

Ways In, Ways Out: A Preliminary Study of Neolithic Wall and Roof Openings

Introduction: Defining Spaces – Defining Entries

¹ Doorways are such a common feature of the present-day built environment that we rarely consider what they do to us as well as for us. Doorways not only define the passage between territories but are – also in their simplest forms – powerful tools for shaping spaces and, therefore, shaping social interactions and hence societies. There are a series of archaeological and architectural studies¹ investigating doors and windows in classical and medieval periods. In contrast, there are only a few studies that take a closer look at prehistoric and, in particular, Neolithic doorways, doors, windows and other kinds of wall openings². At first glance, this topic seems to be straightforward; however, a large number of Neolithic structures do not show any evidence for clearly defined doorways or other means of access³. How to enter a building without doors? This contribution aims to show some of the potential of studying these architectural elements and features in order to get a better understanding of Neolithic architecture, social behaviour and the Neolithic mind.

² What is a doorway? In his basic architectural handbook »Architecture – Form, Space, and Order«, architect Francis Ching points out that »entering a building, a room within a building, or a defined field of exterior space, involves the act of penetrating a vertical [or horizontal] plane that distinguishes one space from another. [It] separates ›here‹ from ›there‹. The act of entering can be signified in more subtle ways than [...] a hole in a wall [...]. In situations where greater visual and spatial continuity between two

Title page: Göbekli Tepe, large portalstone with two openings (Loc. GTK10-88-7, 2010)

¹ E.g. Klenk 1924; Salonen 1961; Büsing-Kolbe 1978; Walsh 1983; Brunner 1986; Hochreiter 1986; Laun 1986; Waelkens 1986; Damerji 1991; Beyer et al. 2006; Abdel-Gawad 2007; Taravati 2008; Mecca – Dipasquale 2009, 339–343; Selbmann 2010; Tsukamoto – Atelier Bow Wow 2010(2014); Eriksen 2013; Atelier Bow Wow 2014; Boettger 2014; Atelier Bow Wow 2016; Mumcuoglu – Garfinkel 2018; van Opstall 2018; Eriksen 2019; Campbell – Tutton 2020; Michielin 2021; Roeten 2021; Rönnberg 2021; Pech et al. 2022; Taubert 2022.

² E.g. Naumann 1971; Butterlin et al. 2012.

³ E.g. Watkins 1989–1990, 339.

spaces is desired, even a change in level can establish a threshold and mark the passage from one space to another«⁴.

3 While Ching concentrates more on the general functional aspects of doorways, the architect Simon Unwin, in his compilation on the importance and meaning of the doorway, stresses that »[t]he doorway is one of the most powerful instruments available to the architect. It is even richer in its powers than the wall, upon which it almost always depends. Where the power of the wall is to deny (to keep things apart), that of the doorway is to permit (to allow passage). And permission usually has more dimensions of possibility – risks as well as rewards – than denial. Doorways and the doors by which they may be closed are so common a feature of our surroundings that we rarely give conscious thought to what they do, to us as well as for us. Until we encounter a door that is locked against us, or one that has been violated and failed to protect our belongings from thieves, they seem just part of the background, a mere component of the stage-set within which we act out the small and grand dramas of our lives. We cannot exactly ignore them – we pass through doorways probably hundreds of times every day – but neither do we pay them much attention. Because our minds are taken up with more immediate concerns – buying food, talking to friends, getting our work done – we tend to acknowledge doorways only at a subliminal level. But the powers of the doorway pervade our lives. There is hardly a culture on earth that does not use the doorway. It is an essential element in the organisation of space, a key part of the common language of architecture«⁵.

4 In his study on doors, French anthropologist Pascal Dibie⁶ raised the simple but basic question of what a door actually is. He argues that its very definition implies the existence of an ›outside‹, of what is ›beyond the door‹. In his account, doors are first seen from the inside of the house by one who is inside; however, it could as well be vice versa, but it reflects an internal spatial perception as presented in Plato's cave allegory. Based on this we can easily imagine terms as *inside*, *outside*, *open*, *closed*, *well-being* and *danger*. According to Dibie, there is no space we (humans) have wanted to sleep in that we have not barricaded, not a field we have not fenced, not a temple we have not charged, nor a family or city we have not protected. He states that »our doors are everywhere, be they narrow exits or monumental gates. [...] Folklore appropriated thresholds, nourishing our beliefs and our strange rites of passage. Others like us, from ›an elsewhere close by‹ or far away, did the same: nouns and locks keep watch in Africa, while in China people still calculate the direction of openings, the balance of the entire universe depending on each door. In the Amazon, doors are within us, whereas in Oceania, they are a long path of partnership. Doors are for each of us a daily source of joy and worry simply because, of all our daily objects, they represent an inexhaustible world of thoughts«⁷.

5 There are some archaeological studies that deal with classical or medieval doorways, but actual building archaeological studies on doorways are very rare. Taking this into account, it is not surprising that studies concerned with Neolithic doorways are almost non-existent. With the establishment of more permanent buildings and settlements during the transitional period from the Epipalaeolithic to the Neolithic, humans were forced to re-define their world, their cosmos and their social arrangements⁸. By creating some sense of belonging, ownership as well as ›privacy‹, buildings turned into houses and homes. How were these spaces organised and accessed? This contribution

4 Ching 2007, 250; for a more technical turn compare with Koepf – Binding 1999, 474 f.

5 Unwin 2007, 3.

6 Dibie 2012.

7 Dibie 2012, blurb. Crouch – Johnson 2001.

8 Benz – Bauer 2021.

is an attempt to shed light on some of the earliest examples of doorways in the history of human buildings. The cases known from the Neolithic of Southwest Asia display not a single approach but a wide array of solutions. Some of these may seem more familiar to us than others.

The Invention of Doorways or Entering and Exiting Neolithic Spaces

6 It is difficult to determine when the first doorway was constructed. We have to assume that already during the earliest attempts to occupy caves and rock shelters, the control of access was organised and perhaps also that stones were moved and intentionally placed to demarcate a border or point of access. Similarly, we have to assume this was also the case for very early tent or hut constructions⁹. How was the access to buildings organised when architecture emerged in the Early Neolithic of Southwest Asia? Some building elements can be traced back to earlier attempts to create spaces and structures that met the needs for sheltering, gathering and creating identities¹⁰. When constructing a building, the access defines the internal and external orientation. It is an essential key point for understanding a building and its relationship to its surroundings – both the natural and the built environment. Access to a building can be organised in various ways depending on the general design of the spatial arrangements and structural solutions.

7 At first glance, most of the earliest human buildings follow a quite similar spatial layout: They are single spaced, round to oval in shape and semi-subterranean or set into slopes. Some have a fireplace, some of them open to one (front) side or can be access only by a single opening in the perimeter wall, whereas others have no traces of access points at all¹¹. Some early examples at, e.g., Tell es-Sultan (Jericho)¹², Wadi Tumbaq 1¹³, Mureybet¹⁴ and Nahal Oren¹⁵ have entrances with short wall extensions leading away from the building, creating short corridors. These short walls could be interpreted as windbreaks, but also as transitional zones between the inside and the outside. In some cases, a few steps leading down to the interior had been placed there¹⁶.

8 The concept of how access was organised depends as well on the material chosen for the building. However, the choice of type of access was also influenced by other (key) factors, e.g., control of access for reasons of security and social control, or natural factors, such as prevailing wind directions. It may also be related to a certain narrative and could have been connected to ›cosmological‹ explanations and with references thereto. In addition, to be in control of a space played an important role in this context; establishing an ›environmental buffering system‹ that excludes the impact of the natural environment and thus offering a ›safe space‹¹⁷. In this way, the social cohesion and resilience of a society could be ensured¹⁸.

9 Compare with nomadic ephemeral structures presented in, e.g., Cribb 1990.

10 For further details see Kurapkat 2012; Kurapkat 2014 and Kurapkat 2010.

11 Aurenche 1981; Eichmann 1991; Nissen et al. 1991; Schachner 1999; Stordeur 1999; Byrd 2000; Bıçakçı 2001; Banning 2003; Banning – Chazan 2006; Sicker-Akman 2007; Duru 2013; Kinzel 2013; Gheorghiu 2014; Kurapkat 2010; Baudouin 2019.

12 Kenyon 1981.

13 Abbès 2008.

14 Ibáñez 2008.

15 Stekelis – Yizraely 1963; Grosman et al. 2005.

16 Kenyon 1981, 280.

17 Vetter 2019, 23–29.

18 Graeber – Wengrow 2021, 244–247.

9 One aspect of early Neolithic building practices – which will be discussed in a bit more detail below – is the control of daylight. In early human permanent structures, daylight played almost no role in the interior. However, over time there was a slight shift in the concept, perception and usage of it. In general, there was a tendency to have only relatively small openings to enter and exit a structure. This may not only be connected to the control of access, but also a way to limit the effects of weathering on the interior spaces, especially for people to shelter from unpleasant winds or extreme sun. The possibility to regulate the air circulation may not have been a primary goal but a welcomed side effect and later used strategically.

10 According to Andreas Vetter, the meaning and perception of buildings also have a direct influence on the perception of doorways and the ›invention‹ of the threshold¹⁹. If – with reference to Vetter’s work – there is a doorway or entrance that, in principle, can be used by everyone, then the power and meaning of the building regulates its de facto openness. In the case of Neolithic ›special buildings‹, the possible evocation of anxiousness, awe and fear, which had an effect on people who found themselves in an extreme situation when confronted with monumental architecture, contributed significantly to the fact that individuals did not dare to enter even if the doorways or portals were open and unguarded²⁰. Such ›threshold anxiety‹ demonstrates the strength of the architectural ›presence‹ of a building with metaphysical significance. The less a person knows about the cult and the system of reference, the more impact can be attributed to the architectural form²¹. Doorways play a major role in such contexts. The same is true for the threshold playing an essential role as a protection. The threshold is where the ceremonies and rituals to repel the bad spirits from a house occur²². Therefore, some doorways are thought to be protected by a ›guardian spirit‹ or other mythical entities. For example, the snake reliefs and animal sculptures on the portal stones from Göbekli Tepe may be understood as such guardians²³. These kinds of guardians were there to perform two tasks: to protect the entrance from evil and to highlight the entry to the ›sacred‹ interior. In Roman mythology, Janus, the god of the door, was depicted with two faces looking in opposite directions: symbolising the changes between the past and present, and the transition from one world to another. It was because of his ability to see both forward and backward that he became known as the two-faced god of boundaries, doors, gates, beginnings and all movements of transition²⁴.

Types of Access

11 As stated above, it seems that early human buildings follow a simple and almost identical plan. The aesthetical conceptions of the buildings are based on simple but powerful mathematical and geometric principles. One basic aesthetical concept is the symmetrical organisation of spaces. The single-spaced structures are organised in a symmetrical way that first follows structural needs and is later filled with meaning and different functional needs, leading to distinct features, which can differ from site to site. However, although the interiors may have a similar spatial organisation, the points of access are treated quite differently. While horizontal wall openings served as doorways in some settlements – as we still see today – others were only accessible vertically through openings in the roofs. In general, we can distinguish between these

19 Vetter 2019.

20 see Fleisher – Norman 2016 as well as Wilburn 2018, Wilburn 2019.

21 Vetter 2019, 34 f.

22 Taylor 1985; Taravati 2008, 62.

23 Schmidt 2010, 252.

24 Hochreiter 1986; MacMahon 2003; Taravati 2008, 64.

two ways of access: a direct horizontal access and a vertical access. The size of the access defines not only the term used to describe it but also the practical, functional, social and cultural connotations²⁵.

12 Entering a house from above offers some advantages as well as a series of disadvantages. It is undeniable that the access over the roof has some advantages when it comes to security. By removing the ladder(s) to the roof, the house walls serve as ›fortification«. However, this only really applies if the normal traffic runs on a level that is lower than the roof. In steep slope settlements, this is often not the case. Here, the roofs are the actual streets. Anyone who makes it onto the roof could possibly also enter a house. In sub-recent examples, e.g., from Afghanistan²⁶ the village in its entirety forms an inaccessible structure and provides the necessary security for the community. In addition to the security aspect, access from the roof in a slope settlement somehow ensures a clear visual social control over who is moving in the settlement and who is entering buildings. At the same time, the relatively narrow access ensures that curious eyes see nothing of the house interior²⁷. However, in densely built settlements, it also ensures that some light is channelled into the interior at the same time as the access is kept under control. An argument for having such entrances could be that animals and unwanted creatures cannot easily enter and that smoke can exit the space easily through it²⁸.

13 The relatively small opening limits the accessibility and makes it difficult to bring things and people into and out of the ›house«. Nowadays, this could be seen as a disadvantage. Who could actually pass through the openings? Were there gender- or age-specific buildings where only a certain group was allowed to enter and exit?

14 Another aspect to consider is that rain can easily enter the interior when the roof opening is not covered or inadequately executed. It is essential to maintain the roof surface and the area around roof openings regularly to keep the building accessible and the roof watertight. Water management in dense settlements, especially on steep slopes, is crucial for the survival of the built environment. The impact of heavy rain or snow should not be underestimated and may have caused severe damage²⁹. In addition, roof material can easily be washed into the house interior through the opening if it is not carefully designed and maintained. The circulation of air through the hatchway is not optimal, although feasible. The integration of an opening into the roof may lead to some structural decisions being made and cause structural weaknesses depending on the size and location of the opening. Roof openings can be seen as a weak point when sheltering against the elements is the goal – variations in temperature (too hot and too cold should be avoided) as well as rain and wind. However, it is, as many examples show, possible to cover roof openings. There are various ways that this was and is done, and almost all variations were shown in Çatalhöyük reconstruction artworks³⁰. Not all may have had the anticipated effect, e.g., a stone slab placed atop to close an opening could lock people inside when additional weight was loaded on top (stones). On the other hand, a lack of ladders or other climbing supports had perhaps a higher impact on the accessibility of such buildings.

Horizontal Access Points

15 Entering a space by moving horizontally through a gap in a wall is obviously one of the simplest ways of crossing a spatial boundary. However, there are various types of doorways (fig. 1). For classical and later periods, the terms doorway and door

25 Steadman 2015, 59–62.

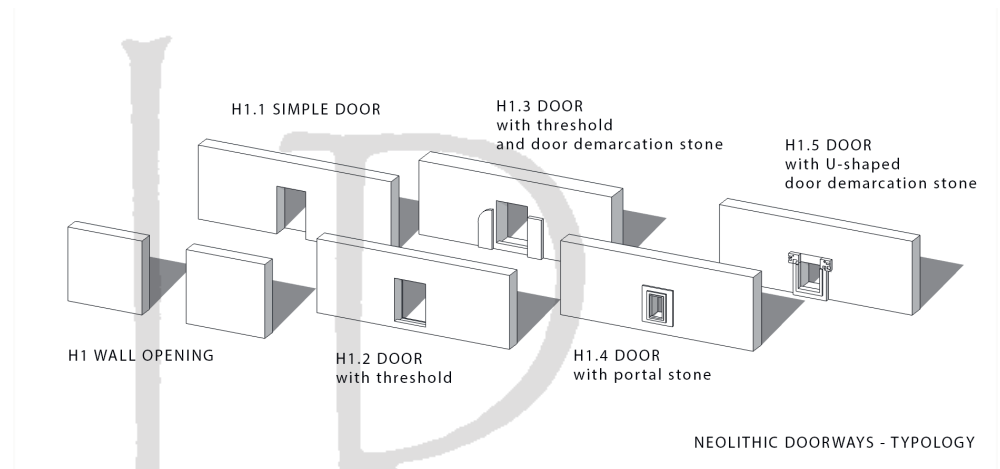
26 Hallet – Shamizay 1980; Wutt 1981.

27 Steadman 2015, 59.

28 On the importance of air vents in regard to health conditions, see Shillito et al. 2021.

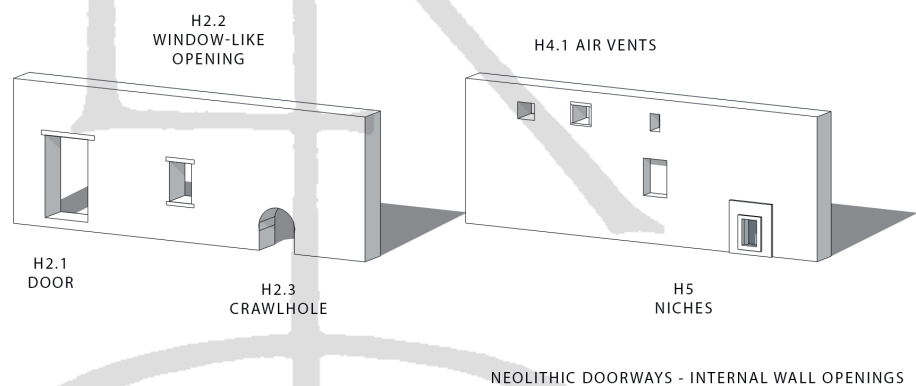
29 Kinzel 2013; Kinzel et al. 2021.

30 Kurapkat 2010, 143–148 and references therein.



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Fig. 1: Neolithic doorways: horizontal access



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Fig. 2: Neolithic doorways: horizontal access variations

are used as synonyms, although initially the doorway was the actual opening and its construction, whereas the door was the movable part that closed the doorway³¹. Nowadays, the door is seen as the entire construction, including the frame, the closing part and the opening itself. However, in the following, the term doorway will be used since, in most cases of Neolithic doorways, no traces of the closing part have survived and may have never existed.

16 *Doorways:* Doorways or doors are, in general, defined by two vertical elements on both sides of the wall opening – the recess or reveal – and a horizontally placed element on top to span the opening – the lintel.

Type H1 – Doorways to the Exterior

17 Doorways that connect the exterior with the interior of a building are the very basic means of entering an interior or exterior space. It is the basic concept of being at a place by crossing a line and stepping into, e.g., a circle. The easiest way of doing so is to create a simple gap – wide enough to slip through – in the boundary, which, in the case of a building, is a wall.

31 For Çatalhöyük, the various doorways were defined as ›access holes‹, including crawl holes, openings, doorways and windows: a gap in a wall that goes right through, connecting two adjacent spaces. These were generally small with a raised threshold and bridged over the top; there is rarely evidence of these being of full height as a doorway (Taylor 2016, 146 after Farid – Hodder 2014, 38 f.).

18 *Type H1.1 Without any special treatment:* A simple gap in the wall; with or without a lintel.

19 *Type H1.2 With threshold:* A wall opening with a wooden or stone-made threshold. The threshold can consist of several steps and have a stone slab as the actual threshold.

20 *Type H1.3 With door demarcation stone:* Doorways with two vertically placed stone slabs on both sides of the wall opening are perhaps best known from PPNB Beidha³² and Shkārat Msaied³³.

21 *Type H1.4 With portal stones:* Perforated monolithic stone slabs used as door frames or portal stones are known from the Urfa Region in Southeast Anatolia³⁴. There are now also examples reported from the Tigris basin. The openings in these portal stones measure from 0.45 to 0.7 m. The few known examples have only slightly raised rims around the opening, in contrast to the portal stones used as vertical access points (see also below).

22 *Type H1.5 With U-shaped portal stone:* A unique U-shaped portal stone is known from Building C at Göbekli Tepe³⁵. There are another two possible examples found at the sites, but these are heavily fragmented. There is a good chance that there were more examples of this special form of door demarcation at the site. The portal stone in Building C was decorated on the top with carved predators that evidently had an apotropaic function³⁶.

Type H2 – Internal Doorways

23 What is an internal connection? (fig. 2) There are differences depending on the topography and individual approaches at sites; e.g., at LPPNB/PPNC Ba'ja doorways on the first floor of buildings are wider and higher so that it is possible, in some cases, to move through them walking upright and transport »things« from one room to the other. However, in basements or on the ground floors, internal connections are generally kept small in combination with a high threshold (window-like openings) limiting the access.

24 *Type H2.1 Doorway:* Wall openings made in a similar fashion to the external doorways – with or without a threshold. In rubble-stone masonry, the recess is carefully set and indicates the possible use of plumb lines to define the vertical limits of the wall opening. Lintels are made the same way as for external doors. Sometimes, internal doorways are a bit wider than the exterior ones to allow better air circulation and light distribution inside a structure³⁷. In sub-recent traditional architecture, lintels of internal doorways are made of wood only; stone seems to be reserved for the external doorways. Several doors connecting internal spaces are known from Area B at Basta, e.g. in Building BI, where they measure around 0.75–0.85 m in width, and in Building BVIII, where they are also around 0.75 m wide and about 1.5 m high³⁸. In several cases, it is hard to decide if the doorways are actually internal connections. At Ba'ja, for example, doorways are predominantly internal connections on the upper floor level of a building complex but at the same time also connecting individual building units with each other.

25 *Type H2.2 Window-like opening – high threshold:* In some cases, the threshold of a doorway was raised to a height that means it could be viewed as a parapet³⁹. However, these should still be understood as (raised) thresholds. Some of the best examples for

32 Kirkbride 1966; Byrd 2005.

33 Kinzel 2013; Kinzel 2019.

34 Schmidt 2009, 206 f.; Kurapkat 2010; Kinzel – Clare 2020; Kinzel 2023; Kinzel in press.

35 Kurapkat 2010, 140–142.

36 Schmidt 2005, 17 fig. 5; Piesker 2014, 42–44; Kurapkat 2010, 140–142.

37 Kinzel 2013, 180.

38 Nissen 2006, 162. 171–177; Kinzel 2006, 196 f.

39 Kuijt 2011, 142 describes this as »half-doors« with the appearance of windows.

this kind of access into rooms are known from the LPPNB architecture of the Southern Levant, at sites such as Basta⁴⁰, Ba'ja⁴¹, Ghwair⁴², 'Ain Jammam⁴³, as-Sifiyya⁴⁴, el-Hem-meh⁴⁵, 'Ain Ghazal⁴⁶ and Wadi Hamarash⁴⁷, but have also been found at sites along the Euphrates Valley, including Jerf el-Ahmar⁴⁸. Almost all examples have the same size and ratio. In general, window-like openings connecting internal spaces – often in basements or on ground floor levels. The parapet is between 0.5–0.7 m high and the portrait-oriented, rectangular-shaped openings measure about 0.4–0.5 m in width and 0.6–0.7 m in height⁴⁹. The windowsill (threshold) is made of one or two larger, flat stone slabs. The lintel is constructed in a similar way. In some cases, branches were likely placed there in addition to the stone slab spanning the width of the window. In traditional houses of the greater Petra area, combined wooden and stone lintels are attested. As recent archaeological experiments undertaken in Area B at Basta have shown, it is possible to pass through those wall openings⁵⁰. However, the access is limited by the size and flexibility of the user. The sills have slightly polished surfaces, plausible traces of regular use, but how intensely those wall openings were actually used and for how long cannot be determined.

26 *Type H2.3 Crawl hole*⁵¹: Crawl holes are, in contrast to window-like openings, placed on or just above floor level and have, in some cases, also a threshold. One has to physically bend down to crawl through it. Crawl holes are most prominently known from Çatalhöyük⁵². Dimensions are reported to be between 0.4–0.75 m in width and 0.72–0.77 m in height⁵³. Sizes are sufficient for passing through on a daily basis but are also kept small enough to allow for a stable indoor climate in the separated spaces. A variety of different shapes are known for crawl holes at Çatalhöyük⁵⁴.

Type H3 – Gate

27 Gates should be understood as large doors – often closed with two gate leaves to allow more people or animals to pass through at the same time. So far, no real gates have been attested in the context of Early Neolithic architecture. A possible gate, which was later blocked, was identified in Area B South at Ba'ja, in Wall B74:22. The gate is about 1.4 m wide and has so far been exposed to a height of c. 1.15 m, which is obviously not its full size. The lintel is made of a long stone slab, which was probably combined with a wooden lintel (Loc. B74:35)⁵⁵.

40 Gebel et al. 2006b.

41 Bienert – Gebel 2004; Kinzel 2013.

42 Simmons 2000; Simmons – Najjar 2003; Ladah 2006.

43 Waheeb – Fino 1997; Gebel 2008; Kinzel 2013.

44 Mahasneh 2001; Mahasneh 2004.

45 Makarewicz – Rose 2011.

46 Banning – Byrd 1987; Rollefson – Kafafi 2013.

47 Sampson 2010, Sampson 2011, Sampson 2013.

48 Stordeur 2015, 78.

49 In the case of Neolithic Basta: 0.35 × 0.5 m to 0.45 × 0.65 m – sills/thresholds are between 0.6–0.75 m above the floor surface (Kinzel 2006, 197).

50 Kinzel 2013.

51 For crawl holes, the terms ›portholes‹ (e.g. Smith 1990, 330 f.; Lelek Tvetmarken 2012, 89) or ›access holes‹ (Taylor 2016, 146 after Farid – Hodder 2014, 38 f.) are also used.

52 Mellaart 1967; Hodder 2006; Barański et al. 2015; Haddow 2016; Barański et al. 2022a.

53 Mellaart 1967, 56.

54 Barański 2016; Haddow 2016; Haddow 2017.

55 Kinzel 2013, 106.

Types H4, H5 and H6 – Other Horizontal Wall Openings and Features

28 The features presented here are in general too small to be used as physical access points or are structurally related to wall openings, e.g. niches. However, they may have served as communication openings, air vents or to store items.

29 *Type H4.1 Air vents/air circulation openings:* Only a few examples of air vents are known. Many of them are poorly preserved, whereas others, e.g. at LPPNB Ba'ja or Göbekli Tepe, were found blocked or closed as a result of later building events⁵⁶.

30 *Type H4.2 Smoke/fume exits/ventilation shafts (preforms of chimneys):* A special form of air vent is one where the extension of it has a passage into a smoke or fume exit, or chimney. There are a few examples attested at, e.g., PPNB Ghwair (Area A/1, Room 1)⁵⁷ in the greater Petra area and roughly contemporary Aşıklı Höyük and Balıklı in Central Anatolia. Here, they are strategically placed near the fireplaces/roasting pits to ensure a proper airflow⁵⁸. There is also a recently exposed possible air vent/smoke exit opening in Space 61 at Göbekli Tepe. Only two sides – made of thin stone slabs – have survived in the upper part of the wall, just below the remains of the roof or ceiling screed. The opening is located above a fire installation and would ideally have led the smoke out into the stepped alley.

31 *Type H5 Niches:* Niches are found in many Neolithic buildings. They are constructed in a very similar manner to window-like openings and crawl holes. Sizes can vary greatly, but generally have the same proportions as window-like openings or air vents. When filled with sediment material, niches can be easily mistaken for window-like openings. Niches are known from, for example, 'Ain Jammam, in the northern wall of Space AJ01 (fig. 3)⁵⁹, Beidha, Phase C 1, Building 5⁶⁰, Basta, Building BVIII⁶¹, Boncuklu Tarla, Building EA 1⁶², Çatalhöyük, e.g. Building 43, Space 600⁶³, Ghwair, Area 1, Room 1 (fig. 4)⁶⁴, and Göbekli Tepe, in the northern walls of Building B (fig. 5. 6. 7)⁶⁵.

32 *Type H6 Low walls/kerbs/platforms and benches*⁶⁶: At some sites, the internal spaces are divided by low walls that do not reach up to the ceiling, a set of stones, kerbs, or earthen or wattle-and-daub structures that are easily crossed by stepping over; these serve more as extended thresholds than walls (fig. 8. 9). Sometimes, a stepping stone was placed in front of the wall to ease the access to and exit from a space. This arrangement is often found where room compartments are used as storage bins or workshops⁶⁷. At other sites, e.g. Çatalhöyük, the space is divided by platforms and benches placed against the walls, forming a central sunken floor area. According to the activities that took place on them and based on the deposits found there, these features can be further divided into ›clean‹ and ›dirty‹ areas. The step up to the platform forms the physical and intangible limit of this spatial unit.

56 Kinzel 2013, 107. 179 f.

57 Simmons – Najjar 2003, 413.

58 Simmons – Najjar 2006; Duru et al. 2021a; Shillito et al. 2021.

59 Waheeb – Fino 1997; Gebel 2008; Kinzel 2013, 558.

60 Byrd 2005, 55 fig. 305.

61 Kinzel 2013, 556 pl. 5.20.

62 Kodaş – Çiftçi 2022.

63 Barański 2016. At Çatalhöyük, niches were also referred to as a ›shelf‹, ›hand recess‹ or ›recess‹. A plastered opening in the wall of a house, acting as a shelf, often utilised the back of the neighbouring house wall as its back (Taylor 2016, 147 after Farid – Hodder 2014, 38 f.).

64 Simmons – Najjar 1998, 94; Simmons – Najjar 2003, 413.

65 Kinzel – Clare 2020.

66 For Çatalhöyük, this was described as follows: »Kerb: Ridge, Threshold, Step. Raised clay ridges across the floor area creating internal demarcation zones for internal activity areas; sometimes the demarcation occurs as a shallow step. Kerbs can also be created by the edges of platforms and other raised furnishing« (Taylor 2016, 146 after Farid – Hodder 2014, 38 f.).

67 See Bartl 2004; Kuijt – Finlayson 2009; Kuijt 2011; Kinzel 2013.