# 1

# Introduction

## 1.1 The Research Topic

In my research I examine the role of hunting as it was expressed and manifested by the Neolithic people of Çatalhöyük, an early farming community in central Anatolia, Turkey (7,100-6,000 BCE), with the aim of ascertaining the role it played at the advent of agriculture (Hodder 2006). My gateway to investigating hunting practices in this community is through the hunters' weapons. The arrowheads and spearheads that were preserved through the millennia have their own stories to tell us. I am interested to know how they were made, circulated, wielded and discarded as a means of reconstructing what they might have meant for the people who owned them.

This book's objectives are threefold:

1. To offer a thorough study of the projectile point assemblage that will provide us with new information.
2. To understand why, unlike agriculture and pastoralism, hunting seems to have been symbolically laden.
3. To investigate the role of hunting in an early agropastoral society.

The archaeological site of Çatalhöyük is located in south central Anatolia, Turkey, in the Konya Plain, 50 km southeast of the modern city of Konya (Figure 1.1). The site was inhabited continuously for approximately 1,100 years, roughly from 7,100 to 6,000 BCE, spanning a large portion of the Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods. Çatalhöyük consists of two mounds: the East Mound was in use mainly throughout the Neolithic period, at the end of which it was abandoned in favour of the West Mound, which is predominantly Chalcolithic in date (Hodder 2006). The site was first excavated in the 1960s by James Mellaart (Mellaart 1967). Excavations were resumed in the 1990s by an international team of archaeologists under the direction of Ian Hodder and are still ongoing.

Çatalhöyük represents one of the earliest examples of an established permanent settlement in Anatolia whose population at its height (*c*. 6,500 cal. BCE) ranged between 3,500 and 8,000 people (Hodder 2006). From the outset the settlement's economy was predominantly based on farming and herding, with hunting being a smaller component. The town was densely packed with houses, which seem to have been the focus of both religious and everyday life. Some of the structures' walls are decorated with wild animal skulls and/or wall paintings, while the bodies of their dead lay beneath the platforms where daily activities were carried out (Hodder 2006). Çatalhöyük is the largest Neolithic town discovered thus far in Anatolia, and one of the best-known archaeological sites globally due to its elaborate material culture and degree of preservation.

From the early excavations of James Mellaart in the 1960s it quickly became apparent that hunting was a socially significant practice for the people of Çatalhöyük. The site gained publicity for, among other things, its unusual wall paintings; the macabre decoration of houses with horns, animal skulls and jaws; and its rich feasting deposits of wild animal remains (Hodder 2006). The associations with hunting and the 'wild' have been prominent in Çatalhöyük and they seem to be in stark contrast with the ideas we have about Neolithic farmers and their lifestyle. As we will see in greater detail in Chapter 4, the practice of hunting by peoples who were producing their own food by means of domesticated livestock and crops is an underexplored theme in the archaeological literature. Çatalhöyük provides an excellent example where one can study this theme, not least because hunting seems to have been central in religio-symbolic aspects of life at the settlement, whereas the main way of obtaining food, via domesticates, is never part of symbolic representations.

The projectile points from Çatalhöyük are made mostly of obsidian, a volcanic rock with excellent knapping qualities that comes from three different and distant sources. Çatalhöyük projectiles are technologically elaborate artefacts requiring a high level of skill and precision for manufacture (Knecht 1997a). My aim has been to explore the cultural biography of these artefacts, from raw material procurement to their production, use and discard, which are stages in the lives of these objects that linked together a variety of people and places (Kopytoff 1986; Gosden and Marshall 1999;). Therefore this is as much a project about people and things – it engages with current debates concerning agents and material culture (Hoskins 2006; Miller 2010) – as it is a study of the social significance of hunting to agropastoral societies (Kent 1989a; Hamilakis 2003).

The carefully made projectile weapons of Çatalhöyük have received less attention. They were skillfully produced on site using the same lithic raw materials used for the rest of the stone tools. Obsidian seems to have been available in abundance (Cessford and Carter 2005). The obsidian sources the people used were at a linear distance of 190–200 km in the volcanoes of Cappadocia. Cessford and Carter have estimated that in a direct access model (i.e., members of the community going to get the obsidian themselves), the inhabitants of Çatalhöyük would be able to make the journey in 10–13 days, walking on average 20 km per day (2005: 310–11). The journey was well worth the effort (most likely paired with other seasonal

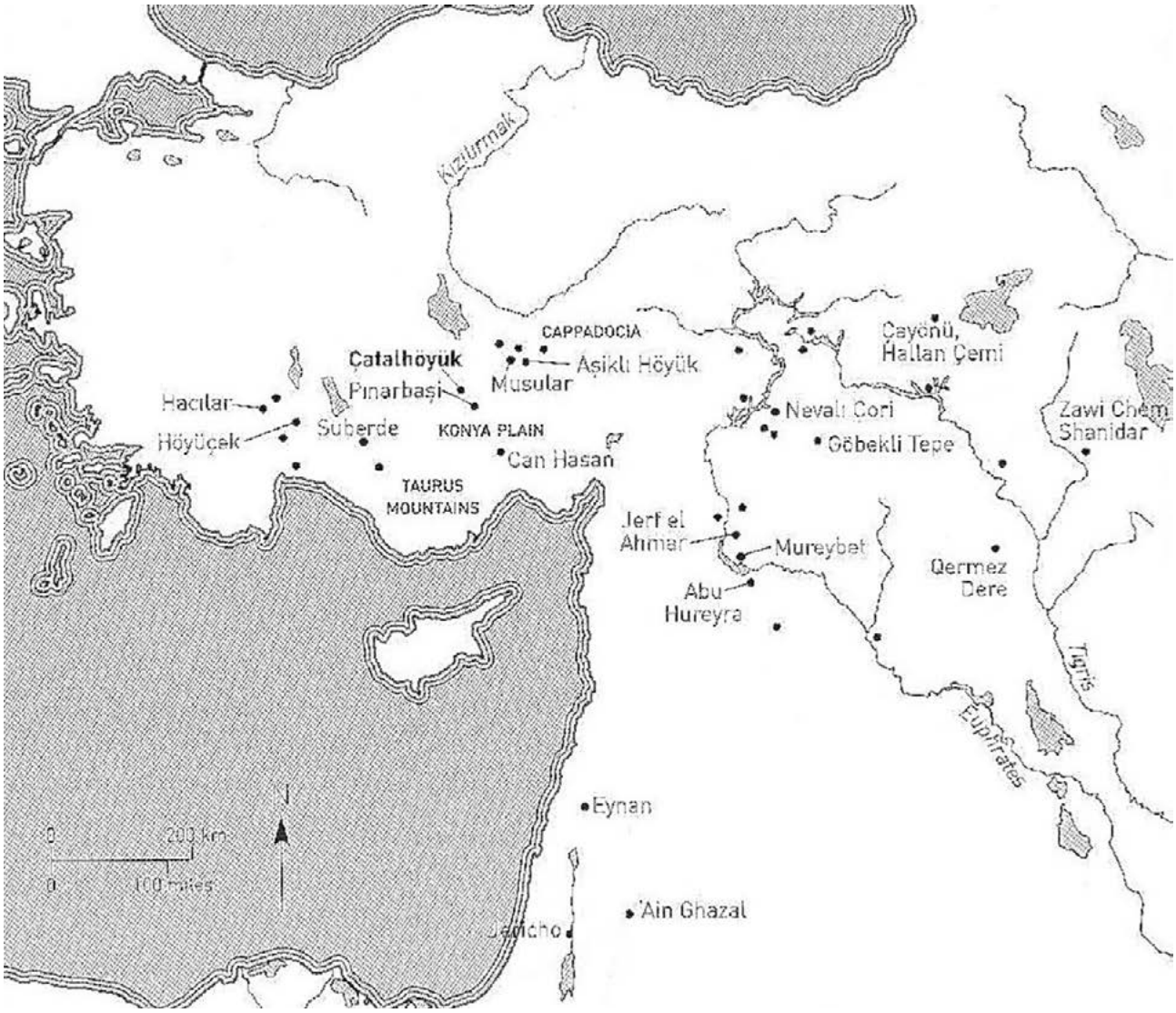


**Figure 1.1 Map of Anatolia showing sites mentioned (from Hodder 2006:15).**

tasks [Fairbairn et al. 2005]), given that the raw material procured was of the highest possible quality and it could be procured in large sizes: large enough to produce biface projectiles of 159 mm in length. The two main sources of obsidian in Cappadocia are East Göllü Dağ and Nenezi Dağ: the former produces a black, translucent type of obsidian with a slight bluish hue, whereas the obsidian of the latter source has a nebulous black colour with a greyish hue. Typically these two obsidian types have few or no inclusions, which allows for the waves of percussion initiated by the knapper's blows to travel unhindered through the raw material, resulting in fewer breakages and more control over knapping.

The projectiles were made using technologically advanced modes of knapping. Some were made on bidirectional blade blanks, whose production is a hallmark of the Pre-Pottery Neolithic B (hereafter PPNB) period of the Levant (e.g., Borrell 2011; Barzilai 2013) and a tradition well established in central Anatolia from the earliest Neolithic, as evidenced at Aşıklı Höyük (Todd 1966; Balkan-Atlı 1994). The blades were made on blade cores with two opposing striking platforms, with the detachment of blades alternating between the two platforms (cf. Barzilai 2013). This technique is not easy to master and it certainly cannot be learnt without apprenticeship. The result is two types of blade: the negative so-called upsilon blades and the positive pointed blades sturdy enough to be used as blanks for projectiles and other tools (for more details see Chapter 7 and Figure 7.11). The blade was then turned into a projectile through careful pressure retouch which ranged from partial to invasive all the way to covering one or both projectile faces.

The other technique used to produce projectiles was reserved for the production of large bifaces. Large, thick obsidian flakes were chosen and, with peripheral percussion, a biface preform was formed which was thinned and refined through a combination of indirect percussion and pressure flaking. The end result varied from roughly shaped bifaces to exquisitely symmetrical leaf-shaped bifaces.

Projectile points were deposited in a variety of contexts at Çatalhöyük both domestic and extramural. Some are found in a heavily fragmented and used state in external midden areas or in the infills of abandoned buildings, giving the impression that they were discarded after no longer being needed. Other types, however, were treated differently. During the first half of Çatalhöyük's occupation, bifaces seem to have been deposited exclusively in hoards buried in shallow scoops within the confines of a building and always near the hearth. The bifaces found in these curated deposits were in very good condition, preserved fully, without any apparent signs of use.

Previous work at the site has emphasized an association of projectiles with building foundation and abandonment practices, such as their placement in post-retrieval pits (Carter et al. 2005: 250–1; Carter et al. 2015). Their technological elaboration, exotic raw material and ritualized forms of deposition were taken to suggest that projectiles were powerful objects in their own right, intimately related to individual and/or group identities (Carter et al. 2005; Carter 2007; Conolly 1999). This premise forms a major hypothesis for this book. As we will see in Chapter 7, this view of projectiles is not entirely corroborated by the data collected.

In undertaking this research it is important to consider the social and historical context in which these projectile points were created andused and acquired meaning. We usually tend to associate the Neolithic period with agriculture and the domestication of plants and animals (e.g., Childe 1952; Braidwood 1952; Flannery 1973; Redman 1978; Henry 1989; Kuijt 2002; Cauvin 2007; Simmons 2007). These achievements were so tremendous and have had such a profound impact on the course of humanity's history that they have monopolized our interest in Neolithic studies – perhaps rightfully so.

The role of hunting in past agropastoral societies is an underexplored topic in archaeological literature. This reflects a long-established belief that hunting was associated almost exclusively with hunter-gatherer societies, where it comprises the main subsistence strategy (e.g., Morgan 2000 [1877]; Childe 1952; Braidwood 1964; Lee and DeVore 1968; Sahlins 1972; cf. Kent 1989a; Zvelebil 1992). Conversely, hunting in agropastoral societies has tended to be considered as a marginal, opportunistic and seemingly unnecessary practice, given that meat is theoretically readily available from livestock (Kent 1989c). This belief is based on the premise that with the advent of the Neolithic period, when domestication and agriculture appeared, hunting and gathering were abandoned altogether in favour of the novel and more productive economy (Zvelebil 1992: 8). When hunting and farming are considered together, it is either in the context of transition from one economic model to the next (e.g., Price and Gebauer 1995) or where hunting is seen as a risk-buffering mechanism for agricultural societies in distress (Halstead and O'Shea 1989).

Yet the archaeological record provides compelling evidence that hunting remained an important practice for agropastoralist societies, not least in the Eastern Mediterranean Neolithic (Banning 1998: 212; Watkins 1990: 336). In the Near East there is an increase in the production and diversity of projectiles during the PPNB period, despite the fact that wild animal meat clearly constituted a smaller percentage of people's diets compared to that procured from domesticated stock (Banning 1998). It has been suggested that the developments in projectile technology do not represent changes in hunting practices but the emergence of violent conflicts instead (Bar-Yosef 2010; Watkins 1990). In the specific context of Çatalhöyük, however, this argument does not seem to hold, as the extensive human remains assemblage provides very little evidence of violent conflict (Molleson et al. 2005). On the contrary, what seems to be prominently celebrated by the community is hunting, as evidenced not only through the aforementioned wall paintings, but also through large numbers of feasting deposits comprised almost entirely of wild animal remains (Hodder 2006; Hodder and Meskell 2011: 46; Twiss and Russell 2010). This does not change the fact that the overall faunal assemblage indicates that hunting was only an occasional practice, with wild animal remains comprising a minority component throughout the Neolithic (Russell and Martin 2005).

In examining hunting I wish to move away from considerations that view hunting as an economic strategy separated from social life, and instead move towards identifying a complex set of relations where the practice of hunting plays an instrumental role. My research explores the idea that the practice of hunting was not merely an alternative subsistence strategy, but an arena where social relations and identities were forged, transformed and regulated.

### 1.2 Theoretical Background

Projectiles, i.e., spearheads and arrowheads, tend to be some of the most distinctive and most discussed forms of material culture in the Neolithic Eastern Mediterranean (e.g., Bar-Yosef 1981; Ataman 1988; Gopher 1994; Balkan-Atlı et al. 2001; Kozlowski and Aurenche 2005). A traditional interpretative point of departure has been to consider their functional and socioeconomic significance, i.e., whether they represent hunting tools or implements used in violent conflicts (e.g., Runnels et al. 2009). They have also been the focus of numerous typological analyses (e.g., Gopher 1994), both for dating purposes (based on chronological associations of specific forms) and, more recently, for the (not unproblematic) definition of cultural (or even ethnic) groups on the basis of the spatial distribution of certain types (e.g., Kozlowski and Aurenche 2005). In turn, technological and functional studies using a *chaîne opératoire* analytical framework have provided these objects with a detailed reconstruction of their life histories, from raw material procurement, via processes of manufacture, to their use and discard (e.g., Abbès 2003; Astruc 2002). While this has given us

an insight into human technical practices and cognitive skills, I would argue that the potential for considering these artefacts' richer history and their social biographies has rarely been realized (cf. Appadurai 1986). Finally, on the basis of their use of exotic raw materials, stylistic elaboration and consumption in 'ritual' contexts in the larger region, it has recently been acknowledged that the role of these implements may have been as symbolic as it was functional (Cauvin 2007: 125–6).

It is my aim to critically reappraise and develop these approaches to chipped stone projectiles, starting with the premise that these distinctive objects constitute 'active agents in the maintenance of complex social relations' (Gero 1989: 103). Drawing on recent literature on practice theory (Bourdieu 1977), agency (Dobres and Robb 2000; Dobres and Robb 2000) and materiality (Buchli 2004; Meskell 2005; Miller 2005) I aim to demonstrate the entanglements between material culture and technology with the making of symbolism and possibly myth (e.g., Hoskins 2006; Fowler 2004; Knappett 2005; Larick 1986, 1991).

Current archaeological theory is interested in understanding what it meant to be human in a past society and how that experience manifested itself within the social space and the material world. Recently, archaeology has benefited from philosophy and performance studies in thinking about personal identity in a richer way. Identity, as is now clear, is not an ontological given; rather it is constructed and performed according to the norms prevalent in a society (Butler 1990). Through bodily movement 'people perform objects of all kinds, but especially buildings, by moving through and around them; but buildings also perform people by constraining their movements and by making likely certain kinds of encounters between them and others' (Turnbull 2002: 135). This notion of space as performative, drawn mainly from Bourdieu (1977), opens up interesting avenues for archaeological thought, as it reveals the relationship between objects and subjects not as a Cartesian dichotomy, but as a dialectic process of entanglement. Moreover, it provides archaeologists with a more nuanced outlook on the role of material culture in daily performances and by extent the creation, maintenance and expression of social identities (Wynne-Jones 2007: 330).

Work by scholars such as Kopytoff (1986) and Hodder (1982) marked the beginning of the concept that artefacts have an active social role in society. Objects are theoretically anthropomorphized, in the sense that they too have a life and a biography, which is formed and transformed through the various meanings ascribed to them by being part of social relations (Gosden and Marshall 1999; Hoskins 2006). Furthermore, objects are viewed as a means of constructing and changing the social context within which they are created or used; in other words, objects are potential agents (Gell 1998; Latour 2005). Material culture is perceived as a dynamic component capable of negotiating social relations and affecting structure. Objects can be part of one's identity; they can be ordinary or exotic, necessary, desired, useful or useless, symbolic, or even magical, and, depending on the meaning and significance ascribed to them, they have the agency of affecting practices and, by extent, relations (Joyce and Lopiparo 2005).

Theoretical developments over the last twenty years or so have led to the emergence of material culture studies (Miller and Tilley 1996). A central concept of this approach is that of materiality, which goes beyond the physicality of objects – but does incorporate it to the fullest – and is better defined as 'a set of cultural relationships' (Meskell 2005: 6), because people's constant engagement with things results in the shaping of themselves and their world. For archaeology, an essentially material-based discipline, the theory of materiality calls for a reconceptualization of the way we have thought about objects thus far. Miller's concept of 'the humility of objects' is central in this effort (Miller 2005). He postulates that objects form the appropriate setting for our social practices and tell us how to act appropriately in each setting. In his view, 'the less we are aware of [objects], the more powerfully they can determine our expectations by setting the scene and ensuring normative behaviour' (Miller 2005: 5). Therefore the concept of materiality is useful to archaeologists because it assigns a social role to every object and helps us to better understand not only the props of everyday social performances but also the daily engagement of people with objects in the construction of habitus, i.e., societal norms and practices that people habitually uphold as a result of their life experiences (Miller 2010: 53). Ultimately, materiality could be the best answer we have at the moment to the tantalizing question 'what is the relationship between mind and ideas on the one hand and the material things of the world on the other?' (DeMarrais et al. 2004: 1). Perhaps a succinct answer would be that '[it is] an enmeshing that combines persons, objects, deities, and all manner of immaterial things together in ways that cannot easily be disentangled or separated taxonomically' (Meskell 2005: 3).

In more recent years, theoretical interest has continued to focus on our ability to understand how things interact and even shape culture by focusing on the complex networks of interdependencies between humans and things. Entanglement theory, spearheaded by Ian Hodder, examines how dependent we are on things but also how much things depend on us (Hodder 2012, 2014c; Hodder and Mol 2015). Inspired by Bruno Latour's Actor Network Theory (2005), Hodder focuses 'on relationality rather than on apparent fixed and essential dualisms such as truth and falsehood, agency and structure, human and non-human, before and after, knowledge and power, context and content, materiality and sociality, activity and passivity' (Hodder 2012: 90). A dense meshwork of interconnections between humans and things defines the affordances and limitations of culture as a whole.

This book may be of interest to an audience wider than scholars of prehistoric Anatolia. Near Eastern scholars

will draw parallels with Near Eastern PPNB sites where hunting persisted even after the advent of agriculture. In my work I have deliberately used typologies developed by Near Eastern scholars (see Chapter 5) specifically to facilitate comparisons of Çatalhöyük and the wider Near Eastern region. It is my hope, however, that anthropological scholars interested in the role and function of symbolic artefacts will also find this work relevant. As we will see in Chapter 7, this book concerns itself with artefacts that belong in the mundane sphere of everyday life but also with emblematic, conspicuous objects whose role was clearly symbolic. In this respect the book will advance our knowledge of how objects can assume different roles and serve different functions in the social sphere and, most importantly, it will provide a specific methodology with which to reach such conclusions.

### 1.3 Book Outline

Chapter 2 essentially sets the scene for the rest of the book. It outlines the history of research at Çatalhöyük from the time of James Mellaart's first excavation to the current project directed by Ian Hodder. In this chapter I introduce the reader to some basic site terminology, excavation areas, architecture, the chronology and the stratigraphy, but I also give a brief overview of the interpretations and general ideas formulated about Çatalhöyük from both the older and the current projects.

Chapter 3 examines the role of projectile points in formulating archaeological interpretations in the context of Near Eastern prehistoric studies. I discuss the kind of information that can be gleaned from projectile points, and particularly their use as indices of cultures, chronological periods and identity, and their association with subsistence practices and interpersonal violence. The second part of the chapter is a reappraisal of previous research conducted on the Çatalhöyük projectile assemblage and how these interpretations have used projectiles.

Chapter 4 reviews the archaeological evidence for hunting from Çatalhöyük– such as wild faunal remains, iconography etc. – and looks at previous interpretations on the role of hunting in this community. In the second part I explore the possible reasons hunting might have persisted well into the Neolithic period in spite of the availability of domesticated animal meat. With the help of ethnographic studies on peoples who practised both farming and hunting, I explore themes such as hunting as a risk-buffering mechanism, the social value of game meat, animistic beliefs and human–animal relations, but also how hunting serves to negotiate and reify gender roles and the creation of masculine identities.

Chapter 5 concerns itself with the multitude of terms frequently used by lithicists studying projectile points (e.g., points, darts, arrowheads, lances) and how these are defined. These terms signify different weapons with different attributes and potential, both of which are essential in building the picture of hunting at Çatalhöyük; but before arriving at such distinctions I first establish how we can identify securely a projectile point using use-wear analysis and diagnostic impact fractures. In the last section I discuss the issue of distinguishing between arrowheads and spearheads in the archaeological record by reviewing a number of proposed methodologies.

Chapter 6 details the methodology I employed to collect and analyse data from the Çatalhöyük projectile assemblage. I describe the variables used and give a brief explanation of the reasons why each one was included in the study and how it addressed my research questions.

In Chapter 7 I present the results of my study and introduce the two groups of projectiles. The section that follows takes the reader through a set of criteria (technological, morphological, etc.) that determine the separation of the assemblage into two distinct groups, which were used and kept very differently. The two groups are then examined diachronically in order to establish how the assemblage has changed through time or whether there was continuity in practices. The two groups of projectiles are analysed further to determine whether they were used as arrowheads or spearheads.

In Chapter 8, the last chapter of this book, I provide a summary of the main points of my analysis and bring together all the evidence to produce a history of projectile weaponry and hunting and their significance at Çatalhöyük throughout its millennium-long Neolithic phase.