PART I

INTRODUCTION

1

Setting the Archaeological Scene

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Introduction

This volume is the result of two realms of endeavor suddenly and contingently coming together to explore what each can do for the other. On the one hand, some archaeologists of early settled societies in the Middle East had come to realize that the old perspective of Neolithic societies as dominated by notions of fertility and mother goddesses needed to come to terms with the evidence for imagery that emphasized wild and dangerous and often male animals (Hodder and Meskell 2011; Schmidt 2006). Why was it that the formation of settled village life from the tenth millennium BC onwards in the Middle East was often associated with images of animals with their teeth bared and their ribs showing as at Göbekli Tepe? What was the relationship between violence and settled life? And why was it that 2,000–3,000 years later at the large mega-site of Çatalhöyük, the imagery again emphasized violence as in the claws, tusks, horns, and beaks set in walls, the reliefs of leopards facing each other, and the rituals in which large bulls were teased and killed and feasted upon?

On the other hand, followers of the late philosopher René Girard were seeking realms in which they could apply his ideas. Girardian theories are explained in detail in Chapter 2 in this volume, and throughout the other chapters, but in general terms they deal with the relationship between violence and the sacred. According to Girard's mimetic theory, the process of mimesis whereby humans desire the same things as each other leads to violence that can easily break out into violence of all against all. This type of rampant violence can be resolved by the participants turning against one – the scapegoat. The latter may then take on a sanctified

position as the one that brought peace to society, and through time the sacrifice of the scapegoat is repeated and re-enacted in ritual in order to sustain peaceful order. So here is a theory in search of examples in order to pursue a generality. Because the theory links ritual violence to social order, it seems ideally suited to explain the evidence from sites such as Göbekli Tepe and Çatalhöyük. Could the killing of wild bulls at Çatalhöyük be seen as a re-enactment of the killing of a sacrificial victim? Of Çatalhöyük, Girard (2015, 223) wrote, "I believe that these paintings, and the whole Çatalhöyük settlement, are an enormous discovery from the point of view of the mimetic theory."

This volume is the result of the bringing together of these two areas of interest through a series of chance and then intense interactions and conversations as described in the Preface. In this chapter I will explore what mimetic theory can contribute to debate in archaeology, as well as examine some of the difficulties that arise from bringing Girardian ideas into dialogue with archaeological evidence. The chapters in this volume are by non-archaeologists (Chapters 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10) and by archaeologists (Chapters 1, 4, 5, and 11). The former are Giradian theorists drawn towards the fascination of Çatalhöyük and Göbekli Tepe. They have visited the two sites and spent many hours in discussion with the archaeological teams that work there. The latter are archaeologists interested in grappling with Girardian theories in relation to archaeology. The aim of the theorists is not to produce accomplished in-depth archaeological studies but to point to potentials and scope for further debate. The aim of the archaeologists is to respond to this stimulus from the point of view of a deeper familiarity with the Neolithic data. I aim to show in this first chapter and in Chapter 11 that indeed there is much potential for bringing the Neolithic archaeology of the Middle East into conversation with Girardian theories, as long as a critical stance is maintained. In order to do this, it is first necessary to describe Çatalhöyük as this was the context in which the conversations between Neolithic archaeologists and Girardian followers took place, as described in the Preface.

Çatalhöyük

Three previous volumes have explored the role of violence at Çatalhöyük (Hodder 2010, 2014c, 2018) and in the Neolithic of the Middle East more generally, including at Göbekli Tepe. The focus of this project, Çatalhöyük East (7100–6000 BC) in central Turkey, is one of the

best-known Neolithic sites in Anatolia and the Middle East, roughly contemporary with later Pre-Pottery and the following Pottery Neolithic in the Levant. It became well known because of its large size (34 acres and 3,500–8,000 people), with eighteen levels inhabited over 1,100 years and dense concentration of "art" in the form of wall paintings, wall reliefs, sculptures, and installations. Within Anatolia, and particularly within central Anatolia, recent research has shown that there are local sequences which lead up to and prefigure Çatalhöyük (Baird 2007; Gérard and Thissen 2002; Özdoğan 2002). In southeast Turkey, the earlier sites of Çayönü (Özdoğan and Özdoğan 1998) and Göbekli Tepe (Schmidt 2006) already show substantial agglomeration and elaborate symbolism. In central Anatolia, Aşıklı Höyük (Esin and Harmankaya 1999) has dense-packed housing through the millennium prior to Çatalhöyük. There are many other sites contemporary, or partly contemporary, with Çatalhöyük that are known in central Anatolia and the adjacent Burdur Lakes region (Duru 1999; Gérard and Thissen 2002). Yet Çatalhöyük retains a special significance because of the complex narrative nature of its art, and many syntheses (e.g. by Cauvin 1994 or Mithen 2003) give it a special place. Much of the symbolism of the earlier Neolithic and later (into historic times) periods of the Middle East can be "read" in terms of the evidence from Çatalhöyük and the rich evidence from the site enables interpretation of the evidence from other sites.

The site (Figure 1.1) was first excavated by James Mellaart (e.g. 1967) in the 1960s. After 1965 it was abandoned until a new project began in 1993 (Hodder 1996, 2000, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2006, 2007, 2013a, 2013b, 2014a, 2014b). Through both projects, only 5 percent of the mound has been excavated, but the whole mound has been sampled using surface survey, surface pick-up, geophysical prospection, and surface scraping (see reports in Hodder 1996). The inhabitants cultivated domestic plants and sheep and goat. In the early levels they hunted wild cattle, aurochs, and other wild animals such as boar, deer, and equid, but domestic cattle had been introduced by the middle levels of occupation. More than two hundred houses have so far been excavated by Mellaart and the current project. The main architectural components of the site are densely clustered houses, with areas of refuse or midden between them. The art and symbolism and burials all occur within houses. There is evidence of productive activities in all houses, in midden areas, and on partial second stories. None of the sampling has found evidence of large public buildings, ceremonial centers, specialized areas of production, or cemeteries.

FIGURE 1.1 Overview of the contemporary excavations in the south area of Çatalhöyük.
Source: Jason Quinlan and Çatalhöyük Research Project.

Göbekli Tepe in southeastern Turkey is an earlier site, dating to the late tenth and ninth millennia BC, and to the Pre-Pottery A and B periods. Here the inhabitants depended on wild plants and animals. The site and its interpretation are described fully in Chapter 5 in this volume. Its relevance to the theme of this volume is that, as at the later site of Çatalhöyük, much of the visual imagery is of wild animals, often very male (with erect penises) and apparently violent in aspect (with bared teeth, claws, and horns prominent). The similarities between the imagery in the two sites have been discussed elsewhere (Hodder and Meskell 2011). The two earlier volumes discussing the violence of these scenes (Hodder 2010, 2014c) argued that violence can be associated with moments of transcendence. Violence could thus be seen as incorporated into rituals that established transcendent roles and rules in societies as they settled down and cultivated plants and animals.

Bloch (2008, 2010) sees most human societies as understanding that there is a permanent framework to social life that transcends the natural transformative processes of birth, growth, reproduction, ageing, and death. Violence and symbolic killing take people beyond process into permanent entities such as descent groups. By leaving this life, it is possible to see oneself and others as part of something permanent and life-transcending. For Bloch (1992, 2010), mastering the virility of wild bulls in rituals and depictions in the house "reanimated" the transcendental social and thus contributed to the continuity of the house. The moments of danger and/or violence involved movements away from

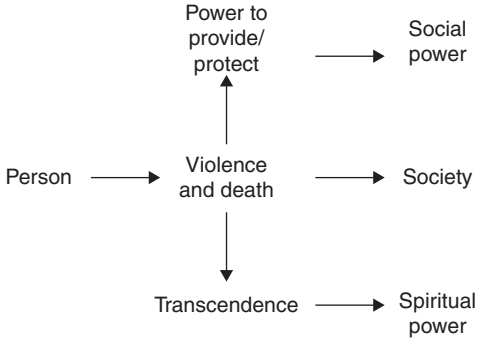

FIGURE 1.2 The role of violent imagery in social and religious processes at Çatalhöyük as discussed in a previous volume (Hodder 2010).
Source: the author.

the here-and-now; they involved transcendent experiences in which the social group could be transformed and made permanent. For Bloch there could indeed be a link between the violence in the imagery at Çatalhöyük and the lack of violence on human bodies. Social violence was dealt with by living within a symbolic, transcendent world of violence in which conflicts were resolved and social structures made permanent.

The view that the violent imagery at Çatalhöyük and other sites had a key role in creating the social and the long-term as people first settled down and formed complex societies is summarized in Figure 1.2. In this diagram, on the central horizontal axis, the person is made social through violence and death, either through initiation and other rituals or in the daily interactions with bull horns and other animal parts present or made absent in the house. In the lower part of the diagram, this social process is linked to the transcendental and the spiritual as persons experience something beyond themselves that is integral to their lives. Spiritual power is gained by individuals in these experiences, but also is controlled by elders or special houses. In the upper part of the diagram these spiritual powers are related to social powers. The social manipulation of rituals and symbols of violence give power to elders and special houses. There is also evidence that the power of wild animals was used to provide or protect. Thus in Building 77 the bull horns surround and protect the ancestors buried beneath the platform and in Building 1 wild goat horns were found over, perhaps protecting, a bin containing lentils (Hodder 2006).

Bloch offers a more general, sociological, and anthropological perspective that in many ways parallels the Girardian view, and yet it lacks the specificity, the spontaneous uncontrolled moments, and the generative mechanisms (see below) of the latter. Both describe general processes that are heightened at the dawn of sedentary and agricultural life. But it is Girard who emphasizes the ever-present raw violence that is embedded in the mimetic process. For him violence is far from symbolic; it churns away within the social process, continually generating change.

The Girardian view has to contend with archaeological and anthropological disciplines that have often wanted to "pacify the past." Allen (2014) describes a decades-long period in which anthropologists and archaeologists had downplayed the evidence for warfare in small-scale societies. Although this moratorium was brought to an end by a series of publications in the 1990s and onwards that demonstrated the importance of warfare amongst hunter-gatherers in the past and historic present, it is undoubtedly the case that Neolithic archaeology and the study of Neolithic human remains has continued with the notion of a "pacified past" until recently (see Knüsel et al., Chapter 4 this volume). In the case of the Neolithic in the Middle East and Europe an important influence on the notion of peaceful societies was the arguments made by Gimbutas (1974) and her followers that the Neolithic was a period in which women and the "Mother Goddess" were able to create non-violent societies, at least until the male-related violence asserted itself in the Late Neolithic and Chalcolithic and Bronze Age. Çatalhöyük in particular has been embroiled in this debate (Mellaart 1967; Meskell 1995).

While Allen describes the differences between those anthropologists and archaeologists who believe that warfare has always existed amongst humans and those who favor a short chronology (warfare only started with larger-scale, more complex societies), there is fairly widespread consensus that there has been "a long chronology of violence among hominins" (Allen 2014, 21), stretching back at least 5 million years. The small sample sizes and the very fragmented nature of much recovered human bone make it very difficult to evaluate the amount of trauma on Palaeolithic and Mesolithic European skeletal material, although for both periods there is evidence of interpersonal violence such as embedded projectiles and injuries to the cranium and lower arms. For Europe the evidence is summarized by Estabrook (2014; and see also Thorpe 2003). There is much evidence of interpersonal violence in the Epipalaeolithic and Neolithic in the Middle East, from Jebel Sahaba in Sudan (Wendorf

1968) to the "death pit" in the Late Neolithic at Domuztepe in southeast Turkey (Kansa et al. 2009).

While it may seem reasonable to argue that pressures on human societies as they became sedentary and invested in the ownership of houses, resources, tools, and prestige items led to increased interpersonal violence and warfare, there is little good evidence for such a change (Allen and Jones 2014). It is equally reasonable to argue that as human societies settled down and invested in longer-term relationships, networks, and roles, mechanisms were developed to manage potential increases in violence. The Girardian view is that one of these mechanisms was prohibition: the establishment of classifications and taboos that channeled desires in different directions and kept rivalries from getting out of hand. It is certainly a characteristic of Neolithic sites in the Middle East that they become increasingly structured, organized, and differentiated through time. But it is in fact the detailed evidence from Çatalhöyük that has showed most evidence for prohibitions and taboos. For example, I have discussed the contrast between the prevalence of imagery of leopards and the complete lack of leopard bones (except one claw) at the site in terms of a taboo against bringing leopard carcasses into the settlement (Hodder 2006). Very similar restrictions seem to have been applied to bears, and to a lesser degree to wild boars. There are other patterns that seem distinctive – for example, whole pots are never placed with bodies in graves, and neither are animals. Through most of the sequence of occupation, pots are not decorated but walls are. This latter pattern is linked to the main prohibition that dominates all the evidence from Çatalhöyük: it is the northern and eastern walls of houses that are preferentially painted and decorated, not the southern walls where the hearths and ovens occur and where pots are used and kept. There is an overall separation of the northern clean floors, under which there are adult burials, and the southern "dirty" floors, where most cooking and productive tasks took place (Hodder and Cessford 2004) and where only neonates and children were buried. All the ritual and symbolism so distinctive of Çatalhöyük is found in the northern parts of the main rooms. There are changes in floor height, kerbs between floor areas, different types of plaster used on the different floors; all this serves to separate activities and spaces. Movement around these buildings was highly controlled and restricted. Who could do what, where, and when was all carefully managed. It seems very likely that this complex web of positive rules and prohibitions created a society that was highly ordered, disciplined, regimented, all helping to limit conflict and violence.

But such preventive measures, prudent as they may have been, are inadequate in themselves. After all, why should individuals adhere to the prohibitions? There is no evidence at Çatalhöyük of a ruling elite that wielded force in order to establish rules and roles. It seems that older men and women were treated with special respect and had valued roles (Pearson and Meskell 2013), and there may well have been community-wide groups of elders who had particular influence. The members of the more elaborate houses which continued over longer generations and in which people were preferentially buried ("history houses" as defined by Hodder and Pels 2010; see also Hodder 2016) may have had special roles through their position in relation to ritual. But again, why did community members adhere to the restrictions advanced by these elders?

Perhaps elders and ritual leaders were able to mobilize sufficient resources to enforce the rules and restrictions, but it seems unlikely that force and policing would themselves have been sufficient in this largely egalitarian society. There were likely other ways in which taboos and restrictions were made manifest, justified, and normalized. It is here that the second mechanism identified by Girard comes to importance: the turning of violence of all against all to violence towards one emissary victim. Given that this mechanism is discussed fully in Chapter 2, my aim here is to explore how scapegoating and mimetic theories are attractive not only for Çatalhöyük and the origins of settled life in the Neolithic of the Middle East, but also for archaeological theory more generally.

A Productive New Perspective

In the above, I argued that it seems very attractive to interpret the symbolism of Çatalhöyük and Göbekli Tepe in Girardian terms. The images of wild animals and of mobs of humans "teasing and baiting" such animals seem readily interpretable in terms of rituals of sacrifice that lead to the resolution of conflicts within the community. In Part II in this volume, the main focus of the chapters is on the way mimesis, through rivalry, leads to violence and thence scapegoating as a solution. The chapters largely explore the evidence for intragroup violence at Çatalhöyük and nearby sites, and variously discuss this in relation to Girard's scapegoating model for archaic religion and society. The evidence tends to be either iconographic, based on the interpretation of wall paintings or relief sculptures, or osteological.

As Alison remarks in his Chapter 9, there are typically three "moments" to the Girardian model: mimesis, scapegoating, and subversion. Mimesis