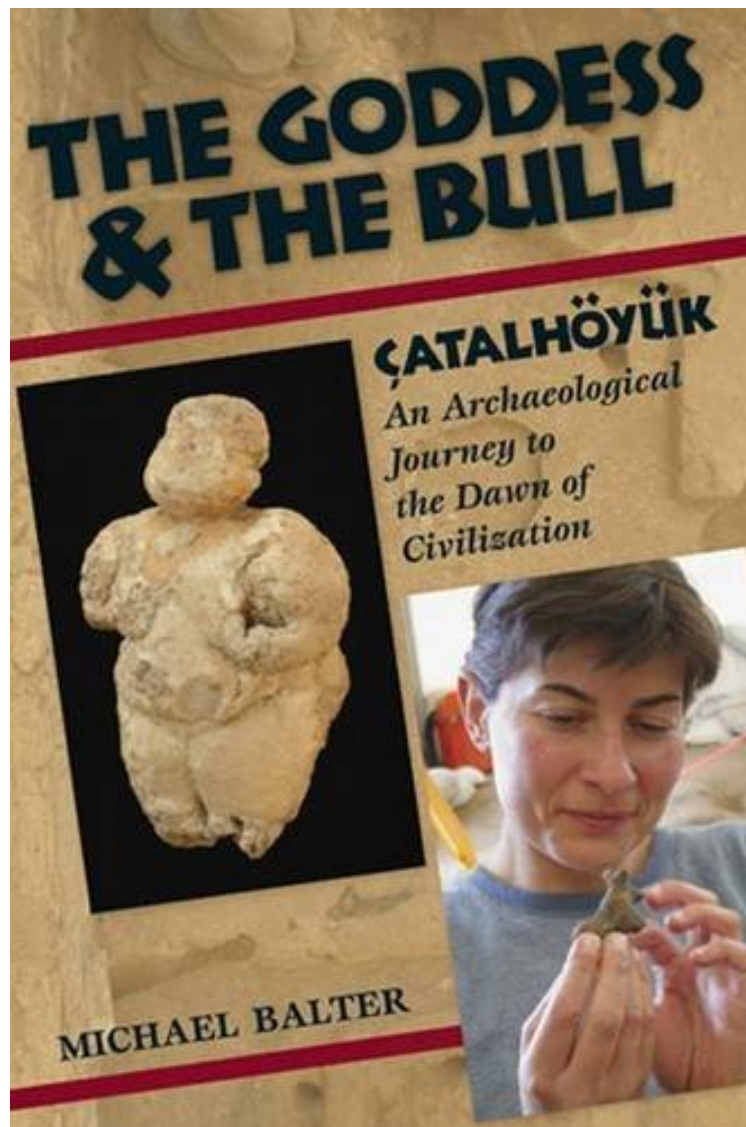


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## The Goddess and the Bull: Catalhoyuk--An Archaeological Journey to the Dawn of Civilization

Michael Balter

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**Michael Balter : The Goddess and the Bull: Catalhoyuk--An Archaeological Journey to the Dawn of Civilization** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Goddess and the Bull: Catalhoyuk--An Archaeological Journey to the Dawn of Civilization:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. The politics of a discipline--Is Archaeology a Science?By Dr. Kimberly A. FolseWhy my library system didn't have a copy of this book is surprising. It's a great current personable

history of the discipline of archaeology (from a British perspective), especially from the time I was in college (late 70s and early 80s). 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars  
By Barry Ore  
Thanks for the book  
4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. not as much info as I'd hoped about the actual archaeological findings  
By Maija Jespersen  
I was so excited to read about this site in detail, but was extremely disappointed by this book. The author thought it was more important to record the birthdate and personal experience of every single archaeologist, instead -- where they were born, why they liked archaeology, and who they hooked up with and when. And, he was unreasonably critical of the archaeologist Gimbutas. He quotes her as saying that an arrowhead undeniably represents a female pubis, when in all of her comprehensively illustrated books there is not a single arrowhead. I really doubt his statement is accurate, especially given how he misinterprets her other findings. There were only two illustrations of the art found at the site, even though the artworks were numerous. There were no illustrations of the cattle bones, the tooth marks, or most of the other findings. Instead, there is a yearbook-style catalog of the archaeologists. I wanted more info about the dig and the findings, and didn't need a yearbook of the diggers, but it did illuminate some interesting trends in archaeology. Not bad, but more of a biopic than a reference book.

Veteran science writer Michael Balter skillfully weaves together many threads in this fascinating book about one of archaeology's most legendary sites at Catalhöyük. First excavated forty years ago, the site is justly revered by prehistorians, art historians, and New Age goddess worshippers alike for its spectacular finds dating almost 10,000 years ago. Archaeological maverick Ian Hodder, leader of the recent re-excavation at this Turkish mound, designated Balter as the project's biographer. The result is a skillful telling of many stories about both past and present: of the inhabitants of Neolithic Catalhöyük and the development of human creativity and ingenuity, as revealed in the recent excavation; of James Mellaart, the original excavator, whose troubles off the mound eventually overshadowed his incisive work at the site; of Hodder and his intense, brilliant crew who marveled and squabbled over the meaning of finds in dusty trenches while attempting to reinterpret Mellaart's work; and of the recent history of the theory and methods of archaeology itself. Part story of the human past, part soap opera of modern scholarly life, part textbook on the practice of modern archaeology, this book should appeal to general readers and archaeological students alike.

"This is a clear and detailed account of how archaeological methodology and different avenues of scientific investigation (archaeobotany, micromorphology and physical anthropology) can be combined to help us understand cultural, religious, and ideological contexts at Catalhöyük. Balter's vivid image of a functioning archaeological community is a unique perspective that is thoroughly enjoyable." -Katie Jaye-Lipton, *Minerva*  
"Balter uses the personalities of the people who have excavated the Turkish archaeological site of Catalhöyük to draw in his reader and to help understand the passion, decisions and dedication that it takes to work for years at an archaeological site.... The Goddess and the Bull is the wonderful true story of one of the largest and most populated Neolithic settlements.... Highly recommended for undergraduates, because the book does a wonderful job of explaining various archaeological theories in a way that is easy to understand." -Melissa Aho, *Anthropology Database*  
"The dawn of civilization means here the beginnings of living in cities and the emergence of complex social and symbolic systems. The author, a celebrated scientific journalist of *Science*, perceptively explores the way in which the archaeological record is interpreted over time. His study retraces some fifty years of excavation at Catalhöyük, one of the largest Neolithic settlements in central Turkey's Konya Plain, which was discovered in 1958 by British archaeologist James Mellaart. This 9,500 old prehistoric village, which was inhabited for a thousand years and whose population is estimated to have been approximately 8,000 at its peak, is made of well preserved mud-brick houses in which artworks depict leopards, vultures, bulls and 'Mother Goddesses'. Balter's skillfully crafted report should be of interest to semioticians not so much for his descriptions of the artifacts as for his vivid rendering of the archaeological process. His main focus is indeed on the archaeologists themselves, who are not mere names appended to scientific articles or books reporting data and interpretations, but embodied minds embedded in institutions and complex webs of influences. Each one is introduced by a life story and his/her involvement with Catalhöyük is described in both intellectual and emotional terms. But, perhaps more importantly, this book dramatizes the theoretical and methodological changes that occurred during the last fifty years in archaeology. The paradigm shifts from 'traditional' to 'New', then from 'Processual' to 'Post-processual' archaeology are lucidly explained as well as their consequences in the field. Balter exemplifies, without using the word, the semiotic turn in archaeology, the explicit quest for the meanings that prehistoric artifacts had for the people who made them and used them." -Semiotix  
"(Balter) has produced a compelling read, one that achieves the double act of educating and entertaining." -*Science Magazine*  
"All in all, this book is an exciting read. Balter knows his stuff and anyone interested in the origins of civilization and the ultimate foundations of the modern world we live in will enjoy and learn from it. Besides that, there is basically an undergraduate education in archaeological theory included." -*Political Affairs*