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Yılmaz ESKİBİNA	**KÜRESELLEŞME, ORTA EKONOMİK SINIFLAR VE MİLLİ-DEVLETLER** GLOBALIZATION, MIDDLE ECONOMIC CLASSES, AND NATIONAL-STATES ГЛОБАЛИЗАЦИЯ, СРЕДНИЙ ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКИЙ КЛАСС И НАЦИОНАЛЬНЫЕ ГОСУДАРСТВА	**108-121**
Orhan AYAZ **Bahattin ÇELIK** **Fatma ÇAKMAK**	**“STATUS SOCIETY”: SOCIOLOGICAL THINKING OF GÖBEKLI TEPE AND KARAHAN TEPE IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION** “STATÜ TOPLUMU”: GÖBEKLİ TEPE VE KARAHAN TEPE’Yİ TOPLUMSAL TABAKALAŞMA BAĞLAMINDA SOSYOLOJİK DÜŞÜNMEK “СТАТУС ОБЩЕСТВО”: СОЦИОЛОГИЧЕСКИЙ ПОДХОД К ГЁБЕКЛЫ ТЕПЕ И КАРАХАН ТЕПЕ В КОНТЕКСТЕ СОЦИАЛЬНОЙ СТРАТИФИКАЦИИ	**122-142**
Bahattin ÇELIK **Orhan AYAZ**	**RISE OF GÖBEKLI TEPE CULTURE: “HUNTING GROUND ECONOMY” AND THE ROLE OF SPECULATIVE “KNOWLEDGE”** GÖBEKLİ TEPE KÜLTÜRÜNÜN YÜKSELİŞİ: AVLAK EKONOMİSİ VE SPEKÜLATİF “BİLGİ”NİN ROLÜ ПОДЪЕМ КУЛЬТУРЫ ГЁБЕКЛЫ ТЕПЕ: ЭКОНОМИКА ОХОТНИЧЕСТВА И РОЛЬ СПЕКУЛЯТИВНОГО “МЫШЛЕНИЯ”	**143-160**

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"STATUS SOCIETY": SOCIOLOGICAL THINKING OF GÖBEKLI TEPE AND KARAHAN TEPE IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION[****]

"STATÜ TOPLUMU": GÖBEKLİ TEPE VE KARAHAN TEPE'Yİ TOPLUMSAL TABAKALAŞMA BAĞLAMINDA SOSYOLOJİK DÜŞÜNMEK

"СТАТУС ОБЩЕСТВО": СОЦИОЛОГИЧЕСКИЙ ПОДХОД К ГЁБЕКЛЫ ТЕПЕ И КАРАХАН ТЕПЕ В КОНТЕКСТЕ СОЦИАЛЬНОЙ СТРАТИФИКАЦИИ

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Bahattin ÇELIK[**]
Fatma ÇAKMAK[***]

ABSTRACT
Göbekli Tepe and the Neolithic sites around Urfa, which were identified by surveys, provide rich data for the transition of human beings from hunter-gatherer groups to settled and semi-settled agricultural societies. It is possible to trace most of the institutional foundations of today's societies to this transition period. Social theory, which was heavily influenced by the "Neolithic revolution" paradigm, ignored this transitional period. Sociological thought categorizes societies as hunter-gatherer and agricultural societies starting from the back and moves from the axiom that hunter-gatherer societies are egalitarian and agricultural societies are hierarchical. On the other hand, archaeological studies, while addressing the hierarchical "nature" of Neolithic societies, do not sufficiently benefit from the relatively rich theoretical

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background of sociology. As a result, it becomes important that the two disciplines work in cooperation. This study will emphasize that egalitarian hunter-gatherer groups lived in a relatively long transition period before class-based stratification originating from the economy, and that they went through a hierarchical social order based on social prestige rather than economic inequality during this transition period. For this, Weber's concept of status, which emphasizes different inequalities, rather than Marx's conceptualization of class division based on the ownership of the means of production, will be taken into consideration. Göbekli Tepe society was a classless society, but a hierarchical society based on status. It is possible to define societies that share Göbekli Tepe culture as "status society" in which individuals and groups have prestigious status on an ideological basis. In this scenario, some people had a more prestigious position than others because they monopolized the mythological narrative that made the world meaningful, causing social differentiation. Unlike the main claim of social conflict analysis, the article will argue that the symbolic world, which expresses the social hierarchy in Göbekli Tepe culture, has important functions that enable the Neolithic lifestyle, besides providing a meaningful explanation of the social world rather than causing an exploitation mechanism against a part of the Neolithic society.
Keywords: Göbekli Tepe, Karahan Tepe, Taş Tepeler, hierarchy in the Neolithic Period, status

ÖZ

Göbekli Tepe ve devamında yüzey araştırmalarıyla tespit edilen Urfa civarındaki Neolitik tepeler, insanoğlunun avcı-toplayıcı gruplardan yerleşik ve yarı yerleşik tarım toplumlarına geçiş süreci için oldukça zengin veri sağlamaktadır. Günümüz toplumların kurumsal temellerinin çoğunu bu geçiş sürecine kadar götürmek mümkündür. Büyük oranda “Neolitik Devrim” paradigmasından etkilenen sosyal teori bu geçiş sürecini göz ardı etmiştir. Sosyolojik düşünce, toplumları geriden başlayarak avcı-toplayıcı ve tarım toplumları şeklinde kategorize edip, avcı-toplayıcı toplumların eşitlikçi olduğu ve tarım toplumlarının hiyerarşik olduğu aksiyomundan hareket etmektedir. Diğer taraftan arkeolojik çalışmalar da, Neolitik toplumların hiyerarşik “doğasına” değinmekle birlikte sosyolojinin görece zengin teorik arka planından yeterince yararlanmamaktadır. Sonuç olarak iki disiplinin işbirliği içinde çalışması önemli hale gelmektedir. Bu çalışma eşitlikçi avcı-toplayıcı grupların, kaynağını ekonomiden alan sınıf temelli tabakalaşmasından önce nispeten uzun bir geçiş süreci içinde yaşadıklarını ve söz konusu geçiş sürecinde ekonomik eşitsizlikten ziyade sosyal prestij temelinde bir hiyerarşik toplum düzeninden geçtiklerini vurgulayacaktır. Bunun için Marx’ın üretim araçları sahipliğine dayanan sınıfsal bölünme kavramsallaştırmasından ziyade farklı eşitsizlikleri vurgulayan Weber’in statü kavramından hareket edilecektir. Göbekli Tepe toplumu sınıfsız bir toplumdu fakat statü temelinde hiyerarşik bir toplumdu. Göbekli Tepe kültürünü paylaşan toplumları ideolojik temelde prestijli statülere sahip birey ve grupların olduğu “statü toplumu” olarak tanımlamak mümkündür. Bu senaryoda bazı kişiler dünyayı anlamlı hale getiren mitolojik anlatıyı tekellerinde bulundurdukları için diğerlerinden daha prestijli konum elde ederek toplumsal farklılaşmaya neden olmaktaydı. Makale sosyal çatışma analizinin temel iddiasından farklı olarak Göbekli Tepe kültüründe sosyal hiyerarşiyi ifade eden sembolik dünyanın, Neolitik toplumun bir kısmı aleyhine bir sömürü mekanizmasına neden olmaktan ziyade toplumsal dünyanın anlamlı bir açıklamasını sunmasının yanında Neolitik yaşam tarzına imkân sağlayan önemli fonksiyonlara sahip olduğunu tartışacaktır.
Anahtar Kelimeler: Göbekli Tepe, Karahan Tepe, Taş Tepeler, Neolitik Dönem’de hiyerarşi, statü

АННОТАЦИЯ

Гёбекли-Тепе и неолитические холмы вокруг Урфы, выявленные в результате наземних обследований, предоставляют богатые данные о переходе человечества от охотнико-собирательского к оседлым и полуоседлым земледельческим обществам. К этому переходному периоду можно отнести большинство институциональных основ современных обществ. Социальная теория, на которую сильно повлияла парадигма “неолитической революции”, игнорировала этот переходный период. Социологическая мысль, начиная с преисторического периода, классифицирует общества охотнико-собирателями и земледельцами и исходит из аксиомы, согласно которой общества охотников-собирателей эгалитарны, а сельскохозяйственные общества иерархичны. С другой стороны, археологические исследования, обращаясь к иерархической “природе” неолитических обществ, не получают достаточной пользы от относительно богатого теоретического фона социологии. В результате становится важным, чтобы две дисциплины работали в сотрудничестве. В этом исследовании будет подчёркивается, что в течение указанного переходного периода эгалитарные группы охотников-собирателей жили в относительно длительный переходный период до классового расслоения, происходящего из экономики и они прошли через иерархический социальный порядок, основанный на социальном престиже, а не на экономическом неравенстве. В связи с этим, будет принята во внимание веберовская концепция статуса, которая подчеркивает различные виды неравенства, а не марксовая концептуализация классового разделения, основанного на владении средствами производства. Общество Гёбекли-Тепе было бесклассовым, но иерархическим обществом, основанным на статусе. В нижеследующей статье указывается, что в отличие от основного утверждения анализа социальных конфликтов, символический мир, который выражает социальную иерархию в культуре Гёбекли-Тепе, выполняет важные функции, обеспечивающие неолитический образ жизни. Наряду с этим, обеспечивает осмысленное объяснение социального мира не вызывая механизм эксплуатации против части неолитического общества.

Ключевые слова: Гёбекли Тепе, Карахан Тепе, Таш Тепелер, неолитическая иерархия, статус

INTRODUCTION

Gordon Childe uses the "Neolithic Period" to conceptualize the era wherein the hunter-gatherer groups began to domesticate animals and plants, and characterizes said era as "revolution" to underline the rate of such transition (Childe, 1964: 55). Said definition by Childe that considerably reflects the materialist understanding of history by the Marxist archeology, which started to become important in archeology as from early 20th century, began to shift particularly starting from the second half of the century. Both new approaches that emerge in the social sciences and the increased number of field studies have corroborated the notion that the Neolithic Period represents the transformation that spans in time rather than a breakthrough (Özdoğan & Karul, 2020). In addition to Mesoamerica and China, the Fertile Crescent region in the Near East represents one of the geographical regions where such transformation process achieved success (Bar-Yosef, 2016: 298). The Pre-Pottery cultures that existed until the beginning of the 7^{th} millennium B.C. came after the Natufian culture wherein wild plants and animals were exploited in the Eastern Mediterranean, one tip of the Fertile Crescent, during

the period elapsing between 12th and 10th millennium B.C. (Hodder, 2021: 20). During this period starting from the Epipalaeolithic and Early Neolithic, densely populated, large and permanent communities that accompanied the transformation experienced in the subsistence economy and wherein the symbolic culture is predominant started to emerge (Watkins, 2013: 8).

Discovery of the Nevali Çori settlement dated to the Pre-Pottery Neolithic Period represents the milestone for the Neolithic of the Near East. The structure with T-shaped pillars unearthed for the first time in this excavation site was of vital importance for discovery of Göbekli Tepe and other Neolithic sites thereafter (Schmidt, 2006: 67). The surface surveys conducted shortly after Klaus Schmidt discovered and started excavating Göbekli Tepe on the basis of his experiences at Nevali Çori demonstrated presence of a wider Neolithic cultural world that can be characterized by T-shaped pillars. Karahan Tepe (Çelik, 2011), Taşlı Tepe, Sefer Tepe (Güler et al, 2013), Ayanlar Höyük (Gre Hut) (Çelik, 2017) and Harbetsuvan Tepesi (Çelik, 2019) can be listed as several Neolithic settlements that share symbolic aspects with Göbekli Tepe. Discovery of such cultural world presented new insights into the onset of agricultural activities and transition of human beings to permanent settlements (Schmidt, 2010; Albayrak, 2010; 2019). Before excavations at Göbekli Tepe, it was assumed that emergence of complex settlements occurred in line with the agriculture; however, Göbekli Tepe and other excavations associated thereto have invalidated the link between domestication of animals and plants and establishment of settlements (Hodder, 2021: 108). Although the inhabitants of Göbekli Tepe Neolithic culture[1] have not domesticated the animals and the plants yet, said inhabitants have left behind unexcelled monumental structures, astonishing works of art and rich symbolism.

Since the initial years of the excavation, an important debate engaged during the studies on the cultural environment of Göbekli Tepe was whether T-shaped special structures were temples/ sanctuaries or domestic structures (Schmidt, 2010; Banning, 2011; Dietrich & Notroff, 2015). Another important issue under deliberation was on interpretation of the symbols and statues depicted in the form of relief (Dietrich et al, 2019; Peters & Schmidt, 2004; Verhoeven, 2020; Watkins, 2020). The new data acquired as excavations continued and new excavation sites were established revealed that said Neolithic sites contain much more complex layers and structures (Kinzel & Clare, 2020; Petters et al, 2020; Karul, 2021). Emergence of new structures and materials made new interpretations on the functionality of said structures and the making sense of the symbols inevitable (Clare & Kinzel, 2020; Hodder, 2020; Jeunesse, 2020). Despite ongoing major debates on this matter largely by the archaeologists, the collaboration of distinct disciplines is vital for deeper understanding of Göbekli Tepe culture that represents a critical timeframe and region regarding what human beings have experienced in the past, such that Klaus Schmidt, in one of his recent studies, emphasizes that archeology should collaborate closely with distinct disciplines in order to understand the findings at Göbekli Tepe. One of

[1] The expression "Göbekli Tepe Culture" belongs to archaeologist Mehmet Özdoğan.

such disciplines that Schmidt mentioned is sociology (Schmidt, 2010: 254). The aim of such study is to contribute to interpretation of Göbekli Tepe culture by taking advantage of the theoretical background of the discipline of sociology in line with this citation. The focus of said article shall be the social hierarchy as mentioned frequently (Hole, 2002; Peters & Schmidt, 2004; Verhoeven, 2005; Peters & Schmidt, 2004: 210; Hodder & Meskell, 2011: 248; Banning, 2011; Notroff et al, 2014; Clare & Kinzel, 2020: 64) in archaeological studies on Göbekli Tepe culture, but was not subjected to comprehensive theoretical debates. The most detailed study of social differentiation in Göbekli Tepe society was handled by Klaus Schmidt and his excavation team. However, although this study accepts the meaningful social hierarchy in this society, the perspective adopted regarding both the nature of use of the site and the economic system of this society is not sufficiently explanatory in the light of new data (Dietrich vd., 2017).

The concept of *status* by Weber may prove beneficial for comprehending Neolithic Period in Göbekli Tepe. Since no class division based on the ownership of the means of production yet existed, the main objective of the study shall be to comprehend the social stratification at such Neolithic sites by referring to Weber's conceptualizations of social stratification rather than Marxist terminology. The structures, statues, symbols in the form of reliefs or drawings as well as other materials in the Neolithic sites that are prominent with T-shaped pillars around Şanlıurfa province shall be used for interpreting the social hierarchy. Both archaeological data acquired from the regions close to this Neolithic cultural region and the anthropological studies conducted at different times and in different geographies shall be employed for comparisons in the assessment process.

1. SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

The object of research for the social sciences is considered to be the industrial society. The study on inequalities in the industrial society represents one of the most fundamental issues of sociology. The sociologists conceptualize the inequalities between individuals or groups in the society as "social stratification". Although such inequalities are often the subject of analysis on the basis of wealth or property, characteristics such as gender, age and religious affiliation are also considered among the root causes of stratification (Giddens & Sutton, 2016: 493). The confrontational paradigm that prioritizes the “conflict” has been discussed more in the social theory rather than the functionalist paradigm that emphasizes the “social cohesion”, the subject matter of social stratification. In this context, social conflict analysis underlines the fact that social stratification offers benefit to a limited number of people and cause harm to others rather than working to the advantage of the entire society. Said analysis has been shaped around the notions of Karl Marx, with substantial contributions by Max Weber (Macionis, 2013: 259). Karl Marx and Max Weber acted as reference for two distinct perspectives in sociology with their studies on social stratification. The Marxist theory envisages the society as a *class.* Considering the history of societies as the history of class struggles, Karl Marx defines the classes as those who possess the means of production on an economic

basis and those who do not (Marx & Engels, 2018: 52). In this context, Marx emphasizes that economic inequality and class exploitation are the hallmarks of all modes of production except simple tribal communism. In this context, Marx highlights that economic inequality and exploitation of classes represent the hallmarks of all modes of production other than simple tribal communism (Swingewood, 2014: 185).

Max Weber agrees with Karl Marx who claims that social stratification causes social conflict, but considers Marx's economy based model too simplistic. Instead, Weber proposes a stratification that involves three distinct aspects of inequality: The first aspect is the *economic* inequality. The second aspect proposed by Weber is the *status* or the *social prestige* and the third is the *power/party*. Weber argued that such three social inequalities emerged at different times in the course of evolution of the societies. The status or the social prestige stands out as "honor" in the agrarian societies. The nobles or the servants in such societies acquire status by adhering to the cultural norms associated with their particular standing in the society. In the industrialized society, on the other hand, the distinctive difference between people is the economic aspect. However, in time, the bureaucratic states have grown and attached the power/party more importance in the stratification system (Macionis, 2013: 262). Accordingly, Weber states that any society may be, for example, a *status society* or a *class society* depending on the dominant type of stratification. In this context, Max Weber conceptualizes agrarian societies as status societies (Weber, 2018: 428).

Weber's interpretation of stratification as the multidimensional structure embodying the social class, status and party has become the primary reference for the social theory and the studies by the sociologist have acted as beacon for the social science[2] in the twentieth century (Swingewood, 2014: 195). Weber was first to observe the fact that the industrial societies presented rather more complex picture due to the presence of status groups in addition to the existence of classes. In the society, the *classes* are expressed by production and the acquisition of things, while the *status groups* are stratified by certain lifestyles[3] (Bottomore, 2015: 262). The terms *class status* and *class* refer to one's common interest with others, while the term *status* refers to the claims to social standing in terms of positive and negative privileges. According to Weber, the status is designated by the *lifestyle, formal education,* and *hereditary* or *professional reputation* (Weber, 2018: 427). A social stratification based on prestige propounds a quite different concept of social hierarchy and illustrates social stratification as the social reality made up of more or less defined status positions as determined not only by the factor of ownership, but by multiple factors and reject the sharp contradictions between the classes. Consequently, the relations between status communities at different tiers are competitive but not characterized as contradictory (Bottomore, 2015: 263).

[2] One should particularly note Weber's intense influence on Pierre Bourdieu on social stratification (See Wolf & Wallance, 2015: 165).

[3] With the concept of "lifestyle", Weber refers to the way the individuals grow up and the education they receive (Weber, 2018: 427).

2. THE ABILITY OF THE SOCIOLOGY TO INTERPRET NEOLITHIC SOCIETIES

Sociology recognizes subdivision of the society into strata that make up the hierarchy of power and prestige as an almost universal characteristic of the social structure. Generally, the sociologists initiated the social stratification from the agrarian societies and discussed such stratification based on four main types of classes, which are slavery, community, caste and social classes. The precedent assumption, on the other hand, was that people lived as hunter-gatherers in small groups for a long time and that said lifestyle was egalitarian. According to the sociologists, no categories existed among human beings wherein one human being is considered to be better than the other before the technological advancements that would produce the surplus product. However, after transition to the settled agriculture, the social stratification has accompanied the significant amount of wealth and resources introduced by such settled lifestyle. A minority of the society started to control the significant portion of the surplus product. Therefore, stratification in the societies who started to live on agriculture and animal husbandry resembled a pyramid that feature large number of people at the bottom that decreases towards the top (Macionis, 2013: 248; Swingewood, 2014: 185; Bottomore, 2015: 247; Giddens & Sutton, 2016: 499).

Such sociological assumptions were intrinsically influenced by the anthropological data and studies. In line with the sociology, the anthropology discipline also acknowledges that the hunter-gatherer societies are classless societies as no surplus products yet exist. Based on the anthropological perspective, the key to living in advantageous economic conditions for hunter-gatherers is to dispose of the surplus product and relocate constantly as the limited number of people living around the camp often consumed readily accessible food sources in a short time. In this case, the people either have to transport food from far distances, which represents a costly endeavor, or endure less resources nearby. This fact necessitated for hunter-gatherer lifestyle to dispose of the surpluses and to relocate by carrying fewer items. No matter how useful and how easily constructed, the belongings are no longer meaningful if they become burden rather than means of comfort. For instance, it does not make any sense to build durable houses if they are to be abandoned very soon (Sahlins, 2016:43). The society has consistently resisted concentration of the surplus product and power, as Clastres has demonstrated in the indigenous societies in America. In such societies where the tribal chief is almost devoid of authority, enrichment of the chief to the extent where he/she accumulates power is constantly prevented by methods such as plundering the chief's residence. Here, the chief is dependent on the community and is always ready to demonstrate that he only functions as a mediator (Clastres, 2000: 28).

Briefly, the common tendency in political anthropology is that, although some political mechanisms exist in pre-agrarian societies (See Abélès, 2020), such mechanisms does not induce any intense social differentiation. However, the excavations conducted on Upper Mesopotamian Neolithic Period in the last two

decades have challenged the assumptions set forth above. In particular, in Göbekli Tepe culture, although the society has not yet switched to the agriculture and animal husbandry, they managed to build a civilization with complex and monumental structures as well as rich symbolism. In terms of production, the Neolithic Period did not witness any specific progress compared to the Paleolithic period (Sahlins, 2016: 44). Although nothing has changed in production, these societies in the process of transition from hunter-gatherer lifestyle to settled agricultural lifestyle have built "robust structures" featuring distinct functionalities and continued to live together in a relatively crowded community for prolonged periods. The question to direct here is: whether such societies who established permanent and complex settlements despite not yet possessing surplus production were egalitarian like the nomadic hunter-gatherers that come before them, or were they hierarchical like the later agrarian societies? Considering Göbekli Tepe, the hierarchical elements were disregarded and pushed to the background for a long time when the head of excavation, Klaus Schmidt[4], interpreted the site as a "temple" or "sanctuary" where hunter-gatherer groups gathered in certain seasons. Once more, it was emphasized that the societies residing at other Neolithic sites that are either coeval or successor to Göbekli Tepe culture does not feature hierarchical "nature"[5] (Hodder, 2021; Hole, 2002). However, both the excavations ongoing at Göbekli Tepe and the new excavations conducted in the nearby region presents an extremely different perspective. Recent publications on the sites and the visits we conducted to such sites indicate intense presence of domestic structures as well as special structures at such sites (Clare, 2020; Karul, 2021; Kinzel & Clare, 2020). Recent developments require introduction of the hierarchical elements back to the discussion, as the Neolithic sites in this vicinity, Göbekli Tepe in particular, are not gathering centers for the hunter-gatherer societies, but are complex settlements that further feature special structures. Moreover, much more customized structures and symbolic elements that can be interpreted as hierarchy were unearthed during the excavations. This study shall interpret the materials that may be meaningful for social stratification in such Neolithic settlements by capitalizing on the theoretical background of the social theory. In particular, this study shall argue that Weberian conceptualization may contribute to interpretation of the "nature" of the hierarchy in the Neolithic societies. In this sense, Weber's studies on stratification can be beneficial for analyzing not only the agrarian and industrial societies, but also the Neolithic societies in terms of illustrating other aspects of stratification. The concept of *status* that Weber attributed

[4] However, Klaus Schmidt limited the hierarchy to the time hunter-gatherer groups spent on this site at certain times for rituals and work feasts (Peters & Schmidt 2004, Dietrich vd., 2017).

[5] However, it is worth noting that Mehmet Özdoğan, one of the leading archaeologists on Anatolian Neolithic since the very beginning, stated that one of the main characteristics featured by the Neolithic societies in this region is hierarchy (Özdoğan, 2003: 25). However, this study does not involve the economic factor at the bottom of the Neolithic hierarchy, and, at this point, a perspective that differ from Özdoğan's perspective has been adopted.

especially to the agrarian societies seems to be insightful for the Neolithic society as well.

3. INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

a. Interpretation of the Structures

The Near Eastern Neolithic featured distinct perspectives on social hierarchy. The interpretation wherein social classes based on economy were established at the Neolithic Period and some sort of "temple economy" prevailed based on the magnificent and monumental structures erected in the Neolithic Period was expressed by Mehmet Özdoğan who studied on Anatolian Neolithic for long periods of time (Özdoğan, 2003: 25). Yet again, an interpretation wherein such special structures may belong to the privileged tribal chiefs, which, in turn, leads to some sort of hierarchy is another version of this first point of view (Banning, 2011; Jeunesse, 2020). Another perspective in this respect is that the special structures beside the domestic structures are utilized for death rituals at certain times, or that each special structure acts as meeting place for different social groups, therefore is not indicative of any meaningful social differentiation (Hodder, 2020; Hole, 2002). In a similar approach, Verhoeven too states that no social hierarchy and leadership existed in the Neolithic Period and that the rituals and symbolic systems restored the social order (Verhoeven, 2020). The comments positioned rather at the middle of both perspectives state that the surplus product accumulated in said Neolithic settlements in time and that the social hierarchy started to emerge during such process (Clare & Kinzel, 2020).

First of all, the notion that the sites representing Göbekli Tepe culture consisted solely of "temple" style special structures are no longer valid in the light of recent data. Both domestic structures features living quarters and structures more specialized than the special structures were unearthed beside the special structures in question (Clare, 2020; Karul, 2021; Karul, 2022: 6, Kinzel & Clare, 2020). While Göbekli Tepe offered important data on existence of daily life at immediate vicinity of the special structures (Clare, 2020), Karahan Tepe, on the other hand, presented much more specialized structures, which we will conceptualize in this study as the most special structures.

The excavations in progress at Karahan Tepe unearthed much more specialized structures carved into the bedrock (Fig. 1) immediately beside the special structure (AD structure) that contains the T-shaped pillars (Fig. 2) and sitting benches, a major characteristic in the cultural world of Göbekli Tepe that we already encountered at Nevali Çori, Göbekli Tepe and Harbetsuvan Tepe. In particular, the steps constructed for entrance and exit, phallus-shaped pillars and the AB structure (Fig. 3) that contain the human head carved from the bedrock stands out as one of the most remarkable structures (Karul, 2021).

In this study, it is possible to conceptualize the buildings into three architectural categories as the domestic buildings, the special buildings and the most

special structures[6] based predominantly on the findings at Göbekli Tepe and Karahan Tepe. Said tripartite structure presents the opportunity to comment on the social stratification. There is a strong possibility that certain people performed public meetings or rituals in the special structures as the daily life was going on in domestic buildings. We already know that, during the Pre-Pottery Neolithic Period in general, special structures were utilized for various rituals, banquet meetings or rites of passage (Banning, 2011: 640). Thus, it is plausible to interpret the ideological narrative about the most special structures and that access to such structures is granted and monopolized by those certain people residing in the special structures. Furthermore, the interior architecture of the special buildings provides strong indications on existence of certain privileged statuses. The fact that the two T-shaped pillars located at the center, as we already know from Göbekli Tepe, are much larger in size than the other pillars embedded in the wall, may further indicate some hierarchy in the social apprehension (See also Dietrich vd., 2017: 120). In addition, a hierarchy can be mentioned among all anthropomorphic stones. The interpretation of these stones, which reflect a complex mythology, will be discussed in another study. It is possible to observe the most remarkable sign on the benches available in AD structure at Karahan Tepe. The fact that this portion of the bench in the AD structure features throne-like platform and that the stone present in front of the bench is decorated with the relief of a leopard probably possessing highly symbolic value offers strong indication that some kind of hierarchy exists among those who perform the public meetings and/or rituals at this site.

b. Interpretation of the Symbol and Material

The structures in Göbekli Tepe culture offer significant evidence on social differentiation. The materials and symbols discovered inside the buildings provide major clues on who the people with privileges might be. Gender represents one of the most profound examples of social stratification, and all societies were structured to reproduce the privilege of men over women in terms of wealth, status and influence (Giddens & Sutton, 2016: 522). Available data indicate existence of a male-centric social organization since the early Neolithic as contrary to the traditional claim of matriarchy (Hodder & Meskell 2011:236).

Although phallic symbolism is not a universal theme, it has been widely featured in many societies for different meanings and intentions. However, such symbolism is as common, diverse and centralized in design in few cultures as in Göbekli Tepe. The study by Hodder and Meskell (2011) on prevalence of the phallus theme in Göbekli Tepe culture is noteworthy. The most common depiction of phallus is the theme of human beings holding the phallus with his hands as discovered sometimes on reliefs and sometimes in sculptures. Urfa Man unearthed at Yeni

[6] Until today, the most special structure has been unearthed only at Karahan Tepe. In this context, ongoing excavations shall show whether examples of such structure can be discovered in major centers such as Göbekli Tepe and Ayanlar Tepe. Furthermore, one should also keep in mind the possibility that only one or more hills located at the central position may host such most special structures.

Mahalle (Çelik, 2000), Kilisik Sculpture unearthed in Adıyaman (Hodder & Meskell, 2011), the depiction of human being holding phallus with one hand as discovered at Sayburç (Özdoğan & Uludağ 2022), the pillar depicting hands holding an erect penis as noted by Harald Hauptmann at Nevali Çori (Hodder, 2021: 205) are the examples best known in the context of this theme. Another significant theme is the relatively small sculptures with exaggerated phallus that we encountered at Göbekli Tepe and Harbetsuvan Tepe (Çelik, 2019). Once more, the prominent depictions of human and animal phallus on T-shaped pillars at Göbekli Tepe should also be noted in this context. Moreover, the phallus-shaped pillars in the AB most special structure at Karahan Tepe that we discussed above also represent unique specimens in this context (Karul, 2021). Another striking example at Karahan Tepe is the sculpture of the seated man with his phallus extended almost down to his knees (Excavation director Necmi Karul, personal communication). On the other hand, taking into consideration the data acquired from the entire region, depiction of any female figures is rather uncommon except for the depiction of a women figure drawn extremely sloppily on a stone plate at Göbekli Tepe (Schmidt, 2006). It is obvious that the phallus depiction not refers to any sexual motivation but acts as mythological references in all such Neolithic settlements (See Sütterlin & Eibl-Eibesfeldt 2013:46). It is clear that the image of the phallus positions the male of the genders at higher rank also socially in the mythological-symbolic order and therefore leads to some sort of hierarchy between the genders, even if it is not intended as such in the first place. Considering the evidence set forth above, we can deduce that the men hold more prestigious position in Göbekli Tepe society.

The Neolithic inhabitants of Göbekli Tepe should have established a link with the past by removing the skulls of some people from the burial sites thereof. One can mention that the practice of beheading in the Neolithic Period was peculiar to certain people holding certain status in the society (Hodder, 2021: 179). Taking into consideration the fact that the skulls were still attached to the bodies in the "tomb" containing three bodies unearthed on the floor of one domestic building at Göbekli Tepe, said procedure was not implemented for all individuals of the society (Clare, 2020). Judging by the symbolic and material repertoire, then, it can be said that men -probably adults- are the source of power and authority. The next question is: Why were these people more prestigious in Göbekli Tepe society?

DISCUSSION

In the joint study recently published on Göbekli Tepe, Watkins (2020), Hodder (2020), Jeunesse (2020) and Kinzel and Clare (2020) initiated some discussion, albeit indirectly, to provide an idea about the social hierarchy here. In this study, Watkins state that Neolithic societies were egalitarian, but reminds that prestigious people who acquired some of the inherited knowledge and applied such knowledge in construction of the sites also existed. Watkins reports his personal views based on the assumption that such sites are not settlements but centers where the hunters gather temporarily, as interpreted by Klaus Schmidt (Watkins 2020:26). However, recent data as well as reinterpretation of the former data indicated that

such sites are not temporary centers for gathering of the hunters, but rather complex settlements consisting of various structures with distinct functions. The recent data require reviewing the former interpretations.

According to Hodder, as Neolithic societies grow in size, the problem of conflict-free coexistence of individuals and groups started to emerge. Hodder contemplates that Göbekli Tepe society is divided internally like structures A, B and C, and that the communities are competing with each other. According to Hodder, such division in the society further served to balance and keep the society under control to live together without conflict. In other words, social cohesion was achieved by maintaining the balance between the communities (Hodder, 2020: 49). Such remark is in line with the assumption on hunter-gatherer society with "egalitarian morality". Although such remark by Hodder signifies a social reality in Göbekli Tepe culture (which will be further discussed below), it is still far from reflecting the complex structure that has become more prominent at Karahan Tepe during the last excavation efforts. Architectural structuring in Göbekli Tepe culture did not consist of independent social units in the form of households as in Çatalhöyük. There is no evidence of any centralized control mechanism at Çatalhöyük (Hodder, 2021:138). However, the situation is slightly different in Göbekli Tepe culture. Even if the gender-based hierarchy, as acknowledged by Hodder in another study (Hodder & Meskell, 2011), is set aside, the AB most special structure at Karahan Tepe indicates that the fragmented society is reintegrated on another plane. In this culture, there is a higher authority that concerns the whole society on top of the existing fragmented structure. Therefore, one can state that Göbekli Tepe society features a hierarchical structure based on social prestige, albeit loosely, beyond the gender-based hierarchy.

Also, serious challenges are brought forth from the field to the interpretation of the "fancy house" or the "origin house", which Banning advocated long ago (2011) and recently stated by Jeunesse (2020) in a similar fashion. Both the domestic structures, existence of which is ascertained in almost all Neolithic settlements, and the most special structures diminish the possibility of a lineage-based social organization.

In the scenario propounded by Jeunesse, the two stelae located at the center within the structures embody the founders of the prestigious lineage and are often associated with what is closest to the divine lineage or supernatural, which is necessarily higher than their descendants. Jeunesse states that his model provides logical explanation for the architectural diversity, both on-site and off-site. The "origin house" of the highest lineage on the prestige scale represents the apex of the pyramid (Jeunesse, 2020: 55). The AB most special structure at Karahan Tepe seems to constitute the apex of the pyramid for now, but not as an "origin house". Therefore, although lineage is important, the hierarchy rather seems to be related to prestigious individuals who transcend the social organization on the basis of lineage and regulate transition to the most special structure and hold the mythological narrative regarding thereto.

Kinzel and Clare, on the other hand, insert the hierarchy in Göbekli Tepe society at the end of the story. According to Kinzel and Clare, the increasing population led to accumulation of surplus products, which in turn induced social tensions. The monumental structures in question further reinforced the sense of belonging of the group on the basis of the ancestors, thus ensured social cohesion. According to Kinzel and Clare, the special structures at Göbekli Tepe featured "communal" characteristics and only a limited number of people attended such meetings. Despite this fact, said structures had an important function in fulfillment of the social responsibilities and reinforcement of the social ties. Employing a functionalist approach, Clare and Kinzel suggest that the T-shaped pillars at Göbekli Tepe exist as a substantial carrier of the communal memory and narrative by conveying an ancestral narrative (Kinzel & Clare, 2020: 44). In other words, one can state that said pillars imply that the monumentality and symbolism of the special structures are "superstructures" that legitimize the economic and social "infrastructure". It is worth noting here that archeology based solely on ecology and social-economic oriented scenarios can be biased. In such scenarios, the most fundamental concerns and orientations such as endeavoring to overcome death, establishing meaningful world regarding the origin of the universe, human beings and the living things are ignored. Here, our primary assertion is that the hierarchy is not established subsequently due to surplus product and population getting crowded in time, but that a hierarchical apprehension may exist within the symbolic universe of meaning that is constructed socially from the very beginning and whose socio-economic interactional conditions are unknown (at least for the moment) (Berger, 2015: 289). We contemplate that emergence of such apprehension in distinct forms - for instance, from oral narrative to monumentality and symbolism on the stones - and fulfillment of several socio-economic functions - for instance, keeping populations getting crowded together - does not alter the “essence” of the subject matter.

Of course, the rituals and the symbols fulfilled a series of social and economic functions. Creation of an ethnic and community identity that ensures social cohesion was undoubtedly one of the most important functions. Moreover, when some crises, either social or economic, occurred, such functions may have become much more significant, even surpassing the other functions. Despite predominance of the functionalist approach in the literature that focus solely on the social functions of the ritual such as construction of the identity and collective memory, it may prove more beneficial to focus on how the ritual renders the world a meaningful place by considering the ritual as a manifestation of prevalent and supportive belief in Göbekli Tepe culture (See Finlayson, 2014: 138). Because it seems rather more plausible to state that the structures that we have subdivided into three distinct categories before differ on an ideological basis rather than an economic[7] one. There are some taboos and powerful mythological elements at the special and most special structures that

[7] We do not yet know whether animals kept for a long time in the trap areas around these Neolithic settlements result in a surplus (Çelik, 2019).

shall be addressed in further studies. As is the case in other Neolithic societies, the foundation of Göbekli Tepe society has not been food production (Özdoğan, 2003). In this context, we also know that no evidence for processing of food inside the monumental structures from Göbekli Tepe or for utilization of such sites as warehouses has been encountered (Dietrich et al, 2020:19). The structures and symbols in Göbekli Tepe culture stand out not as of economic origin (Schmidt, 2010: 246), but as the product of ideological concerns and motivations (in terms of conception of the world). When we take other Neolithic sites into consideration, the most prevalent themes are human heads and phallus-like elements[8] with little or no economic connotation (See Hodder & Meskell, 2011; see Peters et al, 2020 for more comprehensive study on the fauna and flora of the era). It would be more reasonable to consider the world wherein such themes are heavily used as an "ideological" society rather than an economic society. Here, the axiom of the new sociology of knowledge wherein the "knowledge" and the "reality" are in mutual and dialectical interaction formation relationship, and that sometimes knowledge and sometimes material reality dominates, may offer guidance (McCarthy, 1996). We need more than the functionalist approaches if we are not to consider the Neolithic hunter-gatherers as "naive" materialists just trying to feed themselves and avoid conflict.

First of all, Göbekli Tepe society appears to be an "ideological", "knowledge"-based society. Such knowledge was the mythologies that presented the origins and meaning of all things that surrounded the society (including themselves). Economic and social problems were among the priorities of this society, but the physical effort expended on structures, more subtle categorization of structures from general to the most specific, and the symbolism that clearly reflects complex mythological narrative offer a panorama beyond economic and social concerns. As expressed by Özdoğan and Karul, "The symbols affecting distinct aspects of life make us think that the social environment and the religious ideologies are much more determinant than others" (Özdoğan & Karul, 2020: 21).

CONCLUSION

This study endeavors to comprehend the social stratification in Göbekli Tepe culture by highlighting the "psycho-cultural" aspect of human being (See Zeder, 2011) against the functionalist approaches that underline the economic and sociological role of the structures and the symbols. In this context, the concept of *status* may prove to be beneficial for interpreting highly "ideological" society such as Göbekli Tepe, where myth is determinant, in the context of social stratification. In Weber's work, *status* refers to the dissimilarities between the groups regarding social honor or prestige recognized by others. Such dissimilarities include skills and attributes or qualifications that influence the types of jobs people can have. In traditional societies, the status was often determined on the basis of the knowledge acquired about any person who appeared in interactions on varying contexts at any given period of time over the years (Giddens & Sutton, 2016: 499). Following

[8] Animals also occupy an important place in the symbolic system, but the secondary position (compared to the other two) and economic aspects of animals will be discussed in another study.

Weber's footsteps, Pierre Bourdieu strongly emphasizes the roles of education and cultural factors in social stratification as independent from the economy (Bourdieu, 1984). The *status group* demands dedicated monopoly on social standing and status. Weber lists three status groups: occupational, hereditary, and political (Weber, 2018: 428). The concept of *occupational status* appears to be more insightful to comprehend the social differentiation in early Neolithic societies.

A socially constructed universe of meaning exists in Göbekli Tepe culture, and the task of standardizing and carving the meaning of the symbols in this universe requires a professional authority. Currently we don't have any information on whether those who hold monopoly over the mythological knowledge and the stone masters are actually the same individuals. However, in the possibility where such individuals are not same, it is highly possible that the narrators and those who embroider such narration on the stones hold either equal or otherwise similar statuses. The Neolithic society had someone to mediate in contacting with the metaphysical beings, with the animals, the netherworld and the ancestors either with or without shamans (Hodder, 2021: 170). In Göbekli Tepe culture, such prestigious individuals were organizing the rituals related to special and most special structures, the mythological narrative that would accompany such rituals, as well as concretization of such narrative on the limestones. Judging by the architectural mastery demonstrated at such Neolithic settlements as well as the complex mythology accompanies thereof, such individuals should have acquired such prestige[9] not by heredity, but through genetic predisposition and education. Contemplating that the special structures represent different social groups, one can say that some sort of competition exists over such skills.

The society in Göbekli Tepe Neolithic cultural region can be interpreted as a "status society" wherein prestigious groups based on ideological power and authority exist. It seems more suitable to state that such prestigious individuals are members of the groups formed on the basis of consent and act as mediators in the society, rather than considered as leaders holding monopoly of exerting force regarding the social issues. This seems to be the case applicable to almost all indigenous tribes in the Americas. The chief of the family or the tribe was considered the natural leader who was respected and heeded for resolution of the social problems despite not possessing any power to exert force (Clastres, 2000). In this context, there is evidence that the hierarchy existing in Göbekli Tepe culture is quite loose. Although presence of the most special structures that concern the entire society started to be unearthed at Göbekli Tepe, one can observe existence of fragmented panorama in special structures precluding centralization of the society around strong leadership. Therefore, one could also argue about some resistance against strict hierarchy. Another indicator of such resistance can be further observed upon emergence of the consequences of the revolution in production that has an impact on the life (Özdoğan, 2003). The increase in practices that fit the sedentary lifestyle,

[9] The possible effect of some bloody rituals on gaining this prestige will be discussed in another study.

such as ownership, surplus products and restricting access to the resources, that started to sprout at times when Göbekli Tepe cultural world was on the verge of extinction may have threatened the loose hierarchy within the society, wherein satellite settlements started to emerge around large settlements, which could imply separation from the centers.

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Figures



Fig.1. The most special structures, special structures and domestic structures at Karahan Tepe (Karul, 2021, "Fig. 2. Western Terrace, buildings excavated in 2019 and 2020")



Fig.2. Special structures at Göbekli Tepe (Schmidt,2010, "Fig. 3. The main excavation area at the southern slope, spring 2010; in the foreground, enclosure D, followed by enclosures C, B and A")



Fig.3. The Most special structure at Karahan Tepe (Karul, 2021, "Fig.6, Str. AB, view from West").