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CHAPTER 42

GÖBEKLİ TEPE: A NEOLITHIC SITE IN SOUTHEASTERN ANATOLIA

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FIFTEEN kilometers northeast of the town of Şanlıurfa in southeastern Turkey and 2.5 km east of the village of Örencik (formerly known as Karaharabe), Göbekli Tepe has been known since 1963 as an Aceramic Neolithic site, but its importance was not recognized by the early explorers (Benedict 1980). Since 1995 the German Archaeological Institute has been carrying out archaeological research at the site in cooperation with the Museum of Şanlıurfa (Schmidt 1995, 2006, 2009a, 2009b).

At a height of 785 m asl, the mound of Göbekli Tepe rests at the highest elevation of the Germuş Range northeast of Şanlıurfa (figure 42.1). It stands above the Harran Plain, which spreads out to the south. Springs are accessible in the plains that surround the mountain on the north, east, and south, but there is no access to water in the immediate vicinity of the site. Though only partially excavated, it has become increasingly obvious that the findings from Göbekli Tepe may contribute significantly to our understanding of the transition from a subsistence pattern based exclusively on hunting and foraging at the end of the Pleistocene to the appearance of agriculture and animal husbandry in the course of the early Holocene.

Figure 42.1. The artificial mound of Göbekli Tepe from the air (2004) (photo by Orhan Durgut, DAI).

Material Culture and Subsistence

The people of Göbekli Tepe were still hunter-foragers. Animal husbandry was not practiced there, according to the results of the osteological investigations done by Angela von den Driesch and Joris Peters (Peters and Schmidt 2004; von den Driesch and Peters 1999, 2001), and the botanical studies by Reinder Neef (2003). The small finds from the site corroborate these results. Göbekli Tepe and its material culture are part of the world of the Pre-Pottery Neolithic (PPN) of the Near East, a period name deriving from Kathleen Kenyon's work at Jericho in the 1950s. Bidirectional cores, often of the typical naviform shape, were used extensively at Göbekli Tepe. The range of artifacts includes arrowheads, burins, endscrapers and scrapers, and notched and denticulated tools. Byblos, Nemrik, and Helwan points are distinctive

types (Schmidt 2007:107, fig. 3). Obsidian was used only for a very few tools; 99.9 percent of the industry is based on homogenous dark-colored flint of high quality.

In contrast to the common flint artifacts, tools made of bone or antler are very rare. The typical metapodial awls known from many prehistoric sites are almost completely missing. There are some fragments of spatula and hook-shaped bone artifacts and a few fragments of polished needles with incised holes and round sections.

The ground stone industry seems to be very standardized. Heavy oval-shaped mortars made of basalt are very common. Cylindrical and conical pestles were made from basalt as well. Large and heavy containers made of limestone also are quite frequent. The common occurrence of limestone slabs covered with groups of small cup marks have often been interpreted as game boards; however, their function is as obscure as the equally interesting large and heavy rings made of limestone with diameters between one-half and one meter (Schmidt 2006:fig. 23).

Spacer beads with two or more drillings, known from contexts at Çayönü and Nevalı Çori, are a common object of jewelry at Göbekli Tepe. Several fragments of thin-walled decorated stone vessels from Göbekli Tepe (Schmidt 2007:107, fig. 4) belong to the Hallan Çemi type (Rosenberg 1999; and see Rosenberg and Erim-Özdoğan, chapter 6 in this volume). Geometric and figurative motifs are incised in the outer face of the cups and bowls. Complete vessels of this group have recently been discovered at Körtik Tepe (Özkaya and San 2007). Other sites with comparable findings are Çayönü, Nevalı Çori, Jerf el Ahmar, Tell Abr, and Tell Qaramell. All these sites date to the PPNA/Early PPNB, in the second half of the tenth and the ninth millennium cal B.C.E. All of these can be described as settled hunter-gatherer settlement sites, with a spatial division of residential and specialized workshop areas and a growing importance given to *Sondergebäude* used for communal and ritual purposes, including open courtyards as communal space (Cauvin 1997; Hauptmann 1993, 1999; Özdoğan and Özdoğan 1998; Rosenberg et al. 1995; Schmidt 2006; Stordeur 2000; and see Rosenberg and Erim-Özdoğan, chapter 6 in this volume).

Göbekli Tepe is of similar date, but it is very different in comparison with these sites. It is unique not only in its location on top of a hill and in its monumental architecture but also its diverse set of objects of art, ranging from small stone figurines through sculptures and statues of animals to decorated megaliths, all of which set it apart. Göbekli Tepe is not a settlement; it is a mountain sanctuary.

Stratigraphic Excavations and Architecture

The excavations at Göbekli Tepe have been focused on the southern slope of the mound (figure 42.2). There is a post-Neolithic Layer I that consists of accumulations resulting from natural erosion and sedimentation processes due to

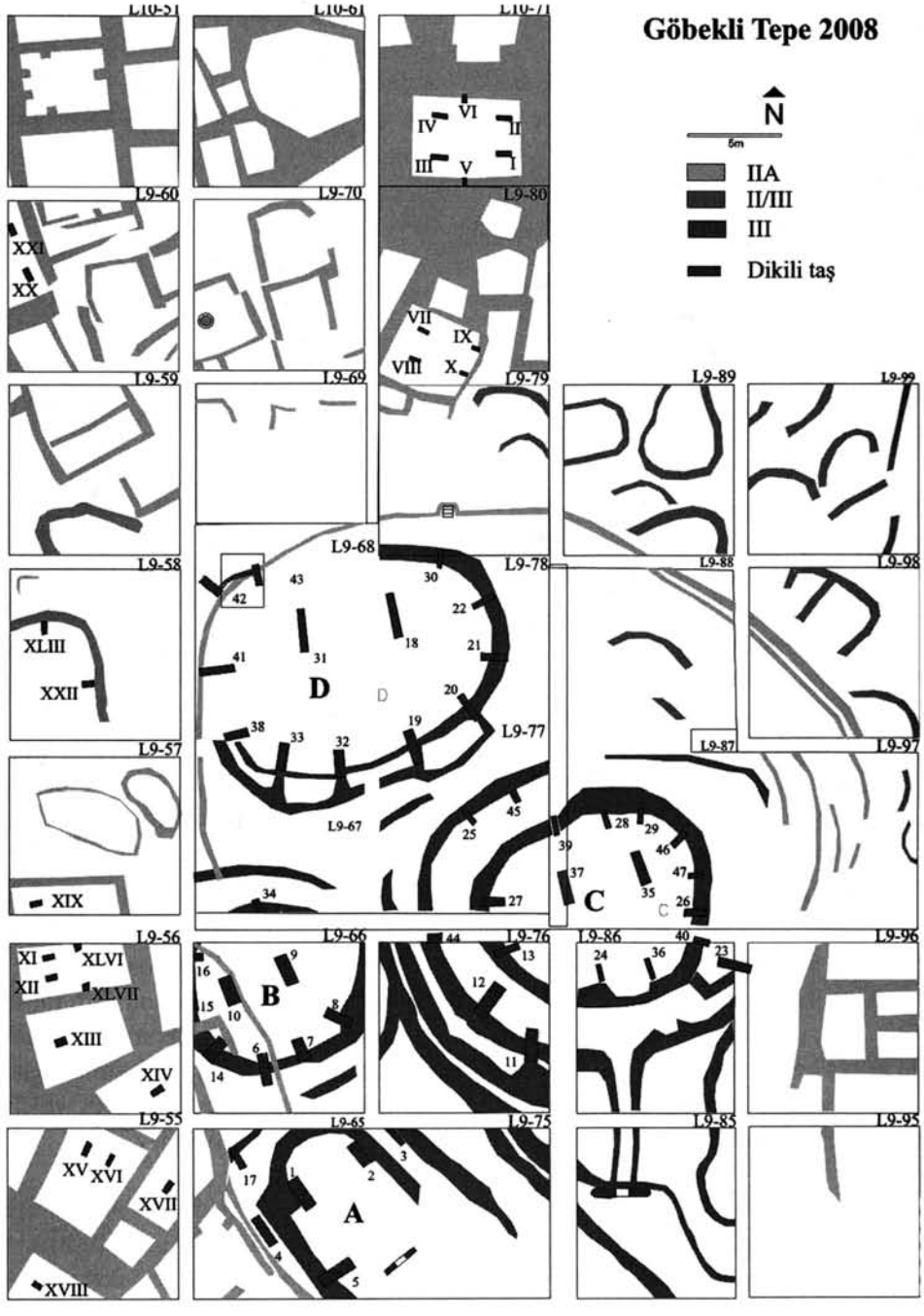

Figure 42.2. Schematic map of the main excavation area at the southern slope (graphic by DAI).

agricultural practices in medieval and modern times. Layer II is Early–Middle PPNB and is restricted to the upper zone of the hill; it contains buildings consisting of several rectangular rooms with terrazzo floors. Layer III dates to the

PPNA/Early PPNB. It consists of megalithic enclosures with diameters from ten to thirty meters, which were excavated in the center of a large depression on the southern slope. These structures are overlain by the buildings of layer II, as each of the megalithic enclosures had been backfilled soon after its erection to cover it completely. A volume of at least 300 m^3 has been estimated for the filling of one enclosure.

A geomagnetic survey, including ground penetrating radar, substantiated the prediction, based on the archaeological surface investigations, that the megalithic enclosures were not restricted to a specific part of the mound but existed all over the site. More than ten large enclosures were located on the geophysical map. As there are several areas at the surface of the mound without clear contours in the map—areas where further enclosures could exist—it seems very probable that at least twenty enclosures in total existed inside the Göbekli Tepe mound.

The most characteristic feature of the buildings of both Layers II and III are the T-shaped monolithic pillars, a type that was first discovered at the Early–Middle PPNB settlement of Nevalı Çori (Hauptmann 1993, 1999; see Harmanşah, chapter 28 in this volume, for discussion on the role of monuments in Anatolian prehistory). Of interest is the fact that on the shaft of some of the pillars a pair of arms and hands are depicted in bas-relief. The arms and hands are without doubt those of humans. Thus, it is clear that the pillars are much more than architectural elements. They are three-dimensional sculptures, representing stylized humans, the horizontal part being the head, the vertical shaft being the body and legs. This highly stylized expression of a human body was intentionally chosen, rather than being due to any inability of the craftsmen to represent humans naturalistically. There must have been certain reasons not to depict the eyes, the nose, the mouth, or the breast, vagina, or penis, if sex were to be indicated. To "modern eyes," the T-shaped beings belong to another sphere of reality, and it seems very probable that a similar meaning was intended by the Stone Age people.

On several pillars there are two parallel stripes in bas-relief on the stomach. They end always just above the fingers, if arms and hands have been depicted. In some way the stripes remind one of a garment such as a stole. Regarding the question of their meaning it is most probable that the stole of the Göbekli Tepe pillars represents a specific kind of dress, presumably worn not by everybody but only by a certain group of people.

The pillars are not only megalithic, they are monolithic. Like a menhir, they were made from one single stone, and it seems that the monolithic nature of the pillars was very important. Whereas in Layer II the height of the pillars measures only an average of 1.5 m, we observe a height of up to 5.5 m and a weight of up to fifteen tons in the older Layer III. The transport of such colossi took an enormous effort. For a calculation of how many people may have been involved in such a project, an ethnographical example from the beginning of the twentieth century may be helpful. A report details an event in 1914 on the island of Nias in Indonesia, during which a soul-menhir of the king of Bawomataluo, weighing nearly ten tons, was dragged into place by 525 men (Bakker 1999:153, fig. 6). It seems very probable

that like the event on Nias, major feasts provided the reason for the gathering of so many people at Stone Age Göbekli Tepe as well.

Through 2009 four monumental enclosures with forty-seven pillars have been discovered in situ. Up to twelve pillars are arranged purposefully in a circle or an oval to delineate the enclosures. The pillars are interconnected by walls and stone benches. In the central part of each circle, there is a pair of pillars. As a rule these central pillars are much larger than the surrounding ones and of a superior quality; for example, their surface is extremely well prepared, and they are always decorated with figurations.

The origin of the raw material of the megaliths is no surprise; the surrounding limestone plateaus served as a quarry in Neolithic times. Many cavities cut into the living rock can be explained as the places used for the extraction of large megalithic stones from the natural limestone beds (Schmidt 2009a:figs. 14–17). Some quarries can be easily recognized as the place for the extraction of T-shaped pillars. An unfinished example in the quarry on the northern plateau has a length of nearly seven meters and an estimated weight of nearly fifty tons (Schmidt 2006:fig. 33).

The megalithic enclosures and the pillars have been numbered according to the order of their discovery. Enclosure A had been recognized already in 1996. Despite the fact that it was discovered first, it is only partially excavated, as it had been partially destroyed in ancient times. Fortunately the central pillars—1 and 2—survived. On pillar 1 there are a stole and five snakes in bas-relief on the stomach (Schmidt 2006:fig. 44). The right face of the shaft is not yet visible. On the left face there is—again in bas-relief—a so far unique motif. Based on the triangular form of its endings, the object depicted seems to represent a "tapestry" of interwoven snakes, a sort of "net" made up of seventeen animals (Schmidt 2006:fig. 45). Below that object there is a quadruped, most probably a ram.

On pillar 2 there are the bas-reliefs of a bull, a fox, and a crane (Schmidt 2006:fig. 46). A stole is not depicted on the front of the pillar shaft, but on its back side there is one with a bukranium on top of the stole (Peters and Schmidt 2004:fig. 12). Because the motif of the stole is quite frequent and usually placed on the stomach of the pillar, it is very obvious that the stole on pillar 2 is in the wrong place. It will be proved by other observations in the forthcoming discussion that the reuse and replacement of pillars seems to have been a common phenomenon. Pillar 2 is the first clear example of such a replacement. Of the remaining pillars of Enclosure A (nos. 3–5, 17) it is only on pillar 5 that the relief of a snake is thus far visible (Schmidt 2006:fig. 47).

Pillars 9 and 10 are the central pillars of Enclosure B. The floor of the enclosure is a terrazzo floor, and in front of the eastern pillar 9 a stone bowl had been set into the floor (Schmidt 2007:108, fig. 6). On the shaft of each of the central pillars a male fox is depicted. Below the fox on pillar 10 is a graffito of a boar, tracked by three dogs (Schmidt 2000:23, fig. 10a–b). Around the circumference of the pillars (nos. 6–8, 14–16, 34) quite a few reliefs are thus far visible, including a fox (Schmidt 2006:fig. 53), an animal looking like a four-footed reptile (Schmidt 2006:fig. 54), and two snakes. The position of the "reptile" and the snakes at the rear of pillars 6

and 14 can again be regarded as evidence for the replacement of these pillars. Another observation seems to be noteworthy: none of the pillars wear a stole in Enclosure B.

The natural bedrock was used as the floor in Enclosure C (figure 42.3). It had been carefully smoothed, and two pedestals had been cut out of the rock for the central pillars. The upper parts of these pillars had been destroyed in ancient times, but both shafts were found in situ, each set in a rectangular hollow in the middle of the pedestal. Both pillars wear a stole. On the inner face of the shaft of the western pillar 37 is the relief of a fox. Opposite to it on the eastern pillar 35, there is the relief of a bull. The height of pillar 35 was reconstructed using laser scanning of the fragments found nearby, which could be joined virtually to the pillar's shaft. The original height was five meters above the pedestal.

Enclosure C consists of two concentric circles of walls with inserted pillars (nos. 11–13, 24–29, 39, 40, 44–47). Several of the pillars bear bas-reliefs. The motifs are dominated by wild boars and ducks (Schmidt 2006:fig. 59). On pillar 40 engraved hands can be observed at the stomach. Two foxes and several abstract symbols are also depicted. It is interesting to note that snakes, the most frequent motif at Göbekli Tepe, are completely absent within the reliefs of the pillars of Enclosure C.

One of the most astonishing discoveries at Göbekli Tepe was a high relief of a predator on the stomach of pillar 27, directly above a boar in bas-relief (figure 42.4). Pillar and animal had been made from one stone, a masterpiece of ancient stone masonry. It became obvious that several of the sculptures discovered in the débris fill of the enclosures originally had been similar high reliefs, attached to pillars;

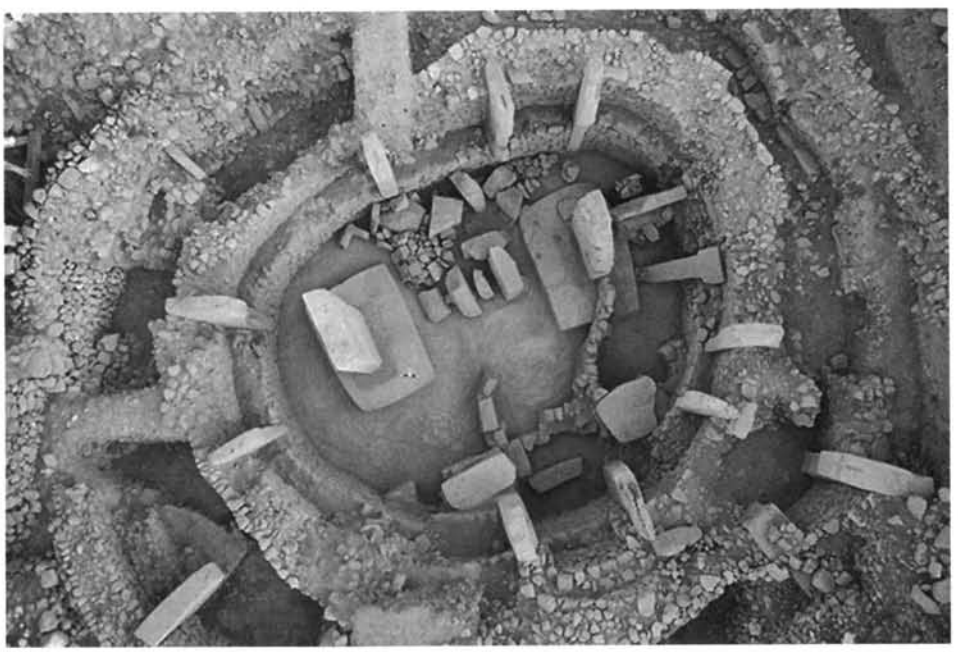

Figure 42.3. Enclosure C seen from the air (2009) (photo by Klaus Schmidt, DAI).

these sculptures had been intentionally smashed down for unknown reasons during the PPN Period.

Enclosure D was found north of B and C. It is the largest structure and preserved in excellent condition. As at Enclosure C, the floor is made of natural bedrock, which again had been carefully smoothed. Again, each of the central pillars—numbers 18 and 31—was set in a hollow in the middle of a pedestal, which had been cut out of the rock. Both pillars have a height of 5.5 m and are still in situ. At the southern face of the eastern pedestal there is a surprise: directly above the floor there are the reliefs of several ducks, depicted in a movement from east to west.

Figure 42.4. High relief of a predator and bas-relief of a wild boar on pillar 27 in Enclosure C (photo by Dieter Johannes, DAI).

On both pillars a stole, arms, and hands had been depicted, but only on the eastern pillar 18 does the pillar being hold a fox in its right elbow. It wears a necklace with ornaments in the shape of an H-shaped symbol, a circle, and a crescent. The western pillar 31 also wears a necklace, in this case in the shape of a bukranium. Both pillars portray beings wearing a belt and a loincloth made of animal skin, probably that of a fox, covering the genital region. On both belts there are U-shaped buckles visible, but only the belt of pillar 18 is decorated with H- and C-shaped motifs.

On the other pillars (nos. 19–22, 30, 32–33, 38, 41–43) depictions of foxes and snakes are most common, but there is a wide range of different figurations, which include such diverse fauna as aurochs, gazelle, wild ass, crane, duck and vulture, spider, scorpion, and insect. On pillar 43 there is a very rich combination of different motifs (figure 42.5), including a vulture, an ibis and snakes, a scorpion, and a headless, ithyphallic person, as well as many other motifs.

Interpretations of Göbekl[i] Tepe

Because it can be safely assumed that the pillars represent anthropomorphic beings, one of the most relevant questions concerns the meaning of the combination of the anthropomorphic carvings and the various motifs depicted on the pillars. Preliminarily it can be concluded that animals played an important role in the spiritual world of the PPN community at Göbekli Tepe. Since the site's inhabitants relied on hunting for their protein supply, one possible explanation for these figurations might be the performance of hunting rituals; however, a comparison between the faunal assemblage attested at the site and the iconography does not support that idea (Peters and Schmidt 2004; Peters et al. 2005; von den Driesch and Peters 2001). Mammalian bone fragments form the bulk of the material, but remains of ungulates predominate, constituting over 90 percent of the total sample. This is also the case in other PPN archaeofaunas collected in the Upper Euphrates basin (Helmer, Gourichon, and Stordeur 2004; Peters et al. 1999).

Did the animals serve as guards to protect the stone beings? With respect to the mammals, with one exception only male individuals are displayed on the pillars. One explanation may center not on their biological sex but rather that the depiction of strong and aggressive (male) animals was the intended message. This scenario could apply well to taxa such as carnivores or snakes and eventually also to wild boar and aurochs, but wild sheep, gazelle, wild ass, or crane would be difficult to fit into this concept. Thus, although each enclosure features animal figures that look threatening, we doubt whether the role of animals within the symbolic world of the PPN can be reduced to this simple level of apotropaica. It is important to note that not only are animals depicted on the pillars, but also a complex system of symbols (Morenz and Schmidt 2009).

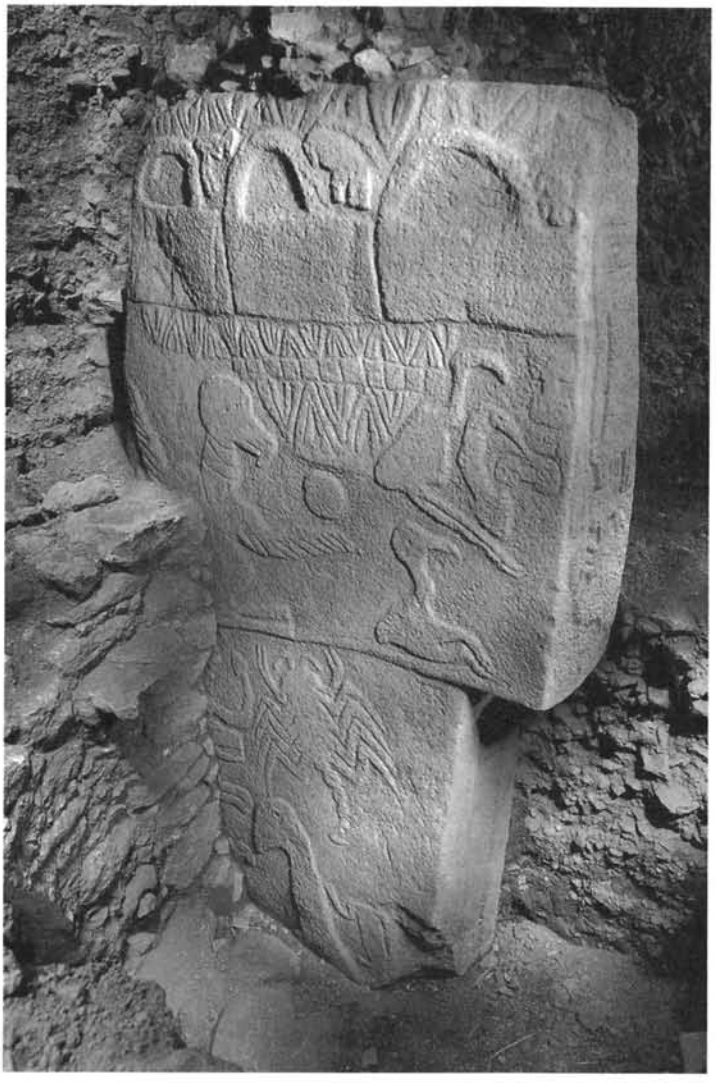

Figure 42.5. Pillar 43 in Enclosure D (photo by Berthold Steinhilber).

In addition to the animals and symbols depicted in bas-relief, there is the group of three-dimensional sculptures and high reliefs, which seems to offer somewhat different symbolism. There are two main species depicted, a wild boar and a predator, reminiscent respectively of the Erymanthian boar and the Kerberos of Greek mythology by their appearance (Schmidt 2009c). It thus seems probable that there is a slight difference in the meaning of both groups. The sculptures and high reliefs seem to be mainly apotropaic in their function. The animals and symbols depicted in bas-relief are meant to transmit mythic narrations. However, it is difficult to investigate the entire inventory of images in a specific enclosure. First, most of the pillars are not completely visible due either to the stage of excavation, or because walls and benches, often constructed and placed after the erection of

the pillars, cover parts of their shafts and the reliefs. Second, there is the reuse of pillars. We cannot be sure if the position of a pillar is the original one, if the pillar has been replaced but the reliefs are still the original ones, or if new stone furnishing and a new "layer" of images greet our modern eyes. Because of that we will try to evaluate some of the motifs individually rather than the complete *Bildprogramm* (symbolic ensemble) of the enclosures—a task that will be important for the future when the excavations have finished and we can be sure how many motifs exist in the enclosures.

At Göbekli Tepe, snakes are the most commonly depicted figures. They appear either isolated or in small groups of four or five individuals. The reliefs are mainly located on the stomach of the pillars. Only in two cases do we find snakes on the back side of a pillar, both in Enclosure B, but it is very probable that these pillars have been repositioned. With few exceptions, the snakes are moving downward. In three cases there are more than ten snakes depicted together. The net-like object made of interwoven snakes on pillar 1 has been mentioned. On pillar 33 there are two bundles of snakes. All the snakes depicted are thick, short animals with large, flattened triangular heads. Several highly venomous species are known to occur in the Urfa region, including the Levantine viper (*Vipera lebetina*), and it may be these that are depicted.

The importance of the snake is repeated in the iconography of the PPN sites of Upper Mesopotamia, where the snake motif is widespread. This is illustrated by findings from Hallan Çemi, where snakes carved out of bone have been found (Rosenberg 1999:fig. 11), or by artifacts depicting snakes found at PPNA sites like Körtik Tepe (Özkaya and San 2007), Jerf el Ahmar (Stordeur and Willcox 2009), and Tell Qaramel (Mazurowski 2009; Mazurowski et al. 2009), or at the Early–Middle PPNB settlement of Nevalı Çori, where a limestone sculpture of a life-size human head crowned with a snake was found inside a wall of a ritual building when the building was completely removed for re-erection in the museum in Şanlıurfa in advance of the rising water of the Atatürk Dam lake (Hauptmann 1993, 1999). Quite obviously this snake from Nevalı Çori is an anticipation of the Uraeus snake of the Old Egyptian pharaohs.

Looking further west to central Anatolia, at Çatalhöyük snakes are completely absent from the wall paintings, although there exists a handle of a flint knife made of bone and carved in the shape of a snake (Mellaart 2003:126, resim 88). The blades for such tools are bifacially pressure flaked, and it is obvious that the knives are not made for daily use. Again, the snake motif seems to be connected with the threatening aspect of this animal and its apotropaic meaning.

Interestingly, depictions of snakes at Göbekli Tepe are completely absent at the pillars in Enclosure C. They seem to be replaced by the wild boar, which is depicted a number of times in bas-relief. The partially very naturalistic representations show a male individual signaling its readiness to attack, its mouth opened to display its impressive fangs (Schmidt 2006:fig. 59). The omnipresence of wild boars in bas-relief in Enclosure C is notable in that of the ten sculptures (or fragments of sculptures) hitherto found depicting a wild boar, nine have been discovered in Enclosure C

(e.g., Schmidt 2006:fig. 60); the tenth is from Enclosure A (Schmidt 1999:11, bo. A15 pl. 3.1–2).

The fox is another common motif at Göbekli Tepe. It is depicted either singly or in combination with other species, for example, aurochs and a crane on pillar 2 (Schmidt 2006:fig. 46), aurochs and a snake on pillar 20 (Schmidt 2006:fig. 83), or a boar and three birds on pillar 38 (Schmidt 2006:fig. 87). Its presence on the central pillars P9 and P10 in Enclosure B and on the western central pillar of Enclosure C denotes its importance. In Enclosure D it is the anthropomorphic pillar itself, the eastern central pillar (pillar 18), which holds a fox in the right elbow, and both central pillars are wearing loincloths probably of fox skin. The relatively high frequency of fox remains in the archaeofauna at Göbekli Tepe compared to other carnivores and in most of the PPNA/Early PPNB faunal assemblages (Helmer 1994; Helmer et al. 1998; Peters et al. 1999) underscores the significance of this taxon in the spiritual world of the PPN in Upper Mesopotamia. The presence of the fox at the Cypriot Neolithic site of Shillourokambos (Vigne 2000) may perhaps relate to the role this animal already played in the symbolic world on the mainland prior to the colonization of Cyprus by PPN human groups.

It is interesting to note that the fox, like the wild boar, is nearly absent in the cave art of the Upper Palaeolithic. But there was something special about the fox in that period, too: fox teeth are in the first assemblage of raw materials from which animal teeth pendants were made in the Upper Palaeolithic sites of Europe. One would expect that the teeth of bear or wolf would be the first choice for pendants, but the fox is the winner in that respect. Although we can only guess at the role *Vulpes* played in the PPN Near Eastern symbolic world, it is a fact that in the mythology of post-Neolithic cultures of the ancient Near East, the fox is rarely present, and its role is that of the trickster as in European fairy tales. In contrast to other species, for example, the bull, lion, or dog (Black and Green 1992), the fox was not associated with a certain deity in the post-Neolithic, especially in Sumerian, Akkadian, Babylonian, or Assyrian mythology.

A Complex Prewriting System of Symbols

Finds with images of symbolic value are not restricted to the reliefs on the monumental T-shaped pillars. Similar motifs appear in many of the PPN sites of Upper Mesopotamia en miniature, for example, on the stone vessels at Hallan Çemi, which have already been mentioned as a characteristic feature of the material culture of the PPN in the north. There are other groups of artifacts that feature figurative decoration. Shaft straighteners often have incised decorations of animals and various symbols. Several examples from Jerf el Ahmar and Tell Qaramel bear rich combinations of motifs showing groups of animals like snakes and scorpions, quadrupeds, and birds.

Very similar motifs and symbols were incised into the so-called plaquettes of Jerf el Ahmar type. In contrast to the shaft straighteners, which have been grooved deeply as a defining functional attribute, the plaquettes (often little more than coin size) show no indication of an obvious use for any specific function. They probably were produced just for the purpose of bearing the symbols incised on them. Their general presentation is very like the clay tablets of the cuneiform texts of the ancient Near East invented several thousand years later in the Sumerian period. These plaquettes have been discovered in significant numbers at Tell Qaramel, Tel Abr, and Jerf el Ahmar; only one example has been found so far at Göbekli Tepe. From Körtik Tepe there are several plaquettes with animals in bas-relief, animals which seem to depict the chrysalis state of an insect (Özkaya and San 2007:2:24 fig. 19). There may be some connection between this and the spider and insect motifs known from some pillars at Göbekli Tepe. These images offer a new symbolic world, a symbolic language, which had commonalities among the residents of the PPN sites in Upper Mesopotamia.

Buttons, made of greenish stone like the plaquettes, are another interesting type within the small finds category (Schmidt 2005:32–33, fig. 6). Their shape is similar to stamp seals of the Hittite period; the "handle" has an oblique perforation at its end. Outside Göbekli Tepe such buttons are known only from Nevalı Çori, where there are only a few examples. At other sites this distinctive form has not been found. It seems appropriate to call these artifacts the Göbekli Tepe button type. They were owned by people living mainly at Göbekli Tepe and not commonly found in the surrounding settlement sites. A similar situation may be the case for small pendants whose shape reminds one of a cucumber (Schmidt 2000:33, fig. 14.d). They form another type characteristic for the inventory of Göbekli Tepe and again seem to be rare at other sites. All these groups of artifacts seem to be part of a system of symbols, existing not only on the pillars and plaquettes with their two-dimensional reliefs and engravings but also as a system that includes objects like garments and ornaments. On the other hand, bracelets known from several other PPN sites are very rare at Göbekli Tepe, and clay figurines are completely missing. The absence of clay figurines at Göbekli Tepe is especially remarkable as that group usually is very common in the early Neolithic settlements of the Near East.

However, figurines made of limestone exist at Göbekli Tepe in some numbers. A small figurine of a vulture (Schmidt 2007:114, fig. 23) seems to be the miniature version of a large sculpture known from Nevalı Çori (Hauptmann 1999:2:48 fig. 15). A head of a lion again very closely resembles an example from Nevalı Çori (Hauptmann 1999:50, fig. 20), both in the motif and in its miniature size. Large-scale sculptures of the same type have been found at Göbekli Tepe. It becomes quite clear that the small figurines made of limestone often repeat the repertoire of the large sculpture, which we know so far from Nevalı Çori and Göbekli Tepe. The inventory of the early Neolithic large-scale statues is completed by a more than life-size human head found at Göbekli Tepe (Schmidt 2006:fig. 28) and an isolated statue discovered in Şanlıurfa (Bucak and Schmidt 2003), which probably came from the context of

a PPN site in the center of Şanlıurfa itself, now nearly completely lost due to the expansion of the modern town.

Conclusion

To conclude, the most characteristic feature of the monuments of Göbekli Tepe are the monumental T-shaped pillars. They are arranged in round or oval enclosures, always with a pair of free-standing pillars in the center. It is highly probable that the T-shaped pillars are meant to represent anthropomorphic beings. The fact that mainly animals have been depicted on them underscores this assumption. Sometimes they are accompanied by symbols and/or pictograms. How should the images be interpreted? We have excluded the possibility that the animal motifs represent favorite game species. We recognized that the meaning of two-dimensional bas-reliefs and the engravings en miniature seems to be a little different from the meaning of the three-dimensional sculptures. These seem to have mainly an apotropaic function, the species functioning as guardians. The other group most probably represents a symbolic system which illustrates mythic narrations.

The overall shape of the pillars is very standardized, and an indication of their sex is always lacking. Except for a graffito on a stone slab (Schmidt 2006:fig. 104) no female representation has so far been found at Göbekli Tepe. The Magna Mater, whose presence—following the *opinio communis*—actually should be expected in such an important ritual site as Göbekli Tepe, remains completely invisible. However, the central pillars of Enclosure D, with their height of 5.5 m, show monumental and unquestionably important beings wearing belts and loincloths. Belts seem to indicate male persons, as seen in the group of clay figurines from Nevalı Çori where belts are restricted to the male examples (Morsch 2002:148). It is not clear what kind of beings the T-shaped monoliths personify, but their faceless impersonality makes it probable that they represented mythical ancestors or even theomorphic beings from another world.

No doubt the amount of time, energy, craftsmanship, and manpower necessary for the construction and maintenance of this site is indicative of a complex, hierarchical social organization and a division of labor involving large numbers of people. Feasting was presumably the immediate reason for the gathering of hundreds of individuals at the site. Seen from this perspective, the emergence of food production in the course of the PPN may represent the outcome of a series of innovations and adjustments to the subsistence patterns to meet and secure the energy demands of these large sedentary communities. A major driving force behind the process of plant and animal domestication may have been provided by the spiritual concepts of these PPN peoples, in particular the investment of effort by generations of PPNA groups in the materialization of their complex immaterial world.

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