

## Rethinking 60 Years of Architectural Epistemology

*Seventy percent of all archaeology is done in the library. (Indiana Jones, in Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade)*

### 1.1. Purpose of this book

This book has one main objective: to systematically and comprehensively research the epistemology by which archaeology has translated the architectural record excavated at Late Neolithic and Early Chalcolithic (6500–5500 BC) sites in central Anatolia into interpretations of social organisation. More specifically, this book aims to be an exhaustive (and for readers possibly exhausting) dissection of a particular archaeological discourse – that concerned with architecture and its use for understanding the four social processes that will be identified in Chapter 6 as central to the formation of Late Neolithic and Chalcolithic societies: increasing household autonomy paired with decreasing suprahousehold integration, incipient social competition and stratification, increasing mobility, and warfare. It aims to first, make visible the interpretational patterns that have been used to interpret social organisation based on architectural data; and second, to critically evaluate this epistemology in order to suggest improvements for future research. To achieve this, this book uses content analysis, a method derived from social sciences that systematically identifies patterns in large quantities of text. Content analysis has been used in the past in some reflexive archaeology projects (7.1). This book, too, is in essence a contribution to archaeological reflexivity: a critical evaluation of archaeology's own research practices with the aim of improving them. I conducted a content analysis of 284 archaeological publications on the prehistory of central Anatolia with the aim of identifying patterns and themes in the academic discourse around architecture and society. The oldest analysed publication being from 1958, this book researches more than 60 years of archaeological thought since the excavation of the first Neolithic/Chalcolithic site in central Anatolia (Hacılar). In Chapters 8–12, I extensively discuss the results of this content analysis, thereby exploring and evaluating the ways past research has understood the social meaning of prehistoric architecture in the study region. This discussion produces foremost a better understanding of epistemology, but also a tool kit for architecture research specific to Neolithic and Chalcolithic central Anatolia, in accordance with the contextual approach taken by this book (2.2).

Apart from its primary objective to research epistemology, this book also produces two additional outcomes that are something like side effects of the epistemological discussion. Because these were not primary research aims, the exploration of these two secondary outcomes can in

no way, however, be seen as complete. The first of these side products is a synthesis of Late Neolithic and Early Chalcolithic architectural data. Thirteen sites have been excavated in LN/EC central Anatolia, but their architecture has never before been summarised in one publication. As a preparation for my epistemological discussion, I briefly summarise the existing architectural record from these 13 sites. I also review chronological evidence from each site to determine the dating of sites and occupation levels (Chapter 5). This book can therefore be used as an entry-level overview of architecture data from Late Neolithic and Early Chalcolithic central Anatolia, but not a complete or exhaustive summary – and certainly not a new analysis of architecture data, since the main purpose of this book is not to research architecture data directly, but to analyse what past archaeological publications have stated about the interpretation of this data. In other words, when an analysed source suggests that a settlement enclosure wall, e.g. at Hacılar II, signifies the existence of warfare in the study area (11.2.1), the main purpose of this book is to scrutinise the assumption that an enclosure wall translates into warfare, not the identification of an enclosure wall at Hacılar II. However, some elements of critique on the architectural record—including on the mentioned Hacılar II wall—are contained in Chapter 5 and 8–11 where it seemed particularly necessary.

The second side product is an improved understanding of how people in Late Neolithic and Early Chalcolithic central Anatolia used architecture to build the kinds of communities they wanted to create. The patterns identified in the content analysis provide a structure for describing the social use of architecture in the past, for example how social hierarchies were constructed through built environments that produced, communicated and reinforced differences in social status (Chapter 9). The indicators and themes identified through content analysis therefore also tell the story of architectural choices that formed and transformed societies during Anatolian prehistory. However, this book does not directly investigate the social use of architecture in the past, but observes what past researchers have said about this social use of architecture, which provides an indirect and in parts biased view.

Why does all this matter, within the bigger picture, looking beyond architecture and central Anatolia during the time period 6500–5500 BC? By critically reflecting on epistemology, by contributing towards a synthesis of architectural data from the LN/EC and towards an understanding of the social use of architecture during that

time period, I contribute also to an improved understanding of the long-term transformation of Anatolian prehistoric societies between the first farmers of the Early Neolithic and the first stratified pre-state societies of the Early Bronze Age. The “millennia in the middle” (Düring 2011b)—between the agricultural revolution of the Early Neolithic and the formation of social complexity in the Early Bronze Age—have in previous research received less attention due to a seeming absence of major cultural transformation (6.4.1). However, newer research has demonstrated that the millennium between 6500 and 5500 BC was an important transformative time in central Anatolian prehistory during which social structures established in the Early Neolithic unravelled as households became more autonomous, competitive and mobile. Chapter 6 will describe these changes and demonstrate their impact on later prehistory, including on the development of social complexity in the Early Bronze Age. That is not to say that the period of the Late Neolithic and Early Chalcolithic is only relevant because of its impact on the formation of complex societies, but this is one way in which they are relevant in a wider forum.

Social complexity in Southwest Asia and Europe is defined by features such as: urban centres, population density, centralised political administration through formalised law, social differentiation and stratification (Barton 2014:307), hereditary ranking, long-distance trade, craft specialisation, centralised production, writing (Verhoeven 2010:12), metallurgy (Düring 2011b:809; Steadman 2011:251) and organised religion (Düring 2011c:253). The word ‘civilisation’ is often used in place of ‘complex society’ outside of archaeology, and sometimes also within it (e.g. Sagona and Zimansky 2009:172), though it is avoided in most current archaeological writing (Verhoeven 2010:11–12). Why does the formation of social complexity matter? Condensed down to its essence, the emergence and further development of social complexity is part of the story of how the modern world came to be the way that it is. This makes social complexity or ‘civilisation’ relevant within archaeology but also for a general public (Herrero 2013). To name just one example from the non-academic sphere, the commercial success of books by Jared Diamond (1997, 2005) is based on the public interest in the emergence, development and ‘collapse’ of complex societies. And central Anatolia is very much part of academic and non-academic debates around social complexity or ‘civilisation’. The region hosted the earliest pre-Bronze Age research ever conducted on the Anatolian plateau (Chapter 4), and remains one of the more thoroughly researched areas within prehistoric Anatolia (Düring 2011c:28; Özdoğan 1995, 1999:10). This has led to central Anatolia having an exemplary character for the study of prehistory in other parts of the Eastern Mediterranean region, both within archaeology (Baird 2012a:432) and outside of it, for example in form of the site of Çatalhöyük, which has attracted public interest as an early ‘town’ (e.g. Hodder 2006; Mellaart 1962a, 1963a, 1963b, 1963c). Interpretations made here therefore have significance beyond the circle of archaeologists directly

concerned with the study of central Anatolian prehistory, and Baird (2012a:432) explicitly names the debate around early complexity as one example: “Debates continue about the nature of early social complexity and how much this was a response to the development of sedentary farming communities of scale. The Anatolian evidence allows us to understand whether and how social complexity might have operated in environments that contrast with those where the developments have been more fully studied, especially the Levant, but also northern Mesopotamia.” And indeed, Diamond cites Anatolia as the place from where markers of ‘civilisation’ such as agriculture, metallurgy and “towns and cities, chiefdoms and kingdoms, and organized religions” (Diamond 2005:180) spread to Europe and transformed that continent. Recent overviews on the history of European and Southwest Asian warfare also routinely refer to the very sites studied in this book (Ferguson 2013:218–220; Hamblin 2006:24–27), making them part of the larger story of the deeper origins of European modernity.

If central Anatolian prehistoric archaeology is relevant to public and academic debates, for example those surrounding the beginning of complex societies, then it needs to produce reliable interpretations. This book contributes to increased reliability by describing and critiquing the gaps, disagreements and unquestioned assumptions that exist in the interpretational frameworks that archaeologists use to translate architectural evidence into social organisation. Chapter 6 will show that social complexity, in Anatolia and probably beyond, can best be understood as the unintended outcome of various small changes to the social makeup of local communities, and that society in this part of Anatolia moved towards social complexity via previously unperceived mechanisms and pathways, for example through mobile pastoralism. My aim is to contribute to an accurate understanding of these small- and large-scale shifts in the social fabric of communities.

## **1.2. Chapter outline**

This book has two parts: The introductory chapters (Chapters 1–6) describe the research context around the epistemology that is analysed in the second part of the book (Chapters 7–12). Chapter 1 has defined the objectives and significance of this research project. Chapter 2 describes the two elements of archaeological theory that influenced the way this research was designed: reflexive and contextual archaeology. Chapter 3 defines the geographical and chronological scope examined in the book. Chapter 4 provides a brief history both of Neolithic and Early Chalcolithic archaeological research in central Anatolia more generally and architecture research in the study region more specifically. Chapter 5 summarises the architectural evidence from each of the 13 LN/EC sites in central Anatolia as well as their chronology. Chapter 6 summarises the current state of knowledge on the development of social organisation between the Early Neolithic and Early Bronze Age (8500–2000 BC) in central

Anatolia. Chapter 7 describes the research methodology employed in my analysis. Chapters 8 (Household autonomy and suprahousehold integration), Chapter 9 (Social competition and social stratification), Chapter 10 (Mobility) and Chapter 11 (Warfare) discuss the results of the content analysis. The final Chapter 12 provides a summary of the main outcomes of this research. It is also relevant to mention here that the cut-off date for literature to be included was 30 April 2021. Literature published after this date is not included in this book with the exception of chapters from two edited volumes published in 2022 that I, as editor of one (Biehl et al. 2022) and editorial assistant of the other (Biehl and Rosenstock 2022), had advance access to and that contained new research highly relevant to some issues discussed in this book. Also, since this is a reflection on past research, I made the decision to reprint figures such as architecture plans and reconstructions from the original publications without modifications or without recreating them – sometimes at the expense of picture quality and resolution.