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So Fair a House

Göbekli Tepe and the Identification of Temples in the Pre-Pottery Neolithic of the Near East

by E. B. Banning

Archaeologists have proposed that quite a number of structures dating to the Pre-Pottery Neolithic A and B in southwest Asia were nondomestic ritual buildings, sometimes described specifically as temples or shrines, and these figure large in some interpretations of social change in the Near Eastern Neolithic. Yet the evidence supporting the identification of cult buildings is often equivocal or depends on ethnocentric distinctions between sacred and profane spaces. This paper explores the case of Göbekli Tepe, a large Pre-Pottery Neolithic site in Turkey that its excavator claims consisted only of temples, to illustrate weaknesses in some kinds of claims about Neolithic sacred spaces and to explore some of the problems of identifying prehistoric ritual. Consideration of the evidence suggests the alternative hypothesis that the buildings at Göbekli Tepe may actually be houses, albeit ones that are rich in symbolic content.

Almost since archaeologists first identified the Pre-Pottery Neolithic (PPN) in the Near East, they have interpreted some buildings as temples or shrines rather than as domestic structures. The earliest such identifications were at Jericho in Palestine (fig. 1), where first Garstang and Garstang (1948:59–60) and then Kenyon (1957) identified Pre-Pottery Neolithic B (PPNB, ca. 8000–7000 cal BC) structures as shrines or temples. Later, Mellaart (1967) famously discovered a large number of "shrines" at Çatalhöyük in Turkey. These structures, with substantial investments in sculptural and painted architectural elaboration, belong to the Pottery Neolithic (PN) but had a great influence on the interpretation of PPN ideology (e.g., Cauvin 1994:48–51).

Ironically, identifications of PPN "temples," "shrines," and special communal or ritual buildings proliferated after the late 1980s (Hauptmann 1993; Özdoğan and Özdoğan 1998; Rollefson 1983, 1987, 1998*b*; Rosenberg and Redding 2000; Stordeur 2000) just as Mellaart's (1967) identification of "shrines" in the PN levels at Çatalhöyük fell into disrepute. Recent work has convincingly demonstrated that all the shrines at Çatalhöyük have abundant evidence for ordinary domestic activities, such as food preparation and consumption, and that buildings differ only in their degree of symbolic elaboration, with no sharp demarcation between shrines and houses and no houses that are devoid of symbolic content (Asouti 2005; Hodder 2006; Hodder and Cessford 2004).

These contrasting interpretations of Neolithic ritual space make it clear that archaeologists are far from agreed on how to identify specialized ritual spaces either in the Neolithic or more generally. This is not only a matter of identifying evidence of ritual activity but of identifying in what ways, if any, it can be distinguished from the "ordinary" activities of daily life that we associate with residential or "domestic" use.

Some Neolithic buildings may indeed have had some specialized ritual functions or particular religious significance. A number of Neolithic structures, for example, appear to have had mainly mortuary purposes (e.g., Çayönü's "skull building": Croucher 2005; Özdoğan 1999; Özdoğan and Özdoğan 1989; and Tell Aswad's mortuary chamber: Stordeur 2003: 110). Others may have had nonresidential purposes that we cannot identify more specifically with confidence but that could have included ritual functions. However, many of the archaeological interpreters of Neolithic structures appear to have presumed that the inhabitants of PPN sites made a strong distinction between sacred and profane and have often overlooked or given insufficient attention to the alternative that PPN cosmology infused everyday life—including its residential or domestic buildings, activities, and spaces—with meaning and spirituality. Some authors (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003:83; Boyd 2005; Hermansen and Jensen 2002; Kuijt 1995: 192, 207, 2005:36; Mithen, Finlayson, and Shaffrey 2005; Simmons and Najjar 2003:415; Testart 2006; Verhoeven 2002:7) have acknowledged this alternative, but even some of these go on to interpret the evidence in terms of distinct ritual and

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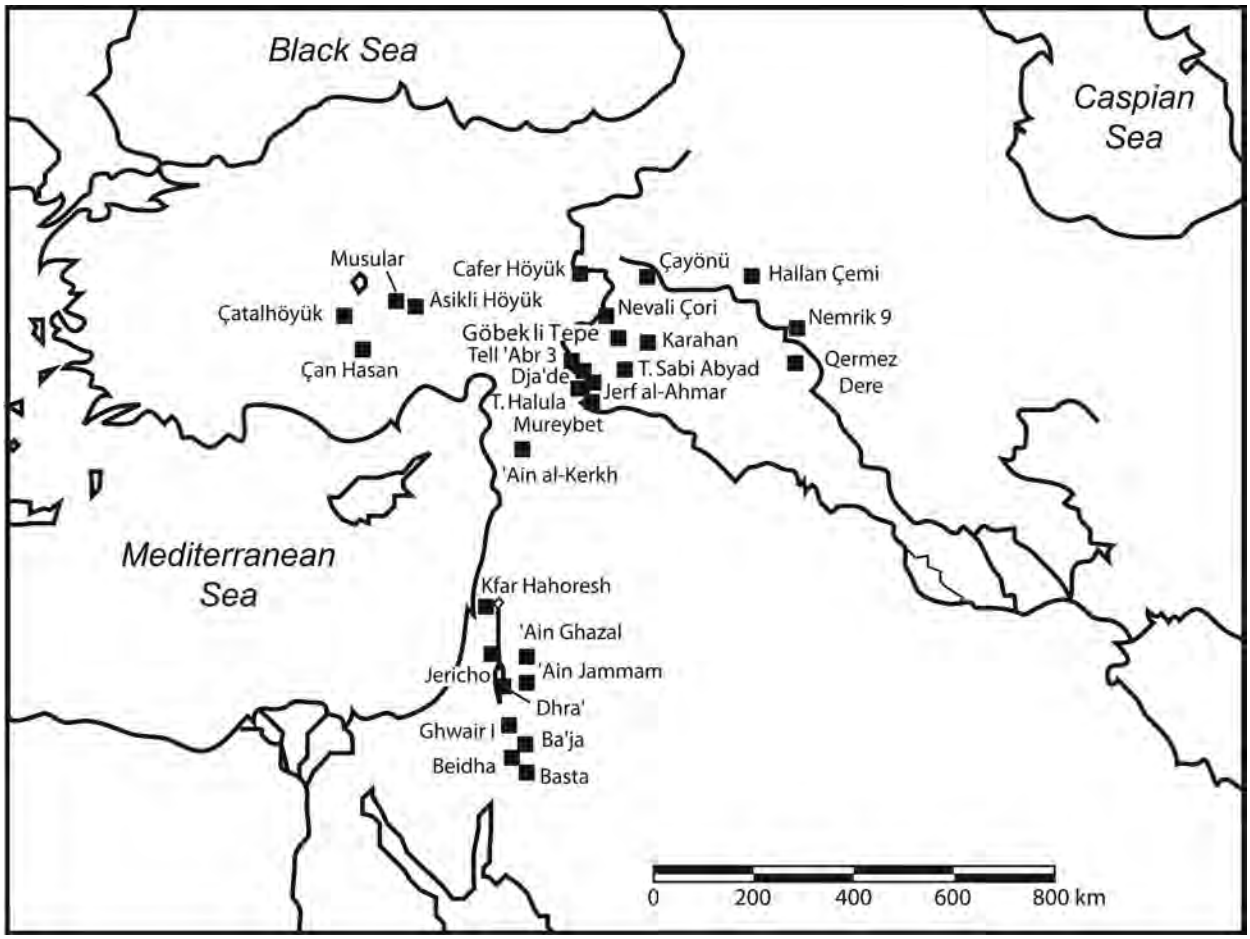

Figure 1. Map of southwest Asia, indicating archaeological sites mentioned in the text.

nonritual spaces. Review of ethnographic studies and archaeological evidence suggests a more widespread distribution of PPN symbolism and ritual features than some of the temple hypotheses would suggest. In this paper, I will present this as a competing hypothesis for the PPN.

The site that currently figures largest in discussions of Neolithic religion and ritual is Göbekli Tepe in southeastern Turkey. Consequently, this site will be the main focus for discussion of ritual space in the PPN of the Near East. Although the Near Eastern Neolithic exhibits considerable variability across space, investigators all across this large region have often used quite similar arguments for the identification of special ritual buildings, so Göbekli Tepe and its interpretation have resonance and relevance well beyond southern Turkey.

Göbekli Tepe

Archaeologists have identified "temples," "shrines," or "communal buildings" at a number of Neolithic sites in the Near East (Bar-Yosef 1986; Braidwood and Braidwood 1982; Braidwood et al. 1981; Çambel 1980; Esin 1998; Esin and Harmankaya 1999; Hauptmann 1993; Hauptmann and Özdoğan 2007; Özdoğan and Özdoğan 1989; Rollefson 1998*b*, 2000; Rollefson and Kafafi 1997; Stordeur 2000; Stordeur, Helmer, and Willcox 1997; Yartah 2004, 2005), some more convincingly than others. The most extravagant claims for early temples, however, are connected with the 8-ha site of Göbekli Tepe in the Sanliurfa (or Urfa) province of Turkey (fig. 1). This is indeed an impressive site. The site occupies the top of a ridge some 100 m high, where it overlooks the Harran plain and the Balikh floodplain. It is a little more than 1 km northeast of the village of Örencik, while other villages, Seyrantepe and Ortaören, lie below it on the plains about 1.5 km to its northeast, and the Neolithic site of Nevalı Çori is some 50 km to the north.

The site has three main stratigraphic levels that belong to the Neolithic. Level III, the oldest, apparently dates to the Pre-Pottery Neolithic A (PPNA) or Early PPNB (Pustovoytov

2002) and exhibits buildings that are usually oval and about 15 m × 10 m in size with at least two concentric walls built around and often incorporating a bilaterally symmetrical arrangement of T-shaped monoliths in the perimeter and two larger ones near the center (fig. 2). Two of these buildings also exhibit monumental stone entranceways or "U stones" toward the south or southeast (Schmidt 2006*b*:155–157). It is difficult to assess whether the level III buildings were constructed and used about the same time or at different times during the Early Neolithic. Level IIA dates securely to Middle PPNB, ca. 7500 cal. BC, and has smaller (ca. 5 m × 3 m) and more rectangular buildings with finely executed terrazzo floors and sometimes exhibiting one or two generally smaller T pillars, which are most often undecorated (fig. 3; Schmidt 2000:26–33, 2006*b*:229, 253). Ones without pillars sometimes show buttresslike projections from the walls or stone benches. Level IIB (also called II/III) is reportedly intermediary between the other two Neolithic levels but has received much less attention in publications. Here we find rather unassuming ovoid structures apparently without any monoliths (Schmidt 2006*b*:168, 2009:190).

The limestone pillars found in levels III and IIA are finely formed and exhibit, particularly in level III, a variety of sculpted images of foxes, snakes, scorpions, boars, ducks, and other creatures. In level III, the height of the pillars above the floor typically ranges from about 2 m to about 3.5 m but up to 5 m, while those of level IIA are only on the order of 1.4–2 m high. Although current publications do not often provide precise dimensions of the pillars, we can make some rough estimates of some of their masses by assuming that

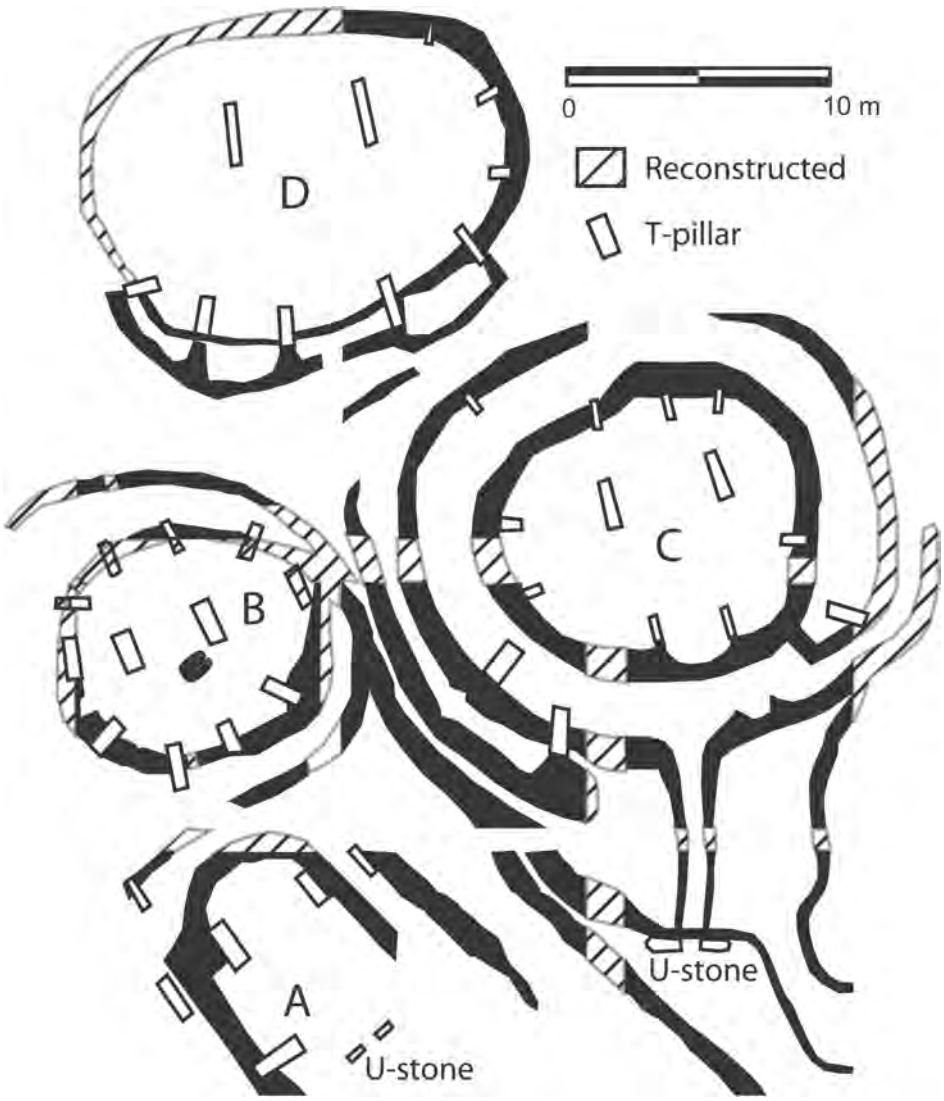

Figure 2. Level III structures A–D at Göbekli Tepe (after Schmidt 2006*b*: 168).

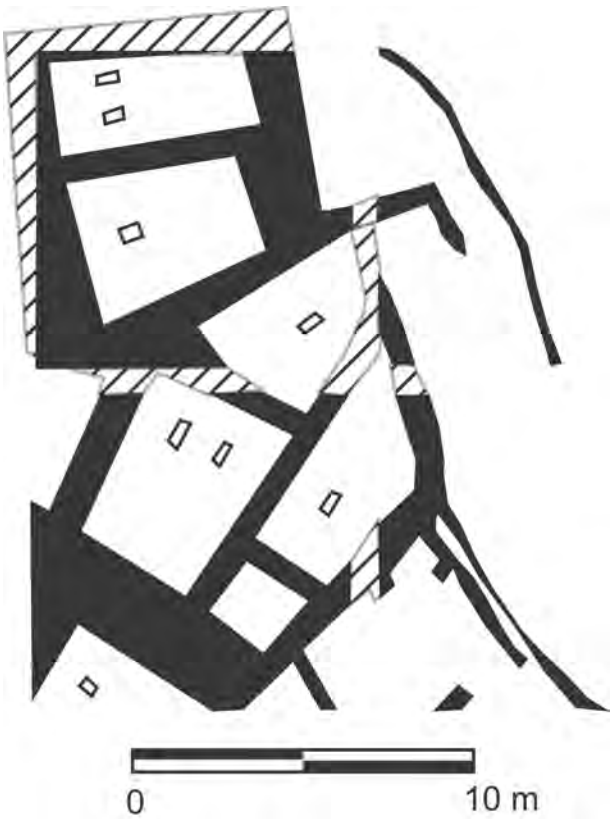

Figure 3. Level IIA structures southwest of the level III ones at Göbekli Tepe (after Schmidt 2006*b*:168).

one-quarter of each pillar's height is below ground level and that their limestone has a specific gravity of about 2.4–2.6 g/cm^3. In level III, for example, pillar 43 in structure D would have a mass about 2.5–2.7 metric tons (tonnes [t]); pillar 1 in structure A would have a mass about 5–5.4 t; and a pillar 5 m high would have a mass about 10–10.8 t (table 1). In level IIA, pillar 1 in the lion-pillar building would have a mass of about 740–800 kg. Schmidt (2006*b*:131–132) estimates the masses of the above-ground portions of pillars 9 and 10 in structure B as 7.1 and 7.2 t but appears to have estimated the specific gravity of their material as about 3.13 g/cm^3, within the range for basalt. In both levels III and IIA, Schmidt (1999: 13, 2001*b*:51) interprets the pillars as nonstructural and suggests that the buildings, somewhat like Stonehenge, were unroofed. Most of the pillars appear to have pockmarks, cupmarks, or small depressions on top, possibly remnants of their shaping that were not dressed quite flat because they were not expected to be visible.

There are numerous traces in the bedrock around the site of the quarrying activities that yielded these pillars (Schmidt 2006*b*:103–111, 2009:207–213, 216). Here, blocks of limestone appear to have been isolated by cutting vertical channels, U-shaped in section, around the blocks, presumably with flint tools. Possibly wooden levers and wedges were used to help split the blocks from the bedrock along a natural bedding plane once they had been outlined in this way.

The Prevailing Interpretation

Schmidt (2000, 2001*b*, 2006*b*) sees all the excavated buildings of levels III and IIA at this site as temples—the houses of divinities (Schmidt 1998*b*:17)—and views the site itself as something like the center of a classical Greek amphictyony, analogous to Delphi or Olympia, where hunter-gatherers from a large region met for periodic cultic activities but where there was no residential occupation.[1] Schmidt goes on (2000) to argue that temples came before villages and towns, an allusion to Mumford (1961) that also recalls Lord Raglan's (1964) hypothesis that temples came before houses, although Raglan recognized that "ordinary" houses routinely have sacred aspects and are the setting for rituals.

We could break down Schmidt's interpretation into the following parts. (1) The large oval buildings of level III and rectangular ones of level IIA were specialized ritual spaces, or "temples," and not residences. (2) The site was not a settlement; or, to put it another way, it was devoid of "ordinary" domestic occupation. (3) The site was a ritual center that drew hunter-gatherers from a wide region. Let us examine these separate arguments in turn.

The Buildings Are Temples and Not Houses. The principal evidence leading Schmidt to interpret the Göbekli structures as temples appears to be their monumentality and impressive sculptures, including the massive T-shaped monoliths with animal reliefs, and the substantial effort that must have been involved both to construct them and to fill them in on abandonment. However, Schmidt also highlights differences between these buildings and typical Neolithic houses, some similarities to other buildings that could be interpreted as "special" or "cultic" buildings, and claims a lack of normal domestic remains in the buildings.

As we have seen, the larger elements of the buildings are quite massive. Quarrying the large pillar blocks from the limestone would require substantial effort, even with the aid of stone axes and chisels and wooden levers (Arnold 1991:27–40). Unfortunately, we lack good data on exactly how much effort, and estimates for Easter Island statues, of quite different stone, range from as low as 15 days (Routledge 1920) to as much as 15 months (Heyerdahl 1958:138). Although the mass of the pillars is "up to ten metric tons" (Schmidt 2005*b*:14), more typical pillars are probably on the order of 2–6 t, still a lot to move, and would seem to distinguish the buildings from more typical Neolithic houses, in which the largest structural members would more typically be wooden posts and beams, the very largest of which might have a mass as much

1. In a paper that appeared after this article was submitted, Schmidt (2009:201–202) now admits the possibility that there were some permanent residents at the site while maintaining its special character as a holy place rather than a settlement.

Table 1. Estimates of the masses of Göbekli pillars and labor requirements for moving them with water or other lubricant over level ground without rollers

Pillar	Height (m)	Estimated volume (cm^3)	Low-mass estimate (kg)	High-mass estimate (kg)	Starting force (N)	Laborers
A.1	3.8	2,062,500	5,000	5,400	6,860	14
B.9[a]	3.4	2,300,000	5,500	6,000	7,550	15
B.10[a]	3.6	2,400,000	5,800	6,300	7,960	16
D.43	4.0	1,038,000	2,500	2,700	3,430	7
. . .	5.0	4,218,500	10,100	10,800	13,900	28
LP.1	2.0	307,700	740	800	1,015	2

Note. Moving up a slope of 8° would approximately double the labor requirement. Pillar heights, except where noted, assume burial of the lower quarter of each pillar. The low-mass estimate and starting force assume limestone with a specific gravity of 2.4 g/cm^3; the high-mass estimate assumes a specific gravity of 2.6 g/cm^3.

[a] Values for pillars B.9 and B.10 are for aboveground portions only, so number of laborers should be higher by perhaps 20%.

as 400 kg (oak log 3 m long with average diameter about 0.6 m), but with most Neolithic houses constructed of members nowhere near that size. Cutting, moving, and erecting Göbekli's pillars would have involved substantial efforts. "The work of quarrying, transporting, and erecting tons of heavy, monolithic, and almost universally well-prepared limestone pillars . . . was not within the capability of a few people" (Schmidt 2006*b*:252). Schmidt (1998*b*:38, 2006*b*:108–109) estimates, in comparison to Thor Heyerdahl's experiments with Easter Island statues and later to a century-old case from Nias Island in Indonesia (Schmidt 2009:212–213), that hundreds of adults would have been necessary to move the larger monoliths at Göbekli Tepe. The implication is that this magnitude of effort is beyond what we would expect to be invested in residential structures or perhaps beyond the capability of small social groups, and indeed Schmidt suggests (1999:14) that it would have taken some coercion by powerful individuals to muster the required labor.

Schmidt interprets the images on the pillars as "art" and as religious symbols, citing aspects of Cauvin's (1994) and Schmandt-Besserat's (1997) interpretations of PPN religion by reference to Bronze Age religious iconography with favor. They also represent additional investments of considerable effort, it being necessary to dress and smooth the pillars' sides and carve the reliefs, probably with flint and basalt cutting, pounding, and scraping tools; basalt grinding stones; and wet or dry sand abrasive (Arnold 1991:41–47; Stocks 2003:83–95, passim). A geomagnetic survey indicates that there are probably at least 15 more megalithic structures of the level III type in addition to the ones already excavated, leading to an estimate of more than 200 T-shaped pillars (Schmidt 2006*b*: 252).

At the end of their use life, the buildings appear to have been intentionally filled with as much as 5 m of sediment consisting mainly of limestone chips and fine earth (Özdoğan and Özdoğan 1998; Pustovoytov 2006; Schmidt 2001*b*:46; 2002:8). Schmidt (2002:8) estimates that at least 300 m^3 of deposit was used to fill one level III structure. Carrying this much earth manually in baskets, even from a short distance, might occupy ten adults for about 1 week (1.9 person-hours/m^3 to excavate and 0.32 person hours/m^3 to transport earth 10 m; Abrams 1994; Erasmus 1965) or as many as 32 people for 1 week (7.1 person-hours/m^3; Ashbee and Cornwall 1961: 133). Futhermore, if this fill was transported to the site from some unidentified off-site settlement, this would entail considerably more transport cost (e.g., an additional 9,600 person-hours for each 1 km that the earth was carried over flat ground, and greater cost uphill).

Schmidt (2001*b*:46) insists that "no serious claim for domestic use [of the buildings] is tenable," noting (Schmidt 2001*b*:49, 2006*b*:232) that the Göbekli buildings are "without fireplaces, ovens, or other usual traces of 'domestic life.'" In addition, he interprets the pillars as nonstructural, concluding that the buildings were unroofed and thus unsuitable as habitations (Schmidt 1999:13, 2001*b*:51).

Schmidt's argument also depends on differences between the architecture at Göbekli Tepe and the domestic architecture of other PPN sites. "It is not necessary . . . to enter into a basic discussion of whether or not the stone circle ought to be interpreted at all as a 'cult' installation, for we know what the settlements and houses look like from this period" (Schmidt 2005*b*:14). Furthermore, the lion-pillar building of level IIA and all the excavated structures of level III bear certain similarities to the "cult building" at Nevalı Çori on the upper Euphrates some 50 km north of Göbekli. This structure, with three successive phases, differs substantially from the common residential structures at the site (Hauptmann 1993). The structure, in both its best-preserved phases, is relatively large and exhibits a series of T-shaped stelae, some of which are sculpted with stylized human arms and hands similar to some examples also found at Göbekli Tepe. Two larger stelae are found near the center of the room, while smaller ones are incorporated into the stone walls. A wide bench covered with stone slabs runs around most of the periphery, and the floor is "terrazzo": limestone chips set in plaster. In both phases, the building appears to have been semisubterranean. Architecturally, this structure is quite different from the bulk of contemporary buildings at the site,

strengthening the claim for its special character, and a sculpted column that Hauptmann (1997:133) likens to a Northwest Coast totem pole was found incorporated within the fabric of one of the rebuilds. The fact that the first known examples of the T pillars were discovered in this distinctive building makes it tempting to interpret buildings with T pillars that were subsequently discovered in a similar way. One could also cite some similarities with the large round structures at Jerf al-Ahmar and Dja'de (Coqueugniot 1998; Stordeur et al. 2000) and somewhat looser ones to the "flagstone building" and "terrazzo building" at Çayönü (Özdoğan and Özdoğan 1989:71), all of which have been considered "special" or "communal" buildings.

The Site Was Not a Settlement. If we are willing to accept that all the buildings found to date at the site are temples, then the lack of "ordinary" or "domestic" buildings at the site is the first premise in the argument that Göbekli Tepe was not a Neolithic settlement. However, Schmidt attempts to strengthen the hypothesis by the site's "distinct geographical setting" (2005*b*:13) with the implication that its location is completely unsuitable for settlement.

Göbekli Tepe's location is arguably unusual (Schmidt 1998*a*:1). Today, its ridge seems rather bleak and has no obvious nearby water source. Benedict (1980:179), reporting on the survey in which he discovered the site, noted that there was "no water in the vicinity." Although there are many springs in Urfa province, no known spring is very close to the site. Furthermore, evidence that the stone pillars were quarried from the limestone in the immediate vicinity of the site suggests that bare rock was outcropping in at least those areas even in the Early Neolithic. However, Schmidt (2009: 201–202) has recently revised this part of his interpretation by suggesting the possibility that some temple personnel and others attracted to the temples may have resided at the site.

The Site Was a Ritual Center for Hunter-Gatherers

The last element in Schmidt's interpretation is that the site's temples attracted hunter-gatherers from a wide region, perhaps as a site of pilgrimage or of communal ritual (Schmidt 2002:12, 2005*b*), and perhaps at some unknown interval, the site remaining abandoned at other times. In essence, this part of the interpretation is a corollary of the other two. If all the buildings were temples and there was no residential occupation of the site, we need to account for all the building activity and the site's fairly large size. In other words, the other two aspects of the interpretation do not make much sense, at least in combination, in the absence of something like a regional-center hypothesis. In addition, Schmidt (2001*b*: 48) intimates that the massive labor requirements would have required large gatherings of people from over a wide region.

Conceivably, some of the finds from Göbekli Tepe could provide specific evidence for the use of the site by visitors from diverse distant regions, but apart from similarities in material culture, this possibility has so far been investigated only with respect to obsidian (Carter et al. 2009). Obsidian is not abundant at the site but appears to come from three sources, including the Bingöl A/Nemrut Dag peralkaline sources and Bingöl B calc-alkaline source to the northeast and the East Gollu Dag source in Cappadocia to the northwest. Thus it could be argued that this evidence is consistent with the hypothesis that people came to the site from diverse regions.

Less critical to but still part of Schmidt's hypothesis is that the visitors or pilgrims to Göbekli Tepe were hunter-gatherers. This is based on the lack of morphologically domesticated plants or animals among the debris found at the site, all of which so far points to wild taxa (Schmidt 2001*b*:47–48) despite the site's proximity to the region where some of them, including einkorn (Heun et al. 1997), may have been domesticated. Among the fauna, gazelle dominate, with significant contributions by aurochsen, sheep/goat, wild boar, and red deer (Peters and Schmidt 2004).

An Alternative View

Although some special buildings in the PPN of southwest Asia may well have been nondomestic and the locus of unusual concentrations of ritual activity, especially mortuary ritual, the interpretation of every Neolithic building that shows any evidence of spectacular art or unusual architectural features as a specialized shrine is problematic. This is especially so when evidence for likely domestic activities in and around those buildings does actually exist, and this calls for continued discussion of the grounds by which archaeologists identify prehistoric ritual (Kuijt 2005:35).

Inevitably, archaeologists bring their own preconceptions and cultural backgrounds to their interpretations of the past (Gadamer 1975). Thus, we should not be surprised that so many authors who have discussed these structures have applied Western concepts of the separation of sacred and profane to PPN contexts (but see Boyd 2005:26). In this they perhaps follow Durkheim (1960 [1912]:50–58), who considered the sacred-profane dichotomy to be the fundamental characteristic of all religious beliefs. However, he was not able to provide a very satisfactory basis for defining this dichotomy, particularly as he recognized that seemingly mundane things, such as houses, could be sacred and that some sacred things, such as amulets, can be far from awe inspiring. He is left with the claim that the distinction is so strong and the interdictions against mingling sacred with profane so strict that the classification should be easily recognizable. Clearly, many religions, and not just Western ones, do make such distinctions (Fogelin 2007:60), yet anthropologists from Radcliffe-Brown on have recognized a continuum between religious and secular ritual (Douglas 1966:65; Moore and Myerhoff 1977:22), some going as far as to see ritual in most aspects of human behavior (Leach 1966:403). Many ethnographies, furthermore, have frequently documented the use of domestic res-

idential spaces for religious as well as secular rituals. In such cases, we must at least admit the common extension of the sacred principle to "ordinary" artifacts and features such as hearths and houses. Consequently, recent archaeological studies in other parts of the world show recognition that the sacred and mundane spheres are often inseparable (e.g., Bradley 2005; Kyriakidis 2007:16–18; Nikolaidou 2007).

Implicit in most interpretations of PPN buildings as shrines, however, is the assumption that "normal" domestic or residential structures should either be devoid of evidence for ideological meanings or ritual activities or be restricted to "simple" household rituals involving hastily made figurines or the burial of a family member. Only rarely have their authors given substantial attention to the possibility that typical house features could be symbolically loaded, as in Watkins's (1990) interpretation of clay posts in houses at Qermez Dere as nonutilitarian and symbolically charged features, despite the now widely accepted interpretation of Çatalhöyük's "shrines" as houses. Many archaeologists appear reluctant to entertain the possibility that Neolithic houses in southwest Asia were rich in cosmological or spiritual symbolism even when, as at Göbekli Tepe, the symbols are ubiquitous rather than focused on only one or two buildings.

A variety of both ethnographic and archaeological data suggest a likelihood that PPN people in southwest Asia either made no strong distinction between sacred and profane or found the sacred in their daily routines and that the domestic sphere—indeed their whole world—was infused with meaning and spirituality. This is a hypothesis that deserves consideration as an alternative to the prevailing view that all the Göbekli buildings were temples, and it does not require us to abandon the possibility that *some* buildings had special meanings. The point is not that specialized shrines are incompatible with domestic ritual but that evidence for ritual or conspicuous symbolism does not automatically imply specialized temples.

Ethnographic Evidence for Domestic Ritual and Cosmology

Members of many hunter-gatherer societies see the everyday human environment as inseparable from nature and infused with meaning and the traces of spirits or ancestors (Ingold 2000:42–58). Yet the extension of the spiritual world into domestic contexts, or rather the inclusion of the domestic sphere within the spiritual cosmology, is not restricted to hunter-gatherers.

Houses of the Batammaliba in Togo and Benin (Blier 1987) are good examples of how domestic environments can be rich in symbolic content and ritual activity. The very spatial organization of the Batammaliba house entails metaphors to both Batammaliba cosmology and the human body (Blier 1987:119–124). The upper part of the house is a metaphor for the sky, its terrace is a metaphor for the earth, and its construction details parallel features of the Batammaliba creation myth, while the lower rooms of the house are a metaphor for the underworld (Blier 1987:14, 39–57), where we find shrines to wild game animals and to deceased elders and the main house altar or "place of the dead." Construction of a house itself is a metaphor for the creation of the world and involves a series of rituals, sacrifices, and dedications (Blier 1987:22–34, 37–46). In front of each house, we find a cluster of "soul mounds" that represent individual household members and serve as miniature houses for their souls or "that which is hidden" (Blier 1987:130–137).

The Berber or Kabylie house (Basagana and Sayad 1974; Bourdieu 1970; Maunier 1930) is a well-known example of a domestic layout structured according to cosmological principles of light:dark::east:west::high:low and for interior reversal of orientations (*le monde renversé*), but it was also the focus for a number of rituals. First, there were "rites of construction." Construction of a house was a communal effort and concluded with a feast hosted by the house's owners. It began, however, with foundation rituals, including the solemn tracing out of the house foundations, consecration of the house, and sometimes placement of foundation deposits (Maunier 1930:153–162). The last were quite variable and could include pebbles or a handful of earth taken from a sacred place, bones from a sacrificed animal, or one or more silver coins. In one village, it included a piece of steel, the hair of a donkey or mule, a cattle or goat horn, and a lock of a circumcised boy's hair. Sacrifices of animals were also important in house construction, sometimes one that preceded the feast, in other places ones both to begin and to end house construction, and in still others even more (Maunier 1930:162–169). In addition, it was necessary to anoint some part of the house's fabric, typically the door or a wall, with blood.

While in use, the house continued to be a locus of ritual, sometimes specifically focused on the threshold, where *jinn* were thought to be particularly concentrated, or on the hearth (Basagana and Sayad 1974:45–47; Maunier 1930:121–152). Some of these, such as a new bride's kissing the lintel of the entry, would not be archaeologically visible. On the more physical side, acts such as the ritual purification of the house by whitewashing in preparation for a family feast are reminiscent of the multiple replasterings at Neolithic sites, most notably Çatalhöyük (Matthews 2005*a*, 2005*b*). To protect their virginity, newborn girls' umbilical cords are ritually buried behind the loom (Bourdieu 1970:742). Sacrificing fowl to inaugurate a new tripod on the hearth or pouring couscous, water, or oil on the hearth stones during domestic rituals of purification or defense against evil eye, maleficent *jinn*, or ordinary illness might leave physical traces but ones not easily distinguished from those of ordinary culinary activities. Indeed, "tout est sacré et animé dans la maison" (Maunier 1930: 151). The stable, grinding equipment, loom, and even latrine had their rituals. With respect to Göbekli Tepe, perhaps the most notable aspect of the Kabylie house was the cult of its central pillar (Basagana and Sayad 1974:45–46; Maunier 1930: 151), where a guardian spirit in the form of a serpent, called

Assas boukham, was thought to reside. Householders would present offerings to this pillar, and fixing a lock of an infant's hair to the pillar would bring the child good fortune.

The ritual destruction of houses is also documented ethnographically and historically. Until the Japanese Meiji government outlawed the practice in 1871, the Ainu burned the house when one of its residents died (Ichikawa 2001:275). In the American Southwest and California, a number of societies ritually burned structures upon a resident's death (Kent 1984: 140; LaMotta and Schiffer 1999:23; Wheeler-Voegelin 1942: 137–138, 231). In many cultures, residents who are seriously ill and women about to give birth are taken out of the house, often to a makeshift structure, in case they should die, because dying in the house would pollute it and require its ritual demolition (e.g., Ward 1980:31–33).

Many other examples of domestic ritual and cosmology could be cited, too many to review here (e.g., Douglas 1972; Ellen 1986; Moore and Myerhoff 1977; Raglan 1964; Rapoport 1969). In fact, even formal shrines and altars occur quite commonly in ordinary houses, ranging from the ancestral shrine (*lararium*) of ancient Roman houses (Boyce 1942; Dwyer 1991:26) through those of more recent Han China (Hsu 1949), Mayan Mexico (Deal 1987:176–185; Gonlin 2007: 89–93; Vogt 1969), Mongolia (Montell 1940), and Nepal (Milliet-Mondon 1981, 1982) to Vietnam (Hickey 1964), among others.

Ethnographic Evidence for Domestic "Art"

The presupposition that "art," or even "monumental" art, should be exclusively associated with specialized shrines or other nondomestic spaces also fails to withstand scrutiny. There is abundant ethnographic evidence for considerable investment in the decoration of domestic structures and spaces, whether to commemorate the feats of ancestors; advertise a lineage's history or a chief's generosity; communicate "canonical" (Blanton 1994) information about deities, cosmology, or acceptable behavior; or record initiations and other house-based rituals. Here we will visit just a few examples.

We have already noted the cosmological significance of houses and their parts among the Batamamaliba. It is further noteworthy that some rituals associated with houses entailed the painting of house facades or granary walls. Painting of the men's granary with icons associated with the pythonlike male initiation deity Fawafa, for example, underscores the deity's role in protecting and supporting men in their economic pursuits. The paintings were intended to be visible only for about a month each year and were covered at other times (Blier 1987:106, 251n.).

Among the Kachchhe Meghavals of India's Gujarat, women create painted decoration on exterior house fronts and clay relief decoration on houses' interior walls (Fisher 1993; Pandya 1998). These designs are closely related to embroidery, and their motifs include scorpions, with meanings related to fortune and fertility; peacocks, which are rare and admirable or lucky; peppers, which are hot, tasty, and satisfying; and sweets, which symbolize auspicious occasions and hospitality.

The North American example par excellence of decorated domestic space comes from the cedar plank houses of the Northwest Coast. These and the spaces in front of them were elaborately decorated with carvings, including the famous "totem" poles, house posts, memorial posts, and house fronts that record the household's lineage and important events in its history while sometimes also displaying clan crests or the exploits, wealth, or generosity of a current or deceased chief (Boas 1896; MacDonald 1983; Malin 1986). Although somewhat ironically it is technically incorrect to view the images on these columns as totems, some of them were, nonetheless, closely allied with particular clans that had the right to use them. Rather than representing ancestral beings, they may be images of animals that appeared to an ancestor in a dream, for example. Although carved from cedar rather than stone, these sculptures were substantial accomplishments, with some of the house posts and main roof beams each weighing as much as 3 t among the Haida, Coast Tsimshian, and Kwakiutl. For example, one modern 42-ft.-tall Nisga'a pole began with a red cedar log 5 ft. in diameter at its base (Jensen 1992:19), probably with a mass over 10 t. Carving and painting of posts was also a great investment, taking on average more than a year to accomplish traditionally, and more than 2 months even with modern power tools (Jensen 1992), while raising a pole inevitably involved hosting a costly potlatch.

In a similar vein, decoration of house fronts with pairs of cattle horns among the Toraja in Indonesia commemorates feasts and displays or augments the household's status (Adams 2005; Adriani and Kruyt 1950–1951; Jannel and Lontcho 1992; Testart 2006). In some North African communities, meanwhile, displaying on the door or lintel the gall bladder or first vertebra of the sheep slaughtered for 'Eid al-Kebir helps to advertise accomplishment of the feast even if it is said to have other purposes, such as warding off illness (Maunier 1930:133).

Decoration of houses with ibex horns in the Hadhramaut is also noteworthy (Bin Ageel 2004; Helfritz 1935:397; Ingrams 1937; Rodionov 1994; Serjeant 1976; Stark 1936:123, 1938). There, ritual ibex hunts incorporate processions or dances in which the hunters wave in the air or adorn themselves with ibex horns, which are also mounted on house parapets or corners. Field (1937) similarly notes the decoration of buildings with the horns or skulls of ibex among the Yezidis and Kurds in northern Iraq and among Iranians at Meyhir near Shiraz.

However, display of horns can also have meanings quite removed from feasts or hunts. Among the Batammaliba, for example, the essence of the female initiation deity, Fakuntifa, is thought to reside in a *Cephalophus* antelope horn, kept in the female granary-support room of the house, while the war deity, Fayenfe, similarly resides in a shrine in the men's granary that consists of the horn of a bushbock antelope (*Tragelaphus scriptus*) nested inside that of a larger *Hippotragus*

equines or *Boocercus euryceros*. Antelope horns are also part of the women's initiation headdress, which may rest on a women's wild game shrine inside the house when not in use. In addition, clay-modeled "horns" above the entry on the front façade of the house are connected with abundance and the worship of the creator deity Kuiye (Blier 1987:14, 85–88, 107, 109–110).

Admittedly, most of the house decorations just mentioned do not involve the same level of investment as the Göbekli monoliths. However, the effort invested in house posts and memorial poles of the North American Northwest Coast was far from trivial.

Archaeological Evidence for Ritual or Symbolism in Domestic Contexts

A number of existing sources of evidence point to the ideological significance of "ordinary" houses in the Near Eastern Neolithic. These range from in-house inhumations through caches to wall paintings. While there is considerable variability in domestic arrangements across the Near East, this kind of evidence is nearly ubiquitous.

Mortuary use of houses is a long-recognized ideological aspect of Neolithic domestic contexts. Even though such intramural burials cannot have accommodated most of the deceased in PPN settlements, it seems clear that subfloor burials and burials in interior platforms were common in houses that were still occupied by the living in most parts of the Near East (e.g., Estebaranz et al. 2007; Hodder 2006:23–24; Kenyon 1957; Kuijt 1996; Mellaart 1967). In some cases, at least, human skulls appear to have adorned the interior of houses, as at Mureybet IVB, where they appear to have been mounted on clay pedestals along a house wall (Cauvin 1994:111). However, we should not assume that mortuary rituals were the only rituals to have taken place in houses.

Although they are seldom as well preserved as at Çatalhöyük, paintings, sculpture, and other architectural decorations may have been more common than we imagine in PPN houses in some parts of the Near East. On the Syrian Euphrates, traces of house decoration include paintings on walls and floors as early as PPNA in level IIIA at Mureybet (Cauvin 1977:30) and somewhat later at Tell Halula (Molist 1998). Another polychrome wall painting found at Dja'de in one large building among other smaller ones, however, may not belong to residential space, and it differs considerably from the bulk of buildings there (Coqueugniot 2000). In northern Iraq, Watkins (1990:342) has identified the regular feature of "nonfunctional" plastered clay pillars in houses at PPNA Qermez Dere as symbolic features. Whether these were as nonutilitarian as he claims (cf. Kozlowski 2002:28–29; Kozlowski and Kempisty 1990), it is not implausible that their function was at least partly symbolic. House decorations are also found in Middle PPNB sites of the southern Levant, such as wall and floor paintings at 'Ain Ghazal (Banning and Byrd 1987: 314; Rollefson and Simmons 1985:48, 1986:150, 1987*b*:104–105; Rollefson, Simmons, and Kafafi 1992:449), Ba'ja (Gebel 2002:127, fig. 8), and Ghwair I (Simmons and Najjar 2003: 413, 2006) and an unusually shaped fragment of plaster from Jericho that might be a remnant of a house's decorative mouldings (Kenyon 1981:290). Given the more typical preservation of PPN buildings, it would not be surprising if we were missing a good number of examples of both wall paintings and carved posts or beams.

The finding of unusual groupings of animal horns or skulls in what are probably domestic buildings, plausibly interpreted as "decorations" that had fallen from house walls or roofs or as foundation deposits, is another hint at the symbolic content of Neolithic houses quite aside from those at Çatalhöyük. At Hallan Çemi, for example, an aurochs skull appears to have hung on an interior wall, opposite the entrance, of one building, and several sheep skulls found in another structure are less certainly fallen from walls, although notably Rosenberg and Redding (2000:48–49) prefer to interpret these as public buildings. At Tell 'Abr 3, an aurochs skull had been hidden within a bench of the "communal" building B3, but another was found in what appears to have been a domestic dwelling (Yartah 2004:143, 149). At Cafer Höyük, cattle scapulae apparently unrelated to food preparation were found in houses, while cattle skulls surrounded by cattle or equid scapulae were found in benches, and cattle horns routinely occurred in house walls of level III at Mureybet (Cauvin 1977:44, 1994: 46, 120). Closer to Göbekli, three pairs of aurochs horns and a whole aurochs skull found in a small burned house at Jerf al-Ahmar appear originally have been mounted on the walls (Stordeur 2000:1–2). A probable ritual deposit of aurochs skulls in the foundation of a house at Tell Halula is also noteworthy (Molist 1998:117). Again, similar things appear to have occurred in the southern Levant, at least from the Middle PPNB onward. At Ghwair I, a "cache" of goat and cattle skulls accompanying a cache of blades and some malachite led Simmons and Najjar (2003:414) to interpret the room as having "some ceremonial or ritual significance," but in other respects it is similar to other domestic buildings of the phase. In a Late PPNB room at 'Ain Jammam in Jordan, a gazelle skull had been placed face outward in an eye-level wall niche, and a gazelle horn lay on the floor below it (Rollefson 1998*a*:112). In other respects, there is nothing to distinguish this room from others at the site. House 6 (3081/3082) at 'Ain Ghazal featured three *Bos* metacarpals, one neatly incised with three parallel lines and some cross-hatching, along with a cattle figurine, all placed at the bottom of a silo or bin that had been formed by sealing up a niche (Rollefson and Simmons 1986:152–153, 1987*a*:43). Even granting that decoration with paintings and animal skulls and horns differs in scale and effort from the symbolic elaboration of some Göbekli structures, especially in level III, it seems clear that residential structures fairly routinely served as symbolic media in the PPN.

Aside from ostentatious animal remains, we also have evidence for other kinds of deposits that may have been foun-

dation caches or traces of domestic ritual in houses. Gebel (2002) suggests that hiding objects, especially within walls, was part of the Early Neolithic magico-religious belief system. He notes caches of celts and grinders in PPNA walls at Jerf al-Ahmar, Syria; stone celts in a house wall, two deposits of upside-down stone bowls in plaster floors, and an arrangement of animal and human bones within another floor at Late PPNB Ba'ja, Jordan; and "nests" of hammerstones set under floors at PPNB Basta, also in Jordan (Hermansen 1997). At PPNA Nemrik 9, a cache of bladelets in house 1A is less clearly symbolic, as it may simply have been stored for later use (Kozlowski 2002:33). A tightly bundled cache of flint blades, most able to be refitted, within the plaster floor of house 13 at 'Ain Ghazal is a good candidate for a ritual deposit (Banning and Byrd 1987:313), while in house 4 (3083/3282) next door, two cattle figurines pierced with pieces of flint debitage had been cached beneath a small flagstone pavement in the house's northwest corner (Banning and Byrd 1987:313; Rollefson and Simmons 1986:150, fig. 10). From the PN, some excellent candidates for foundation deposits and other ritual caches include a number of unusual obsidian caches at Çatalhöyük, small stone vessels deposited in a house wall at Tell Sabi Abyad, and an unusual pit and its contents found under a small house at 'Ain al-Kerkh (Carter, Conolly, and Spasajević 2005:243–244; Conolly 2003; Gebel 2002:126n.; Mellaart 1964:105–107; Tsuneki 2002:136). Although Garfinkel (1994: 179) casts doubt on the interpretation of such finds as foundation deposits, there appears to be abundant evidence for the intentional and probably ritual placement of objects below or within the fabric of Neolithic houses, at least in some regions.

Aside from figurines in caches, clay figurines of both animals and people appear to have been deposited most frequently in ordinary domestic contexts in houses and trash deposits. Although many archaeologists have tended to downplay the significance of these finds, at least relative to larger plaster statues and stone sculptures, these may in fact constitute our best and most ubiquitous evidence for at least one kind of domestic ritual. McAdam (1997) and Voigt (2000) both make convincing arguments that these figurines, which often appear to have been decapitated intentionally but are otherwise in relatively good condition, had very short use lives and were probably made, used, broken, and discarded all in the context of a single ritual (see also Bailey 2005; Meskell 2008:379; Meskell et al. 2008; Morsch 2002; Verhoeven 2007). Occasionally, rituals appear to have involved stabbing figurines with flints (above, and Russell and Meece 2005:217). It is also likely that these rituals took place in domestic contexts; certainly the figurines are typically discarded in roasting pits, trash pits, and other ashy deposits in domestic areas (Voigt 2000:265). Schmandt-Besserat (1997, 1998) also sees the clay figurines as operating in domestic contexts in contrast to larger statues that, she argues, were more appropriate for public displays.

Although rare, smaller than most of the Göbekli sculptures, and not necessarily in its use context, even stone sculpture has been found in buildings whose domestic status appears uncontroversial. At Nevalı Çori, sculpture fragments not only occurred within the "cult building" but also in houses. For example, house 3 yielded the stone sculpture of a human head from the upper part of a stele or pillar and a sculpted stone bowl fragment (Hauptmann 1993:66–67). At Kortik Tepe on the upper Tigris, portable stone objects with carved and incised figural designs, some depicting snakes and scorpions, apparently occur mainly in graves but also in and around the houses (Özkaya 2004; Özkaya and Coşkun 2009). At Nemrik 9, stone sculptures of bird heads, cats, snakes, and humans were associated with the round and subrectangular houses (Kozlowski 2002:77–79).

Ritual burnings or closings of houses appear to have marked the end of ancestral households and their replacement by new ones in the Vinča culture of southeastern Europe (Stevanović 1997; Tringham 1991) as well as at PN Çatalhöyük (Cessford and Near 2005:173–175; Hamilton 1996:219; Hodder and Cessford 2004:32–33; Russell et al. 2008). In a similar vein, Watkins (1990:341–342) has noted the apparently intentional destruction of houses and filling of housepits at Qermez Dere. The fill appears to have been brought in rather than consisting simply of structural collapse or midden, and symbolically important objects, notably human skulls, were sometimes placed on floors before the fill. Then a new house pit was excavated on substantially the same spot even though it would have been much more "efficient" simply to have reused or remodeled the old house pit. In the southern Levant, infillings of the lower levels of multistory houses that may perhaps have involved something similar to the "house-closing" ceremonies at Çatalhöyük occurred during Late PPNB at Ba'ja (Gebel 2006).

Finally, we should be mindful of the possibility that even "ordinary" domestic utensils in houses can have more than utilitarian significance (Walker 1998:247, 1999). Not to mention elaborately painted bone tools from Kortik Tepe (Özkaya and Coşkun 2009) or sculpted pestles such as those from Nemrik (Kozlowski 2002:78), Mithen, Finlayson, and Shaffrey (2005) have argued that even ordinary PPN mortars and pestles entailed sexual metaphors, and the relationship of sex to fertility should alert us to the possibility of more far-reaching significance for such utensils. At the PPNA site of Dhra', east of the Lisan Peninsula, a structure that its excavators interpret as a domestic storage structure (Finlayson et al. 2003) seems to have had floor joists supported by rows of upended and notched grinding stones. Although we could interpret these merely in utilitarian terms—the disused grinders were a convenient and expedient source of building material—the consistent use of grinders for this purpose in one structure, the lack of evidence for ordinary stones being used in the same way, and the lack or at least scarcity of grinders being used in other architectural contexts suggest that this use of grinders was intentional and symbolic. The fact that grinding equipment is closely associated with food processing, just as the

structure itself was associated with food storage, strengthens the symbolic association—much as the "teeth" of the Batammaliba house (Blier 1987:121–122)—without compromising the basic interpretation of the building as domestic in overall purpose.

Of course, accepting that aspects of residential structures or domestic activity areas can be symbolically loaded or involved in rituals in no way requires rejection of the *possibility* of specialized ritual spaces. However, it does highlight that the display of symbolism or execution of ritual does not always *require* such specialized spaces. Consequently, the presence of evidence that we might be tempted to interpret as ritual or symbolic is not sufficient for the secure identification of shrines or public buildings.

Reinterpreting the Evidence from Göbekli Tepe

It is not my purpose to dismiss claims that any of the structures at Göbekli Tepe were locations for symbolic, ritual, or religious activities or to make the counterclaim that no PPN buildings were nondomestic. It is rather to suggest that the very distinction between "temple" and "house" may well be inappropriate in some PPN contexts and that the possibility that symbolically charged structures, including those at Göbekli Tepe, were both ritual and domestic spaces deserves attention as an alternative hypothesis. Neolithic houses, for all their variety across different regions of the Near East, were almost certainly the setting for many kinds of ritual and, I suggest, were deeply entrenched in PPN cosmology and metaphor. Furthermore, some houses undoubtedly displayed what we might call "art," and we should not be too quick to assume that such art had only religious significance.

Returning to Göbekli Tepe as the example par excellence of the temple hypothesis, there is no question that this is an impressive site, and its many sculptures warrant consideration for their possible role in the ideology or social strategies of its Early Neolithic inhabitants or visitors. The question is whether the evidence justifies the site's interpretation, as its excavator argues, as a hunter-gatherer cult center with no domestic occupation at all.

The Buildings Were Not Houses?

Claims for shrines or communal buildings at some sites, such as Nevalı Çori or Çayönü (Hauptmann 1988, 1993; Özdoğan and Özdoğan 1989, 1998), have gained credibility from the fact that there are significant differences in design and internal features between these buildings and "ordinary" houses at the same sites. At Göbekli Tepe, on present evidence, this kind of argument is impossible, at least for level III, because all the buildings known to date appear to be of much the same sort, namely the large oval structures. In level IIA, the buildings are all of the rectangular type, many with plain T pillars (figs. 2, 3), others with internal buttresses, or neither. The fact that the lion-pillar building is alone in the excavated sample for having reliefs on some of its pillars does make it a candidate for being more distinctive, although this is not a point that Schmidt emphasizes.

If the structures were indeed unroofed, as Schmidt (1999: 13, 2001*b*:51) suggests, clearly that would make them unsuitable as houses, and new evidence, such as the micromorphology of the floors or drainage patterns, that might serve to evaluate this hypothesis would be welcome. Terrazzo floors, such as those found in some of the Göbekli buildings, would likely show weathering if left in the open. Without clear supporting evidence, the claim that the T pillars did not support roofs in either level III or IIA is reminiscent of Watkins's (1990) claim for the plastered clay pillars at Qermez Dere, while Kozlowski and Kempisty (1990; Kozlowski 2002: 28–29) suggest that the closely similar pillars at Nemrik 9 were structural, and Biçakçı (2003:399–400) concludes that this was likely the case at both sites. Hauptmann (1999:79) refers to "sockets of the horizontal beams that must have supported the roof" of the lion-pillar building of Göbekli's stratum IIA, but there are also some clues that the level III buildings may also have been roofed. The monoliths' arrangement is much as we might expect if at least one of their functions was to support roof beams (fig. 4) and somewhat similar to the arrangement, although not the scale, of wooden posts in the level IIIA houses of Mureybet (Cauvin 1977:30). In this conjectural reconstruction for level III, it is assumed that the taller central pillars supported the beams for the peak of a sloping, perhaps thatched, roof. Similarly, Nevalı Çori's houses may have had thatched gable roofs (Hauptmann 1999, figs. 5, 6). In level III, although most pillars do not show any specific accommodation for beams, pillar 30 in structure D is pierced horizontally near the top of the T and also grooved along the top of the T (Peters and Schmidt 2004, fig. 7; fig. 4, foreground), conceivably to accommodate the placement of beams or alternatively to assist with the pillar's movement and erection. The spans in most of the level III structures do not exceed 3.5 m, while the largest spans, in structure D, appear to be less than 6 m. This is well within the capability of a hardwood beam—for example, an oak or ash beam 7 m long and with a square section 25.4 cm on a side (10 in. × 10 in.) can safely support 3.26 t. The only question is whether timbers of this size would have been available in the vicinity of the site, and it is noteworthy in this respect that the admittedly sparse plant remains from level III fills include charcoal of *Pistacia antlantica*, *Prunus amygdalus*, *Quercus brantii*, *Populus euphratica*, and *Fraxinus* sp. (presumably *Fraxinus augustifolia*). Most of these species will reach heights up to 10 m even under modern circumstances, while *F. augustifolia* will quickly grow to heights around 25 m with trunks up to 1.5 m in diameter. Interestingly, it is also where the longer spans would be in structure D that we find buttressing of the outer pillars precisely as though to counter the outward thrust of heavy rafters. Furthermore, pillar 43 in structure D of stratum III depicts three enigmatic objects, each a rectangle

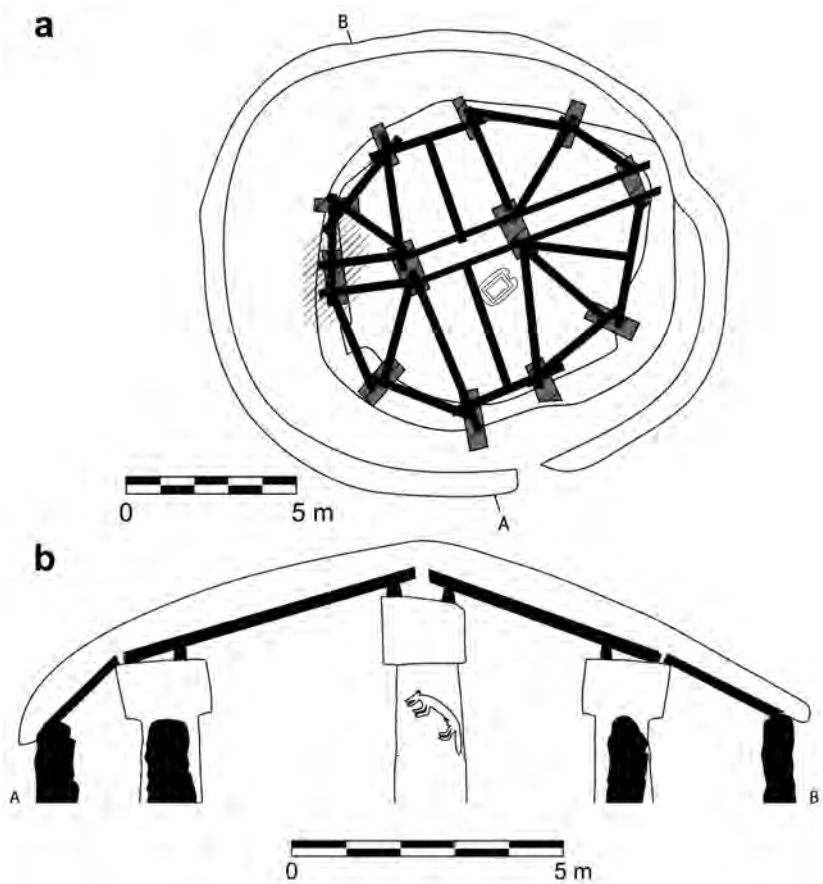

Figure 4. Conjectural reconstruction of the roof framing of structure B at Göbekli Tepe with (*a*) plan view and (*b*) cross section along the line A–B. Peripheral rafters are omitted from *a*, some pillars are conjectured, and scale is only very approximate.

with a "handle" on top (Schmidt 2006*a*), that might even represent a view of three thatched or vaulted buildings (fig. 5, and see below).

Although we cannot make distinctions between anomalous "temples" and "ordinary" houses within Göbekli Tepe itself, at least in level III, Schmidt instead points out that the architecture here contrasts with that of other PPN sites (Schmidt 2005*b*:14). However, the Near East actually exhibits considerable architectural variability, as even the sample of domestic architecture from PPN central and eastern Anatolia demonstrates (Balkan-Atlı, cited in Cutting 2005:27; Düring 2006; Özdoğan 2002:257). Although some house types have a wide distribution, these distributions tend to be rather patchy, and there are many places on the map for which we have no evidence at all.

Among earlier sites that might be approximately contemporary with level III at Göbekli, Hallan Çemi, in eastern Anatolia, exhibits widely spaced, often semisubterranean, circular structures some 5–6 m in diameter that are arranged around an open space and are accompanied by smaller circular structures (Rosenberg and Redding 2000). Kortik Tepe and Demirköy, near the confluence of the Batman and Tigris rivers, similarly show round earthen-floored buildings, but these are only 2.5–3.5 m in diameter (Özkaya and Coşkun 2009; Rosenberg 2007). In the lowest levels of phase I, Çayönü, also in eastern Anatolia, exhibits round structures (Özdoğan and Özdoğan 1989; Redman 1982; Schirmer 1990). Levels XII–X at Cafer Höyük in central Anatolia, by contrast, have rectangular domestic structures about 4 m × 5.5 m in size with buttresslike piers or partition walls extending from the long walls to subdivide the building into two or three rooms, sometimes with hearths in their corners (Cauvin 1989:77–80; Molist and Cauvin 1991). Given the imprecise age of Göbekli level III, it is possible that the earliest levels of the much nearer site of Nevalı Çori could be contemporary. Architecture from Nevalı Çori, even in levels I and II, differs in its rectangular "cell-plan" houses 5–6 m wide and 10–12 m in length in addition to the large subrectangular "cult building" (Haupt-

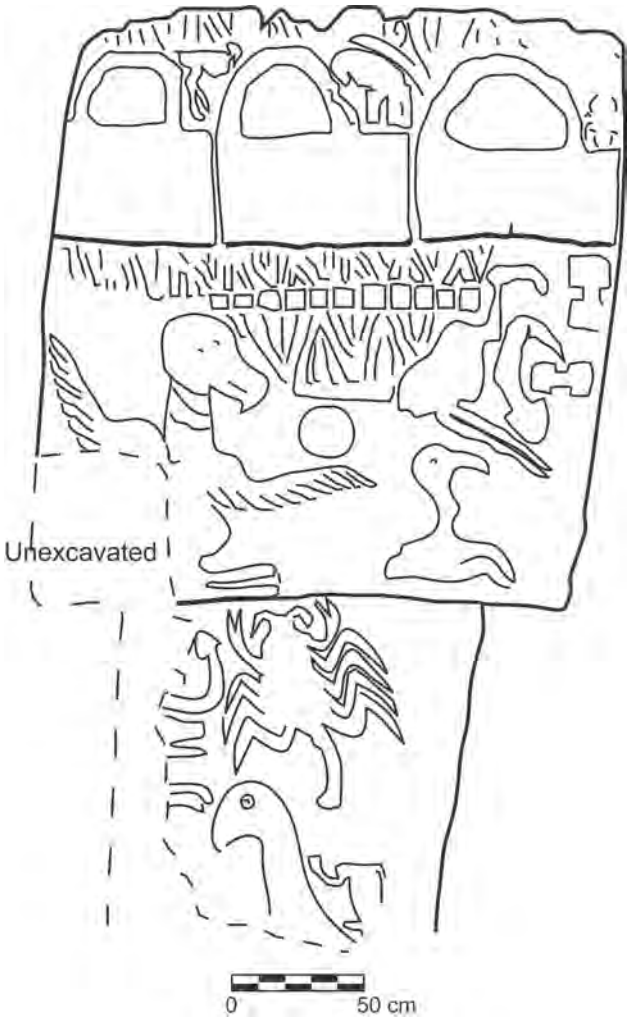

Figure 5. Relief on pillar 43 in structure D. Note the "box-like" objects near the top of the scene on a background of chevron pattern that might represent vegetation or the ground. One possible interpretation of these objects is as houses with thatched or vaulted roofs. The small animals to the right of each "roof" could be clan or house emblems.

mann 1988, 1999). A little south of Göbekli, on the Syrian Euphrates, we find Mureybetian or PPNA round structures up to 6 m in diameter with internal subdivisions at Mureybet (Cauvin 1977:28–30) and Jerf al-Ahmar (Stordeur 1998, 2000; Stordeur et al. 2000). However, at the latter site we also find other buildings, including ones with two circular rooms joined on one side, subrectangular buildings 4–5 m × 6–7 m in size with two or four rooms, and larger round buildings similar to the Mureybet ones but seemingly of communal purpose. For Early PPNB, nearby Dja'de al-Mughara exhibits mainly small one-room rectangular buildings but also at least one similar to Jerf al-Ahmar's most rectangular ones, with side-by-side rooms and a sort of porch, and about 3 m × 3 m in size (Coqueugniot 1998:110–112, 2000). This last, the "*maison des morts*," is distinctive for its use as a mortuary repository for the remains of at least 38 individuals. Again, much as at Jerf al-Ahmar, this site also has a larger round building about 7.5 m in diameter and with masonry pillars decorated with wall paintings; its excavator interprets this building as communal. Meanwhile, rounded semisubterranean houses up to about 25 m^2 in size and with internal piers or pillars are found at Qermez Dere and Nemrik 9 in northern Iraq (Kozlowski 2002:27–30; Kozlowski and Kempisty 1990; Watkins 1990).

Among sites that were approximately contemporary with level IIA at Göbekli Tepe, levels VIII–V at Cafer Höyük show buildings about 5 m wide and upward of 7 m long, each divided into at least six small square rooms with square buttresslike thickenings of some of the partition walls (Cauvin 1989:76–79). Later subphases of phase I at Çayönü exhibit "grill plan," then "pebble-paved buildings," then "cell plans," and finally simple large rectangles, most on the order of 4–5 m × 10–12 m in size (Özdoğan and Özdoğan 1989; Redman 1982; Schirmer 1990). Nevalı Çori, some of whose phases are likely contemporary with Gobekli level IIA, exhibits large houses most of which are similar to those of Çayonü's intermediate subphase or Cafer Höyük's lower levels, with pebble-paved buildings similar to cell buildings (Hauptmann 1988). In some of these cases, the plans that we are seeing archaeologically may just be the basements for structures whose plans we cannot reconstruct with any certainty. Farther west, Aceramic Neolithic houses at Asıklı Höyük consist of tightly clustered rectangular structures with one to three small rooms, likely accessed from the roof (Cutting 2005:33–46; Düring and Marciniak 2006). Can Hasan III (Cutting 2005: 75–78; French 1972) is somewhat similar, particularly in its clustering, with most rooms ca. 3 m × 3 m but other rooms or courtyards much larger, some 8 m on a side. Meanwhile, to the south on the Syrian Euphrates, at Abu Hureyra we find rather standardized rectangular mud-brick houses some 4.5 m × 10 m in size, each typically subdivided into five long rooms with plaster floors, sometimes with a hearth in one corner and in one case with an oven (Moore 2000:261–267). Perhaps a little later in date, at Tell Halula we find rectangular houses, for the most part rather tightly packed together, each 4–5 m wide and 9–10 m long, with a large living room and two smaller rooms accessed on either side of a formal hearth (Molist 1998).

In the context of this architectural variability, the level IIA structures at Göbekli Tepe actually do not depart drastically from domestic structures at some contemporary Anatolian sites, albeit ones farther west. They are rectangular, or nearly so, tightly packed and presumably with roof access, and they have floor areas of some 19 ± 3.6 m^2 on the basis of those sufficiently exposed in published plans. This area, far from being unusually large, is well within the range of Neolithic houses elsewhere in Anatolia and, if anything, toward the small end of that range (e.g., 11 ± 7 m^2 in Askili Höyük and 13 ± 6 m^2 at Canhasan III [Cutting 2005:43, 77], but 63 ± 22 m^2 at Nevalı Çori, level III [after Hauptmann 1999, fig.

3]). The pillars, furthermore, are well placed to support roof timbers or joists for an upper floor, although they are not tall enough to result in a comfortable ceiling height without intermediary stone or wooden supports. While the level IIA structures are fairly impressive in some ways, they are comparable in size and some other attributes to houses found at some PPN sites in Anatolia. Further, the single example that has sculpted reliefs on its pillars, the "lion-pillar building," also seems distinctive for having thicker walls, arguably providing the kinds of distinctions that have suggested a difference between "ordinary" and "ritual" buildings at other sites such as Nevalı Çori.

Schmidt makes little mention of level IIB at Göbekli Tepe (more recently called level II/III; Schmidt 2009), in which we find rather unassuming ovoid structures on the order of 20–30 m^2 in area, but they are difficult to measure because of partial preservation (Schmidt 2006*b*:168). In overall size and shape, most appear similar to early buildings at sites such as Hallan Çemi and Çayönü, already mentioned above. One in square L9–98 is rather subrectangular and divided into two by a partition wall, somewhat as some of the buildings at Jerf al-Ahmar. It is hard to imagine these not having residential purposes, which is perhaps why they have attracted so little attention.

The level III structures at Göbekli Tepe are indeed rather remarkable and differ in size and elaboration from known contemporary houses at sites 50–100 km away. Yet it is conceivable, particularly as so little is currently known about Neolithic domestic architecture in the Sanliurfa region itself, that they represent a previously undocumented house type derived from the rounded pit houses of the earlier Neolithic but on a grander scale that accommodated coresidential units larger than nuclear families. A number of their features are reminiscent of the round structures of Hallan Çemi, Mureybet, and especially those of Nemrik 9 (Kozlowski 2002:27–30; Kozlowski and Kempinksy 1990) and Qermez Dere (Watkins 1990): oval shape; posts or sculpted pillars, either freestanding in pairs or built into the outer walls; and formal and deliberate infilling of the pits upon structure abandonment. In addition, the fact that the T-shaped monoliths are turning out to have a fairly wide regional distribution as archaeological investigation of the Urfa region intensifies suggests they are part of a distinctive regional architectural tradition. T-shaped pillars are now known from Nevalı Çori, Hamzan Tepe, Karahan Tepe, Adiyaman-Kilisik, and Sefer Tepe, sometimes in very large numbers, as at Karahan, and sometimes in probable domestic contexts, as at Sefer Tepe (Çelik 2000, 2004, 2006; Hauptmann 2000; Kürkçüoglu and Karahan Kara 2003, 2005; Schmidt 2005*b*:15). Furthermore, to date, both Karahan Tepe and Sefer Tepe, like Göbekli, seem to lack the expected Nevalı Çori–like houses (Schmidt 2008*b*:11). Although it is not impossible that all these sites were primarily cultic centers, I predict that future archaeological research in Sanliurfa province will instead reveal that structures with T-shaped pillars were the typical PPN houses there whether or not they are always as large or impressive as the buildings of Göbekli Tepe (cf. Çelik 2006:24).

As already noted, there are also some similarities between aspects of the Göbekli structures of both levels III and IIA to buildings elsewhere that have some claim to being "special" in some way. This is clearest in the case of Nevalı Çori's "cult building III" and does contribute to the probability of Schmidt's hypothesis. However, keeping in mind that examples such as the Nevalı Çori "cult building" are anomalies at sites where another type of (residential) building is more typical and that they are likely some centuries later in date than Göbekli's level III structures, it would not be surprising for the residents of those sites to have constructed special community buildings in a style that recalled the houses of their ancestors.

The structures of level III are indeed quite impressive for the effort that must have gone into their construction. Yet Schmidt sees this effort as within the capability of hunter-gatherers who used the site only for seasonal religious pilgrimages. One can only conclude that it would be similarly within the capability of sedentary or seasonal villagers. Furthermore, there is no reason to presume that all the reliefs were carved at once or all had the same purpose. Conceivably, and especially because some pillars are uncarved, carvings could have accumulated on the pillars over time.

In addition, Schmidt almost certainly overestimates the amount of labor needed to move and raise the stones. Although they are indeed quite large and heavy, and I do not intend to trivialize the effort they represent, recent studies and experiments with blocks meant to simulate Stonehenge's sarsens and Egyptian obelisks, for example, have shown that surprisingly small teams could move and erect extremely large stones with quite simple technology (e.g., Adamson 2002; Parry 2000; Richards and Witby 1997; Simpson 2001).[2] In fact, Heyerdahl's experiments on Easter Island do not support the view that hundreds of workers would be needed. Although Heyerdahl's first attempt to move a *moai* statue with a sledge indeed took 180 men, the islanders were quick to point out that this is not how their ancestors would have done it. Subsequently, using levers and stones, 12 men were able to raise a 20-t statue in 18 days, while 16 men were able to move an erect statue, with an estimated mass of 10 t, about 100 m per day by "walking" it with four ropes (Heyerdahl 1989:204–208, 226, 240–241; Skjölsvold 1961:370–372). As we have seen, Schmidt describes the mass of the pillars as "up to ten metric tons" (Schmidt 2005*b*:14), but a more typical mass for one of the pillars is about 2.5 t for a peripheral or 5–6 t for a central pillar in level III, while one 5 m high could have a mass of about 10 t. To slide pillar 43 in structure D horizontally on a hard surface with a lubricant but without rollers would require a starting force of about 3400 N (assuming a coefficient of friction of 0.14; Stocks 2003:196). Such a force

2. W. T. Wallington, *The forgotten technology*. http://www.theforgottentechnology.com/ (accessed June 15, 2008).

is within the capability of seven adult men (table 1, assuming 500 N per worker; Stocks 2003:197; see also Atkinson 1961: 297). Starting it up a ramp with an 8° slope, the maximum slope recommended to avoid backslippage, would require approximately twice this force, or about 14 men. Erecting such pillars with ramp, ropes, and levers could have been done in a fashion similar to the raising of Stonehenge sarsens (e.g., Adamson 2002) or the Easter Island statues. It is thus plausible that a few dozen individuals could effectively have moved and erected each of the Göbekli monoliths. No matter whether the buildings were temples or houses, this makes the raising of the monoliths within the capability of large households, extended families, or clans not to mention the possibility of drawing on the labor of other clans or of neighboring houses for periodic and probably symbolically charged construction events. In short, it would not have required the participation of hundreds of visitors from over a vast region whether or not it required coercion by powerful leaders.

We must also admit that considerable effort seems to have gone into the intentional filling of the buildings, yet we should recall that similar although quantitatively smaller efforts appear to have characterized the "house-closing" rituals at Çatalhöyük in the PN and Qermez Dere in PPNA. At present, there is no reason to assume that all the structure closings took place simultaneously, and as with the quarrying, construction, and sculpting, the labor of 10–30 adults would be as much within the capability of a village community as within that of a regional hunter-gatherer agglomeration.

Schmidt's (2001*b*:49; 2006*b*:232) claim that the Göbekli buildings are "without fireplaces, ovens, or other usual traces of 'domestic life'" is reminiscent of Kenyon's claim (1981) that Jericho's PPNB had no hearths despite the presence of shallow "basins" in the plaster floors that we now know were hearths even though they only rarely contain ash (Banning and Byrd 1987:310; Kuijt 1995:248). Because the excavations have not extensively exposed any floors in the level III structures (Schmidt 2009:149), the lack of clear hearths is not particularly surprising. Furthermore, in buildings B and C as well as on the southeast plateau we find a monumental subrectangular *steinplatte* (stone slab, "rim" or "frame"; Schmidt 2002, fig. 8, 2005*b*, fig. 7, 2006*b*:104, 106) or *türlochstein* ("door-hole stone," Schmidt 2009:217–218). These are very large and rather impressive, and their function is currently unknown. Schmidt (2009:206) suggests the possibility that they are a sort of door frame, but there is no compelling reason they could not have served as the borders of large hearths. Their central position in two of the buildings (although apparently placed intentionally in the fill rather than set into the floor) would be suitable for a hearth. The enigmatic limestone rings and their fragments found at the site (e.g., Schmidt 2006*b*:94, 229), apparently on the order of 1 m in diameter, could also conceivably have served as formal hearth borders. Although most are surface finds or occur in room fills and thus not in contexts that would especially support this interpretation, four arc-shaped stones found beside the base of a column in one of the level IIA rooms in room I of the southwestern excavations fit together to make a complete circle 80 cm in diameter (Schmidt 2000:29, 2006*b*: 229). Nearby on the floor were the fragments of a lime-plaster bowl, while a larger stone bowl was on the floor of another IIA room.

The lack of ovens, meanwhile, is hardly telling; even though ovens are more common in northern parts of the Near East, most PPN buildings in the Near East lack this class of feature. However, in addition to the bowls just mentioned, other evidence for probable domestic activities includes portable mortars (fig. 6). For example, a basalt mortar was found on a stone bench in a IIA room west of the lion-pillar building (Schmidt 2006*b*:229), while cupmarks, which may have functioned as small mortars, occur on large slabs on the floor of structure A in level III (Peters and Schmidt 2004, fig. 12). Also in level III, a stone bowl is set into the plaster floor near one of the central pillars of building B, with a small gutter connecting to it, which Schmidt (2006*b*:133) provisionally interprets as a sacrificial basin. In structure C, two plates and a "crude vessel," all of limestone, were found on a platform near pillar 35 (Schmidt 2008*a*:28). In level IIA, a large limestone vat was found in the western part of square L9–70 (Schmidt 2009: 217). Although, of course, the builders of the structures and the pilgrims who visited them would have had to eat, plates and vessels can indeed be used in rituals, and mortars and bowls can have functions other than food preparation, it is not accurate to say that there is no evidence at all for domestic activities, and it seems like special pleading to dismiss all signs of likely domestic activities in this way.

The Site Was Not a Settlement?

More noteworthy is Schmidt's mention of large amounts of settlement debris in the fills. Indeed, he is at some pains to account for "where all the cubic metres of debris had been taken from" (Schmidt 2002:8). Having stated elsewhere that there are no PPN habitation sites in Göbekli Tepe's vicinity, you would think the obvious conclusion would be that this debris was created right at the site and, in one place, Peters and Schmidt (2004:183) admit that the source "cannot have been too far away." The fact that the fills contain a lot of limestone chips would be consistent with the use of local quarrying debris for at least some of the material. Notably, the site's deep deposits also exhibit high densities of lithics—including a variety of points, scrapers, burins, and sickle blades—as well as evidence for "all stages of production" (Schmidt 2001*a*, 2001*b*:51). One might expect to find stone tools related to the quarrying and manufacture of limestone monoliths and debris from the tools' manufacture, but those in the fills, at least, are not noticeably different from what one might expect to find in a domestic deposit. There is also abundant animal bone (Peters and Schmidt 2004; Schmidt

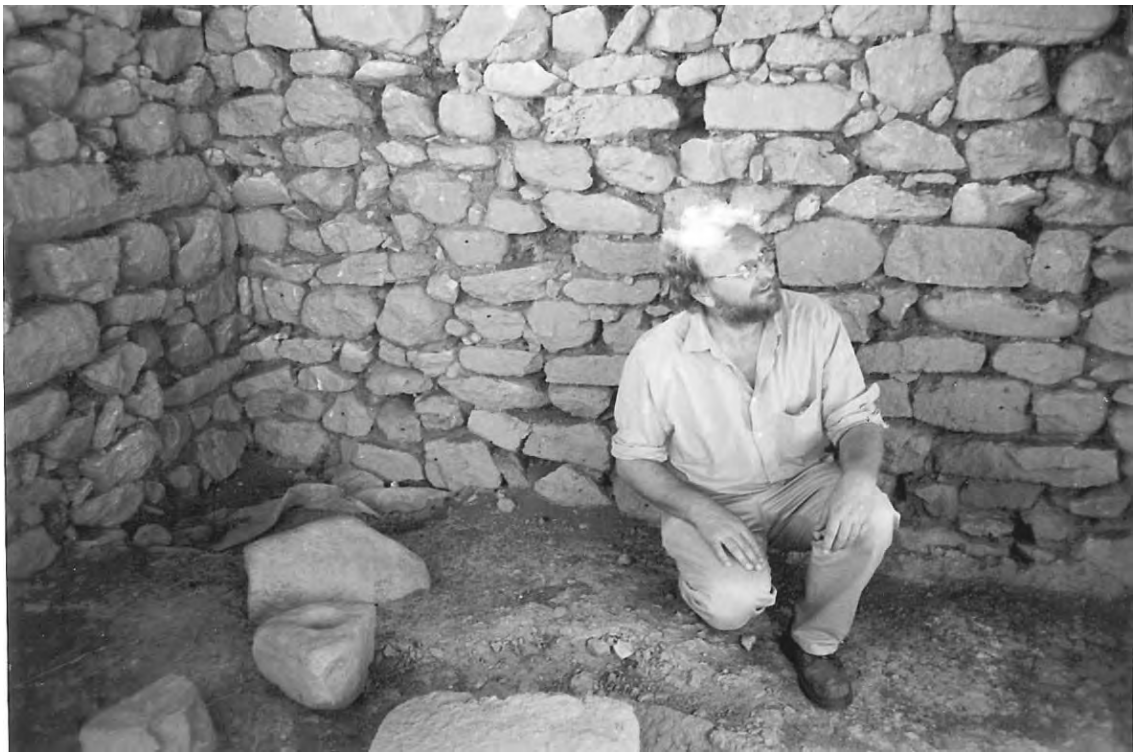

Figure 6. Klaus Schmidt and portable mortar within one of the level IIA structures at Göbekli Tepe (photo courtesy of F. Hole).

2001*b*:47), while dark earth found in the Ah soil horizons may be anthropogenic, probably associated with the high density of bone fragments and other organic materials (Pustovoytov 2006:706).

Plant remains are not well preserved in these deposits but include a broad suite of edible wild seeds and the charcoal of trees such as ash, almond, poplar, and Brant's oak (Neef 2003) that could have furnished both fuel and roof timbers. Numerous depressions that are likely bedrock mortars at Göbekli Tepe (fig. 7; Beile-Bohn et al. 1998:48–50; Hole 2005: 30; Schmidt 2009, figs. 9, 12) also attest to substantial attention to food processing there.

Given the need to explain the presence of all this domestic debris, three possibilities come to mind. First, as Schmidt has argued, it is possible that the debris in the fill was brought to the site from elsewhere, although no contemporary habitation sites are known within about 14 km. Second, it is possible that the flint, bones, and plant remains come from the activities of the builders and pilgrims who were present at the site for relatively brief periods, including, perhaps, feasting activities. Third, as Schmidt (2009:201–202) has recently conceded, there could have been a very small resident population consisting of permanent temple personnel and people who settled around the temples. Finally, it is possible that the debris comes from the activities of a substantial population that was resident at the site more or less permanently. Given the massive effort that would have been involved in importing sediment with only human transport, the first seems the most unlikely scenario and, given the massive amounts of debris, the last seems most likely.

As we have seen, to support the assertion that Göbekli Tepe was not a village, Schmidt suggests that the site's unique location on the top of a limestone ridge, far from accessible water, is not suitable for a settlement. The site's situation, although more dramatic, bears some similarities to that of Karahan Tepe, which, in addition to exhibiting hundreds of pillars, occupies the now rather bleak "lunar landscape" (Schmidt 2006*b*:202) of the Tektek mountains (really hills) that border the eastern edge of the Harran plain (Çelik 2000). Although there are no known nearby water sources, Göbekli Tepe "overlooks the springs of the Balikh to the east" (Schmidt 2001*b*:46), and Hauptmann (1999:79) notes that "springs are accessible to the south at the foot of the ridge." Today, the Urfa district has many karstic springs, with some 25 feeding the Karakoyun stream, leading Hauptmann (1999) to note that "springs and pools of the karstic limestone are characteristic of the region and prompted the earliest settlers to locate close by" (66). Arguably, it would be inconvenient to carry water, presumably in skin bags, from even the nearest springs found today up the rather steep slopes to the top of the ridge, but surely that would be no less convenient than hauling debris from a distant settlement to fill the abandoned

Figure 7. View of Göbekli Tepe with numerous bedrock mortars in the foreground (photo courtesy of F. Hole).

buildings. It is also noteworthy that "no water in the vicinity" is Benedict's (1980) comment on numerous sites of his survey, including large mounds that were surely habitation sites.

Furthermore, during the Göbekli Tepe's occupation around 8000 cal BC, during the early Boreal period, the climate was considerably more humid than the current 450 mm of mean annual precipitation would suggest, and the water table was likely rather higher, potentially with springs closer to the site that no longer exist. Wick, Lemcke, and Sturm (2003) suggest that around Lake Van, the dry conditions of the Younger Dryas shifted rapidly to more humid conditions around 8460 cal BC, possibly before construction of the level III structures at Göbekli Tepe, while globally the Younger Dryas seems to have ended even earlier, about 9600 cal BC (Alley 2000; Severinghaus et al. 1998; but see Pustovoytov and Taubald 2003 for the view that level III experienced Younger Dryas conditions). Deforestation and modern irrigation projects have also had serious impacts on local water tables and stream flow (Hole and Zaitchik 2007; Wilkinson 1998), making the present distribution of water a poor indicator of Neolithic water sources. Neef's (2003) analysis of plant remains from Göbekli Tepe suggests that the site's environs consisted mainly of steppe forest in which pistachio and hawthorn were dominant, but the charcoal sample also has substantial contributions from hygrophilous ash, poplar, and willow, which would have grown near springs and streams. There are rock-cut "cisterns" and "pool-like pits" at the site, including two near building E that are trough shaped and 2 m deep (Beile-Bohn et al. 1998:49; Çelik 2004:3; Schmidt 2009:204). We cannot be certain of the date or function of these features. Although there appears to be no significant post-Neolithic occupation of the site, there are remains of a square building, possibly a Roman or Byzantine watchtower, associated with a large cistern 6 m deep and about 6 m in diameter on the southern plateau (Schmidt 2009:218–219). Cisternlike features occur at the PPN site of Hamzan Tepe, however, suggesting that at least some of those at Göbekli Tepe are Neolithic in date.

Similarly, the lack of potentially cultivable fields or stands of wild grasses does not stand in the way of habitation either. Schmidt (2001*b*) makes the observation that "the grassy slopes reported by Benedict are still today large areas of the occurrence of wild cereals" (48). Examination of the site's location with Google Earth shows fertile fields, not only on the Balikh's floodplain down the steep slopes to the east but also in more accessible valleys and plateaux to the west and southwest, some less than 1 km distant. Neef (2003:13) corroborates this, indicating the presence of edible wild barley, wild oats, broom grass (*Bromus* sp.), feather grass (*Stipa* sp.), and goat grass (*Bromus* sp.) in the site's vicinity. Indeed, the increasing fre-

quency of glossed sickle blades at the site suggests "the idea of incipient cultivation at Göbekli Tepe" (Schmidt 2001*b*:51).

As noted in the last section, the lack of major differentiation among structures in each of the levels is one of the factors that makes it impossible to use the same kind of argument for "special buildings" as used at other Neolithic sites. However, one reviewer of this paper defended the identification of the Göbekli buildings as temples by suggesting the alternative hypothesis that ordinary domestic structures lie in unexcavated parts of the site. This is a tempting suggestion, and identification of such structures in future, particularly in level III, would indeed strengthen the hypothesis that some of the buildings were specialized places with particular concentrations of ritual. Identification of residential occupation at the site, in any level, would also falsify the suggestion that the site was uninhabitable. In this connection, it is intriguing that structures A–D appear to have been marked off as a special place in level IIA by an enclosing terrace wall and by avoiding them during later construction. However, given current evidence, the only candidates for such "ordinary" structures—most notably the simple level IIB ones—are reportedly stratigraphically later and therefore out of the running, while the geomagnetic survey reportedly shows evidence of at least 15 more structures of the level III type (Schmidt 2006*b*:252) in unexcavated parts of the site, and the *felsentempel* (structure E) on the southwest plateau of the site appears to be the floor of a level III structure closely similar to structure C (Schmidt 2006*b*:102–107, 2008*a*, 2009:202). Notably, Schmidt (2009:201–202) has recently opened the door to the suggestion that there were at least some permanent residents at the site while maintaining its special status as something different from a village.

While there is no doubt that Göbekli Tepe is an important site and that aspects of its structures were symbolically loaded, the claim that the site had no residential occupation is simply not credible. The enormous amounts of debris not to mention the presence of at least some large tools typically used for food processing and serving have a high prior probability of being related to domestic activities on the site. Most likely, either the famous "temples" are actually houses or houses lie elsewhere on the site and are simply not represented or not yet identified in the excavated sample.

The Site Was a Ritual Center for Hunter-Gatherers?

As noted above, the hypothesis that Göbekli Tepe was a ritual center is almost a corollary of the others in that a site consisting only of temples with no habitation would only make sense as a ritual center. Currently, no other evidence strongly supports or contradicts the hypothesis that people came to the site from over a large region in order to participate in rituals. However, any weakness in the hypothesis that the buildings were temples would also weaken the hypothesis that the site was a regional ritual center.

At some specialized ritual sites, evidence that the site attracted visitors from considerable distances sometimes takes the form of prestigious items with a diverse set of distant sources or isotopic evidence from human or animal teeth that shows that they were raised elsewhere. At Durrington Walls, near the famous Stonehenge, for example, strontium isotope ratios from cattle teeth indicate that the cattle were brought there from several distant parts of Britain, consistent with the view that they were brought by pilgrims (Balter 2008). This type of isotopic evidence is not currently available from Göbekli Tepe but, as noted above, the obsidian from the site comes from three sources both east and west of the site. This does not constitute strong evidence for pilgrimage, however, because obsidian traveled extensively in the Neolithic and is found sometimes with higher frequency even at sites farther from the sources. Although it is rare for sites to have obsidian from disparate sources, Jerf al-Ahmar, for one, similarly obtained obsidian from both Bingöl and Cappadocian sources (Abbès et al. 2003). Göbekli Tepe's location intermediary between the sources seems a reasonable explanation for this distribution of obsidians.

Finally, we turn to Schmidt's repeated mention that the visitors or pilgrims to Göbekli Tepe were hunter-gatherers with the implication that they were unlike their contemporaries in typical village sites. That morphologically domesticated plants and animals have not been found is not as surprising as it sounds, at least for level III. Throughout the Near East, and no matter whether one favors the "long-gestation" or "short-gestation" model for the domestication of Neolithic founder crops from cultivated wild progenitors (Colledge, Conolly, and Shennan 2004:S38; Harris 1998:69–71; Hillman and Davies 1992:144), very few PPNA or Early PPNB sites show any morphological evidence for domestication of plants, and there is even less evidence for morphological domestication of animals, while hunting of gazelle and other animals continued to be important well into PPNB. This is notwithstanding the high probability that people during these periods had begun to cultivate emmer, einkorn, barley, and other plants (Colledge, Conolly, and Shennan 2004; van Zeist and Bakker-Heeres 1982; Willcox 1996, 2007; Willcox and Fornite 1999) and to manage and possibly even control breeding of some species of morphologically wild animals (Zeder and Hesse 2000). Their economy mixed traditional hunting and gathering with newer, more controlled exploitation of resources. Middle PPNB sites commonly do show at least some evidence for morphologically domesticated plants, goats, or both, but whether through small sample size, poor preservation, or a greater focus on hunting and gathering, they do not universally present unambiguous evidence of domesticates and typically show significant contributions by wild resources. This does not mean that they were not participating at all in early forms of cultivation and stock raising. In short, there is no strong reason to assume that the people who used the buildings at Göbekli Tepe, in any stratum, were not Neolithic villagers. Indeed, as mentioned above, Schmidt himself suggests that the many sickles found at the site might have been involved in "incipient cultivation" (2001*b*:51).

Discussion

Although the prevailing interpretation of Göbekli Tepe's "temples" provides an excellent example, in many ways it is just a highly visible symptom of the widespread readiness to interpret PPN ideology and symbolism through the filters of much later Near Eastern religions. In this, archaeologists commonly employ the assumption that religion and ritual are conservative, but even long-lived symbols and ritual practices can change substantially in meaning (Belfer-Cohen and Goring-Morris 2005:22), and rituals can themselves be arenas for change and individual interpretation (Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994). PPN communities, despite being in the throes of new social and economic arrangements, were historically far closer to their hunter-gatherer heritage than to these later analogues. Although there is increasing recognition that the Neolithic in general (Goring-Morris and Belfer-Cohen 2002; Verhoeven 2005:41) and Göbekli Tepe in particular (Perrot 2003; Schmidt 2005*b*: 17–18) owe more to the Upper Palaeolithic than usually credited, it is still not uncommon to interpret the "ritual" or symbolic evidence by reference to much later iconography and mythology (e.g., Cauvin 1994:98–100; Schmandt-Besserat 1998: 11–14). If we are to interpret these plausibly, however, we must be cautious in the use of analogies to cultures that had priestly bureaucracies and hierarchical political systems. From a Marxist perspective, we would expect Bronze Age religions to have naturalized the political inequalities and hierarchies of their own day and recent past, and Jacobsen (1943:167–168), while characterizing it as "primitive democracy," noted that the world of the Sumerian pantheon likely reflected the human political realities of (recent) prehistory.

To say that these may not be suitable analogues for PPN ideologies in no way requires rejection of the possibility that Early Neolithic people sometimes invested time and symbolism in particular places or buildings but only that we not be too quick to impose one possible model that emphasizes the localization of spirituality and ritual. How to determine the relative merits of competing models is a difficult question.

"Framing" and the Identification of Ritual

The prevailing willingness to regard "odd" or "unusual" or "impressive" archaeological finds as dedicated to ritual depends on a Eurocentric and post-Enlightenment assumption of a sacred-profane or ritual-domestic dichotomy (Boyd 2005: 26; Brück 1999) even though such a dichotomy is not unique to the West, and even in the West, ritual and the sacred penetrate the domestic sphere more than we typically realize. While most advocates of Neolithic shrines and temples make this distinction implicitly, the scholar of the Near Eastern Neolithic who has most carefully attended to our methods for identifying ritual has attempted to blur this dichotomy. Verhoeven (2002, 2004:220, 2005) employs "ritual framing," a concept he has adapted from Bateson (1986 [1936]): "the way, or performance, in which people and/or activities and/or objects are set off from others, for ritual, or non-domestic, purposes" (Verhoeven 2004:220). Although "non-domestic" may appear here almost as a synonym for "ritual," elsewhere Verhoeven explicitly indicates (2004:219) that there is a continuum between sacred and profane and uses framing as the starting point for a reflexive or dialectical analysis. Bateson's study was actually of play in animals, and ritual was really only an analogy or aside. The essence of Verhoeven's version of the framing approach is to identify anomalies in the location, physical characteristics, orientation, and associations of things or groups of things; in other words, to recognize unusual or "odd" characteristics and combinations. This approach formalizes what many archaeologists were doing implicitly, but it is important to avoid the temptation to assume that rituals and use of "dominant symbols" are inherently different from or somehow marked off from everyday life. As Verhoeven (2002) notes, "almost all actions are governed by cultural rules and norms, *i.e.*, are symbolic" (27).

Framing as a concept for understanding how "special" activities are marked was extended to other fields after Bateson. According to Milner (1955), in child psychoanalysis, as in a painting, "the frame marks off the different kind of reality that is within it from that which is outside it; but a temporal-spatial frame marks off the special kind of reality of a psychoanalytic session" (86). Admittedly, this, like Bateson's study of play, was in a very different context than that of prehistoric ritual, yet Douglas (1966) takes up this concept when she says

> everyday symbolic enactment does several things. It provides a focussing mechanism, a method of mnemonics and a control for experience. To deal with focussing first, a ritual provides a frame. The marked off time or place alerts a special kind of expectancy. . . . We can reflect on this framing function in small personal instances, for the least action is capable of carrying significance. (62, 63)

In some ways this focusing is reminiscent of some of Renfrew's (1985:19–20) correlates of ritual activity. But note that Douglas does not equate framing with "oddness" or "non-domestic" aspects of life; in fact, she provides an example of a hurrying Dinka herdsman who ritually knots some grass and leaves it on the roadside to express his wish that he will not be late for supper. Note, too, that Verhoeven explicitly indicates that framing can be chronological rather than spatial. Yet archaeologists tend to think of ritual framing as making *spaces* or *buildings* distinct rather than setting off special *times* within perfectly ordinary spaces. Verhoeven is on the right track in emphasizing framing, yet archaeologists need to resist the temptation to think of it as nondomestic and rather embrace the view that ritual framing "enlivens the memory and links the present with the relevant past . . . [and] changes perception because it changes the selective principles" (Douglas 1966:64). As in a picture frame, Bateson's framing is a matter of boundaries, such as a door threshold that marks the beginning of a sacred space or a formal gesture that marks

the beginning or end of a ceremony (or a dog's play; but see Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994:75–76).

Especially in cases where, as at Göbekli Tepe, framing on Schmidt's account must have occurred in many or all buildings and does not consist of the setting out of particular buildings, we should be mindful of its potential use in domestic contexts. Blanton (1994) uses the terms "canonical" and "indexical" communication to distinguish forms of symbolism found in houses. Canonical communication includes sensory cues directed mainly at the residents of the houses and mainly ones that reinforce social norms and values and dominant ideologies. This can include such things as the mapping of cosmology onto house plans, division of space according to gender, altars, representations of spirits or deities, or taboos regarding thresholds or hearths. Indexical symbolism in houses is directed mainly at nonresidents and communicates claims about the household's status (see also Lawrence and Low 1990; Rapoport 1990). For example, we might expect the conspicuous display of cattle skulls to advertise past feasts (Adams 2005; Testart 2006) to be an example of indexical communication. The two categories are not mutually exclusive, as particularly ostentatious examples of canonical representation can also indexically communicate wealth. In both instances, "framing" can consist, for example, in the quite literal framing of a doorway with decoration, yet it can also be quite subtle. A formal hearth might frame activities performed or alternatively prohibited on or near it, yet an archaeologist might not recognize it as such. Blier (1987) echoes Douglas's usage when she says that the house itself "provides the necessary frame that gives disparate ideas and activities coherence and grounding" (205). While serving as a metaphor for the cosmos (among the Batammaliba), the house is not seen as actually being such; rather, it helps to focus attention on and make links between ideas and events. In any case, Bateson's version of framing is not without its critics; as Humphrey and Laidlaw (1994:75) point out, there are many examples of rituals that require no marking by framing, and even when framing does announce the beginning or end of a ritual, it is not sufficient to account for the ritualization of an act. The same acts or features that might frame a ritual, such as taking off shoes or marking an architectural feature with a painted line, can also occur in nonritual contexts.

Finally, only rarely have Near Eastern prehistorians instead focused on the evidence for *activities* or *events* that might be indicative of ritual. A few have used definitions of ritual that emphasize its active or performative dimension. For example, Hole (2005) defines rituals as "sets of actions that are repeated at intervals according to strict formula which may entail ideas about spirits, gods, natural processes, or predictable order that ensures a desired outcome (as in games)" (31). Potentially we recognize ritual in this sense in extremely patterned remains and especially when the pattern does not seem to make sense in terms of strictly utilitarian values. Note that "utilitarian" is not equivalent to "domestic," however. This is the case when, for example, Hodder notices pattern in the use of images of leopards but not their carcasses or bones at Çatalhöyük (Hodder 2006). We may also recognize ritual in the patterned beheading of figurines or other indications of the "killing" of figurines, such as piercing with flints or perhaps "strangling" with string (McAdam 1997; Morsch 2002; Verhoeven 2007). Yet when Richards and Thomas (1984) suggest that "the performance of ritual involves formalized, repetitive actions which may be detected archaeologically through a highly structured mode of deposition" (215), we should avoid slipping into the assumption that structured deposition "refers to special 'nondomestic' archaeological deposits" (Verhoeven 2002:27). Richards and Thomas never characterize structured deposition in this way and specifically mention "that domestic activity may also involve a high degree of structure" (1984:215).

The use of structured deposition requires us to focus on negative evidence for ritual activities—the lack of "usual traces of 'domestic life'" (Schmidt 2001*b*:49). Such an approach could be tempting, but even in cases where the floor of a building is entirely devoid of artifacts, we should be wary of this line of argument. In a variety of sites ranging from the Early (e.g., Qermez Dere) to Late Neolithic (e.g., Çatalhöyük), we now have evidence that house-closing ceremonies, which apparently included in many cases the removal of artifacts and perhaps cleaning of floors, were at least somewhat common. Many Neolithic structures that we routinely interpret as houses actually exhibit little or no de facto refuse (sensu Schiffer 1987: 89–97). For example, at Nemrik 9, where the PPNA houses had not burned, their floors were "often quite well cleaned off" (Kozlowski 2002:31), and house floors at Qermez Dere were similarly quite clean (Watkins 1990). As LaMotta and Schiffer (1999) caution, "primary deposition of objects at their locations of use is a fairly rare phenomenon in heavily maintained activity areas, such as house floors" (25). They also emphasize the potential importance of house-abandonment rituals in creating floor assemblages (see also Walker 1999).

Whether or not they employ such negative evidence, few of the claims for shrines or temples in the PPN of the Near East make any reference at all to the kinds of activities that actually took place in presumed ritual spaces (Kuijt 2005:35). Very few scholars have made even slight reference to the potential of music (Croucher 2005:617; Watkins 2004:18) or dance (Garfinkel 2003; Russell and McGowan 2003) in Near Eastern Neolithic ritual. Nor has there been any concerted effort to identify the chemical traces of possible offerings, incense, or pharmaceuticals in hypothesized ritual locations, perhaps because of problems with initial attempts that focused on potential blood residues (Custer, Ilgenfritz, and Doms 1988; Downs and Lowenstein 1995; Fiedel 1996; Loy 1983; Loy and Wood 1989; Manning 1994; Merlin 2003). Because music, dance, consumption of mind-altering substances, fasting, and the drama of sacrifice are all common vehicles for framing ritual occasions or facilitating "emergent moods" (Bell 1992:81; Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994:227–244; Renfrew 1985:19–20), these are serious deficiencies. Evidence to distinguish the use of unusual substances in restricted spaces, for example, could come from chemical residues of building

floors. Barba, Ortiz, and Manzanilla (2007) have found that such residues can be well preserved in lime plaster and, at Teotihuacan in Mexico, can be used to identify rooms or parts of rooms and courtyards where liquids of particular kinds were repeatedly spilled, including protein-rich residues probably related to sacrifices on altars. To my knowledge, this type of analysis has yet to be applied to any of the posited Near Eastern Neolithic temples or shrines (but see Hodder and Cessford 2004:27–29 for an application to house floors and Loy 1983 and Loy and Wood 1989 for now-discredited attempts to identify blood residues at Çayönü). Evidence for music could come from the material remains of musical instruments—such as scrapers, "bull roarers," rattles, and clappers—that could well lie unrecognized in our collections of miscellaneous artifacts, such as the whistles that Poplawska (1994) has suggested as the interpretation for four pierced phalanges found at Nemrik 9.

If we indeed paid more attention to evidence for such repetitive and sometimes "unnecessary" activities as music or libations, we would undoubtedly discover more instances of ritual in the everyday lives of Neolithic people and perhaps also find better grounds for identifying specialized ritual locations. While Rollefson (2005:50) suggests that bread "has no ritual significance," for example, it is far from implausible that breaking bread at a meal was a symbolically charged and ritualized act, perhaps more so when it was a rather novel foodstuff, almost magically transformed by heat. While such an act is unlikely to be very archaeologically visible, paying attention to patterning in meal-related material, such as patterns in the disposal of food refuse, might well suggest other aspects of domestic ritual and the symbolic dimension of domestic acts. Meanwhile, if there was a continuum from private and house-based to community-wide and more public ritual in the PPN (Verhoeven 2005:42), we need to be more creative at finding ways to distinguish the scales of ritual activity.

Conclusion

One could easily argue that my characterization of PPN ritual as a part of everyday life is just as speculative as the prevailing interpretation that focuses on special ritual locations. Ignoring even the possibility that some of the claimed shrines and temples at Neolithic sites may have been houses or other types of buildings, however, could distort our interpretations not only of Neolithic religion but of nonreligious aspects of the communities that inhabited or used those sites. For example, many authors have noted with some perplexity that PPNB sites appear to have lacked economic differentiation at the household level, the relatively small variation in material goods, house size, and elaboration seeming to indicate real or fictive egalitarian organization despite the perceived need for complex decision-making in large villages (e.g., Byrd 1994, 2000:91, 2005; Cutting 2006:97–98; Goring-Morris 2000:106; Hole 2000:205–206; Kuijt 1995, 2000; but see Bar-Yosef 2001: 21). Yet if we have already excluded the possibility that the largest, most elaborate buildings may have been houses, how can we hope to identify such household differentiation? Similarly, our readiness to presume analogies to much later temples prevents us from considering other potentially compelling hypotheses about the uses of unusual buildings, including their possible use in certain low-visibility industries (e.g., smoking meat, malting barley, making salt, dying fabric; Banning 1998:225–226) and their potential role in social institutions that were not exclusively religious (e.g., menstruation huts, war houses, chief's houses, sodalities). Interpretation of a building as the residence of a shaman, for example, is rarely suggested (Goring-Morris 1993:70).

In the specific case of Göbekli Tepe, meanwhile, we could be missing a previously undocumented form of Early Neolithic household. At present, it is too early to determine how much variation there may be among the contemporary structures at this site. On current evidence, it appears that all of those found in each level are broadly similar and, apart from the impressive monoliths and reliefs, what is remarkable about them is the overall size of those of level III, which are several times the size of "houses" found at most Early Neolithic sites and at least somewhat larger than even the rather spacious houses at Nevalı Çori. If, as I suggest, these structures were residences, it would seem likely that they did not house nuclear families but substantially larger coresidential groups. This in turn would have several implications for the organization of labor, the accumulation of wealth, and the attainment of status (Coupland and Banning 1996), and it would be interesting in light of Düring and Marciniak's (2006) assertion that the nuclear-family household was not the fundamental building block of most Neolithic communities in Anatolia. Until recently, we had little to no evidence for such large coresidential groups in the Near Eastern Neolithic until substantially later (Banning 1996, 2003; Flannery 2002; Garfinkel 2006). If, furthermore, some of the imagery in the houses may have constituted clan or house emblems, these could be clues to their social organization that we would be imprudent to overlook.

Some authors (e.g., Hodder 2006:165; Kuijt 2000; Watkins 2004) have begun to interpret some Neolithic societies in terms of Lévi-Strauss's concept of *sociétés à maison*, or "house societies," in which "houses" perpetuate themselves and their estates by transmitting their names intergenerationally through real or imaginary kinship, affinity, or both. Originally, the term applied to societies such as the Northwest Coast Kwakiutl that had complex nonunilineal descent systems. In such societies, there are tendencies to use house structures for competitive display; as key locations for ritual activities; as explicit symbols for social units; and to emphasize the transmission of titles or heraldic symbols, family names, and heirlooms or heritable symbolic items (González-Ruibal 2006:146; Lévi-Strauss 1982). Although application of this concept is not without its problems, particularly if represented as an evolutionary "stage" between kin-based and hierarchical social organizations, the unusual structures at Göbekli Tepe actually do seem plausible candidates for the physical structures that the site's Neolithic

community treated as symbols of their predominate social units. If so, they would constitute an unusually early example. Although the massive Easter Island statues are different in many ways and sometimes were placed at ceremonial centers, the competitive aspect of Easter Island stone carving may have resonance here (cf. Schmidt 2009:214).

> On Easter Island it seems that the statue carving was done not by a population under the control of some central power, but rather by a number of fairly independent kin groups from different parts of the island. It is likely that they were in competition with each other, trying to outdo their neighbors in the scale and grandeur of their religious centers and ancestor figures. (Bahn 1993:84)

When we consider the alternative hypothesis that the Göbekli structures had something to do with a "house society," the fact that particular animal themes tend to dominate in each structure suggests the possibility that some of the animals in the reliefs were emblems of clans or other social units. One pillar in structure D, pillar 43, seems particularly relevant in this respect. It prominently depicts a vulture, a scorpion, and another large bird along with smaller birds, snakes, and symbols, and along the top, three "box-like objects with handle-like attachments" (Schmidt 2006*a*:39, 2007:93–95), each accompanied by a small animal and superimposed, apparently, on a background of chevronlike patterning (fig. 5). On other surfaces of the pillar we find another large scorpion, another bird, some "H-shaped objects," and a headless human with erect penis. Schmidt does not speculate on the significance of the "box-like objects," but it is tempting to interpret them as a scene depicting the buildings of Göbekli Tepe itself, the "boxes" being the walls, the "handles" the curved or thatched roofs of the structures, and the chevrons representing the ground. If this interpretation has merit, the animal positioned next to the roof of each building could be a clan or house emblem. Notably, the two most recognizable of these animals are familiar for their prominence in certain buildings at the site. The one at left appears to be a long-legged bird, such as a crane, while the central one looks rather like other Göbekli depictions of boars. The animal at far right is indistinct but could be a spider or scorpion. At risk of speculation, it is conceivable that the pillar records a story in which three clans or houses had prominent parts or perhaps documents three lineages that have some part in the house's heritage. Some of the other pillars in level III could also memorialize particular people, events, or characteristics of a lineage's or house's real or mythical history. For example, pillar 12 in structure C depicts a large wild boar above a smaller animal with what appears to be a scene of the netting of ducks above (Schmidt 2006*b*, fig. 59). These could plausibly be interpreted as memorializing an important feast and the hunt that provided at least some of its cuisine. Although this is, again, speculative, it is not that different from what we find in some of the ethnographic examples (e.g., Testart 2006). Even if my speculation is far from the mark, the point is that, as in many ethnographic cases, the scenes need not be exclusively mythological and could be used in a house's or lineage's negotiations for status.

Most archaeology is inductive, and archaeologists, myself included, always come to their material with preconceptions and prejudices that affect even the selection of supposedly descriptive terms, such as "hearth" or "altar." No doubt my readiness to interpret Göbekli structures in terms of houses has roots in my past interest in Neolithic domestic architecture, just as Professor Schmidt's account likely bears the influence of his experiences of the Nevalı Çori "temple" and the awe that the Göbekli monoliths inspire. That in itself is perfectly acceptable and has led to some creative interpretation that in any case is preliminary (Schmidt 2005*a*). However, there is a need for reflexivity and to challenge our favorite theories with data that despite being themselves being theory-laden are by no means guaranteed to reinforce our expectations (Wylie 2002*a*, 2002*b*). I would dispute the view that either interpretation is "obvious" or not open to "basic discussion," and in this article I have tried to encourage debate about the significance of Göbekli Tepe, its structures, and its art by reference to the data at hand.

There are many outstanding questions that I hope will find resolution through this debate and further research. Were there other kinds of buildings in level III than the large oval ones? Were the buildings roofed or unroofed? Are there level III buildings below the level IIA ones? What exactly is the stratigraphic relationship of the level IIB structures to the level III ones, and is there any possibility of overlap in their use lives? How much of the lithic assemblage can we perhaps attribute to the fashioning of the pillars and sculptures, and how much to such activities as hunting or food preparation? And what, exactly, is the situation at sites, like Karahan Tepe, that similarly have lots of T pillars? Are these concentrated in "special" buildings while "ordinary" buildings lack them?

I think we all agree that PPN buildings were often invested with powerful imagery, sometimes at great expense of time, effort, and materials. It is also likely that some of these buildings were the locus for a variety of rituals, probably including feasts, mortuary rites, magic, and initiations. Yet there is generally no reason to presume a priori, even when these are as impressive as the buildings at Göbekli Tepe, that they were not also people's houses.

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Comments

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Extensive fieldwork in the Near East has produced formidable evidence for what is usually considered to represent ritual and ceremony in the Neolithic even when bearing in mind that only a small portion of the dazzling complexity so characteristic of ritual practices will have left its material imprint on the archaeological record. Be that as it may, it is probably stale news to add that Near Eastern archaeologists have been less than successful in their attempts to interpret these findings beyond often highly superficial or one-sided notions. The many interpretative shortcomings are eloquently expressed in Ted Banning's article by exploring the claims for ritual at the site of Göbekli Tepe in Turkey. His piece makes a thoughtful and deeply researched contribution to current thoughts about identifying prehistoric ritual.

Banning's view on Göbekli Tepe is a most welcome change from earlier perspectives about this site (and others, for that matter) with ample evidence for symbolically charged architecture. The frequently heard identification of the installations at this site as "temples" certainly deserves critical scrutiny because it often relies on little subtle, almost ahistorical analogies with much later Bronze Age religions and institutions. Perhaps even more important (because of its wide-ranging impact) is Banning's hypothesis that Neolithic people "either made no strong distinction between sacred and profane or found the sacred in their daily routines." While Banning is not the only one who thinks in this way, he is among the first to advocate these thoughts so vividly and convincingly for this period and this part of the world.

Most of us will probably agree with Banning's conclusion that the distinction between the ritual and the domestic spheres, between the "special" and the "ordinary," is usually uncritically taken for granted, with all of its implications in terms of, for instance, architectural or even community specialization. However, there is perhaps good reason for such distinction if we take, for example, the site of Jerf al-Ahmar on the Euphrates into consideration, which is roughly contemporary to and at a distance not too far from Göbekli Tepe. This site, with its complex sequence of settlement, revealed buildings with reliable material proof for both domestic and ritual activities in one and the same space—entirely in agreement with Banning's proposition. Significantly, however, the site also contained a few contemporaneous buildings very different in layout and elaboration: large, round, subterranean structures provided with, among other things, wall paintings and stone benches with decorated friezes. It is difficult *not* to ascribe a specific nondomestic meaning to these structures. In this respect there is, I believe, good evidence to show that some of the Early Neolithic groups on the Euphrates intentionally made a distinction in their building endeavors with different usage and meaning in mind. A similar perspective should not be excluded for Göbekli Tepe, particularly in the light of the long-denied but steadily growing evidence for residential stay at the site and the resulting options for increasing architectural variability.

The prevailing interpretation of Göbekli Tepe sees a site littered with specialized ritual installations ("temples") but lacking any residential occupation, where hunter-gatherers from a large region met for periodic cultic activities. In Banning's study, Göbekli Tepe is a village with permanent houses that were rich in symbolic elaboration, the inhabitants of which were probably involved in some form of incipient agriculture. He sees the buildings at the site as previously undocumented house types and predicts that future fieldwork will illustrate their common occurrence. In short, it is the ordinary rather than the exceptional that is emphasized. But is this entirely justified? In a different context (Akkermans 2004) I have argued that some of the earliest Neolithic sites up to the mid-eighth millennium BC were domestic villages and cult centers at the same time but that their occurrence was restricted to a handful of locales in a cultural landscape dominated by small transitory forager camps. In a landscape characterized by tiny short-lived occupations primarily by hunter-gatherers, these selected sites with their often lengthy sequences were preeminent landmarks and meeting places full of history and memories—through time they may have become the focal points of group identities. Ritual and ceremony helped to tie people to these selected places, which had an integrative significance and contributed to the social cohesion of the numerous small and dispersed communities in the earliest Neolithic. In regard of the available archaeological evidence, it is important to emphasize that sites such as Göbekli Tepe and Jerf al-Ahmar were not unique, in the sense that more such sites undoubtedly existed in the region, sites that integrated both domestic settlement and cultic practice within one and the same space (conforming to Banning's argument). However, it is, I believe, equally important to stress that these sites with their lengthy occupations and elaborate architecture had specific meaning in the earliest Neolithic, where small temporary forager camps rather than large permanent farming settlements were the rule.

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I would reinforce much of what Ted Banning argues. Evidence of religious and ritual practices carried out in habitations and symbolized in concrete fashion is widespread. The evidence

of art and ritual practice, however distinctive and striking, is not sufficient to identify nondomestic specialized ritual buildings. At the same time, just because we have ritually and symbolically enriched domestic habitations does not mean that there were no nondomestic structures.

One element in resolving such issues must be whether ritually elaborated buildings have evidence of domestic/habitation activity and indeed roofs. This is not clear-cut in the case of Göbekli level III. However, the floor of one of those level III buildings has been reached, and there is little evidence of more classic domestic features found in southwest Asian Neolithic houses, such as hearths and grinding installations. A more conclusive absence of habitation evidence in the light of soil micromorphology would be more convincing. Of course the converse, the presence of domestic activity, would not on its own convincingly show such buildings were houses because, as we know by analogy with Bronze Age temples in Mesopotamia, temples could be the houses of gods (and priests) where domestic activity was common. As to roofs, I think these buildings were roofed, partly because the pillars seem arranged to support roofs, but especially because the walls of these structures would show evidence of collapse if the buildings had been roofless for any length of time.

A key issue is whether nondomestic buildings can be identified because of contrasts with buildings that are more likely to be domestic habitations. Evidence of such contrasts is easiest to accept where contrasts are apparent at one site. So at Çayönü, Nevalı Çori, Jerf el-Ahmar, and Beidha, many buildings share similar plans, sizes, domestic and storage fixtures, and evidence of habitation, and they contrast with other infrequent buildings, notably the skull, terrazzo, and flagstone buildings at Çayönü, buildings EA53 and EA100 at Jerf el-Ahmar, and Hs13B/C at Nevalı Çori.

The special buildings at Göbekli are of course identified by Schmidt by similarity to the specialized buildings elsewhere. This is a point to which Banning does not give enough attention, and it is why I differ about level III. Contemporary habitations in the Pre-Pottery Neolithic A (PPNA) to earliest Pre-Pottery Neolithic B (PPNB) north Mesopotamia were everywhere modest-sized curvilinear or subrectangular single rooms or buildings with no more than four rooms or rectangular cell-plan buildings. By these standards the Gobekli III structures stand out in the same way as the other purported nondomestic structures listed above: they are much bigger, they would have required much more investment in construction and decoration, they are largely subterranean, they have a distinct open plan, they seem designed for performance, those in the center are well placed to be heard around the edges, they have benches, they often have distinctive symbolism, and they would provide settings for group discussion, storytelling, singing, and dancing. They could accommodate many more people than the contemporary domestic structures elsewhere, probably 20–150. In addition, level IIB actually shows us classic Late PPNA–Early PPNB domestic structures that are present at Göbekli, and some such elsewhere on the site (albeit not those in level IIB) may be contemporary with some of the structures in level III.

This leads on to questions of Göbekli as a ritual center. In the PPNA–Early PPNB there are domestic structures at Göbekli represented by the IIB buildings; none of these are necessarily contemporary with the level III buildings. Nevertheless it is unclear how contemporary level III buildings are among themselves. These buildings are cut down from levels whose contemporary buildings are not visible. They may well have cut through domestic structures around the earlier of these buildings. Geophysics suggests a number of large circular buildings on the site. These may well have accumulated over a significant time period, cutting away earlier domestic structures. It is quite likely that the mass of domestic material, knapping debris, tools, bone, and so on, derive from midden associated with such occupation and redeposited into abandoned nondomestic structures. If there were domestic structures on the site in the PPNA–Early PPNB, as indicated by the IIB evidence, it removes the need to see Göbekli as a ritual center.

What of the level IIA buildings? Applying the logic outlined above, it is much more likely that many of these are domestic structures. In terms of size, plan, and construction, these buildings are much less different from their contemporary PPNB domestic structures than the level III buildings from their contemporaries. Unlike in level III, we know that many similar buildings occupied the site contemporaneously, suggesting a more typical domestic arrangement. Many of the pillars in these buildings are small. The small rooms seem suited to domestic and storage activity rather than public gathering. It is particularly interesting that the T-shaped pillars that we see in the earlier ritual structures are reduced in scale and usually not decorated, that highly symbolic aspects of public buildings are incorporated into the domestic sphere in a telling set of symbolic acts.

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Banning is to be congratulated on this detailed, thought-provoking, and critical appraisal of the archaeological data deriving from Schmidt's ongoing investigations at Göbekli Tepe. Yet some of Banning's arguments are problematic, whether at the level of the presentation of the archaeological data, its internal logic, or its interpretation.

In examining the possibilities of disentangling the sacred from the mundane, if at all, Gobekli Tepe being a cautionary example, Banning delves deeply into comparative studies based on both ethnographic literature from a wide array of societies and the archaeological record of the Near Eastern Neolithic. In doing so he disregards altogether the issues of time depth and the diachronic evolution of cultural traditions.

While using examples from extant societies, he totally ignores local Neolithic antecedents and discounts the "first-time" nature of Neolithic phenomena stemming from complex developments, namely the "Neolithization" processes that modified and changed basic notions in human cultural progress. Concurrently, the chronological framework is conflated such that the Neolithic is treated as a monolithic whole from the Pre-Pottery Neolithic A (PPNA) through much of the Pottery Neolithic (ca. 9700–6000 cal BC), while provisional dates at Göbekli span ca. 9500–8500 cal BC. We believe it is important to emphasize the regional variability apparent during the course of the Neolithic such that one can define a local "upper Tigris" sequence, one in the Middle Euphrates region, or another in the eastern part of central Anatolia (without mentioning those in the southern Levant).

Banning laments the fuzziness in archaeological research as regards definitions of "temple" or "shrine" (this is more than simple semantics), yet it is the very nature of the archaeological record that encourages relativism rather than rigidity in definitions of phenomena changing through time and space. Archaeologically, as in the present, borders between the ritual and the profane are undoubtedly fuzzy. Indeed, cult and symbolism within domestic contexts are acknowledged by many researchers, but this does not negate the presence of special buildings within residential settlements or even special sites (e.g., Goring-Morris and Belfer-Cohen 2001, 2002, 2003, 2008, 2010). In the same spirit, if Göbekli primarily had a ritual function, this would in no way contradict the presence of cultural remains from everyday mundane activities—it would have required lots of lunch bags to feed the laborers and guardians during the building and use of the structures.

Ultimately, Banning proposes a scenario in which he considers Göbekli and Karahan as domestic settlements with "house" types of a previously undocumented nature involving monumental investment (although most of the time he ignores or belittles the scale and scope of the endeavors invested). Moreover, he actually claims that later nondomestic structures in sites such as Nevalı Çori echo those buildings, where they now functioned as nonresidential community structures (i.e., ancestral "houses").

Our alternative scenario is that Göbekli reflects significant initial Neolithic (PPNA) demographic expansion in the region accompanied by dynamic sociocultural and economic changes (Goring-Morris, Hovers, and Belfer-Cohen 2009, fig. 10.14). Accordingly, Göbekli was founded as an aggregation locality in a prominent watershed location by related yet competing social groups from the newly founded villages some distance away, along the banks of the Euphrates and Balikh (e.g., Jerf el-Ahmar, Mureybet, Tel Abr, etc.). These communities represent a "Neolithization" phase of hunter-gatherers/incipient cultivators "on the move," that is, developing the "Neolithic package" to be and concurrently dispersing geographically. We argued elsewhere for Göbekli filling a special role within a sacred ancestral landscape similar to the *prehistoric* (not classical) Greek amphictyony (Belfer-Cohen and Goring-Morris 2002, 2005). Structures at Göbekli thus represent a synchronic "ratcheting up" of the communal kivalike structures that accompany domestic residential structures in PPNA/Early Pre-Pottery Neolithic B (PPNB) villages (Stordeur et al. 2000). This likely involved wide-ranging competitive activities by different social units (clans, moieties, etc.), including feasting. In this vein we believe that the unexcavated site of Karahan to the southeast, perhaps coeval with the later phases of Göbekli, may have fulfilled a similar role.

It is possible that the changing nature and scale of functions through the sequence at Göbekli may reflect developments in social structure during the shift from PPNA to PPNB and the inability to pay the long-term price of such investments; this may reflect a degree of social disintegration and a retreat back to the individual community, hence, Göbekli's demise during the course of the PPNB rather than at the end of the PPNB koine (Belfer-Cohen and Goring-Morris 2011).

Finally, it is somewhat ironic that Banning accuses archaeologists of imposing the present on to the past. In terms of the Near East, it is the past that throws its shadow on the present; Göbekli is located near Urfa, in the heart of the Haran region, the sacred landscape where monotheism was born and God revealed himself to his chosen disciple, Abraham (Genesis 11–12).

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The erection of a temple in early Mesopotamia and classical antiquity is connected with the intension to house an idol and to worship in it a personified deity or several divine personifications. "The deity is conceived as residing in his cella, to be fed, clothed, and cared for appropriately . . . by a personnel which we call respectively courtiers and priests" (Oppenheim 1964:183–187). These common features of the temple induced Heinrich to differentiate between the earliest shrines in Eridu XVI–XII from the later 'Ubaid buildings in XI–VI, which by virtue of their location on terraces, monumentality, standardized tripartite ground plan, and specially shaped fireplaces were designated as the first temples and which seem to represent the beginning of a prolonged religious tradition (Heinrich 1982:23–33). In northern Mesopotamia the new architectural concept as revealed by the building complex of Tepe Gawra XIII ('Ubaid 4) was derived from south Mesopotamia as represented by Eridu and 'Ubaid temples I/II from Uruk, and it was designed on the basis of a common ideology. But in all these buildings there is no other internal evidence to prove their actual function as places where exclusively religious activities were performed. The model of the later temple city with a market seems to have

been developed during the 'Ubaid period. Strikingly throughout the long course of Mesopotamian prehistory that covers a period between 6000 and 4500 BC from Hassuna to Halaf, it has not been possible to identify a definite ritual structure. But this lack of information in the available architectural tradition could be explained by the state of research.

The interpretation of structures in Near Eastern Neolithic sites as ritual buildings, shrines, or temples has gotten a boost by the discovery of special buildings in early sedentary communities of upper Mesopotamia since the tenth millennium BC. Since 1964, when in Çayönü monumental freestanding structures that were separated from the normal settlement were revealed, they were cautiously described as special, unique, or unusual buildings, thus avoiding the term "temple." Yet the installation in the "flagstone building" with standing stones, the arrangement of burnt skulls in wooden shelves, crypts for secondary burials and an altar in the "skull building," and the stone basin with the relief of a human face in the "terrazzo building" are likely to reflect ritual significance. Another phenomenon in the layout of early communities in Çayönü and Nevalı Çori, similar to that of Sumerian Mesopotamia, is the location of such buildings at the fringe of the settled area. Despite the long duration of the occupation with different rebuilding phases, the space for the sacred area was reserved for repeated use.

The designation "temple" has been assigned for the monumental round or oval enclosures A–F with T-shaped pillars of Göbekli Tepe III dating from the Late Pre-Pottery Neolithic A (PPNA) after 9500 BC. The decoration of the standing stones with reliefs of animals, geometric signs, and narrative scenes in connection with the anthropomorphic shape of the pillars seemed to support the interpretation of the structures as temples and the whole site as a regional sanctuary quite apart from the normal world of the surrounding hunter-gatherer society. Schmidt's concept of a ritual center for a "Stone Age amphictyony" covering a wide area on both sides of the Karaca Dağları, which separates the Urfa from the Diyarbakir basins, is apparently supported by the presence of T pillars in sites such as Çayönü, Hamzan, Karahan, and Sefer Tepe as well as Nevalı Çori, and anthropomorphic or theriomorphic stelae of similar shape in Jerf el-Ahmar, Urfa-Yeni Mahalle, and Kilisik Tepe (Schmidt 1974). One can also think of other localities in upper Mesopotamia that served as central meeting places for a region inhabited by seminomadic hunter-gatherer groups. Following a model from the Franco-Cantabrian Upper Palaeolithic, when mobile population groups under the necessity of securing their survival roamed through their own territories and had their central cave sanctuaries, a similar function for Göbekli could be considered. The painted caves perhaps formed "memorial places" over many generations. Following Hodder's idea of "history houses" in Çatalhöyük, which reflect the relationship between religious symbolism and power and property (Hodder 2006:165–168), these stimulated the excavator to see the role of Göbekli as "constructed memorial place." The "commemorative place" could be interpreted as focal point for the collective memory of social groups living in an area that describes a radius of 200 km around the site (Schmidt 2010).

Such far-reaching hypotheses, which do not take the term "templum" into consideration, provoke some contradictions, as presented by E. B. Banning in his thorough analysis of all architectural and symbolic evidences characterizing the special buildings in the late PPNA site of Göbekli III and settlement patterns of other Early Neolithic sites in upper Mesopotamia and in the Jazira. For him it is out of the question that the enclosures served not only an exclusively religious function but also represent "people's houses." His alternative hypothesis demonstrates that the monumental structures were residences. The imagery in the houses could both depict clan emblems and reflect memories of this social group. But it is always questionable to interpret social and cultural phenomena from the remote past with apparent parallels from recent ethnographic observations.

The possibility has been proposed that the normal occupation was situated in still unexplored parts of the site as seen in other PPNA sites (such as Jerf el-Ahmar or Çayönü). But a geomagnetic survey revealed altogether 200 monoliths in addition to enclosures A–F around 15 others of the same monumentality and installation. Because the site of Karahan in the Tektek dağları displays a similar assemblage of monumental buildings furnished with the same monolithic pillars and sculpture, this settlement type could indeed be characteristic of this phase in upper Mesopotamia.

The author's suggestion that the T pillars' function was also to support the beams of a roof is comprehensible by the fact that a prototype of the round structures in Mureybet IIIA shows an elaborate roof construction. Other special buildings in Jerf el-Ahmar and Nevalı Çori have been also roofed. In Göbekli, the densely arranged enclosures (structure A and E have been cut into the rock) revealed no installations of drainage to avoid heavy rains from transforming the interior into pools.

Arguments for the domestic use of the site are evident. The abundant animal bones found in the fill of the enclosures cannot be only the remnants of ritual meetings where amounts of roast venison were consumed. Stone mortars and tools attest to food processing, and the lack of fireplaces and ovens in the enclosures can be explained by their location in Nevalı Çori III. There, only house 6 contained two hearths and a "roasting pit," which normally were found outside the houses. The residents of Göbekli would have had access to a spring at the foot of the ridge, and in large cisternlike features, rainfall could be collected. Parts of the rocky surface are covered with the debris of lithics. The frequency of glossed sickle blades—harvest implements—in the wide range of flint tools attests not only to "all stages of domestic activities" but underscores also the importance of the place as a production center of flint tools. Considering all aspects, the elaborately designed buildings justifiably were dedicated to both social-communal activities and ritual ceremonies of a family or clan.

The interpretation as a "regional ritual center," consisting of sole sanctuaries with no or only restricted habitation where hunter-gatherers met for periodic cultic ceremonies, is still in dispute. Both the author's critical suggestions and future research will hopefully find a resolution of the outstanding questions.

Primary villages of the "round building phase" in the region called the "Golden Triangle" since Mureybétien revealed specially built structures that normally share the same portion of the village as the domestic semisubterranean huts. Some of them in Qermez Dere have features, such as clay pillars around a stone core and the laying of human skulls, that suggest a supradomestic element. Sculptured fancy stone pestles in Abu Hureyra, Çayönü, Göbekli Tepe, Jerf el-Ahmar, Mureybet, and Nemrik 9, shaped mainly as bird heads in combination with the depiction of snakes, raptors, and predators, are significant symbolic features for the Early Neolithic imagery. Elaborately constructed round structures at Jerf el-Ahmar and Tell 'Abr 3 have been described as *bâtiment communautaire*, which by virtue of their decoration including stelae in the shape of raptors prefigure architectural characteristics of the following PPNB period. With the transition to the new Neolithic lifestyle on the basis of food production, which is marked also by the process of increasing settlement sophistication and a varied range of building types, rectilinear structures are now representing the developed type of fully sedentary communities. The settlement pattern is now characterized by storage facilities, workshops, and isolated buildings of supradomestic nature, which included also a religious function, as in Çayönü and Nevalı Çori and to some extent also in Göbekli IIB. The tradition of filling an abandoned cult area with debris and the phenomenon of burying ritual objects as in Sumerian Mesopotamia (*Riemchengebäude* of Uruk) is seen in the special buildings since PPNA, as manifested in Çayönü and Nevalı Çori. Along with the "food production revolution" since the middle of the ninth millennium BC, there is a change in the consciousness of the society that becomes apparent in new rituals and beliefs. As a result of a psychoevolution, the new concept is coinciding with the erection of monumental public buildings separated from ordinary habitation and the emergence of a gradually changing iconography. In the art, human representations depicting supernatural beings are now predominating the former figural images of wild animals of the archaic Stone Age hunter-gatherer world.

Between the Aceramic Neolithic sedentary communities of the "Golden Triangle" and the earliest urban development in lower Mesopotamia there exists a time gap that still lacks a better knowledge of its elusive ritual and symbolic world. The concept of developed Pre-Pottery Neolithic B sites such as Çayönü and Nevalı Çori that have clear indications of a stratified social structure, the presence of monumental cult buildings outside of the residential area, and complex symbolism can comprehensibly be considered as the forerunner of the later Mesopotamian temple city.

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Banning is right that interpretations of cult buildings in the Neolithic of the Middle East have gone in opposed directions in recent decades. Just as there was increasing embrace of ritual functions for large PPNA and PPNB buildings at many sites in the Levantine and northern Mesopotamian region, so it became clear that at Çatalhöyük, Mellaart's supposed shrines were all houses. In fact, however, over recent years there has been some blurring of the distinction between cult and domestic at Çatalhöyük in the identification of "history houses" (Hodder and Pels 2010). The notion of "history house" retains the idea that there are indeed some special buildings at Çatalhöyük (what Mellaart would have termed shrines) but also retains the idea that they are houses. These special history houses are more elaborate than other houses, have more burials beneath the floors, and are rebuilt over longer periods. These houses clearly served ritual functions for other houses (e.g., acting as central burial houses), although they had no other role in controlling production, exchange, or storage as far as we can see so far. Perhaps the idea that there are in the Neolithic of the Middle East "great houses" that are both domestic and ritual allows a less oppositional approach to Göbekli and other sites discussed by Banning. He is surely right that we need to revisit the too-easy assumption that there were always absolute distinctions between cult and domestic buildings. The degree of separation needs to be explored contextually.

I would of course defer to Klaus Schmidt for any discussion of the stratigraphy and phasing at Göbekli. He is to be congratulated in his openness in encouraging others to visit and attempt to interpret his amazing finds. But clearly identifying whether there are any non-"temple" buildings contemporary with the major enclosures D and E and so forth will be key in deciding the functions of the enclosures. Overall, until a clear understanding of the stratigraphy of the site has been published and the main enclosures have been linked to other parts of the site, it seems too early to say what Göbekli is. I know that Klaus Schmidt is keen to address these issues in a site that is technically very challenging to excavate.

Also important will be his continued examination of the enclosures themselves and in particular the "benches" or walls around them. These stone and sometimes internally plastered walls link the large T-shaped pillars around the circumference of the enclosures. They give the impression of being set into earlier versions of the enclosures—building within building as at many sites in the Middle East (e.g., 'Ain Mallaha and Qermez Dere). One could call this the Babushka doll process. Why are these surrounding walls gradually built inward? Klaus Schmidt has suggested to me that there may be burials behind the walls, and this seems to me intriguing and possible. What-

ever the specific purpose, the Babushka process is another version of the repetition of houses in one place that we see at Çatalhöyük and that I have argued is a wider and very early process of history making (Hodder 2007) in the Early Holocene in the Middle East (starting at least in the Natufian). However, this history making could occur in buildings whether they were ritual or domestic or both.

I was very struck on a recent visit to Göbekli by the fact that the massive central pillars are set into, well, hardly anything at all. In one enclosure, at least, the 5.5-m-high monolith with carvings showing a belt and loin cloth was set into a very shallow hollow. This suggests to me that the central monoliths must have been supported by transverse posts, probably incorporated into a roof. The roof may itself have had a support function. Although the presence or absence of a roof does not determine the function of the enclosures, a roof at least makes a domestic function possible.

Overall, then, I welcome Banning's substantively argued reminder that we should not jump to conclusions about a supposed separation between cult and the domestic in substantial buildings in the Neolithic of the Middle East and his demonstration that the labor involved does not necessarily imply large-scale social differentiation. I look forward to Klaus Schmidt's continued work to try and settle the interpretive issues raised.

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Ritual is a seductive topic for archaeologists. Researchers are rewarded, or at least professionally recognized, for identifying the earliest, the most complex, and shedding light onto the rich and varied worlds of the past and present practices that are grouped together as ritual and religion. At Göbekli Tepe, which is for all intents and purposes the Stonehenge of 2010, we are faced with a striking case study that challenges existing economic and social models. Because of the physical scale of Göbekli Tepe as well as the permanence of the large stone pillars, it is understandable that researchers would reach toward examples of the classical period and argue that these structures were temples and regional centers of ritual.

It is for this reason alone that Banning's analysis of Göbekli Tepe is timely and important, for it shifts our engagement with the past from that of assigning ritual terms, such as "temple," to developing a more nuanced and detailed consideration of Neolithic social life, including what must have been intertwined aspects of ritual and the domestic and how these were materialized. Detailed discussion of the relationship and analysis of the Neolithic Near Eastern ritual landscape are long overdue, as previous reconstructions have tended to look inward at a single site with limited consideration of how examples inform us about the short-term regional progression let alone the long-term development of civilizations.

I am in general agreement with Banning's argument that the labeling of Göbekli Tepe as a temple and ritual center is largely assumed rather than demonstrated. In saying this I do not intend to minimize the importance of this site, the skills of the archaeologists involved in this excellent field research, or the scale of the architecture. Elsewhere (Kuijt 2005), I argue that it is the task of individual excavators using terms such as "temple" or "ritual center" to explicitly outline how a specific pattern differs from other known patterns at the site and, just as importantly, why this patterning is sufficient to warrant the labeling of a structure or site as being ritually focused. Moving toward this, Schmidt (2005*b*) presents a working list of objects and iconographical motifs that he views as important to understanding possible shared relationships between Göbekli Tepe and other settlements.

At the same time, however, I think that we have gotten ahead of ourselves in searching for ritual centers rather than developing interpretative models that recognize the coexistence and integration of ritual, economy, and residence in Neolithic life. I believe that further study is required before arguing that specific structures were built and used for *dedicated* ritual purposes let alone applying classical terms such as "temple." As with the ethnographic big house of the Pacific Northwest Coast first-nation groups, the PPN Göbekli Tepe people may have viewed the remarkable structures as a spatial location of ritual practice, residential activity, and the domestic realm. Recent research (Hodder 2006; Kuijt 2008; Verhoeven 2002*a*) on Neolithic village life increasingly highlights how ritual practice, everyday life, and death not only coexisted in Neolithic communities but were deeply intertwined.

At the same time, Göbekli Tepe is remarkably different from other Neolithic sites, so how are we to advance our understanding of one of the most remarkable prehistoric sites known in the world? There are several fundamental unresolved questions that researchers have yet to address. Some of these questions are data and methodologically oriented, including, Was this site used year round or seasonally, In what ways was it a residential site, and How were the structures constructed? Beyond these questions are two more fundamental questions: How was labor controlled, and What does this tell us about the nature of authority at Göbekli Tepe? While Banning convincingly argues for smaller groups (fewer than 20 people) being able to accomplish many building-related activities, this still highlights that significant amounts of dedicated labor were required at Göbekli Tepe. This requires a shared goal, organization, and a means of controlling labor. Banning is correct in arguing that the scale of labor does not require an institutional scale of control and hierarchy, as is required by the use of the term "temple." If the construction of Göbekli Tepe did not require institutional authority, then how was labor organized? Beyond the issue of construction, if these buildings existed as something similar

to Pacific Northwest Coast houses, or alternatively as temples, then how were the buildings used? It is striking to note that we have no detailed idea—repeat, *no idea*—of how the structures at Göbekli Tepe were used. Banning's article moves us toward a long-overdue discussion and debate of this question and shifts the point of discussion toward anthropologically informed models of Near Eastern Neolithic social organization.

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The remarkable site of Göbekli Tepe and the indefatigable efforts of Klaus Schmidt in excavating and interpreting the site have recently emerged at the center of intense scholarly debate. Banning's contribution is a welcome addition to this body of scholarship and tackles one of the biggest challenges, not only for the site but for archaeology everywhere. Banning asks how we identify ritual in the material record and how those logics are pursued across a range of evidentiary materials. How is ritual different, if at all, from other daily practices, and can archaeologists radically reexamine our categorical thinking to blur the boundaries of quotidian and ritual practice, producing more complex and richly textured accounts?

The Anatolian Neolithic is an apposite case study for such inquiries and may even force archaeologists to rethink their old taxonomies of "ritual" and "domestic" elsewhere. Banning attempts to do just that with his careful reevaluation of the Göbekli data, starting with the question of whether the stone structures now exposed are indeed temples or if they could also be considered domestic buildings. He then moves into a larger debate about the nature of the site as having a settlement component or whether Göbekli operated solely as a centrifugal religious center, drawing pilgrims from a wide region. Banning takes issue in large part with Schmidt's explicitly religious interpretations of the site but also acknowledges that since his paper was submitted, Schmidt (2009) himself has begun to consider the possibility of limited residential usage. Given the vast density of lithics that carpet the landscape of Göbekli, not to mention the density of faunal remains (Peters and Schmidt 2004) and cereals within the building fills along with other cultural materials, most archaeologists would have a hard time explaining away this substantial evidence for human occupation. The real proof for the extent of habitation at the site will become more apparent only when the areas adjacent to the stone circles are fully excavated, specifically the cellular structures that now exist on the northern terraces of the site.

Since its discovery Göbekli has occupied a special status on the basis of its incredible architecture, iconography, and distinct geographical setting. Yet that position must now be reexamined alongside other related sites at Nevalı Çori, Hamzan Tepe, and Sefer Tepe, but most significantly at Karahan, where numerous smaller T pillars are exposed in what is today an arid and dramatic landscape. However, Banning rightly asserts that what we currently see might not be an accurate reflection of the Holocene landscape and available water resources. One novel contribution in the paper is Banning's analysis of potential construction and labor outlays entailed in erecting the stone T pillars. While the utility of the ethnographic examples is largely heuristic rather than explanatory, it does provide us some parameters within which to think about the numbers of people involved in construction, which may in turn lend some insight into the density of site occupation.

Of the many issues one could draw from the paper, I'd like to conclude by focusing on the idea of ritual at home. Archaeologists are typically predisposed to targeting evocative representational data for crafting ritual hypotheses rather than looking more closely at depositional practices or mundane activities such as flint knapping, food preparation, or even house construction and maintenance. Our colleagues working in European prehistory and the Americas have been more innovative here (Mills and Walker 2008; Pollard 2001). In this paper Banning pulls together some useful examples from other Middle Eastern Neolithic sites, suggesting we recast our gaze toward the caching of ground stone, deposits of obsidian, arrangements of animal bones, and repeated installations of bowls. These repetitive practices constitute material indexes of ritualized practice. Çatalhöyük is relevant here because the salience of quotidian repetitive practice has already been well described (Hodder 2006; Hodder and Cessford 2004), and evidence for religion and ritual is a focal point of ongoing research (Hodder 2010). At Çatalhöyük, Mellaart's notion of discrete "houses" and "shrines" has faded, and we now recognize that most buildings draw from a repertoire of practices and things: cached lithics, repetitive wall plastering, paintings, burials under platforms, installations of faunal materials, and so on. Just as the quotidian has been reconfigured to encompass meaning-laden and ritualized elements, so too have typically "religious" objects been reevaluated through detailed spatial and contextual analyses. For figurines (Meskell 2008; Meskell et al. 2008; Nakamura and Meskell 2009), we suggest that their making, circulation, use, and discard was an everyday occurrence at the site. Rather than buried in niches or with the dead, some 2,000 expediently made figurines are found in middens, external areas, and building fills, suggesting a highly mobile set of daily practices. Because most were never fired, clay figurine production can be seen as momentary and highly repetitive, though certainly not insignificant. Just as the "symbolic" can easily partake in the domestic sphere, as Banning has unequivocally shown, so too can the objects archaeologists once considered the primary markers of religion be reinterpreted as artifacts of the everyday. What makes

these interpretations possible, and indeed more plausible, is the implementation of more rigorous contextual analysis.

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In the early years of archaeology, in excavating sites the interest of the archaeologists were mainly on "special" architectural remains such as palaces, temples, and fortification systems, mostly overlooking domestic structures unless there was something special about them. Likewise, it was a custom to consider any odd find a cult object. Later, in the 1950s, there was a reaction to this approach; not only the daily life of common people came into the agenda of archaeologists, but it became almost humiliating to call everything that looked unusual a cult object. In this respect, Braidwood was the one who held a firm, unyielding stand rejecting calling all large building temples and all good-looking things cult objects; he considered the Neolithic communities so unsophisticatedly simple that the presence of temples or cult building was out of the question. From this standpoint, before the recovery of the skull building, the flagstone and terrazzo buildings at Çayönü were described as "broad pavement buildings" (Çambel and Braidwood 1980:46), restraining from appending any function. Later, however, even he gave up.

The author's comment that "the identification of cult buildings is often equivocal" is a fact in many instances; however, for Göbekli, this would hardly be the case. Reading through the paper evoked an analogy: a researcher, sociologist, archaeologist, or architect monitoring a modern town visits a number of houses, some of which may have sacred objects such as icons, and goes into a cathedral or a mosque and still assumes that it as a normal house because he did not meet God there to talk with him. In a house, you might find an icon or two, a cross of reasonable size, or even a horseshoe; but in the same space there are kitchen utensils, storage facilities, cosmetics. In the temple, you find a colossal altar but not a lady's cosmetic set.

The distinction between the houses and templelike cult buildings could best be observed at Çayönü, as it is one of the most extensively excavated sites of its period, making it possible to detect functional areas within the habitation. Of course there are houses at Çayönü, many more then the special buildings, but they differ clearly from each other not only by the contents but also in their plan, their structural details, and their location in the settlement, in exactly the same way a home differs from a cathedral. Of course there were indicators of symbolic ritual in the houses, though notably different from those in the temples. Simple clay female and or animal figurines that are remarkably different from the elegant finds in nondomestic places marked domestic contexts.

We have difficulties in understanding how it is possible to compare simple communities of the current time that have not changed their mode of living for thousands of years with the Neolithic cultures of the near East. The latter, 9,000 years ago, was able to attain a cultural level that neither of the former achieved in time; moreover, the setup of Near Eastern communities was extremely dynamic, going through profound changes every century, improvising high technologies, paving the road to urban and state formation.

Likewise, the author compares horns or skulls on modern-day village houses with the bucrania in the Neolithic temples; all over the Near East, including Anatolia, a simple hunter would proudly be hanging the horns of the animal he has hunted on the wall of his house; but there are no villagers' houses with horns and skulls on benches in the houses where small babies are expected to crawl. This all leads to the fact that the ethnographical knowledge should be used with caution, mostly for certain details but not for overly simplistic generalizations to compare two societies that have nothing in common.

One other point needs to be clarified: the distinction between cult area and temple. On a number of occasions we had stressed the difference in the belief systems of north Syria–southeast Anatolia and central Anatolia (Özdoğan 2001). In the latter area, mainly at Çatalhöyük, there are no temples; any domestic building can attain a sacred value, but the basal plan of the structure is exactly the same as other domestic buildings. However, in the former zone, even if nothing is found inside, their plans, setting, and every detail is different from the houses.

To conclude, the only point on which I agree with the author's assessment is that Göbekli Tepe is not a central cult center something like a pilgrimage place. However, it is a settlement site with domestic structures, although all what has been exposed are what we can consider pristine temples that evidently are much more impressive and numerous than all that has been excavated at other contemporary sites.

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Banning asserts two points. The first is a general assertion that not all elaborate Neolithic buildings of the kind often considered "public" buildings (such as those at Göbekli) are "temples" in the sense of sacred special-purpose public buildings. The second is a specific assertion that the elaborate Neolithic buildings (i.e., "temples") at Göbekli are probably domestic structures. This latter is the one that Banning seems particularly intent on judging from his explicit prediction that

they will ultimately prove so and the amount of effort Banning devotes to mustering data to justify that prediction. Logically, the general assertion must prove true in order for the specific assertion to be true; but it is not necessary for the specific one to be true in order for the general one to nevertheless be true. Banning makes a convincing case for the general assertion; he is less successful in making a convincing case for the specific assertion concerning Göbekli.

I emphatically agree with Banning's general assertion, and I commend Banning for raising the issue. As Banning notes, I have always avoided formally attaching any kind of functionally specific label to the public buildings at Hallan Çemi, or for that matter those at any other Neolithic site (e.g., see Rosenberg and Erim-Özdoğan 2011). However, privately I always thought that with the possible exception of those public buildings that were clearly the locus of mortuary activities—and not necessarily even all of those—they were most likely general/multipurpose public buildings that either housed sodalities or functioned in a manner akin to what are often referred to as men's houses (in societies where that institution is present), with or without the gender restrictions inherent in that specific label. In other words, it has always been my opinion that these public buildings (including the ones at Göbekli) were the locus of activity for suprafamily groups (which may or may not have been gender restricted) and at which some highly variable combination of social, economic, political, and ritual activities were planned, if not conducted, and at which the paraphernalia associated with such activities may have been stored. The specific combination of activities carried out within the public building(s) present at any given site and their forms were almost certainly locally variable and governed by the local culture of the group inhabiting any specific site (see Rosenberg 2004).

Unfortunately, Banning overplays his hand by focusing so intently on the Göbekli structures. He obscures the more tenable point that is his general assertion by intertwining it so thoroughly with the much less tenable specifics of what he proposes the Göbekli level III buildings actually functioned as. The fact that the Çatalhöyük "shrines" turned out to be domestic structures only means that elaborate buildings *can* be domestic, not that the Göbekli ones were. Whether or not any such actually were is dictated by locally specific facts that bear on the question. Space permits just two brief points to be made at this time that support the conclusion that the Göbekli structures were public and not domestic structures.

The first is that we have a clear distinction between public and domestic buildings at the relatively nearby site of Nevalı Çori, a site that likely represents the same cultural entity as Göbekli, albeit at a later point in time. Banning addresses the parallels between the Göbekli structures and Nevalı Çori public building by arguing that the latter perhaps evoked an earlier domestic form. Occam's razor, however, argues that they are exactly what they appear to be: the same type of (public) building.

The second is that we do in fact have clear examples of likely domestic architecture at Göbekli in the II/III (IIb) structures. Banning uses them to discount Schmidt's assertion that Göbekli was not a "settlement," but the existence of such potential domestic structures cuts both ways. If they are typical domestic structures for that time and place, what does that make the level III structures if not public structures?

Hunter-gatherer bands are invariably part of a larger breeding population held together by some cultural mechanism. The fact that one population (e.g., Hallan Çemi/Demirköy/Körtik) with its culture lived in small, permanent, autonomous settlements held together by trade and feasting does not mean that another population inhabiting a different local environment was not organized in a fission-fusion system of ephemeral settlements revolving around a more permanent central place. Moreover, the presence of domestic structures in II/III does not automatically disqualify Göbekli from being such a central place, because it is not necessary for that central place to remain the same over time. As noted by Banning, the architectural trappings of what Schmidt considers public buildings are present at other sites in the immediate area. Thus, it is entirely possible that they functioned as the central place during intervals (e.g., II/III) when Göbekli reverted to a more "normal" site.

In sum, Banning should be commended for making a point that has thus far generally been ignored: that elaborately decorated Neolithic public buildings likely were much more than something as categorically simple as "temples." Unfortunately, his specific assertion concerning the domestic nature of the Göbekli III buildings is simply not convincing.

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Framing People, Framing Performance: Buildings and Ritual at Göbekli Tepe

Ted Banning's paper discusses the functions and meanings of buildings at Göbekli Tepe in order to highlight potential problems with current interpretations regarding the nature and material correlates of ritual in the Neolithic. Clearly, this is important work. Furthermore, it is refreshing to see an approach that carefully uses ethnographic and anthropological data to aid the interpretation of prehistoric ritual and religion. Such use of these fundamental sources of information about human behavior is all too often lacking in accounts of prehistoric communities in the Near East.

For archeologists, one of the main problems when dealing with ritual in prehistory is how to recognize it. As Banning has explained, I have used the concept of "framing" for this, referring to the establishment of specific ritual contexts. How-

ever, such differentiation—in time and/or space—is not to be equated with the creation of the sacred within the profane. As is now well known, for many "holistic" societies the distinction between sacred and profane is meaningless. Among other things, ritual symbolism seems to indicate such holism in the Neolithic of the Near East as well. Yet it is evident that some moments or contexts are more sacred or profane than others. In other words, sacred and profane are part of a continuum, and framing can occur anywhere on this sequence. Likewise, there is a continuum between low and high (or dominant) ritual symbolism. Archeologists are normally only able—initially—to delineate and access contexts of high symbolism. We immediately recognize decorated human skulls, large statuary, "special buildings," and so forth as ritual objects, as framed elements. We should not assume, however, that these were the only sacred contexts in ancient societies but rather acknowledge that these are the most convenient analytic points of entry for *us*. Once "obvious' ritual contexts and objects have been identified, further analysis may reveal less apparent elements of ritual and religion. In this respect it should be noted that I have never regarded structured depositions as the result of ritual only. In fact, in the paper Banning refers to with regard to this, I am critical of a direct link between structured deposition and ritual.

The problematic distinction between sacred and profane is just one example of our inclination to create and think in oppositions, such as the distinction between nature and culture, foragers and farmers, and so on. This leaves no room for intermediate categories or for thinking "outside the box." Buildings at Göbekli Tepe, for instance, become a problem as they do not fit within a neat classification of houses versus "temples."

Are the buildings some sort of hitherto undocumented symbolically elaborate houses? Perhaps, but as yet there is no strong evidence for day-to-day domestic structures and activities, leaving aside the occasional mortar. Note that even if more mortars, hearths, stone vessels, and so on are found, this will not automatically solve our "problem," as such items may have had ritual functions only. Moreover, the monumentality of the (level III) buildings and the symbolic elaborateness indicate a highly unusual degree of spirituality for houses. The paper's examples of ritual symbolism in Neolithic houses at other sites are of a quite different order. However, on site level, the huge amounts of domestic refuse at Göbekli Tepe do seem to point to "normal" daily life and residences, probably in unexcavated parts of the site.

We are all eager to solve the mysteries of Göbekli Tepe, but apparently it is still too early to define the functions and meanings of the level III and II buildings. There is a need for more horizontal exposures, more floors (now reached in level III buildings C and D), chemical residue analyses, microstratigraphy, and so on. It has to be acknowledged, however, that traces of primary use were probably disturbed or removed because of abandonment practices (such as intentional filling). Yet in a sense it does not matter whether we call the buildings at Göbekli Tepe temples or houses. What really matters is that there are monumental and visually powerful (canonical) symbolic structures at a very early date. For the people at Göbekli Tepe, a distinction between houses and temples may have been meaningless. It seems that first and foremost they inhabited a world in which animals played a central symbolic role. The spaces with iconography pertaining to "dangerous" animals seem to represent deliberate attempts to express both relations and distinctions between nature and culture. The animals on the anthropomorphic T-shaped pillars, for instance, are themselves but are also part of humans or humanoids. Some of the sculptures even seem to crawl out of the pillars and walls, which thus can be seen as liminal elements "betwixt and between" different worlds. Perhaps the most important lesson is that oppositions provide general frames of reference for being in the world. However, for archeologists and prehistoric communities alike, these are not enough to deal with the dynamics and complexities of social life.

Reply

I greatly appreciate the thoughtful comments by the reviewers and commentators and the opportunity to debate issues surrounding Göbekli Tepe specifically and specialized ritual places more generally. Many of the comments bear on epistemological aspects of the identification of ritual or dedicated ritual spaces, often with implications far broader than their application to the Neolithic of Anatolia or the site of Göbekli Tepe. Others focus on the contextualization of the evidence, the place of Göbekli in a historical trajectory and a geographical context, and the appropriateness (or not) of ethnographic analogies or parallels at other sites. The growing diversity of views about this site emphasizes that most interesting interpretation in archaeology is inductive and that inductive support for this or that hypothesis varies in its strength and relevance.

There is growing support, at least among this group of commentators, for the notion that there must have been residential occupation of some sort at Göbekli Tepe, either throughout its history (Akkermans, Hauptmann, Meskell, Özdoğan, Rosenberg, Verhoeven), or at least during IIB/IIA (Baird). As I noted in the revision of my paper, Klaus Schmidt (2009) himself seems to be coming around to this view in a limited way. Some (Baird, Hauptmann, Hodder) also expressed support for my suggestion that the level III buildings were probably roofed, while some called for evidence to test whether they were roofed or not.

The majority of commentators also agree that the sacred/mundane dichotomy is too simplistic and may not have been appropriate in the Neolithic context (Akkermans, Baird, Hodder, Kuijt, Meskell, Verhoeven)—"a distinction between

houses and temples may have been meaningless" (Verhoeven)—while Akkermans and Rosenberg defend the idea that there were "special buildings" but do not assume that these were "temples" in the conventional sense. Several authors in a volume that appeared after my last revisions (Hodder 2010) also blur the sacred and mundane, sometimes with particular reference to Çatalhöyük, but others more generally. Most particularly, Van Huyssteen (2010) suggests that "we should not expect to discover some clearly demarcated, separate domain that we could identify as 'religion.' . . . Not just special artistic objects and artifacts but daily material life itself (houses and other structures) must have been deeply infused with spirituality" (117).

The readiness among some of the commentators to see residential occupation at Göbekli leads to questions about the site's status as a center of pilgrimage. Originally, it was the alleged lack of residential occupation that was supposed to support this interpretation most strongly, but Akkermans and Rosenberg argue that the site could have served as both a settlement and a central place. As Baird also notices, one could well ask why we need to talk about a ritual center if the site should turn out to be a settlement and, perhaps, is much the same as Karahan Tepe and other sites in the region. Nothing in evidence disproves that Göbekli or any other site was a ritual center, and it is a reasonable hypothesis that Early Holocene hunter-gatherers focused on particular places in the landscape, but it is at least as plausible that it was just a regionally important settlement among other somewhat similar settlements.

Both Professor Schmidt's temple hypothesis and my suggested alternative for the nature of the buildings gain some inductive support from evidence. However, some of the evidence does not strongly lean one way or the other. I rebutted Schmidt's claim that there is no evidence for domestic occupation at Göbekli because he was using this claim as inductive support for the temple hypothesis. Most of the commentators agree with me that the site actually shows evidence for "domestic" debris that we should not ignore. However, as Baird, Verhoeven, and Belfer-Cohen and Goring-Morris point out, the presence of domestic debris at the site does not unequivocally support my alternative for a variety of reasons. Such debris could accumulate in and around temples during construction episodes, during the temples' use, especially if that involved feasting, and also if the fill in the temples came from (unidentified) residential areas at the site. The mortars found at the site could be used in rituals or to prepare pigments, foods, or pharmaceuticals used in ritual. On the other hand, the massive quantities of debris from flintknapping, food preparation, and food consumption do seem a bit much to attribute only to "lunch bags to feed the laborers and guardians" (Goring-Morris and Belfer-Cohen). Citing Occam's razor, as Rosenberg does in another context, I argue that it is much more parsimonious to explain all this debris and the mortars as the result of "ordinary" residential use of either the large level III buildings themselves or earlier or contemporary buildings elsewhere on the site. I would concede that this debris supports my hypothesis only somewhat more strongly than alternative explanations for its presence, but equally it means that the alleged lack of domestic occupation should no longer be cited in support of the temple hypothesis.

As various commentators (Akkermans, Baird, Goring-Morris and Belfer-Cohen, Rosenberg) are correct to point out, an admission that not all ritual or symbolically charged material culture is associated with special buildings does not logically exclude the possibility that some special buildings exist. In fact, in my paper I stated that "some Neolithic buildings may indeed have had some specialized ritual functions or particular religious significance." My summoning of evidence and argument to interrogate claims about the Göbekli buildings had to do with the criteria by which archaeologists identify such "special" buildings, whether they are temples or not. It was not my goal to argue that ritual or symbolism were never concentrated in special places or buildings but only to emphasize that evidence for ritual or significant investments in symbolism does not, in itself, constitute adequate support for the identification of nonresidential dedicated shrines or holy places. Baird, despite disagreeing with many of my specific claims, reiterates this point. Somewhat as with the "domestic" refuse previously discussed, evidence of ritual and art makes a somewhat ambivalent inductive contribution; the probability of finding evidence for ritual or art *given that* a building was a temple might be fairly high (but note Hauptmann's cautionary note with regard to Eridu), but the probability of finding it in "ordinary" residential contexts may not be much lower. Thus, some of the commentators, and Klaus Schmidt himself, additionally make reference to the scale and effort of the symbolic efforts with the implication that such monumental examples are more probable in dedicated or specialized ritual spaces than in domestic contexts. These factors do indeed lend additional inductive support to the temple hypothesis but by no means certainty, as works of monumental scale do nonetheless occur ethnographically in some houses, and not only those of the Northwest Coast.

The scale issue brings to mind the suggestion by Goring-Morris and Belfer-Cohen that I ignore or belittle "the scale and scope of the endeavors." I certainly do not ignore them, as I subject them for the first time to quantitative scrutiny. Nor do I belittle them, as I explicitly stated that "I do not intend to trivialize the effort they represent." Because it was very clear that the massiveness and monumentality of level III were key influences on the prevailing interpretation of the site, I felt it was crucial to evaluate the implication that these endeavours were beyond the scope of fairly small social groups, such as a clan. Hodder, Kuijt, and Meskell appreciate this, and Kuijt goes on to elaborate some new questions that the potentially smaller labor forces raise.

Some commentators more generally question my use of analogy as "overly simplistic generalizations to compare two societies that have nothing in common" (Özdoğan) or that

"disregards altogether the issues of time depth and the diachronic evolution of cultural traditions" (Goring-Morris and Belfer Cohen). The latter commentators have also attacked the "tyranny of the ethnographic record" in another paper (Belfer-Cohen and Goring-Morris 2009), where they correctly point out that the lack of an ethnographic example for a particular practice does not discount its possible existence in the past. However, analogies, ethnographic and otherwise, are inescapable in archaeology. Here my goal was not to generalize, and certainly not to claim that the people who built and used Göbekli were *the same as* any of the ethnographic examples cited. Nor would I accept the characterization of either Göbekli's community or the analogues I chose as "simple communities" (Özdoğan) with the neoevolutionary implications of that wording. Rather, my goal was to counterbalance the analogical arguments inherent in the Schmidt interpretation, which depends explicitly or implicitly on analogies to Nevalı Çori, Easter Island, Stonehenge, and temples of the Bronze and Iron Age Near East and classical Greece. Analogy involves the careful consideration of similarities and differences between the source and the subject (Wylie 2002*c*: 147). My selection of ethnographic and archaeological sources in which ritual or sometimes substantial investments in monumental art took place in domestic contexts was only meant to show that there are other ways to interpret such phenomena that do not depend on the existence of dedicated temples. As Meskell notes, this is rather heuristic. Of course, it does not necessitate that the Göbekli case was similar, and it is true that many of these cases were drawn rather ahistorically from a wide range of contexts quite disconnected from Early Neolithic Anatolia. However, if domestic rituals and residential "art" are found in a broad range of cultures—including not only ones that are historically associated or are economically or technologically similar to the subject culture—then this implies a rather widespread distribution of such practices—albeit not a universal one—that makes it more plausible that the art in the subject culture could also have been associated with domestic rituals. Analogies are strengthened not just by the number and extent of similarities between the source and subject but also by the diversity of sources (Wylie 2002*c*:150). Thus, the analogy's strength depends, in a way, on differences as well as similarities. It is prudent to evaluate the likely relevance of the differences to the interpretation at issue; are they such as to suggest that the similarities are accidental, incidental, or illusory? The fact that domestic ritual occurs in such a variety of contexts shows that differences in economy, for example, are not as relevant as other factors. Incidentally, Goring-Morris and Belfer-Cohen themselves casually employ decontextualized analogy—to kivas.

As noted, the prevailing interpretation also depends on analogies and, as Baird and Rosenberg point out, some of these analogies appear quite strong. A key one is the analogy between Göbekli's level III buildings and the Nevalı Çori "cult building III." As mentioned in my paper, the special status of the Nevalı Çori building depends on its contrast with other buildings at the site that we can plausibly infer are houses. The Göbekli buildings indeed show several strong similarities to this "cult building" but also several relevant points of difference. If Schmidt's claim (bolstered by the geophysical survey) that the large oval buildings were the only, or nearly only, building type in level III is correct, this is quite different from the situation at Nevalı Çori, where the "cult building" is a rare or solitary building surrounded by ordinary houses. Another difference is chronological; the Nevalı Çori buildings are almost certainly several centuries later than Göbekli's level III and are likely contemporary with level IIA instead. Furthermore, the houses at Nevalı Çori are also substantially different from any of the buildings found at Göbekli, including the probable houses of levels IIA and IIB, indicating that there were cultural and architectural differences between the two sites that weaken the assumption that "we know what the settlements and houses look like from this period" (Schmidt 2005*b*:14). We would not compare the pyramids at Giza with the Luxor Las Vegas Hotel without taking their very different contexts into account. Although the differences are obviously not as extreme, the apparently similar structure at Nevalı Çori does occur in a different context than that of Göbekli Tepe, and some of those differences are relevant to its interpretation. If it should turn out that there are small "ordinary" houses contemporary with the level III ovals at Göbekli, this would remove an important point of difference, as Rosenberg emphasizes.

Similarly, that "special buildings" at Jerf al-Ahmar, Çayönu, and other sites are never found without accompanying domestic structures is a relevant point of difference, unless, of course, it should be determined that some small house buildings (like those of IIB?) are contemporary with the level III buildings after all. The "special buildings" at most of these sites not only show similarities to but also differences from Göbekli's buildings in scale, arrangement, and detail. For example, one of Jerf al-Ahmar's shows substantial accommodation for storage while others at Dja'de al-Mughara and Çayönu are notable for their human remains; so far, at least, neither of these features is associated with the Göbekli buildings.

However, Baird in particular raises the question of whether it is necessary for a "special building" to stand out from contemporary domestic buildings at the same site or whether it can stand out from such buildings at other sites "in the same way." This is a critical aspect of Schmidt's argument, at least as originally presented, because it has no allowance for buildings other than the large oval ones in level III. If Göbekli were indeed the only site of its kind, one might see how it could have served as a focal point for hunter-gatherers scattered in small sites across the region. However, the fact that sites such as Karahan Tepe appear likely to be just as remarkable as Göbekli suggests that, by the standards of the Urfa region, the Göbekli buildings may not stand out at all. Somewhat as the Çatalhöyük "shrines" at the intrasite level, it is possible that at the regional level Urfa's Neolithic build-

ings varied in their size and elaboration, but along a continuum rather than falling into two distinct classes of structure. Because we have no evidence at all in the Urfa region for the "small temporary forager camps" that Akkermans mentions, the claim for distinctiveness of the Göbekli level III structures is based on comparisons with sites some distance away and where differences as well as similarities should contribute to evaluation of their inductive support for Schmidt's hypothesis.

We should also evaluate the possible reasons for similarities. Rosenberg and Goring-Morris and Belfer-Cohen take issue with my suggestion that the Nevalı Çori "cult building" and particularly its decorated T pillars may evoke earlier domestic structures such as the buildings in Göbekli's level III. While Rosenberg might be correct that Occam's razor would favor the explanation that they are the same thing, *if all else were equal*, as I point out above, they are not. The prevailing interpretation depends on a number of complicating assumptions that reduce parsimony. Furthermore, it is hardly unprecedented for ideologically charged institutions to evoke archaic prototypes. Most famously (and at risk of irony), classical archaeologists have long attributed the form of the classical Greek temple to that of the Mycenaean *megaron*, the most characteristic form for palaces and houses among the Greeks' ancestors (Müller 1944; Richter 1959:22), or the even older vernacular Greek longhouse (Tomlinson 1989). Possibly, Greek architects considered this the appropriate form for the house of a deity, even as their own houses had moved on to the courtyard type. "The 'Mycenaeans' must have found this type particularly appealing . . . and may even have taken it as their peculiar ancestral type which they wished to preserve and to use. It thus became the specifically Greek type, as it was also in classical times" (Müller 1944:348). To use another example, the medieval basilica had quite a different meaning than the ancient Roman basilica of its origins despite having a nearly identical plan.

Most of the analogies employed to support the Schmidt hypothesis are drawn from a range of Bronze Age and classical contexts that lack any historical continuity ("direct historical approach") with Göbekli and, in that sense, are just as decontextualized as the analogies I have selected. Given the relatively high intensity of research on the Hassunan and Halaf of northern Mesopotamia, it seems unlikely that we can attribute this lack of intervening examples of temples (cf. Hauptmann) simply to an unlucky sample. These sources of analogy are also considerably less diverse and come from societies in which there were well-developed political hierarchies, which are unlikely to have pertained at Göbekli and so are a major point of difference. As I noted in my paper, there is good reason to see a strong connection between formal temples, priesthoods, and the rise of states (see also Bloch 2008:2058; Frankfort 1948), so it is also a relevant difference. Given this disconnect between source and subject of analogies in the dominant hypothesis, it would seem unfair to claim that my use of Neolithic analogies ignores culture-historical trajectories (Goring-Morris and Belfer-Cohen). I specifically suggested that Göbekli's builders "were historically far closer to their hunter-gatherer heritage" than to these Bronze Age and later societies and cited statements by Schmidt as well as Goring-Morris and Belfer-Cohen that also emphasized these predecessors. However, it is impossible at present to cite very specific evidence concerning these ancestral groups because the Epipalaeolithic of most of Anatolia is poorly understood (Kartal 2003) and, in the Urfa district, completely unknown. Consequently, I drew on examples from Neolithic sites in Turkey and northern Syria and Iraq; many of these are later in date, but archaeologists have often emphasized continuity in their traditions (e.g., lithic industries and "skull cult").

Archaeologists can be predisposed to identify temples, as Kuijt implies, but further scrutiny often leads to these identifications being questioned or overturned. For example, the first archaeological discovery of an "Israelite four-room house" was originally taken for a temple, leading its excavator to carry out a church service in its ruins (Bunimovitz and Faust 2003:411; Wright 1978:149). Even seemingly more obvious temples of later periods are not always identified with certainty. Bietak (2003) notes that a number of Bronze Age buildings conventionally described as temples were likely a sort of banquet hall. This would qualify as a "special building" but not a temple in the usual sense even if rituals took place in it. Forest (1996) goes even further, describing Early Dynastic public buildings of Mesopotamia's Diyala region as "pseudo-temples." Forest (1999:2) thus describes interpretation of Nevalı Çori's "cult building" as "a major anachronism," and suggests (1996) that the large buildings at both Nevalı Çori and Çayönü "are not places of worship, that is to say constructions specifically intended to honor the presence of a divinity" (28).

In this context, Rosenberg's comments to the effect that "special buildings" could have a variety of purposes that differ from the conventional temple as place of worship are very welcome. As I indicate in the conclusion of my paper, too-ready identifications of "temples" could cause us to overlook other interesting possibilities, such as menstruation huts, war houses, chief's houses, and sodalities. Should my alternative hypothesis for the buildings of Göbekli level III prove incorrect, I would urge consideration of "special" uses for the buildings that are not limited to the conventional conception of temples as places of worship.

As for unconventional special buildings, Hodder's comment brings up the concept of "history houses" at Çatalhöyük. These in no way contradict my alternative hypothesis for Göbekli level III, as they are, unquestionably, houses. The fact that they have greater investments in symbolism, are more elaborate, exhibit more instances of "relic retrieval," or have more burials than other houses only increases the plausibility that they, as I also suggest, may have been the case at Göbekli, may have something to do with "house societies."

As several commentators note, only time will tell what was really going on at Göbekli Tepe. Klaus Schmidt's continuing

efforts there are critical, and I particularly look forward to new information about the status of level IIB and its relationship, if any can be discerned, to the level III structures. I appreciate the difficulty of carrying out this task under Göbekli's very trying circumstances, and Schmidt has earned all our gratitude for his commitment to the important work there.

—E. B. Banning

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