of around 40 people, along with animal remains, pottery, flint, obsidian, and other material culture (Kansa et al 2009b). The themes of fragmentation already discussed in this chapter are relevant to the interpretation of Domuztepe, with material culture, humans, and animals fragmented within the Death Pit. However, there is a more intensive processing of the human body demonstrated at Domuztepe than is evident in the previous case studies of Kfar HaHoresh or Çayönü, with the evidence from the Death Pit indicating that cannibalism took place. After a general introduction to Domuztepe and the Death Pit, the significance of cannibalism will be discussed, including different motivations for the practice. As well as the significance of cannibalism for interpretation of the Death Pit, the broader themes of personhood and identity, of which consumption is a component, will be discussed as part of this case study.

Domuztepe's inhabitants were agricultural and also used the resources available in the surrounding marshy landscape (Kansa et al 2009a). There is evidence of long-distance contact; a large amount of obsidian has been found at the site, and Domuztepe's location and size suggest that it was prominent within the social landscape of Anatolia and Northern Mesopotamia. As well as evidence of buildings with stone foundations and general settlement activities, space within Domuztepe is demarcated by a large, linear feature running east–west across the site, described by excavators as the 'Red Terrace'. The terrace, as its name suggests, is constructed of a red clay material, which has been brought from off-site, and deposited in a linear feature. This feature was long-lasting, constructed over a period of several hundred years (Campbell 2007–8: 127). The Death Pit was located against this feature, dug into its south edge at roughly the centre of the Tell.

Excavation of the Death Pit has resulted in a huge amount of data for analysis; over 10 000 pieces of bone have been analysed so far, by Sarah Witcher Kansa for the faunal remains and Suellen Gauld for the human bone (Kansa et al 2009b). The human remains are predominantly represented by crania, mandibles, and long bones, and had been subjected to the splitting of long bones and marrow extraction, heating, cut marks, as well as apparent human tooth marks on some bones (Kansa et al 2009b). The evidence is consistent with consumption of the dead, or cannibalism; but this was not practised out of hunger, given the accompanying animal remains, a topic to which we return below.

Butchery marks are visible on animal bones, and there is a significance in the deposition of animals with human remains. The Death Pit, whilst infilled over a short period of time and in stages, allows us to see various phases of activity (see Kansa and Campbell 2004). The lower levels contained what appeared to be more usual butchery waste, primarily consisting of sheep/goat remains. There were around 21 sheep/goat interred in the Death Pit, and other faunal remains represented around 11 cattle, six dogs and eight pigs. Significantly, pigs are under-represented compared to remains across the rest of the site (Kansa et al 2009b). There were few sheep/goat remains in the phases where we see the human deposits. However, the cattle and dog remains are commonly interred along with people. Other than the dogs, all the animals showed the expected evidence of butchery.

The choice of animals in the Death Pit is significant. In contexts with human remains, not only is there an under-representation of the animals usually associated with subsistence at the site, sheep/goats and pigs, we see the selection of cattle, mostly females of prime age, which represent a considerable investment of future resources. However, whilst some animals, including humans, apparently, were consumed, the dog remains were excluded from this treatment, although they were placed alongside human remains. There is an under-representation of cattle skulls, although dog remains are comparable to humans in an over-representation of skulls. Not only were dog and human skulls interred together, they were repeatedly incomplete, with a section of the skull consistently missing. This may be related to the processing of the body, or could relate to the removal of the brain.

Whilst attitudes to animals and the environment are likely to have changed since our earlier case studies, we can still see in the Death Pit a particular relationship between humans and animals, primarily canines. The inclusion of dogs in the Death Pit is especially significant, as we see the same parts of the animal deposited like humans, namely the cranial bones and mandibles. The associations between human and canine bones also continue elsewhere at Domuztepe, with other finds and pits containing canine and human mandibles. There have also been dog claws recovered, suggestive of a dog pelt, from the lower phases of the Death Pit, possibly used to bundle up deposits (Stuart Campbell pers. comm.). Kansa and Campbell write that 'the much higher occurrence of dogs in the pit suggests that dogs were seen as different and were intentionally interred with humans as part of this ritual' (2004: 7).

Clearly dogs held some significance for Domuztepe's inhabitants, their skulls being selected and treated differently from other animal species, and comparably to human skulls. There are further isolated cases from the Near East that highlight the significance of the dog, such as from Tomb H 104 from 'Ain Mallaha, where an early Natufian grave contained the earliest known burial of a puppy accompanying a human. There were also fragments of dog mandibles recovered from the site (Davis 1989: fig. 53). This special treatment of dogs is also a common theme elsewhere in the world, for instance in examples from the Mesolithic Netherlands (Larsson 1989: 370, 372; Radovanovic 1999). From Skateholm I, eight out of the 65 excavated graves were of dog burials, accorded the same burial process as

humans in the cemetery (Larsson 1989: 370). At Skateholm II, dog burials also occurred, although as secondary interments within human graves, and afforded less individual treatment than seen at Skateholm I (Larsson 1989: 372). Dog burials from the Iron Gates Mesolithic have also been recovered, where dogs evidently were utilized for different purposes, thus reflected in their deposition; some were interred with adults in graves, and others were simply discarded as food remains and left for scavengers. Thus Radovanovic (1999) notes the diverse relationships between these animals and humans.

The evidence from Domuztepe suggests that there was a certain relationship experienced between humans and dogs. This situation may reflect the sentience often attributed to dogs above other animals in that they have a close relationship with people, often sharing domestic space and food with humans, a situation that is rarely seen with other species. In a cross-cultural analysis, Morey (2006) suggests that dogs are frequently viewed as family members, and thus buried as such in many regions of the world and through time (and see Losey et al 2011). The relationships between people and dogs is also discussed in Tambiah's (1969: 455) case study of a village in Northeastern Thailand: 'the dog, by virtue of the fact that it lives in the house and has a close association with man, has a metonymical relation to human society'. It would be tempting to assume the 'man's-best-friend' explanation for the evidence at Domuztepe. Although it seems that dogs were afforded the same treatment as humans, it is evident that their remains were not subject to the further fragmentation carried out on human remains, indicating some differences in the treatment and conceptualization of humans and dogs in this context. It seems that dogs were not subject to the butchery practices indicative of consumption seen in the remains of other species. Perhaps the choice not to consume the animal may be analogous to motivations for some people today, where the dog is considered unclean, due in part to their consumption of faeces; perhaps the dog had a paradoxical existence: unclean and yet perceived with sentience, intelligence, and communicative skills. Clearly the dog held some relevance and significance for Domuztepe's inhabitants, treated differently from both other animal species and the remains of humans (a topic of research that current doctoral research will elucidate further) (Bichener forthcoming).

The other species featuring prominently in Death Pit contexts are domesticated cattle—recovered from the same phases as the human

remains—although with a different selection of body parts taking place. There is a high proportion of cattle vertebrae and back bones, including ribs, as well as an exceptionally high proportion of cattle foot bones, considered to be ‘the initial butchery refuse before the cattle carcasses were processed further’ where articulated bones are likely to have been discarded as butchery remains, attached by skin and tendon (Kansa and Campbell 2004: 11). We also see a significant under-representation of head bones among the cattle sample (Kansa and Campbell 2004: 11). There are certain implications to this. The absence of skulls reveals that they were retained elsewhere or rejected from the Death Pit.

The skulls may have been destined for reuse in other activities, perhaps displayed or used in performance. The importance of cattle remains can be seen in other contexts at Domuztepe, with an earlier building south of the Death Pit that had a deliberate placement of cattle jawbones forming a division together with some stones, along a surface with *in situ* pots and patches of plaster (presumably, previously a plastered floor) (Campbell 2002: 2). Cattle skulls, or bucrania, are regularly chosen for pottery decoration (Kansa and Campbell 2004: 12). The common motifs from Domuztepe and contemporary sites suggest that it was the heads of bulls, rather than their bodies, that held symbolic meaning (Mortimer 1999: 26). The use of cattle horns can also be seen at Çatalhöyük, where they are embedded into architectural features in rooms, often described as shrines or History Houses (Hodder 2009a), traits that have suggested a bull cult (Cauvin 2000: 238). One particularly stunning example of the importance of bucrania can be seen in a clay vessel from Çatalhöyük, where the face of a person merges into bucrania in the vessel’s decoration (Hodder and Meskell 2011: fig. 9). For an overview of the use of bucrania, see Stordeur (2000b), which includes Jerf el-Ahmar, where bucrania had not only been hung on walls, but one example had a necklace hung onto it (Stordeur 2010). Not only were the bucrania displayed, but they were additionally adorned. These are just a few examples, from many, of the use of cattle skulls, horn, and crania in architectural and decorative media.

One possible interpretation for the absence of cattle skulls in the Death Pit is that the animal’s gender had been of importance; females were selected for butchery and burial here, yet their skulls were excluded, perhaps suggesting it was only the skulls of male animals that afforded particular significance. It could also be that there was not the same affinity of symbolic association between human and cattle skulls as there was between human and canine crania and

mandibles. Or it may be the case that cattle skulls were more appropriate within architectural contexts, suggesting that specific meaning was attributed to open and closed spaces.

In contrast to the canine remains, cut marks show that other animals were butchered for consumption—with skinning, disarticulation, and chopping-up into smaller parts taking place (Kansa and Campbell 2004: 11). The evidence, together with the under-representation of other species in contexts associated with human remains, indicates that a categorization between people and animals was dependent upon species. However, there appears to be a different understanding of animals and their relation to people than that evidenced in the Skull Building at Çayönü and at other sites. In the Death Pit, various relationships focus on different conceptualizations and categorizations of animals, with special treatment reserved for dogs.

Fragmentation: people and material culture at Domuztepe

The interconnected relationships between people and their worlds around them are further evidenced through the fragmentation of other objects, and people, in the Death Pit. We have already seen at Kfar HaHoresh that pieces of skulls were selected and retained. At Domuztepe, a deposit later in date than the Death Pit, but close to it spatially, contained the crania of a child and a pig along with a vessel that apparently contained a further fragment of a human skull (Campbell 2007–8). A decapitated but fleshed skull of a female aged fifteen to eighteen had also been buried close by but later than the Death Pit; she had been laid on her right-hand side, and the right part of the cranium was missing, discussed below. There are various finds across the site of pieces of skulls and mandibles. Skulls are frequently incomplete in the Death Pit, and even those that are more intact consistently have a piece missing. This, potentially, may be due to impact, processing, and loss (being hit over the head, either as means of death, or the first step in the processing of remains). It is also feasible that pieces of skulls were intentionally removed and retained, leading to their under-representation within the Death Pit itself. This was most clear on the skull of a female excavated from the vicinity of the Death Pit. A piece of her cranium was clearly missing (fig. 6.6b), despite the remainder of the skull remaining in excellent condition with a fully articulated mandible when buried, and fragments of bone still *in situ* (fig. 6.6a). Whilst the missing section of cranium may have been the consequence of the blow to the head she received, the fact



Fig. 6.6a. Skull *in situ*, Domuztepe (Stuart Campbell).



Fig. 6.6b. Photograph of skull post excavation, Domuztepe (Stuart Campbell).

that the piece of skull is missing altogether from an otherwise fleshed and articulated head is perhaps suggestive of intentional removal, possibly as a consequence of the brain being removed (Suellen Gauld pers. comm.; or as the result of a blow to the head, Kansa et al 2009b: 168; potentially decomposed as a result of the fracture, Molleson pers. comm.); perhaps the most feasible among these explanations is the craniotomy, due to the intentional retrieval of a section of the skull,

and if this were the case, a certain amount of hacking away at skin and hair would have been required for its removal from an otherwise very fleshed and articulated skull.

The selection, collection, and deposition of body parts are also evidenced with the placing of skulls, jawbones, and other isolated human remains around the vicinity of the Death Pit. The placement of human bone is rarely done without meaning attached: 'human bone deposits are carefully structured acts rather than random acts of refuse disposal' (Chapman 2000a: 145). It can be argued that the remains at Domuztepe were not arbitrarily placed, but were actions embedded with meaning and purpose, with the ordering of remains into specific phases of deposition within the Death Pit. A specific choice was made to inter these human remains within the context of the Death Pit, a feature that undoubtedly required effort and time, not only in its construction, but additionally in keeping the area clear of activity, as demonstrated through the lack of scavenger and secondary activity.

A further example to support the suggestion that the living retained physical contact with the deceased beyond death is an adult female buried to the southwest of the Death Pit at Domuztepe. Whilst the torso and upper body of this primary inhumation remained intact, the body had been dug down to after burial, and the left femur reinterred the wrong way around (Campbell 2007–8). It was also evident that several attempts had been made to excavate down to the legs at varying times after the initial burial. Additionally, directly above the burial, the mandible of a young individual had been interred with small long bones and a horn core (Croucher 2005a: 160). Other human remains were recovered from the vicinity of the Death Pit, particularly parts of crania and mandibles. During the final phases of the Death Pit, the whole pit was covered with a thick layer of ash, and the tightly bound body of a young child around six to seven years old was buried on the southern edge of the Death Pit as part of the final act of deposition in the pit. The child's skull had been removed and replaced with the body, in almost the correct anatomical position (Campbell 2007–8). The Death Pit area remained a focus for the placement of people, or at least parts of people, for several generations.

It is not only human and animal bodies that were fragmented within the Death Pit, but also certain types of material culture. A piece of pottery was sliced through prior to firing (Campbell

2007–8; Irving and Heywood 2005: 6), and pieces of conjoining pottery were found through different phases of the Death Pit (Irving and Heywood 2005), with pieces from the same vessels occurring in more than one depositional context. Also, potsherds and stones, which resembled crania, had been placed nested amongst skulls. It is tempting to speculate that they fulfilled similar roles as the ‘head replacement objects’ which feature in ethnographic and other archaeological accounts (DeLeonardis 2000, and Chapman’s (2010) discussion of Grave 3 from Hódmezővásárhely, where a vessel containing a net weight was found in place of the head). Obviously, the same meaning cannot be assumed for the objects in the Death Pit but, whatever their meaning, their placement here appears to be deliberate rather than arbitrary. These may symbolize relationships between the living and the (maybe missing) dead, as well as between people and material culture. It seems that relationships between bodies and objects were closely entwined (see Campbell and Croucher forthcoming), subjected to deliberate fragmentation and breaking, with deliberate breakage witnessed, apparently, with other materials too, from both within and outside the Death Pit. Obsidian mirrors are found broken and incomplete throughout the site (Elizabeth Healey pers. comm.), as are stone bowls, with pieces recovered that are often highly polished and demonstrate quality workmanship. With over 590 pieces of stone bowls from across the site, few match each other, and it appears (although analysis is still underway) that no whole vessels can be constructed from the remains (Bronwen Campbell pers. comm.), with the exception of small spouted cups, which usually are found complete. Significantly, one such spouted cup was recovered from unstratified contexts, containing deciduous (milk) teeth (Carter et al 2003: 130), suggesting that the passage through stages of life was significant and marked.

The fragmentation and circulation of material culture and bodies suggest an interpretation of personhood that negated the entire individual within the mortuary domain. This may reflect notions of relational identity during life, or could suggest transformation during death. It is clear that the living were actively manipulating the remains of the dead. Death was not the end of the relationship between the living and the dead. In addition to processing the remains, the living often returned to the dead, removing and then redepositing pieces of them. The act of consuming further strengthens the significance of the mortuary arena, where the

physical incorporation of the dead into the bodies of the living was enacted in meaningful events, creating memories and maintaining relationships.

Consumption and the Death Pit

The role of consumption is particularly relevant when discussing the Death Pit at Domuztepe; here, the act of eating and choices of food played a significant role in identity construction, as did people's relationships with animals, plants, and the environment. Events around the Death Pit included eating, with the large quantities of flesh produced from animal remains suggesting communal events and feasting activities. Yet the importance of the Death Pit reaches beyond acts of consumption, and it was more important than simply a means of disposing of human and animal remains: 'the Death Pit is not simply funerary; it also integrated a wider range of ways of seeing and rationalizing the living and supernatural worlds' (Kansa and Campbell 2004: 13). Events at the Death Pit were communal, possibly involving a large number of people, and the role of animals was prevalent both as food and symbolically (Kansa and Campbell 2004: 13).

Whilst interpretations of personhood do not traditionally focus on the role of consumption and food items, this is an aspect of identity that can be a crucial component of understanding personhood, especially in the context of evidence such as the Death Pit. The role of consumption will be explored next, focusing in particular on practices such as cannibalism, and what it can reveal about personhood and identity.

Identity, food, and consumption

This chapter has already discussed themes including fragmentation of the body and human relationships with animals. One area that is bound up with concepts of identity is food consumption, because it is often closely entwined with human-animal relationships. We know that consumption is about more than simply eating to survive. Bloch has argued that the social role of consumption is almost universal (although with distinct differences from culture to culture), with eating together a mechanism for creating common substance (Bloch 1999: 7, 50). In other words, the act of consuming food can be an encompassing social act, used in negotiations of identities, and in the creation and maintenance of relationships. It can also provide an

arena for other social engagements, which themselves meaningfully construct individual and relational identities. Hamilakis (1998) describes how acts of consumption have the ability to embed memory; eating is also a sensory experience, whereby certain smells, tastes, and sensations of past events are recalled, evoking emotion. In addition, collective consumption is a means by which traditions are learned and maintained; where the same actions and similar foods are anticipated, enjoyed, and recalled by many.

It is not just the act of consuming that is important. The food that is eaten can be fundamental to constructions of identity: whether consuming meat, vegetables, or other sources of food, the relationships between people and places in the landscape can be poignantly reiterated through food choices. As Parker Pearson puts it, 'food is involved in practices that affect our sense of place and identity' (2003: 9). Likewise, as well as a sense of place, a notion of the exotic or 'other' may be invoked when foods from other places are consumed. Cooking methods can also be closely linked to a sense of place and intricately bound up in identities (and now recognized as a vital component of intangible cultural heritage).

None of these aspects of food and identity is too far-fetched as to be unfamiliar to us. The physical acts of eating mean we incorporate substances and food into our bodies. When the food that is consumed changes, such as with the introduction of harvested crops, particular foods may come into focus in a way that is more clearly defined, including new cooking methods and ways of consuming. Cooking methods themselves are often culturally relevant and will change according to the occasion and need. Large-scale eating events require adaptation of small-scale food preparation, cooking, and serving. Just as the procedures change, so too do the people involved, as seen in fig. 6.7, a village in Bangladesh, where gender division is relevant in that the 'everyday' preparation and cooking methods are practised by women using clay ovens (fig. 6.7b), while for the public event it is the men that take over the catering (fig. 6.7a). The equipment used and methods of cooking and serving change according to the context. The social aspects of eating are important: there are choices to be made about the diners, the invitees; about who will partake of the food and are thus included in the renegotiating and reinforcing of relationships and identities.

Particular events may require changes to the types of food consumed as well as in its preparation and how it is served. Funerary events are commonly accompanied by acts of communal consumption or

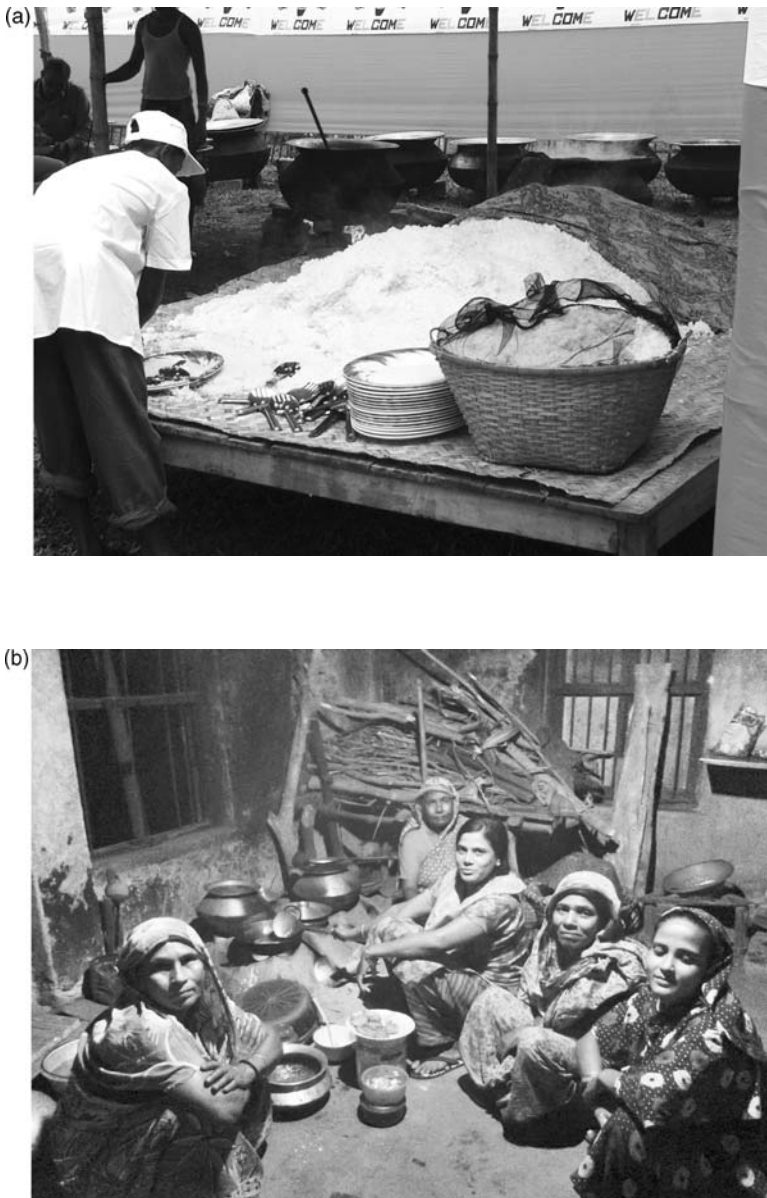


Fig. 6.7. Food production in Bangladesh (a) for a wedding feast (Paul Goodwin), and (b) for a household (Karina Croucher).

feasting. There are instances in the archaeological record where deliberate acts of funerary feasting can be seen. Such acts are usually categorized archaeologically through the presence of particular criteria, such as food preparation, concentrations of food wastage, storage, an unusual variety of cooking/serving equipment, labour-intensive processing of animals, the consumption of large and domesticated animals, visible evidence of the ritual at the site or location, use of human remains, under-processed (wasted) food, artistic representation of food taxa, trophy bones, and memorial constructs (Twiss 2008). A shorter list of criteria is provided by Helwing (2003: 66), requiring evidence of commensal consumption of special food, drink, and/or narcotics, the spatial distinction of a feasting stage or area, and status symbols involved in the negotiation of social relationships. Feasts are also often marked by 'the consumption of unusual foods and/or their modes of preparation and discard, the temporal or locational framing of the event, the material culture used, or the performances undertaken' (Twiss 2008: 419).

Such criteria can be problematic archaeologically, especially with regard to funerary feasting, which may not necessarily take place at the graveside (Hayden 2009: 49). Such occasions may take place outside, or in temporary settings, or may still be regarded as important, although only a few prominent attendees are present, rather than the whole community. Furthermore, the remains of feasts may be dissipated quickly as they are distributed and removed to different households or villages, as well as through canine and other scavenger activity (Adams 2005: 187). Such debate has taken place over potential feasting at Çatalhöyük. Although an obvious feasting arena is not present, rooftops could have been utilized for this purpose (Adams 2005), a proposition for which Hodder argues there is a lack of evidence, arguing that ritual was a part of everyday practice rather than necessarily revolving around distinct events (Hodder 2005). The site of Kfar HaHoresh, discussed above, has convincing evidence of feasting, in particular at the 'Bos Pit', which contained the remains of eight aurochs (Goring-Morris and Horwitz 2007). There was a drastic under-representation of cranial elements, with only ten upper teeth and a few fragmentary pieces of cranial bone, and an absence of mandibles and horn cores. These remains were placed, in a single event, beneath a human burial which later had its head removed. A conservative estimate of the meat available from the butchery of these animals is around 500 kg. To put this into some context, 250

kg of meat can feed around 2500 people (Goring-Morris and Horwitz 2007). There were also whole joints of meat placed in the pit, articulated rather than fully butchered, suggesting a surplus (Goring-Morris and Horwitz 2007). This was a large social activity involving lots of meat; considerable effort would have been involved in the hunting and killing of these animals, and in the butchering and food preparations. It is easy to see how such events were constitutive of memory and meaning, and how they were significant events within a lifetime.

Cannibalism: ethnographies and examples

From the PPNA onwards there are repeated suggestions of the importance of feasting. However, recording methods often make it difficult to apply the precise criteria for recognizing feasting. Animal bones are repeatedly found in processed conditions, and so too are human bones, often found disarticulated and in unexpected contexts. Whilst we are ready to accept that such evidence of processed animals probably represents feasting and consumption events, there is a reluctance to recognize comparable processed human remains in the same light. Consumption of the dead, or cannibalism, is notoriously difficult to prove archaeologically, with decades of controversy and debate having taken place over the topic. Arens (1980) proposed that accounts of cannibalism were a result of a 'Man-Eating Myth', and simply products of propaganda and rumour. However, archaeologists are beginning to rectify this picture, with strong evidence demonstrating many examples where cannibalism is likely to have occurred. And, of course, there are ethnographies that describe the practice. Whilst some of the reports from social anthropologists in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are likely to be subject to some biases and distortions, with notions of savages and barbarians, there are also reliable accounts that discuss the practice.

Cannibalism is broadly defined as the consumption of human flesh (for animals, those that feed on the flesh of their own species), (OED 2005). However, there are different types of cannibalism, which are largely defined by the motivation behind consumption: survival cannibalism, where cannibalism is necessary at times of famine or other extreme conditions; gustatory cannibalism, where flesh is eaten for pleasure; pathological cannibalism, signalling a psychological condition; the eating of enemies as an act of warfare or revenge; funerary

cannibalism, where the deceased are consumed as part of a mortuary ritual; and medical cannibalism. Each of these types of cannibalism will be discussed briefly below, based on sources from ethnographies, historical accounts, and media reports.

Medical cannibalism

The practice of consuming parts of the human body for some perceived medical benefit has been practised at various times in the past, reported to have been widespread during the eighteenth century in Europe. With medical cannibalism, it is rare that the consumer knew the deceased during life; the consumer is removed from the consumed, with the latter depersonalized and becoming a commercial product (Conklin 2001: 13).

Pathological cannibalism

Although it is rare, there are known pathological cases of cannibalism (Taylor 2001a). A recent case is one from the Purbalingga area of Central Java, where a thirty-one-year-old male confessed to eating three human bodies, that of an eighty-year-old woman stolen from her grave the day after her burial, and another two, a pair of robbers, who had attempted to steal from him. The defendant admitted consumption of the corpses, stating that he believed this would endow him with supernatural powers. However, the defendant faced charges associated with theft of the corpse in the absence of a law prohibiting cannibalism. It was claimed that the man suffered from a psychiatric illness, although whilst police psychiatrists classified the man a psychopath, the Banyumas hospital declared the man to be sane (*Jakarta Post* 2003). It is interesting to note that such deviation from the norm labels the individual psychotic; possibly, it is easier for society to come to terms with the breaking of such taboos if the individual concerned is labelled insane.

Gustatory cannibalism

Accounts of gustatory cannibalism are perceived in a comparable way to pathological cases, with the eating of human flesh for pleasure regarded by most societies as abhorrent. Reports are few in number and reliability, often the result of propaganda, although some examples may be more reliable. Seligmann describes accounts of the Melanesians of New Guinea, writing that 'human flesh was undoubtedly eaten for the pleasure it afforded' (1910: 48), describing accounts

concerning the flavour of human flesh, that it resembled pork, and stating that human flesh was preferred for its 'delicate flavour' and lack of the bad side effects, such as vomiting, often experienced after consumption of pork (Seligmann 1910: 552–3). An account by Rhodes (1997) stated that he was informed that Fore women ate their dead because they were 'delicious', although, no doubt, this is open to translation and interpretation. Eye-witness reports exist from a region in Southern China during the Mao Zedong Cultural Revolution in the late 1960s, telling of the roasting and barbecuing of human flesh, especially the liver, which was treated as an 'after-dinner snack' and a delicacy (Rudolph and Burton 1993).

Survival cannibalism

Reports of survival cannibalism are more readily accepted and have been documented throughout history, for example an Inuit account of British sailors' efforts to survive: 'the starving sailors who tried to escape from the ice-bound *Erebus* and *Terror*, the ships of Sir John Franklin's ill-fated expedition to find the North-West Passage in 1845, started to eat each other, cooking the meat inside leather sea boots' (Taylor 2001a). This report was denied, as such behaviour was deemed impossible for British sailors, until an archaeological expedition in 1981 uncovered a human thighbone, with clearly identifiable cut marks, at first explained as frost-bite surgery or Inuit attack. However, further examination revealed that 'the pattern . . . demonstrated across a number of sites is wholly consistent with the traditional Inuk account. Bits of limb were carried as packed food as the doomed survivors struggled slowly south in appalling weather, only to suffer further casualties. These new corpses were eaten too' (Taylor 2001a).

More recently, during the last century, there have been reports that in some areas in Russia people resorted to cannibalism as a matter of life or death during extreme famine conditions (Dickinson 1995). This was also seen during the Blockade of Leningrad during World War II, where the city was laid to siege for almost two years. Survivors recall that cannibalism was not rare; 'of course it's terrible, but, you know, during those times, I can tell you, I was glad to eat cats and dogs. Everyone knew that some were forced to eat relatives who had died. That, or die themselves' (eyewitness account by Lyubov Polovna in a sensationalist news report (Anonymous 2003); see also Lukor 2003 and Snyder 2010).

The most famous example of survival cannibalism in recent history was the result of an air crash in the Peruvian Andes in 1972, where the

survivors turned to consumption of their fellow victims for survival. Initially, small strips of dried flesh were eaten, but as necessity dictated, eventually most of the body was consumed, 'exempting only the lungs, skin, head, and genitalia. Leftover scraps of fat and bone were simply thrown on the floor of their living quarters, the aircraft's cabin.' In time, 'flesh was scraped away from beneath the skin of the hands and feet. They all came to want the bone marrow. After the meat had been scraped away, the bones were cracked open and the marrow extracted. In order to extract the brains, the skin was cut across the forehead and the scalp pulled back, then the skull was cracked open. Due to a shortage of containers, the top halves of four skulls were used as bowls. Other bones were modified into spoons' (Reed 1974: 199–200; also referenced in Flynn et al 1979).

Consumption of enemies

Cannibalism as an act of warfare is fairly well documented, seen for example among the Maori of New Zealand (Robley 1896: 43), the Wari' of Western Brazil (Conklin 2001), the New Guinea Highlands (Strathern 1982: 122), Papua New Guinea (Poole 1983: 17), as well as from the Australian islands in the early twentieth century (i.e. Seligmann 1910). One of the main motivations behind the practice usually involved humiliation of the deceased. Comparable links between enemy raids and hunting have also been drawn (Turner and Turner 1992a: 675), such as among the Wari', where warfare was conceptualized in much the same way as the hunting of animals, with similar preparations and rituals surrounding both events. The eating of enemies in this case involved an element of dehumanization: 'the way they handled and ate enemy corpses explicitly marked the enemy as a nonperson and expressed hostility and hatred' (Conklin 2001: 32). Among the Wari', the consumption of enemies was considered in explicitly different terms to consuming members of the community, compared conceptually to the distinction we make between burying our dead and burying our rubbish (Conklin 2001: xxiii).

Entwined with the humiliation of the deceased, this act is a means of revenge, often avenging prior raids (Seligmann 1910: 48). In other contexts, consumption of the enemy is embedded in symbolic and ritual performances, such as those held by the Bimin-Kuskusmin of Papua New Guinea during their Pandanus Rite which takes place twice annually (Poole 1983: 17), where a victim from an enemy tribe is consumed. The ritual is heavily bound up in symbolism, where

cannibalism is concerned with the balance between genders in complex ritual acts, intended to ensure fertility for the Bimin-Kuskusmin (Poole 1983: 24–30).

Funerary cannibalism

Cannibalism for funerary purposes is perhaps the most recorded of all cases of cannibalism. Many late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century reports document mortuary cannibalistic practices, such as among the Binbinga tribe of North Central Australia (Spencer and Gillen 1904: 548), or Southeast Australian inhabitants who consumed their dead according to the circumstances of death (Howitt 1904: 457), and communities around Maryborough, where a variety of mortuary practices took place including burial, burning, excarnation, and consumption, the latter of which was considered ‘the greatest honour’ had the death occurred as a result of ceremonial combat (Howitt 1904: 470). Smyth writes of the Aborigines of Victoria that the fat of the dead was consumed in order to appease the grief of relatives (1878: 120), a motivation also documented by Howitt (1904: 458). In these accounts, consumption of the dead was seen as an act of honouring the deceased. It is also commonly perceived as ensuring the departure of the spirit of the deceased to the spirit world (Poole 1983: 15–16). There are also accounts where consumption enables the incorporation of the deceased’s essence, or life force, into the living (Bloch and Parry 1982: 9; Conklin 2001: xxviii).

In some cases, rather than the whole or parts of the body being consumed, decompositional fluids were ingested, as documented in an account from the Torres Strait, where ‘it was formerly the custom for men to drink the juices which exuded from the mummifying corpse’. This would be ‘mixed with food and eaten’ (Myers and Haddon 1908: 159). Similarly, among the Dayak of Borneo, it is reported that there is a deliberate delay before burial to allow for decomposition to occur. The coffin would be sealed, except for an opening at the bottom through which the decompositional fluid flowed, which was then collected in an earthenware vessel. It is believed that as ‘the desiccation of his bones progresses so the deceased himself must be gradually freed from the mortuary infection’ (Hertz 1960: 32). These fluids were then collected and mixed with rice for consumption by the close relatives of the deceased during the mourning period (Hertz 1960: 33). Hertz describes a comparable case among the inhabitants of some of the Timor islands, where the

relatives of the deceased rub the decompositional fluids into their bodies (1960: 119, n. 33). Here we see comparable treatment of the physical body of the deceased, only without consumption taking place; such practices surely raise the question of how important consumption itself is in the broader practices taking place.

One of the most recent accounts of mortuary cannibalism follows Beth Conklin's (2001) experiences with the Wari' of the Amazon in Western Brazil. Conklin was able to interview some elders of the community about the cannibalistic mortuary rites which were practised there until the 1960s, when contact with the West brought an end to the mortuary ritual. The Wari' cited the main reason for consumption of the corpse as aiding the mourning relatives. The belief is that through the presence of a buried corpse, there remains a site for mourning, a focus for grief, prolonging the healing process and preventing those close to the deceased from returning to everyday life. It was also an act of great respect for the dead. The Wari' believe the ground to be cold, wet, and polluting; placing their dead in the ground is therefore a painful and disrespectful act (Conklin 2001: xviii–xxi). The corpse is consumed as part of the process to forget the dead. Consumption was not a pleasant act, due to the time it took to gather together all the relatives prior to the commencement of the funerary feast, thus decomposition had usually begun, and consumption would inevitably induce nausea and vomiting (Conklin 2001: 82).

For the Wari', cannibalism was only one part of the mortuary ritual, in which property of the deceased was destroyed, along with any other material markers. Today, this process continues through the destruction of the deceased's house and possessions, rerouting of paths, and prevention from speaking of the dead (Conklin 2001: xxii). In this sense, cannibalism was simply one factor contributing to a wider mortuary ritual, centred on the eradication of the memory of the deceased, for the sake of the living.

Cannibalism: archaeological detection and criteria

The different motivations for cannibalism impact upon archaeological interpretation. Although butchery marks on bones may not in themselves provide evidence of consumption of the flesh, the wider context can be more indicative of such practices, such as the absence of ceremonial treatment of the remains in many cases, combined with

the other factors and criteria discussed above, including the under-representation of vertebrae, and evidence of cooking: pot polish, marrow extraction, and butchery marks, which are seen in anvil and hammer-stone abrasions. These factors are especially successful in the identification of exocannibalism or survival cannibalism. The archaeological identification of remains from endocannibalism is more problematic. In such cases, the consumption of the flesh is ultimately a component of a broader practice concerned with the disposal of the body, the successful departing of the spirit, and part of a process aimed at forgetting the deceased. In ethnographic examples, such practices ultimately often end with cremation; little will remain archaeologically to detect the process. In cases where bones are preserved, evidence of cut marks for defleshing may be the only detectable evidence, which is not sufficient in its own right for conclusions about consumption to be drawn. However, if the consumption is incorporated into the wider practice of secondary burial or bodily deconstructive practices, it comprises a small part of the overall ritual. It serves in part as a means to an end. In such cases, it could be argued, consumption of the flesh itself is of lesser relevance in the overall process of the mortuary ritual. However, this is not to say that such avenues should not be explored where appropriate.

Drawing on evidence from known accounts of survival cannibalism as well as from extensive studies of a few key archaeological sites, criteria for the archaeological recognition of cannibalism are now accepted, and many examples have been identified. There are multiple cases from the American Southwest, brought together by Turner and Turner in *Man Corn* (1999). A case study by Flynn et al (1979) of LA4528, an Anasazi settlement in New Mexico, was an important step in the establishment of criteria, whereby the methodology used drew upon material from the Andean plane crash of the 1970s. At the Anasazi site analysed by Flynn and colleagues, the remains of 11 people had been strewn over the floor of a pithouse; the bones displayed evidence of having been smashed and splintered, as well as evidence of cutting and some burning (1979: 308). All the breaks in the bones occurred whilst the bones were fresh, evidenced by the even and sharply angled edges, where the bones were split longitudinally with evidence of marrow removal. Animal activity is ruled out due to lack of puncture marks or evidence of rodent gnawing (1979: 310–13). Additionally, there were no vertebrae, which, when compared with evidence from the Andean plane crash—where when

searching for food survivors brought back only the limbs and the head (providing the greatest nutritional value), (Reed 1974: 206)—is suggestive of comparable practice. Flynn and colleagues argue that the butchery most likely took place elsewhere; the trunk was not disposed of along with the rest of the remains in the pithouse (1979: 313). They concluded that ‘the overall picture of skeleton destruction is that of dismemberment, crushing of long bone shafts, facial mutilation, scattering and loss of elements of the trunk (ribs, vertebrae, and pelves), and loss of the hands and feet’; arguing that ‘neither the pattern nor the type of breakage could have occurred without conscious human effort at or near the time of death’ (1979: 313).

Following on from this research, further examples helped to refine archaeological criteria for cannibalism and it is now accepted that, ideally, five factors should be met before confirming the likelihood of cannibalism. These are: peri-mortem bone breakage; burning; butchering; anvil or hammer-stone abrasions; and absent or crushed vertebrae (Turner and Turner 1992a: 663).

One of the most detailed examples of archaeological evidence of cannibalism is reported by Tim White from an Anasazi pueblo, Southwestern Colorado. The site of Mancos 5MTUMR-2346, dating to around AD 1100, revealed the remains of a minimum number of 29 individuals of various ages, especially young adults, and both sexes (White 1992: 99), displaying evidence of butchery, marrow extraction, and cooking. This research has added an extra indicator, the presence of ‘pot-polishing’ on the ends of bones, resulting from abrasion against pottery vessels during boiling and stirring.

Recent developments in the identification of cannibalism include coprolite analysis, evidence that supports the argument for cannibalism in the case of the pithouse in Cowboy Wash, Southwest Colorado (Marlar et al 2000; Holden 2000; Dold 1998). However, such evidence from coprolites is extremely rare. There may also be future avenues of research in isotope analysis, where identification of diet through skeletal remains is possible. With regard to human consumption, nitrogen-stable isotope analysis should, in theory, reveal evidence. However, in practice, the situation is more complex. This is because animal protein sources themselves can have a high degree of isotope variability, making identification more difficult, and the situation is further complicated if consumption occurred only rarely (Pearson pers. comm.). Residue and lipid analysis may be a further avenue for clarification on this matter, at least if pottery was being used in this

way. This would rely both on the vessel's use and on preservation of the residues.

European examples where cannibalism has been suggested include the Neolithic site of Fontbrégoua cave in France, dating to the 5th–4th millennium BC. Here, there were 13 clusters of bones discovered in shallow pits, ten of which contained the butchered remains of wild and domestic animals, the other three containing only butchered human remains (Villa et al 1986: 432). In the UK, Taylor has argued extensively for the occurrence of cannibalism in certain periods of the past, such as remains from Gough's cave in Cheddar, Somerset, defending his case in the face of strong criticism (Taylor 2001a, b; Swaebrick 2001; Bahn 2001). More recently, research by Outram et al and colleagues (2005) have pioneered rigorous faunal and human osteological analysis, with specialists working alongside each other, using compatible recording techniques to compare processing marks on human and animal assemblages. The comparison of human and animal remains, identifying comparable techniques and butchery processes, adds further weight to interpretations of cannibalism.

It still remains the case that suggestions of cannibalism require additional proof than with other archaeological interpretations. However, ensuring that *all* of the criteria suggested above are identified will inevitably lead to the dismissal of some remains which possibly resulted from cannibalism. Turner and Turner identify that there is a 'double standard' here, asking 'who has ever challenged that butchered, broken, and burned herbivore bones in archaeological refuse were not the remains of meals?' (1992a: 661).

The problem with identifying evidence of cannibalism is that whilst we may be able to determine that processing of human remains took place, we can rarely determine conclusively that the flesh was eaten. Providing proof for defleshing and processing of the body may be a relatively simple process, but proving consumption is considerably more problematic. As Turner and Turner highlight, 'there is at present no way of *knowing* what actually happened to the removed tissue and fat in these mass burials' (1992b: 191, my emphasis), although consumption is usually the most logical explanation when the evidence is considered. White (1992: 10) comments that when we find similar butchery marks on animals it is instantly taken to mean consumption; shouldn't similar marks on human bones, including cut marks, scrape marks, and burning at least be open to a similar interpretation?

Furthermore, marrow extraction, repeatedly seen in the examples discussed above, would rarely be observed in mortuary rituals, even when defleshing does take place. In such cases, the argument for secondary burial is not necessarily any more plausible than cannibalism, yet it is the preferred interpretation among scholars (Villa et al 1988: 48). In response to the problem of proving cannibalism, Degusta has argued that 'this is correct, in-so-much as it is impossible to absolutely prove anything about past human dietary behaviour. In some cases, such as Navatu, every line of evidence that leads to an inference of human consumption of other mammals also leads to an inference of human consumption of humans. In these cases, the choice is between accepting an inference of cannibalism or concluding that nothing can be known about prehistoric diet' (Degusta 2000: 90).

Cannibalism and Domuztepe

In the case of Domuztepe, the weight of evidence suggests that consumption of the dead has to be considered as a real possibility (Kansa et al 2009b), given the highly fragmentary nature of the human bone, displaying evidence of chopping, percussion, and/or cutting (Gauld pers. comm.), as well as evidence of crushing, in addition to the initial disarticulation and defleshing of remains (Gauld pers. comm.; Kansa et al 2009b). Evidence includes cut-marks consistent with butchery, marrow extraction, localized burning and scorching indicative of cooking, pot polish, and human tooth marks (Kansa et al 2009b: 168). Such processing of the body is in itself the result of a vast expenditure of effort, evidencing certain expertise and knowledge (Gauld pers. comm.). These bones were fragmented to a far greater extent than would be required for simply defleshing the remains, and the additional fragmentation of long bones is rarely seen other than for purposes motivated by marrow extraction and consumption. Animals and humans, other than their skulls, were processed in the same way: 'there was little difference in the way domestic livestock and human remains were processed' (Kansa et al 2009b: 169). 'The possibility of cannibalism at Domuztepe is, without doubt, one that needs to be considered very seriously' (ibid.: 170).

We also know that the bodies of these persons were subject to this treatment at or close to their time of death (ibid.). The animal bones, other than canines, demonstrate comparable treatment, with cut marks consistent with butchery (Kansa and Campbell 2004: 11).

Kansa and colleagues (2009b) argue that we are witnessing comparable treatment of animal and human bones, where the bones were defleshed, further fragmented, and processed in line with butchery techniques. We also see an under-representation of certain parts of the body: 'some portions of the skeleton, such as vertebrae, are greatly under-represented in the sample, suggesting that prior to their deposition, bodies were subjected to certain mortuary activities that resulted in the consistent destruction of particular parts of the skeleton' (Gauld pers. comm.). In particular, there is an under-representation of vertebrae, pelvis and ribs, with an abundance of finger and toe bones (Gauld pers. comm.), and at least 51 carpus bones (the group of eight bones forming the joint between the forearm and the hand) were recovered (Gauld pers. comm.). This suggests that the under-representation of vertebrae with these particular remains is not the result of secondary burial or other exposure of the body, where it is unlikely that the smaller finger and toe bones would be present.

In the case of the Andean plane crash, the lack of vertebrae is a result of death taking place elsewhere, and the limbs most suited to consumption being carried away. It is feasible that this is what occurred at Domuztepe, either at or close to the time of death, where the limbs and heads were brought to the Death Pit, resulting in the presence of finger and toe bones and the absence of vertebrae, pelvis, and ribs. However, it is more likely that the pattern represents processing techniques with a similar presence of human and animal bones (see Kansa et al 2009b: fig. 9).

Evidence from the skulls is also important, where we see the removal of part of the cranial vault, evident in all cases where skulls are complete enough for examination. The most reasonable explanation for this practice would seem to be brain extraction: 'it is likely that the actual detachment of bone from the skull and damage to the cranial base were sustained during post-mortem activities related to removal of the brain' (Gauld pers. comm.); although it is apparent that a different method was used to break the skull than that evidenced by the Andean plane crash remains. It is difficult to think of many reasons for brain removal, but one feasible possibility would certainly be consumption of the brain, as witnessed in the Andean plane crash remains.

In contrast to the Andean plane crash victims, the South American examples discussed above frequently demonstrated evidence of facial

mutilation indicative of acts of violence. At Domuztepe, it appears that the pattern of damage to the facial bones is inconsistent, some receiving damage perhaps in line with mortuary treatment (decapitation whilst face down) and others not (Gauld pers. comm.), unfortunately not helping in the interpretation of the relationship between the living and deceased members of the community. The later deposit of skull 1143 (fig. 6.6), an articulated skull and mandible in later deposits marking the Death Pit, indicates a blow to the skull occurring near or at the time of death, possibly even the cause of death, although it is also possible that 'the side impact damage was sustained after death in order to extract the brain' (Gauld pers. comm.; Carter et al 2003: 124). The facial bones do remain intact on this example. The varied evidence from the Death Pit differs considerably from the Anasazi example, where extensive blows to the face were clearly evident. It may be the case that the relationship between the deceased and the living was not necessarily one of violence and disrespect at Domuztepe.

Funerary cannibalism at Domuztepe?

Whilst the relationship between the deceased and the living can be debated, there are certain factors I believe suggest compassionate cannibalism may have been practised at Domuztepe (a proposition that has arisen from discussions with Stuart Campbell and other members of the Domuztepe team). We can rule out survival cannibalism as a motivation behind consumption of the dead at Domuztepe in light of the evidence above and due to the quantities of meat available and disposed of in the Death Pit (Kansa et al 2009b). One of the key factors in cases of warfare cannibalism or violent mortuary practices is the consistent lack of formal funerary treatment or reverence for the dead. At Domuztepe, great effort had been expended in preparation and participation of the events; not only in digging the pit itself, the slaughter of animals, and the butchery that took place, but also in that the events took place over several days rather than over a long period of time, suggesting a more involved and intensive event. The whole pit was covered over with a layer of ash, requiring a significant burning event, or events, to produce the ash in a location that is not evident in the immediate vicinity of the Death Pit (Campbell pers. comm.). Finally, the pit is in a prominent position within the settlement, which is an unusual location if these were the remains of enemies, especially since the bodies were removed from sight.

Furthermore, the area was kept clear of architecture for at least several generations. The lack of animal disturbance implies that the area must have been maintained and kept clear of scavengers, and whilst the ash would have kept the smell under control, some effort must have gone into ensuring that the remains, which were fairly close to the surface, were not uncovered.

The activities behind the Death Pit must have been significant social events for the participants, especially those involved in the preparation and consumption of the dead. Food evokes senses and meaning, and eating creates embodied memories (Hamilakis 1998: 129). Memories are recalled and created through consumption, whether everyday or out-of-the-ordinary events. Experiences are created through the consumption of non-regular foods, cooking and preparation methods, the location, and the context. The act of eating defines time; 'eating does not mark time, it creates it' (Hamilakis 2008: 15).

We already have evidence of a huge event of communal consumption; you could use the word 'feast' (see definitions by Hayden 2009; Helwing 2003 above), although the term conjures up a particular image that may not be appropriate for the Death Pit. The act of consuming human flesh adds another dimension to the experience. The incorporation of a food or substance into the body potentially creates a powerful change in the concept of identity. It is impossible to imagine that events where cannibalism took place were not meaningful; they were surely significant, out-of-the-ordinary events, which created memories, emotions, and sensory experiences that shaped identities. The incorporation of others into the body through consumption alters the physical body in the same way that any other type of food does; psychologically, the deceased may have been understood to be incorporated into the bodies of the living, altering their composition and their notions of personhood. Additionally, during these times, relationships among the living may have been fundamental, their experiences being shaped by communal actions. Cannibalism, then, has the potential to impact on identity and concepts of personhood. Returning to the categories of personhood discussed at the start of this chapter, it would be easy to see how fundamental such acts would be for understandings of the self if dividual relationships were in place, with people physically and conceptually composed of the substances they consumed, and the powerful common experience behind communal consumption events shaping relationships among

the living. And for the dead, they were irreversibly altered, with their bodies deconstructed and fragmented.

Cremation, fire, and death

The processes of fragmentation and disarticulation are affective for the living who deal with the physicality of the remains of the dead. A further form of breaking down the human body can be seen through cremation. Evidence of cremation is still fairly limited from the Pre-Pottery Neolithic, although it becomes more frequent during the Later Neolithic. This does not mean that cremation did not regularly take place prior to this, simply that the burnt remains were not disposed of in archaeologically visible contexts. At sites during the Later Neolithic where cremation is apparent, the practice was a component of a variety of other mortuary practices, rather than the primary method of corpse disposal. Due to the relative rarity of evidence for cremation, it will only be discussed briefly here, focusing on evidence from the Later Neolithic sites of Yarim Tepe II and Tell 'Ain el-Kerkh. Fire can also be used to take buildings out of use, as can be seen by a few prominent examples below.

Fire is a highly visual event that can mediate transformation and closure. The use of fire to mark the end of a building's use can be seen in many examples in the Neolithic Near East (see Merrett and Meiklejohn 2007), ranging from the PPNA to the Halaf. At Jerf el-Ahmar, large communal buildings, EA30 and EA47, had been burnt and buried at the end of their use. The splayed body of a female was found in EA30 (fig. 6.8). Killed immediately prior to the destruction of the building, she had been decapitated, and the burial location later marked by a cache of rare flint tools (Stordeur et al 2001; Stordeur and Ibáñez 2008; Asouti and Fuller forthcoming). The closure of the PPNB Skull Building has already been discussed, as has the use of ash covering the Death Pit at Domuztepe in the Halaf. The Burnt House at Arpachiyah, also dating to the end of the Pottery Neolithic, is one example where deliberate closure by fire marked the abandonment of an area of the settlement (Campbell 2000: 24). At Sabi Abyad there is a burnt village where two people had been placed, already dead, on the roof of a house which was deliberately burnt (Akkermans and Verhoeven 1995; Verhoeven 2000). A further example pre-dates the burnt village, where a house was filled with fuel before being burnt, evidenced by the deep fills of ash. The building contained many clay sealings with stamp



Fig. 6.8. Building EA30, headless female, Jerf el-Ahmar (Danielle Stordeur).

impressions, tokens of different shapes and dimensions, as well as large numbers of complete basalt grinding slabs and pestles and mortars (Akkermans 2008: 629). An adult burial, in a crouched position, had been covered with soil and placed in a small room in the house, along with half a stone mace head, before the building had been deliberately burnt. In both cases we see the deliberate ignition of the building marking burial events (Akkermans 2008: 629). The mace head accompanying the latter example is a rare find for the site (only four have been found after years of extensive excavation); its broken state may have been intentional (Akkermans 2008: 630).

Evidence from Sabi Abyad has been compared to House 12 at Bouqras, dating to the second half of the 7th millennium BC. The building, apparently once domestic in use, became a charnel house at the end of its life, with the remains of six people within it when it was destroyed by fire; these are the only human burials found from the Neolithic levels of the site. Other than one person who died in or just before the fire, the dead had been in varying stages of decay on the roofs of the buildings at the time of the blaze (Merrett and Meiklejohn 2007). That the bodies were in the process of decomposing for skull removal is suggested by their varying states of decomposition, including a complete skull and cervical vertebrae potentially awaiting decay for removal of the mandible, and placed on the roof of the house. A further defleshed cranium was also recovered. One individual may have been killed as a result of the fire; her body (containing a foetus of

about twenty-one to twenty-eight weeks), was face down, splayed, as if crushed by falling debris. Due to the difficulty of maintaining a fire with mud brick, the house is thought to have been intentionally set alight (Merret and Meiklejohn 2007: 136).

Yarim Tepe II

From the Halaf levels at Yarim Tepe II in North Mesopotamia (c.5800–5400 BC),³ a variety of mortuary practices is evident, with primary burials, secondary remains, skull burial, and cremation, although primary burial dominates the record (see Merpert and Munchaev 1993c; Campbell 2007–8; Croucher 2010; Steven Bell pers. comm.). There are seven cremation burials dating to the lower levels of Yarim Tepe II. Two were juveniles, cremated elsewhere and their burnt remains deposited. The remains of a cremated adult were buried with two painted vessels, smashed at the time of burial (Merpert and Munchaev 1993c: 212), a pattern repeated with other cremations. The cremated bones of another adult had been extracted from the pyre and placed on top of the ash, along with fragments of burnt vessels, with two clay spindle whorls, a bone awl, and a fragment of polished red stone amongst the ashes (Merpert and Munchaev 1993c: 215–6). The charred remains of a ten-year-old had been placed inside a painted pottery vessel buried beneath a floor of a residential building, and at the nearby cremation site, an alabaster goblet, a large bowl, and three pottery vessels had been deliberately smashed (Merpert and Munchaev 1993c: 205–6). An *in situ* cremation contained the charred remains of a ten- to thirteen-year-old, with 20 obsidian beads. The beads had been placed inside a crudely made, broken, painted ceramic vessel, deposited after cremation as it showed no evidence of burning. Several vessels, both ceramic and stone, were thrown, smashed, into the cremation area. Also recovered were a stone seal-pendant with an incised pattern, a charred plate, half a spindle whorl, two cowrie shells, 26 gypsum and 13 obsidian beads, with further beads of other materials, one of which was rock crystal, in addition to 29 clay beads, which had been poorly fired and crudely modelled (Merpert and Munchaev 1993c: 215–6). As discussed by the excavators, ‘the residues of the cremation fires and also the deliberately shattered ceramic and stone vessels were thrown into the burial

³ Although see Campbell (2007) and Campbell and Fletcher (2010) for a discussion of the problematic dating of the site.

pits, and thus are somehow connected with this ceremony' (Merpert and Munchaev 1993c: 217).

There is a repeated theme of breakage, both of the body through cremation, as well as grave goods. There were primary inhumations of adults and, predominantly, juveniles, buried in flexed positions. In the earlier levels of the site, two juveniles had been buried together with a white alabaster spouted cup, which had been deliberately smashed (Merpert and Munchaev 1993c: 209–11). There were other grave goods recovered with primary burials, including an upturned miniature grey-ware cup filled with small ornaments, including pins, carnelian beads, 234 shell beads and 328 soft-stone beads, and in the same burial, charred sheep and goat bones had been placed close to the head (Merpert and Munchaev 1993c: 211). Other objects included a miniature stone spouted vessel, an unfinished alabaster vessel, a painted clay cup with a flint knife and two bone awls, buried with a seven-year-old. As well as burials with necklaces, pendants, and vessels (Merpert and Munchaev 1971b: 31), many graves contained deliberately broken items, including clay and plaster vessels, as well as unfinished or crudely made objects.

Many of the items found in the graves were crudely made or unfinished and, occasionally, animal bones were found, suggesting that the objects interred were not chosen for their fine nature or that conspicuous consumption took them out of circulation, as is often inferred by deliberate breakage at the graveside (Campbell 1992b: 183; Bradley 1990: 94). The act of breaking may have been more significant than the objects chosen, thus low quality and expendable items were chosen to be broken or deposited with the deceased. The breakage may relate to the items as personal objects of the deceased, smashed to mark closure of relationships, and marking the end of life. A minority of the population had burials and cremations of this sort, but perhaps the living thought that these select few required actions of breaking and severing of physical kin ties to ensure sufficient distancing from them, and to facilitate their departure. It is also evident that many of the broken items were not deposited complete (i.e. not all pieces were interred). We see this in the case of the cremations, where items were smashed at the cremation site before being collected and interred with the human remains, in addition to vessels smashed at the site of deposition. Perhaps the incomplete vessels represent previous acts of fragmentation, prior to their final deposition with the body. It is also feasible that fragments were removed and may have

been circulated around the community, or even taken off-site, used for 'extending social relationships through the use of inalienable objects' (Chapman 2000b: 82).

Tell 'Ain el-Kerkh

Excavations at Tell 'Ain el-Kerkh, under the direction of Akira Tsuneki, have recently uncovered cremations dating to the Late Neolithic. Four examples have been excavated to date, three of which are *in situ* cremation pits containing multiple people. Multiple firing temperatures are evidenced, with both white and blackened bones (the former resulting from higher temperatures, the latter from lower temperatures). Whilst some remains were left untouched within the cremation pits, other skeletal parts were moved around and disturbed. Burnt and blackened long bones had been clustered together, whereas the skulls appear to have remained undisturbed (Hironaga 2011: 14), see fig. 6.9. Most of the cremation pits contained multiple burials, usually of around ten people. Cremations frequently took place close to the time of death, with the remains in articulated positions. However, three small cremation pits were too small for the interment of complete bodies, with the bodies only partially articulated prior to cremation (Hironaga 2011: 17). There were



Fig. 6.9. Cremation, with undisturbed skull, Tell el-Kerkh (Akira Tsuneki).

some objects interred above the cremations; above one pit, a stamp-seal and two complete necked jars were found, and another held a small-necked jar (Hironaga 2011: 14–15).

Cremation appears to replace secondary burial practices at Tell el-Kerkh, although both are undertaken with common traits, including comparable sizes of pit, the numbers of bodies interred or cremated, and their ages, mostly adults, with few juveniles (Hironaga 2011: 17). Fragmentation of the body continues, although in a changed and altered manner. However, these contrast with the remains of the primary burials which comprise the majority of the burial record.

Discussion: fire, cremation, and transformation

Fire is used as an agent of transformation in many processes; fire and heat change food from raw to cooked, altering texture, taste, and smell. In processes of creation and production the form of a substance changes, such as during metallurgy, where solids are transformed to liquids, enabling new forms to be cast. Fire is needed in plaster manufacture, and for pottery making; the firing of a vessel changes the nature of the clay, making it durable, whilst also, paradoxically, entailing the risk of fracture. The transformative properties of fire also speak of rejuvenation and are seen as life-giving; fire can be a potent symbol of the regenerative cycles of life and death (Brück 2001: 157–8). Paradoxically, fire is dangerous and fatal, while also cleansing and fertilizing, providing nutrients in slash-and-burn techniques, for instance, or eliminating disease and insects.

In the case of cremation, the dead body is manipulated through fire as an agent of transformation. The transformation from fleshed to burnt bones is remarkable, with the remains physically and conceptually changed. Cremation therefore breaks down the body in a manner that is very different from other forms of disposing of the dead, chemically altering the body, leaving ‘shrunk, broken and deformed bones’, with the weight of the remaining burnt bone dependent on age, sex, and health (Rebay-Salisbury 2010: 65). The method of extinguishing the flames also impacts on the remains that are left; if liquid is poured over the pyre to extinguish the flames, this will result in more extensive breakage of the bones (Rebay-Salisbury 2010). The changed state may correspond in some cases to a belief in assisting the release of the deceased from the physical remains of the body.

At Tell el-Kerkh, it is possible to see from the blackened bones that some cremations took place with low temperatures and slow burning,

whilst for others, white bones are indicative of high-temperature cremations. Through the affective process of cremation, the mourners would have been experientially and mnemonically affected by overseeing the event. Not only was the transformation of the body visible, it was also audible, with the noises, smells, and heat emitted creating a memorable sensory experience. The smoke and flames would have permeated experiences, and may have had further conceptual meaning; Oestigaard suggests that cremation may also be seen as cooking for the gods, with the dead perceived as offerings (2000). The relationship between the living and the dead is altered through cremation; Flohr Sørensen, describing modern Danish practices, describes a termination of the notion of 'person' through cremation, with the person becoming an idea rather than a physical presence once the recognizable body is obliterated (2009: 125), transforming the 'deceased person's body from present to absent' (Flohr Sørensen and Bille 2008: 260). However, this may be more particular to modern cremation methods and grinding of the bone, as open pyres leave more physical remnants than modern methods. Nonetheless, the remains of the dead are irrevocably altered. During the cremation process itself, the body may seem animated as it moves (Bass 1984; Gatto 2002). As different parts of the body ignite (first the hair and clothing, with the trunk taking longer to combust) the body changes; parts are destroyed, revealing organs, muscle, and bone before they burn (Williams 2004: 271), bringing the inner body to the outer surface. Howard Williams (2004: 271) vividly describes the cremation process on an open pyre, where the body can be perceived as having agency, affecting remembrance, and the distributed personhood of the deceased and mourners (Williams 2004: 273, 282). The dead may have been perceived as active agents in their cremation, through their movement, changes in colour, and oozing or igniting of bodily substances and gases, and through the varying conditions that affect the rate and pace of burning, which may have been perceived as the dead playing a role in their willingness (or otherwise) to be consumed by the flames (Williams 2004). Cremation may have taken a long time, and was far from the quick, clean, and sanitized process that we associate with the practice today (Williams 2004: 271). Cremation can be an unpredictable process, with variables including wind and weather conditions, fuel, and burning temperature all impacting on the final outcome, ensuring that rarely are two open cremations alike

(Gatto 2002: 27; Williams 2004). The processes of cremation would have been a potent experience for those witnessing the event.

Rather than a single event, the remains we find archaeologically have usually been part of a sequence of events, with the burning of the body, followed by the collection and disposal of ashes, or burial of the cremated remains *in situ* with the pyre. It is the disposal of ashes that can be seen as a closing event (Hertz 1960: 42–3; Prendergast et al 2006). The final burial of ashes and burnt bones frequently took place in the same locations as primary burials at Yarim Tepe II and Tell el-Kerkh, suggesting that while the processes involved were vastly different, the final, chosen place of deposition was motivated by concerns in common with those of primary burials. However, with cremation, there is a definite cease of decay and decomposition (Flohr Sørensen 2009: 131) with the purifying effect of the fire (Gatto 2002: 28). In the case of el-Kerkh, where dismembered bodies were cremated, there would have been a change in the sensory experience, as the smells of burning and soot replaced that of decaying flesh.

As well as parallels in the locations of the burials of ashes and pyres, both at Yarim Tepe and Tell el-Kerkh, frequent associations and analogous treatment of material culture, including the deliberate destruction of pottery, are also apparent. For Yarim Tepe II, Steven Bell (pers. comm.) has noted the repeated association between burning, breakage, and burial for material culture as well as for bodies. The associations between bodies and objects will be discussed further below.

Relationships: people and things

Bodies and/as objects (. . . the personification of objects)

The fragmentation of bodies and objects has been discussed above in relation to the Death Pit at Domuztepe, Kfar HaHoresh, and the Skull Building at Çayönü. The further analogous treatment of material culture and the body can be seen in relation to some pottery vessels, particularly anthropomorphic examples. There are parallels between the treatment of the human body and the treatment of material culture; both are manipulated, decorated, fragmented, and disposed of, or circulated and curated. The potsherds, nestled with human crania in the Death Pit, have already been discussed, with the

fragments of pots closely resembling fragments of skulls. This analogous treatment of clay and bodies reaches beyond fragmentation—with the surfaces of each decorated and inscribed with meaning. The intentional creation of bodies from clay can be seen through the shaping of anthropomorphic vessels. There is an example from Domuztepe (fig. 6.10), where the vessel has been shaped into the female form; a further example exists from Yarim Tepe II (fig. 6.11).

The vessels clearly replicate the human body, although to differing degrees. For instance, the Domuztepe vessel has feet, whereas the Yarim Tepe II figure has a base that is more usually found on pots. These items combine features to produce what we could describe as ‘vessel people’. The context of the Yarim Tepe II vessel, found deliberately smashed into a pit in a burial area of Yarim Tepe II (Merpert and Munchaev 1993b: 144–5), supports the idea that the figure was attributed some kind of identity. This intriguing context suggests a certain personhood or representative quality, itself ‘killed’ through breakage in this area of the site reserved for deceased humans; themselves often fragmented through secondary burial or cremation. The decorative features of the vessel have been discussed by Stuart Campbell (2008b, 2010), who has also suggested that the vessel may have represented a mythical or supernatural being. It is notable that neither this example nor the vessel from Domuztepe were



Fig. 6.10. Anthropomorphic vessel, Domuztepe (Stuart Campbell).

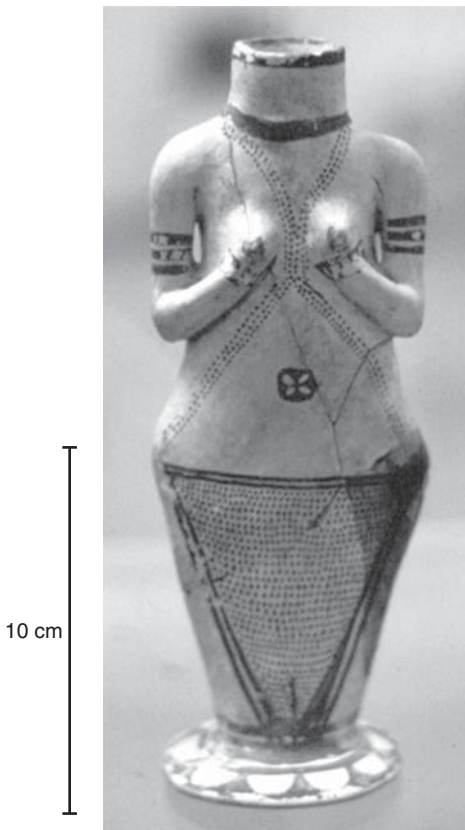


Fig. 6.11. Anthropomorphic vessel, Yarim Tepe II (Stuart Campbell).

constructed with fixed heads. Presumably the heads were shaped into stoppers, if present at all, yet it is significant that they were not included in the representations as elements fixed to the body, that they were never constructed with permanent heads attached to the body. The vessel itself was clearly shaped into a female form, with the malleability of clay exploited to produce these intriguing ‘vessel persons’.

The absence of a head is a frequent feature for figurines. Anatolian examples are discussed by Talalay (2004), including those from Höyücek, where bone bodies could have heads inserted; heads of incised bone were also recovered from the site (Mellink 1992: 125; Talalay 2004: 145). At Sabi Abyad and Çatalhöyük, clay figurines have been found with holes inserted into their necks, enabling the placing

of a head using a dowel, the remains of which have been found in the interior of one of the Sabi Abyad examples (Collet 1996: 403), and at Çatalhöyük, small heads with what appear to be dowel holes have also been recovered (Meskell 2007: 143). The heads from Çatalhöyük appear to display a range of emotions and variations in facial features (Hamilton 1996: 220–1; Talalay 2004: 146). It seems that these figurines had removable and/or interchangeable heads (Verhoeven 2007; Talalay 2004; Meskell 2007), as they were certainly not permanent items. It has been suggested that the Anatolian examples and comparable figurines from Greece perhaps indicate shifting persons or changing identities (Talalay 2004: 145). They may also have been intended to portray ‘a range of emotions, attitudes or states of being’ brought about through changing the head (Talalay 2004: 146, citing Hamilton 1996: 220–1). The heads may also have been added or removed according to the perceived life cycle of the figurine, including its death, or for use in a particular event. This might feasibly recall the process of decapitation repeatedly evidenced throughout the Neolithic Near East, in a comparable tradition to wall paintings (at Çatalhöyük) and later pottery decoration (at Domuztepe), both of which depict decapitated bodies.

Whatever the case, the permanency of the head was not desired here, but removable or changeable identities are suggested. The performative purpose of the figures is significant; in the case of the Domuztepe vessel, wear marks on the feet demonstrate that it was displayed upright and often moved around (perhaps while sharing the liquid inside) (Stuart Campbell pers. comm.). For the Çatalhöyük examples, Meskell (2007) has suggested a possible use for myth or narrative-recital, portraying multiple characters within these performances (Meskell 2007: 144). As well as their story telling purposes, these figurines may demonstrate the multiple identities possible for one being, representing numerous identities, rather than a static ‘individual’. Perhaps identity for these figurines was contextual, dependent on the situation, ceremony, or owner. Whether these can strictly map onto human experience is difficult to confirm, yet we might see that it is a possibility that multiple identities could be experienced by the living; indeed, we should expect so, with identity being relational and contextual.

Nakamura and Meskell, discussing figurines from Çatalhöyük, recognize that trying to identify a fixed meaning is in itself flawed. The figurines are products of processes of engagement, rather than

holding fixed meanings in time. They write that 'the figurine does not only sustain, but demands multiple viewpoints. In this way, it anchors a dynamic network of encounters with and between individuals and coproduces various and often concomitant perceptions, experiences, and knowledge' (2009: 209). Meanings, therefore, are dynamic and are themselves constitutive, rather than simply transmitting meanings (*ibid.*). The processes of making were important, a theme discussed by Joyce in relation to Mesoamerican figurines (Joyce 2008b). The act of making is a transformative process, affecting both the clay and the maker. At some points during the making, the clay can be seen to permeate the skin (Waddington 2007), colouring it and leaving a physical reminder of the process, which might be seen as an interaction between the person and the clay. Ultimately, the new figure emerges from the clay.

Through the evidence from figurines and vessels, we can see that the human body was replicated through other media. The example from Yarim Tepe II was dramatically destroyed, or killed, suggesting that the conceptualization of the clay body was related to a human one, with a 'pot person' created, not just as an item, but itself instilled with meaning and perceived personhood. Both human and pot bodies were frequently 'broken' at death, de-constituted from the whole, but with their parts remaining meaningful. The topic of figurines could provide a further book in itself, so their treatment here has been brief, related to conceptions of the human body, and relatedness to material culture.

... into the grave

We have seen from ethnographies discussed earlier in this chapter that objects can be embedded with multiple meanings, often inalienable with a biography of exchange. They can be closely bound up with people's identities and reinforce relationships as they are exchanged and circulated. It is easy to see how the anthropomorphic examples, such as the people-shaped vessels discussed above, may have been ascribed with biographies. However, other objects can be just as meaningful, perhaps not attributed with their own personhood, but related to the identities of their wearers, owners, and makers.

Some items were worn about the body and accompanied the deceased into the grave; frequently these show evidence of wear, worn during life, rather than placed with the body for funerary contexts. These include beads made from stone, shell, bone, or clay, bone

ornaments and awls, labrets—items which are often worn through the lower lip or as plugs through the ear—and tokens and seals. At numerous sites, dating throughout the Neolithic, there is evidence of the procurement of materials and objects over vast distances. The significance of the source of materials has already been discussed in this chapter, with the properties and qualities adding meaning to the object created; this can also be seen with items of adornment. The choice of materials may relate to their various properties and qualities, whether related to durability, ease of manipulation, or colour and feel. Part of their value may also derive from the remoteness of the source; they may be considered exotic or difficult to obtain, or representative of networks and relationships extending over considerable distances. Examples can be seen in numerous items of adornment throughout the Neolithic Near East. For instance, a necklace from Sabi Abyad included 140 small beads of bright blue, red, and clear quartz-like stones, imported from many sources and locations (Akkermans et al 2006: 149; Belcher and Croucher in prep.).

A beautiful example of a labret was found at Sabi Abyad (fig. 6.12), and corresponding wear marks on teeth confirm the wearing of the labret throughout life (Peter Akkermans pers. comm.). Prior to the find, *in situ*, it was also speculated that the labrets were tokens, items



Fig. 6.12. Primary burial with labret *in situ*, Sabi Abyad (Peter Akkermans, Sabi Abyad Project).

of exchange and administration; when found out of their original contexts, tokens and labrets can be difficult to tell apart (Bonnie Nilhamn and Olivier Nieuwenhuyse pers. comm.). Given that so many labrets are also found not worn on the body, it is unlikely that they were worn all of the time. Furthermore, objects may have been used more than simply for adornment or for exchange, but may have held, fluid, changing, and contextual meanings. An item which is sometimes worn on the body is not excluded from contexts of exchange. The wearing of such an item may further strengthen the ties between the object and person. Such items may be understood as imbued with meaning and identity in relation to the wearer, even as inalienable objects, which can be worn, given away, circulated, and exchanged, building up biographies and reflecting relationships. It is not just objects such as labrets or beads that can be viewed in this way, but seals also hold a particular, more obvious, ambiguity.

Seals are often worn about the body. Many show clear wear marks, and others have been found *in situ* in burials (i.e. from Tell el-Kerkh see Tsuneki 2011: 8; from Boztepe see Parker and Creekmore 2002). Furthermore, patterns commonly found on seals are carved into pendants, more obviously combining the categories of jewellery and



Fig. 6.13. Pendant/seal made from obsidian and repaired after breakage, Domuztepe (Stuart Campbell and Elizabeth Healey).

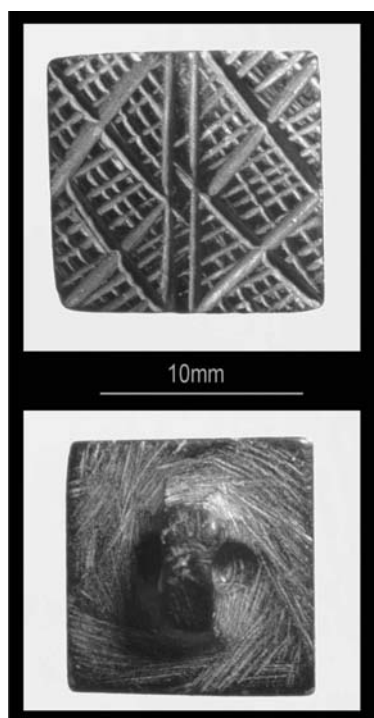


Fig. 6.14. Stamp-seal, Domuztepe (Stuart Campbell).

adornment with that of marking and sealing (figs 6.13, 6.14). Many seals were repaired or used after breakage, suggesting that they were important pieces to keep and use, and not necessarily easily replaceable. As well as the practical motivations of keeping objects close to hand, items worn on the body can be personal and intimately bound up with identities, acquiring further meaning in contexts of exchange. If we abandon our rigid interpretative categories (for example, administrative versus ornamental), further potential meaning behind objects can be more fully explored.

Seals may have been used to signify the individual through acts of sealing and impressing, and worn on the body as a personal, inalienable object tied up with personal identity. The inclusion of these items in burial contexts further reinforces their importance as personal items; whilst wearing them about the body may be practical during life, they were attributed another meaning with inclusion in burials,

accompanying their owners to the grave, or representative of ties with others.

At Tell el-Kerkh, fifteen stamp-seals have been recovered from graves, worn about the hip, or placed in the palm of the hand during the burials of males, females, and children; 'almost all of the community members, regardless of the age and sex, bore their own seals' (Tsuneki 2011: 8). It seems that it was more important to inter these items with their owners than it was to remove the seals from clothing or the body and pass them on to others to use or retain. Seals, it seems, were not simply a method of marking property, but an integral component of a person's identity, regardless of age or gender. The study of seals is currently a topic of research which will provide further information about aspects of their use, curation, and deposition (Simon Denham pers. comm.).

Whilst items such as seals have a functional use, their meaning extended beyond the utilitarian; they could also be personal items that were closely connected with identities. The study of seals takes us beyond mortuary practices and, therefore, has been discussed only briefly here to provide an insight into people's relationships with the world around them. We can see that objects were frequently considered meaningful in ways beyond the utilitarian, closely bound up with the identities of people and the identities of dead members of the community.

The site of Hakemi Use in Southeast Anatolia dates to the 6th millennium BC. Primary inhumations, flexed and wrapped in matting, were recovered, including children and infants. Many of the graves included broken pottery placed as grave goods (Tekin 2005). There were also obsidian items in burials, as well as ear plugs, labrets, and stone beads (Tekin 2005), and ochre and sickle blades were also recovered from graves (Erdal in press). Cranial modification, a practice of altering the shape of the head, discussed in chapter 4, was common at Hakemi Use, with 40 per cent of burials showing cranial modification (Yılmaz Erdal pers. comm.), as well as figurines with elongated heads (Tekin 2005). It seems that people were marked out by their bodily decorations, including modified crania, in addition to adornments worn on and through the body.

As well as items of adornment, the inclusion of grave goods becomes increasingly common during the Later Neolithic, although there are rare examples dating to the PPN. For instance, at MPPNB Tell Halula in Northern Mesopotamia, there is an unusual level of

conformity in burial practices, compared to other sites of the same date. So far, 114 burials have been excavated from beneath the floors of 16 houses dating to the end of the MPPNB, c.7500–7300 cal. BC (Guerrero et al 2009), other than at Level 8, where 14 burials were outside houses (Estebaranz et al 2007). There were generally between five and 13 burials in each house (*ibid.*), all of which were primary inhumations, with just one case of skull removal. The burials included males and females of all ages, many accompanied by objects, including adornments of shell and stone beads, bone pendants worn around the neck, waist, and wrist, and necklaces, bracelets, and belts, with those under the age of about four years having the highest number of grave goods (Guerrero et al 2009: 386). A rare example from Tell Aswad includes the burial of a ten- to fifteen-year-old who had been wearing a necklace of small, white beads in addition to one very worn and broken green bead, a treasured item that accompanied this person into a collective burial (Stordeur et al 2006: 44). A further association can also be seen in a shell associated with a skull, and, close by, a stone hook-shaped pendant (*ibid.*).

Other PPN examples, although few in number, have evidenced adornments placed with the dead, including Abu Hureyra (Moore and Molleson 2000), Tell Qarassa North (Ibáñez et al 2010), and the Early Pottery Neolithic at Çatalhöyük (Andrews et al 2005). Aside from these few exceptions, evidence of grave goods is generally rare, dating to the Pre-Pottery Neolithic; if items had been placed in graves, they were perishable. It is possible that the appearance of grave goods reflects a change in the materials deposited rather than a new practice, an observation made by Goring-Morris (2005: 95) in relation to pottery vessels which replaced plastered baskets in some mortuary contexts. There may also be a changed perception of material items, with new technologies of pottery-making providing a forum for new understandings of materiality and the relationship of objects to identities. It is also feasible that objects in graves related to relationships rather than to concepts of ownership. As Melanie Giles's work on Iron Age Britain has argued, items in graves may suggest that whilst the body remained unmodified and complete, relational identities may still be apparent through grave goods and other associations with the grave, including context and location, and other inclusions, such as animals.

Rather than traditional interpretations which view grave goods as indicators of wealth (see chapter 3), then, these objects suggest that

people's interactions with their world were becoming increasingly entangled with objects during the Later Neolithic, with new types of material culture, including pottery and seals, as well as items of adornment (although these categories are not mutually exclusive). A deliberate choice was made about whether to include items within the grave, including those items that are attached to clothing. Recent excavations at Tell 'Ain el-Kerkh have uncovered a Neolithic cemetery in an open and abandoned area of the site, with over 240 skeletons dating to the Late Neolithic so far excavated. Aside from some secondary burials and cremations, discussed above, the majority of burials were primary inhumations, with all ages represented, from pre-birth to fifty-plus. Just over half of the burials contained grave goods, of adornments, seals, and pottery. The seals have already been discussed above; further examples of grave goods included an eight- to ten-year-old with a small bowl placed in the palm of the hand (Tsuneki 2011: 10); one young adult female had been buried with a necklace of 294 small beads, and on the chest of a child of around one year old were 20 finely crafted beads of serpentine and agate (Masumori 2011: 22). Analysis has noted that frequently beads of different colours were brought together to compose a piece of jewellery (Masumori 2011: 24). One burial had also been interred with a flint blade and conch shell carefully placed in the burial (Tsuneki 2010: 698).

The deliberate breakage of objects is also seen at Tell el-Kerkh, with three shallow pits containing the deliberately broken parts of very well-made vessels of fine materials. The vessels had not only been broken, but their pieces deliberately arranged (Hudson et al 2003). Whilst the vessels may have been taken out of circulation, they may also represent the closing of relationships, or that the vessels had symbolically died. The breaking of objects may also have signified the severing of ties with the deceased, or a means of ensuring the deceased's departure, as has been discussed earlier in this chapter. The deposition of complete objects, however, is also intriguing, not least as this appears to be an emerging practice during the Later Neolithic.

The site of Sabi Abyad has already been discussed in relation to its evidence of figurines. Until recently, general patterns of mortuary treatments for Sabi Abyad were unclear. The recent discovery of a burial field has provided new information on the mortuary practices of the inhabitants of the site from around 6200–6000 BC, with over 100 burials excavated to date. So far, those excavated in the 2005 season have been published preliminarily (Akkermans 2008). The

burials are adult, and most were buried complete and left undisturbed. However, there were exceptions, such as a twenty-six to thirty-five-year-old male who had been decapitated with the head replaced in the grave in almost the correct anatomical position, although facing the incorrect way (Smits and Akkermans 2009). Whilst no infants are present in this cemetery, a separate burial field has been excavated that was used for infants and children. They likewise were buried complete, although the burial field was placed in a different area of the site (Akkermans 2005, 2008). Although the majority of graves did not contain any grave goods, many of the burials were accompanied by whole vessels, usually bowls and jars (Liesbeth Smits and Peter Akkermans pers. comm.). Both the burial fields are located in abandoned areas of the site, separate from the everyday arenas of the living, suggesting that the dead were not a regular, obvious feature for most of the living inhabitants on the tell. There is a distinct separation, with the dead being housed in a separate location, and furthermore, their bodies being rarely interfered with after death and burial.

The individual body was generally kept whole in mortuary practices at Sabi Abyad, and likewise, grave goods were interred in a complete state. Most of the burials were single inhumations, with multiple interments rarely seen. This could relate to concepts of individuality, and certainly suggests that there was no motivation to include the physical remains of the deceased in everyday actions. It may also relate to the increasing removal of death from everyday locations. However, the discovery of 'Death Pits' at Sabi Abyad is adding a further complexity to this pattern (Akkermans pers. comm.). It is possible that such occurrences were recalling social memory of earlier practices, or it may be particular to the circumstances and needs at Sabi Abyad during the time. Further information will be revealed in time, with further analysis of these still-to-be-excavated features, which appear to include primary burials, alongside the manipulation of secondary burials (Akkermans pers. comm.).

Whilst the picture is not a clear one, we can see that during the Later Neolithic there is an increasing separation of the dead from the living, with burials taking place at abandoned areas of the site. There is also an increasing use of grave goods and adornments, suggesting that people's new, increasingly material world was also significant in the mortuary arena. Such items of adornment may have been closely integrated with personal identities, as well as signifying relationships

with others; deposited in the grave they may either have closed a relationship or extended it, through the placement of inalienable objects into the mortuary context. Whilst one clear interpretation is not feasible (as I stated earlier, 'messiness' need not be avoided), such insights offer alternatives to the understanding of grave goods as reflections of wealth or status. The role of the mourner is also significant, making choices about the items to be deposited with the dead, some of which may have related to the consumptive events surrounding the burial itself. The inclusion of items of adornment, including seals, with children, suggests that the traditional understanding of stamp-seals as administrative items is flawed, and speculation that these were deeply personal items (Stuart Campbell, Elizabeth Healey, and Ellen Belcher pers. comm.) is in the process of being confirmed. During the Later Neolithic, identities were seemingly becoming more entwined with material items, with less day-to-day interaction with the physical remains of the dead. However, their identities may still have remained intimately entwined, communicated through the placement or breakage of objects with the deceased.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, concepts such as personhood, individuality, and relational identities have been discussed. These are fundamental aspects of being a person, although personhood and 'being in the world' were experienced in vastly different ways, with fundamentally divergent understandings of what it is to be human and the role of the person in relation to other people, the dead, animals, things, and the environment. Such factors have traditionally been considered difficult to study archaeologically. However, research into Prehistoric Europe and Mesoamerica, discussed earlier in this chapter, has revealed that these aspects of the past are not beyond our grasp, a process comparable to that seen with the study of gender and sexuality; yet, as Chapter 5 discussed, these are now avenues that are open to archaeological detection and discussion.

Personhood is not a static notion but a dynamic and changing one. Assigning one particular kind of 'personhood'—be it dividuality, permeability, or individuality—is problematic, as aspects of these can and do co-exist as components of a person's identity. However,

we have seen that it is possible to think beyond our expectations of bounded individuals in the past; as Chris Fowler has recognized, prehistoric trends involving partibility are at least as likely, if not more so, than indivisible individuals, given the evidence for fragmented and distributed bodies, and exchanges of objects, in non-capitalist contexts (2004: 156).

Understanding personhood and identity in the past requires a different reading of the material, recognizing that people's engagements with the world may have been vastly different from our own. Ethnographic research has helped to inform us of the different experiences of personhood and identity; however, these are not necessarily analogous with experiences in the past, but rather, such ethnographies help reveal the variety of the human experience. Through analysing the archaeological record in a different way, new interpretations and narratives of the past can be sought. For instance, in addition to searching for origins or social stratification, there are other interpretations that can be made. Thinking about people's relationships with each other, with the dead, with animals, and with things, offers alternative perceptions of the past. These complement the existing picture, offering new narratives to contribute to our understanding of the Neolithic Near East, whilst also accepting that there are undoubtedly some aspects of past lives which are beyond our understanding and comprehension.

At sites including Çayönü, Kfar HaHoresh, and Domuztepe, although dating to different regions and periods of time, a common interpretative strand of fragmentation of the human body can be used. Whilst there were different practices at these sites, with undoubtedly divergent meanings and implications, the physical body was not kept complete in the mortuary domain. However, it is not necessarily the disarticulated body itself which reveals the most information about past lives, but the associations made through the placement of parts of the body, and the associations made through deposition. At Kfar HaHoresh, for instance, we see the disarticulation of bodies, of humans, and animals, and the deliberate arrangement and association of remains; mixing bodies of humans and animals, most starkly in the example of the headless gazelle with the human plastered skull. Human identities were closely entwined with animals, or at least certain species of animals. As well as an association between hunter and prey, the relationship between humans and animals may have been a more equal one, with animals considered

akin to people, relevant for comparable treatment in the mortuary domain, where animals were physically intermingled with humans, objects, and minerals.

At Domuztepe, comparable themes of fragmentation emerge, including the mixing of human and animal remains. However, the evidence suggests very different practices and motivations taking place from those seen at Kfar HaHoresh (not surprising, given the temporal and spatial distance between them). At Domuztepe, the events surrounding the Death Pit were focused on consumption, not just of animals, but also of people. However, distinctions were made between species, including humans, with species-specific treatment of the dead. Acts of consumption can reflect and construct identities: I have argued that cannibalism would have contributed towards the construction of identity for those participants at Domuztepe; they were not motivated by hunger (as an abundance of meat from animal remains was available), and cannibalism appears to have taken place as a component of funerary events, which may have also included the curation and circulation of human remains, including parts of skulls. The human remains were not discarded, but were interred within the pit in deliberate acts of deposition, with the area watched over, preventing disturbance or scavenging of the remains.

Although we cannot rule out that consumption of the dead may have taken place at Kfar HaHoresh too, further details supporting or refuting this are unavailable at present. However, breaks in human bones occurred at some time after burial, rather than on fresh bone (Simmons et al 2007: 107), although there are cut marks on bones that are consistent with dismemberment and defleshing (Simmons et al 2007: 116). Whilst we cannot rule out that the flesh may have been consumed, the evidence is not as compelling as that from Domuztepe. Likewise, at Çayönü, the level of evidence leaves possibilities of human consumption unclear, although there are some cut marks observed as a result of decapitation. The processing of human remains at Çayönü took place within the Skull Building; in contrast to the expedient events of the Death Pit, activities in the Skull Building took place over many hundreds of years. The evidence at Çayönü has been used to discuss how our interpretations can focus on the living rather than the dead, considering the tactile engagements which would have played a role in the identity constructions of the living. The actions of processing the dead, as well as the construction and

destruction of the building itself, were communal events, in a performative setting, affecting and constructing the identities of those taking part. Furthermore, the dead were altered through the disarticulation of the body; the individual body was negated in favour of a new existence, as bodily parts entered a communal setting. This may reflect the communal identities that were already in place, or perhaps notions of individuality became transformed through these actions; the dead were communally treated, and relationships between the living and the dead were transformed through these actions. Relational identities may have been experienced, where people were considered to be closely linked to each other, with identities constructed through these relationships with others, including through acts of performance, shared eating, and consumption, and other events that included the dead within the Skull Building.

The bodies of the dead were transformed at Çayönü, becoming a component of a communal entity within the Skull Building during the PPNB. Later, after the closure of the Skull Building, we witness a change; burials taking place beneath the floor in houses, with primary articulated burials, and greater focus on retaining the complete body after death. However, placement of the deceased beneath the floor in houses suggests that the identities of the living and dead remained closely linked to the spaces that were inhabited.² The actions surrounding the events taking place at the Skull Building had an influence on the living, shaping identities, transforming relationships, and constructing memories.

There are key differences evidenced by the locations of the dead. During the PPNA and PPNB periods, the dead are frequently buried beneath the floor in houses. Even when bodies were not dug down to, or their skulls not removed, the dead remain spatially close to the living. The final deposition of skulls throughout the PPNB is often located within household contexts, beneath floors, or within courtyards, although this is not without exception, as those at Aswad interred in a burial area demonstrate, suggesting that whilst human remains were continually manipulated and used, their final deposition was located outside the immediate household architecture. Examples from the Late Neolithic at Tell el-Kerkh and Sabi Abyad

² See Bradbury 2010, 2011 for a discussion of the fluidity and duality of places during the 4th millennium in the Northern Levant, where remains of people and place are closely related.

reveal that primary burials took place in abandoned areas, suggesting a further removal of the dead from the lives of the living.

Primary burials have also been discussed in this chapter. A change is witnessed with primary burials, with an increase in inhumations which were not decapitated or disturbed after burial. It can be argued that there is less of a connection and interaction with the dead, a suggestion discussed by Julian Thomas in relation to Neolithic burials in Britain (2000a). It is common to assume that complete bodies are related to concepts of individuality; however, relational identities may also be indicated through the presence of grave goods or broken items within graves, representing meaningful objects which were closely related to concepts of identity, as argued by Giles (forthcoming) for Iron Age Britain. Complete bodies may still be components of a relational network with the placing or breaking of objects at the graveside. The varying evidence further supports the need for a bottom-up approach and small-scale analysis of data; this, in time, will build up a more detailed and nuanced understanding of Neolithic mortuary practices.

The pursuit of understanding past identities is a complex one, and this chapter has focused on evidence from mortuary practices. The mortuary domain was one arena for the display of concepts regarding personal and community identities, alongside arenas of creation, including making figurines, building and living in architecture, and other aspects of life. The study of personhood resituates past inhabitants back into their webs of experiences, not as isolated beings, but as interacting and participating characters, playing a part in the world around them. Thinking about the evidence from this perspective provides a picture of the past that is populated with complex persons, whose primary concerns were not only with food production, the adoption of agriculture, and the development of social hierarchies. Rather, life and death reflected webs of relationships, between people, the living and the dead, as well as with animals and things.

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Conclusion

AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO INTERPRETING THE MORTUARY PRACTICES OF THE NEOLITHIC NEAR EAST

The aim of this book has been to explore new interpretations of the archaeological evidence from the Neolithic Near East: interpretations which attempt to humanize and personalize the past, considering tactile and sensory experiences, and people's engagement with the world around them. This research has taken the human body as the focus for study and interpretation, primarily using mortuary evidence, which, in addition to providing information about concepts of death and dying, has also revealed insights into the lives of the living, including their relationships with each other, the dead, and their ancestors; with animals, the environment, and the material world.

Interpreting the evidence through mortuary practices and the human body has provided alternative, yet complementary, narratives to those traditionally investigated in Near Eastern Archaeology. Traditional studies into subsistence strategies, economies, and social stratification have provided a strong foundation for further research, enabling approaches that investigate and gain a more nuanced understanding of peoples and their world, including discussions of personhood, gendered relationships, individuality, and relational identities.

As well as providing interpretations about past lives, this book has taken a reflexive approach to the study of the archaeology of the Neolithic Near East. Reflection on archaeological attitudes and epistemologies has accompanied post-processual and interpretive archaeological approaches, with recognition of some of the biases that cloud

interpretations of the archaeological record. Recognizing biases within interpretations is a step to countering the misuse of archaeological interpretations in modern socio-politics; the hetero-, andro-, and Eurocentric biases and perspectives, for instance, which although unintentional, are often inherent within archaeological practice and discourse. As Rosemary Joyce has observed with regard to gender and sexuality, archaeology promises 'a past in which inequality on the basis of sex was not inevitable, and thus, is not a natural and unavoidable feature of contemporary life' (2008a: 130). As archaeological interpretations often are used (or misused) for political gain or motive, it could be argued that there is a moral duty to ensure that interpretations are archaeologically sound.

Small-scale, bottom-up approach and genealogies of practice

This book has taken the approach of starting with small-scale analysis, which has entailed a case-study methodology focusing on individual sites, or even individual features or contexts, to build up an understanding of events and practices. Case studies have included discussions of the find-sites of plastered skulls, the anthropomorphic monoliths at Göbekli Tepe, plaster statuary at 'Ain Ghazal, masks at Nahal Hemar cave, the fragmentation of human remains within the Skull Building at Çayönü Tepesi, human-animal relationships at Kfar HaHoresh, consumption of human flesh and bone marrow at Domuztepe, complete bodies at Sabi Abyad and Tell el-Kerkh, and gendered relationships at Catalhöyük.

Through an interpretative approach that works from the bottom up, the differences between sites becomes more apparent; differences which often complicate large-scale frameworks and interpretations. This is not a problem so long as the differences are embraced, large-scale frameworks are not taken at face value, and there is not a preoccupation with the search for origins. Rather than searching for the origins of practices, this book has taken the 'genealogies of practice' approach advocated by Foucault (1971), where the ebbs and flows of practices can be considered and studied, rather than focusing on tracing the origins of beliefs and mortuary activities.

Small-scale analyses of mortuary archaeology have confirmed that a variety of practices was taking place that do not form a

straightforward, linear trajectory. Whilst there are some patterns in mortuary practices, these were neither uniform nor ubiquitous, as different sites, events, and people chose to bury, dispose of, or keep their dead close to the living in different ways. During the PPNA and PPNB, many sites have sub-floor, primary articulated burials, with the skulls or crania often removed. Other sites have a predominance of disarticulated bodies, or, more frequently, sites exhibit a combination of practices. At times, animals, people, and things were buried together, or at least parts of them were. Skull treatment can be seen at many PPNB sites, and it is a practice that re-emerges during the Later Neolithic, but whether this is part of the same tradition can still be debated. Whilst some patterns emerge, such as decapitated burials and skull treatment, there are always exceptions; conformity of mortuary practices did not occur at all sites even within the same localities and temporalities. Even within the same site, diversity is commonplace with many different mortuary practices taking place contemporaneously or with intra-site changes taking place through time, such as cremation replacing secondary burials at Tell el-Kerkh, although this occurs alongside primary burials. And this variety is not surprising since significant periods of time elapsed.

From analysis of the mortuary practices, it appears that bodies become less associated with houses and the domestic sphere through time: from burials beneath the floor in houses during the PPNA and PPNB, where the dead were kept close to the living even if out of direct sight, to burial within abandoned areas of sites or within abandoned buildings during the later Neolithic at Sabi Abyad and Tell el-Kerkh. However, these burials are still retained within the general vicinity of occupied areas. During the PN of the late 7th and 6th millennia BC, there appears to be an increasing trend in retaining the body as a whole entity within the mortuary domain: for example, at Sabi Abyad, Tell el-Kerkh, and Çatalhöyük—although there are exceptions, such as at Domuztepe, and the recently discovered mortuary contexts from Sabi Abyad. Yet there is not a neat chronological or geographical pattern, as sites such as Tell Halula attest, with primary burials taking place there a millennium earlier during the PPNB; although this is a rare site due to the uniformity of burial practices.

The muddled picture of events is perhaps not so crucial if social change is considered in a different way. Rather than a linear trajectory, the evidence reveals ebbs and flows of practices which emerge,

fade, and re-emerge through time. For instance, the plastered skulls in Anatolia appear a couple of thousand years later than the Levantine examples, or the repeatedly re-emerging practice of cranial modification. The lack of a unified picture of mortuary practices may also indicate that the period is one of flux, transition, and transformation, where new ways of being were being explored and manifested. This makes sense, because the Neolithic was a period of gradual change when people adopted new subsistence methods, lived in larger settlements, and created a new material world. However, this need not mean that the changes were perceived as dramatic upheavals. Whilst the consequences of agriculture or domestication may have been momentous, this does not determine that actions were either mindful or predictive of the changes that would occur as the result of many smaller decisions and alterations in life-ways.

The living and the dead

Throughout the chapters of this book a recurring theme has emerged as a result of the analysis of the evidence relating to the close relationships and interactions of the living with the dead. Death was not the end of a person's role in society, but rather, death was often a transformation, with relationships continuing between the living and the dead. The evidence suggests that perceptions of death during the Neolithic in the Near East, at least at some sites, were dramatically different to modern experiences. Burial or disposal of the body was not the final point of contact with the physical remains of the deceased. Bodies were frequently decapitated either at death, soon after, or in many cases, a considerable time after death when the cranium could be removed easily from the decomposing body. Body parts were frequently excavated and reburied, predominantly skulls and crania. They would often be used and displayed prior to reburial, and sometimes modified, which included plastering and painting on some skulls while others remained untreated. Yet within this picture of interaction with the remains of the dead, a variety of practices was taking place that had different motivations and meanings. For instance, many of the plastered skulls had artistically skilled recreations of the living face applied to the skull or crania, and had been displayed and curated, before their redeposition.

At many of the sites discussed in this book, death was immediately retained within the spaces of the living, whether through curation of human remains or burial beneath the floor in houses. In addition to concepts of marking space and ancestral ties to location, keeping the dead close to the living may reflect a desire to retain emotional ties with the deceased, as well as aiding the transitional process of mourning or making the death easier to deal with, especially if causes of death had not been fully comprehended.

Mortuary performances can be seen as deeply mnemonic, identity-shaping events, which were enhanced through tactile and sensory encounters with the dead. Whether these were events involving large gatherings of people such as those facilitated by the Skull Building or Plaza at Çayönü Tepesi and relatively clear and open areas as seen at Domuztepe and Kfar HaHoresh, or were more secluded locations seen with burials beneath the floor in houses, dealing with the dead involved performance, interaction, and, often, display: significant events in the life cycles of the living. The importance of display is also demonstrated by other evidence, such as the PPNB plastered statues from 'Ain Ghazal and Jericho, designed to be viewed face-on, with a flat profile. The plastered skulls of the deceased repeatedly show evidence of display and use before reburial, and were often interred when the plaster had begun to deteriorate. Plastered skulls were intended to be displayed rather than kept permanently hidden or stored. The roles of display and performance are also indicated by masks, such as those from Nahal Hemar cave; masks speak of performance, of masking, and the hiding of identities, and/or the creation of new identities. Acts of display and performance can also be seen at Göbekli, where anthropomorphic stone pillars were carved with an array of animals and designs; their performative role appears to be short-lived, however, as the carvings were frequently constructed into the walls of shrines, suggesting that the act of making may have been more significant than the final display. Acts of closure, of monuments such as the shrines at Göbekli, the sealing of the Death Pit, or closure of the Skull Building at Çayönü, would also have been communal events, potentially as performative as acts of construction, although often it is the processes of construction, including assessments of expended labour and raw resources, that receive greater archaeological attention. These communal, performative events may have marked specific occasions, and been significant in the construction and maintenance of relationships between the living,

and between the living and the dead. The deceased continued their 'lives' in altered and changed states facilitated by the actions of the living, and the continuum was brought to a close through the events terminating these structures and locations. For archaeologists, a consideration of the tactile and emotive elements of interactions with the dead provides a fuller picture of the events and experiences surrounding death and disposal of the body in the Neolithic Near East.

At Kfar HaHoresh where there are disarticulated burials, as well as primary burials, and plastered skulls, treatment of the dead appears to closely entwine human and non-human identities. It is not fragmentation alone that is significant, but the associations highlighted in the mortuary domain. As well as indicating that the complete body was not intended for many interments at Kfar HaHoresh, there is a close mergence of human and animal bodies after death, as well as the inclusion of objects, particularly minerals, pebbles, and shells. Whilst these objects are naturally occurring, they may have been attributed meaning for particular qualities, as well as for their source. Furthermore, people, animals, and things were not only buried together, but disarticulated, broken apart, and those parts were then mixed with the parts of others, in deliberate depositions. There is not a distinction made between people and animals, although different species of animals are selected for inclusion in mortuary depositions. Rather than viewing the animals as grave goods or symbols of the hunt, they can be considered akin to humans, part of a world view that saw people, animals, and components of the natural world as intertwined.

Relationships with the environment were apparently not dependent on gender or age; many contexts see comparable treatment of males and females of all ages, and other evidence, such as ambiguously sexed figurines, may indicate that gender was not perceived along modern binary oppositions of male and female, and/or that gender was not a defining aspect of individual identities or the basis of inequalities; a gendered distinction between people was not perpetuated in the mortuary domain. Studies that deconstruct notions of male and female are relatively new in the discipline of Near Eastern archaeology. Whilst it may seem controversial to deconstruct categories such as male, female, or gendered roles and families, ethnographic evidence supports that these categories are socially constructed rather than universal, and that it should not be assumed that they have always been the norm in the past. Thinking beyond these categories allows for new interpretations, such as ambiguity in

definitions of sexual and gendered identities, or identities which were determined by factors other than gender, sexuality, or family arrangements.

It seems that our categories are constantly being deconstructed. Understandings of what it is to be dead, as well as gender and inherent family units, are all open to critique. This critique extends further into archaeological analytical categories with archaeological studies of material culture. This includes categories of seals, labrets, and beads, whose functions become blurred if, for instance, the seals are worn and all of these objects are considered to be closely related to relationships and identities; our categories of analysis rarely map neatly onto the uses and interpretations of objects.

Identities were closely bound up with associations: between people and animals, materials, such as stone or clay, minerals, and objects. Notions about personhood were communicated in different ways and experienced through media which are unfamiliar and alien in the modern West. Our expectations of individuality frequently seem irrelevant when the evidence is considered. Yet we know that identities can be complex and dynamic, so whilst personhood was in some ways relational, this does not exclude the recognition of individuality, albeit within communal and relational contexts.

Ambiguities existed between person and pottery with the placement of potsherds alongside skulls in the Death Pit at Domuztepe. Identities and parts of the dead were closely associated with parts of pottery vessels, with analogous treatment of each through fragmentation and deposition. Fragmentation is repeatedly seen at Domuztepe, whether fragmentation of the human body, animal body, or material culture. At other sites such as Sabi Abyad and Tell el-Kerkh, whole objects were important, potentially to communicate identities; building upon biographies through making, giving, and receiving as well as through deposition. Pottery vessels may be attributed with personhood, as they are shaped to resemble people and deposited within comparable contexts to human bodies. The personhood of objects can be seen more prominently with the large anthropomorphic pillars at Göbekli Tepe and Nevalı Çori in Anatolia, where beings were created or released through the carving of stone. Ambiguity was intended, however, with skilled carvers capable of creating realistic human images if they had desired. Instead, they chose to merge categories of person and stone.

Many of the relationships between people, animals, and things were enhanced through mortuary performances; interactions with animals and things continued beyond death, as the dead were disarticulated and fragmented, parts of the dead body removed, or deposited with meaningful objects. However, this need not be an idyllic picture; engagements between the living and the dead were often bloody, messy, and pungent. A further conceptual challenge may be the acceptance of cannibalism, and the recognition that consumption of the dead may have been practised as a funerary rite rather than out of vengeance or hunger; after all, eating is embedded with meaning and not simply a matter of subsistence.

The processing of the dead at sites including Kfar HaHoresh, Çayönü Tepesi, and Domuztepe suggests immediate manipulation of dead bodies, which were then placed in locations not immediately within or beneath houses. Perhaps isolation from spaces directly associated with the living represents a motivation to remove a mnemonic and emotive reminder of death, of distancing disarticulation and defleshing from immediate, everyday life, as well as a practical motivation to remain separated from the pungent aromas that inevitably would have pervaded experiences surrounding the processing of the dead. Preventing smell and further disturbance of the dead would also have been a function of the layer of ash that covered the Death Pit at Domuztepe, the plastered caps over burials at Kfar HaHoresh, and those under the floor in houses during the PPNB; although reactions to smells can also be culturally sanctioned and constructed, the smell of a decomposing body is poignant and memorable.

BEYOND DEATH AND DYING

The examples of mortuary practices discussed within this book, on the whole represent only a minority of the people that lived and died at the settlements or sites studied. Yet in each case we can make assessments about the interactions with the bodies of the dead which often focused on concepts and arenas of display. At many sites, people's identities were closely bound up with the relationships and interactions around them. They were not simply individuated, indivisible actors, but were immersed in a web of relationships from which identities were constructed. These relationships existed

between people, and with the deceased, animals, food, plants, and the environment, although they were expressed in a multitude of different ways. Such aspects of past lives are only becoming apparent through asking different questions of the archaeological record, and by archaeologists remaining open to interpretations, including those focused on concepts such as personhood, gender, and identity in the past: topics which previously were considered to be intangible, and therefore problematic to study using processual approaches to archaeology. Through investigating such topics, new and more humanized accounts of the past are emerging, which recognize actions, personhood, and identities; 'Humanizing the past does not simply mean "add individuals and stir". In interpreting personhood it is necessary to present a humanized view of the past, but it is also important to people the past with different human and non-human beings, with personified places, objects, communities, ancestors and spirits' (Fowler 2004: 161). It is hoped that a more humanized interpretation of the past has been presented here; one which considers people's lives, deaths, and interactions within the world.

Given the dynamic nature of archaeological study, ongoing research will inevitably provide new information about the Neolithic Near East, with existing and future excavations, re-analysis of excavated material, and developments in theoretical and technical methodologies all adding to the body of knowledge available. This will build on our understanding of the Neolithic Near East, developing on the interpretations offered here, where a focus on the body and mortuary practices has revealed the close interactions between the living, the dead, and their surrounding physical and conceptual worlds. It is hoped that such studies can help challenge some of the conceptions, and misconceptions, that are held about people and societies that may appear to be 'other', both in the past and today.

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