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Book Review of Religion, History, and Place in the Origin of Settled Life, edited by Ian Hodder

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An essential part of our humanity, as argued throughout this volume, is the urge to create intergenerational connections through both persistent and repetitive household routines, as well as through ritual practices that link the living, dead, and those yet to be born. These connections suggest efforts to imagine and construct aspects of transcendent communal identity that tie “history making” to religion.

Neolithic religion has featured prominently in Ian Hodder's thinking for the better part of a decade. This is the third volume he has edited focusing on this theme, with two previous books published by Cambridge University Press (2010 and 2014). Based on a series of international seminars and conferences centered on this subject, many of these events were held at Çatalhöyük, where Hodder has been directing excavations since 1993.

Chapters in this book have been influenced by contributions that appeared in the previous two books. Hodder's Introduction, for example, uses a model set forth in the 2014 volume by Barbara Mills to advance his thinking about the "history house" structures at Çatalhöyük. These structures are defined by continuity in architectural plans over time and are associated with numerous intramural burials and contain symbolic features including wall paintings, reliefs, and other installations. Specifically, Mills describes important parallels between the iconography, features, and architecture in these history houses and ethnographically documented society rooms used by sodalities at Zuni Pueblo in New Mexico. Hodder echoes Mills by describing sodalities as having a role in scaling up history making from household contexts to cross-community groups that draw from multiple households. Familiarity with the previous volumes certainly helped me to appreciate the cumulative development of ideas.

Eight of ten chapters focus on archaeological data primarily from Turkey, with Çatalhöyük featuring prominently in many. The remaining two chapters are geographically situated in the Levant (ch. 3) and the piedmont and highland areas of Iraq and Iran (ch. 2). Readers without a background in these regions' prehistoric sequences may experience some frustration as a key figure (figure 0.1) summarizing chronological relationships fails to include all the sites discussed in the chapters, and the map displaying site locations uses only numbers to designate individual sites with no key tying the numbers to site names (figure 0.2).

Several contributions provide innovations in how we look at the time-based sequences necessary to identify history making. Wendy Matthews (ch. 2) documents the repetition of household practices at several newly excavated sites in the central Zagros. She generates microstratigraphic, thin section profiles capable of charting patterns of phytolith distribution, geochemistry, and micromorphology. By 8,000 BCE, these microstratigraphic profiles attest to remarkable continuity in the uses of certain interior and exterior areas for specific activities. Nicola Lercar uses 3D-visualization techniques and digital archaeology to virtually rebuild the occupational sequences of Çatalhöyük's history houses (ch. 10).

The integration of functional and ritual spheres are productively explored by other contributors. Querns and hand stones used to process grain are widely viewed as the ultimate quotidian artifacts, implicated quite literally in the subsistence task of preparing a household's daily meals. But in the context of Building 77 at Çatalhöyük, the symbolic aspect of these tools is the focus of Christina Tsoraki's analysis (ch. 9). A large number of ground stone tools, some intentionally broken with pieces clustered in different parts of the room, were found in the excavation of the final phase of the building, during which it was intentionally infilled and "closed." The number of tools surpasses a single household assemblage, suggesting a commemorative event in which more than one household shared in history making. Mark Anspach (ch. 7) makes the case that hearths in the smaller rooms associated with living spaces at Aşikli Höyük emulate the hearth in Building T at the site, a structure presumed to have both public and ceremonial functions. These chapters examine the roles that objects and features, often considered primarily utilitarian, can have in symbolic spheres.

The collection demonstrates that not all history making is concerned with forging a shared, community-wide identity. Efforts to differentiate certain community subsets or contest communal histories can be discerned as well. Rosemary Joyce (ch. 8) argues that variation among the paddle and anvil techniques used to form household vessels at Çatalhöyük represents uneven distribution of

esoteric ceramic knowledge between households. Some authors see these different modes of history making as part of a developmental trajectory in which communal history gives way incrementally to more differentiation and possible contestation between groups (e.g., Duru in ch. 6). Other authors describe case studies where there appear to be ongoing tensions between the construction of identities at different scales regardless of position in the sequence of agricultural developments (Clare et al. in ch. 4 and Benz et al. in ch. 5).

Hodder claims that the urge to make history intensifies alongside the rise of domestication economies and residential sedentism. But Nigel Goring-Morris and Anna Belfer-Cohen review Levantine evidence that suggests strong trends dating back to the early Epipaleolithic (ch. 3). Ohalo II (c. 23–22,000 calibrated BP) is a seasonal aggregation site on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. During cycles of seasonal occupation and abandonment, hunter-gatherers built, rebuilt, and remodeled brush structures on the same architectural footprints. Patterns of spatially segregated activities were also maintained over multiple occupations. The extraordinary preservation at the submerged site of Ohalo II extends the visibility of history making back into the earliest phases of the Levantine Epipaleolithic. This raises the intriguing possibility that hunter-gatherers also forged historical connections that enabled them to maintain access to resource-rich environments over generations; to sustain long-term, long-distance trade relationships; and to forge shared, communal identities.

Hodder and the other authors have added substantially to the discussion of prehistoric history making and religion. This work will generate interest among humanistically oriented archaeologists, and it need not be limited to those with an interest in Neolithic societies or the Middle East and Turkey.