

# The Evidence of Shamanism Rituals in Early Prehistoric Periods of Europe and Anatolia

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**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Şamanizm, Ritüeller, Paleolitik, Mezolitik, Neolitik

## Introduction

Archaeological evidence about shamanism which is an extremely ancient and once widespread religion dating back to the hunting-gathering cultures of the Palaeolithic period (Dioszegi 1960: 8; Eliade 1964: xv, 504; Furst 1977: 21; Maringer 1977; Walsh 1990: 13, 141-150, 161; Ripinsky-Naxon 1993: 70; D'Aquili – Newberg 1999; Whitley 2000; Winkelman 2000; Lewis-Williams 2002; Pearson 2002; Emerson 2003; Aldhouse-Green – Aldhouse-Green 2005; McCall 2007; van Pool – van Pool 2007; Yakar 2009) are becoming increasingly common.

The term shaman derives especially from the Tungus people of Siberia, meaning “one who is excited or raised or simply to know (Campbell 1983: 157). Shaman is a religious leader of the community whose principal role is to act as a mediator between the three worlds, such as upper (sky), middle (earth) and underworld (underground), aided by his or her ritual equipment and spirit helpers. Ritual equipment almost always includes a drum or other musical instruments, dress, bag, horned mask and models of spirit helpers (Zvelebil 2010: 43-44).

Besides shamans are presumed capable of directly interacting or communicating with humans, animals and spirits and sometimes it is necessary for a shaman to transform into spirits themselves (Eliade 1964; Nicholson 1987; Vitebsky 1995; Hayden 2003: 179; Yakar 2009: 293). During this stage, shamanism often report travelling to the supernatural real to gain help or

knowledge for healing, manipulating weather, divinations, ensuring successful hunts or other important activities such as ensuring fertility (Eliade 1964; Furst 1972; Grim 1983; Atkinson 1987; Wilbert 1987; Whitley 2000, 156; Narby – Huxley 2001; Van Pool 2003).

While shamanism activities may begin to show themselves in parts of Europe before 30.000 years ago, similar activities have been seen around 12.000 BC in the Near East. In this respect I present Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Pre-Pottery Neolithic sites, where various lines of evidence described above indicate both the presence of shamanism and provide insight into its practice<sup>1</sup>. In all these periods, archaeological investigations have yielded spectacular remains, especially the drawings and reliefs, which are commonly held to be indicative of shamanism. Are these finds really the remains of shamanism? Is shamanism related only with hunter-gatherer groups or also with sedentary ones? How far did it continue among early agricultural societies? What are the similarities and differences between shamans of Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Pre-Neolithic groups? In this paper I wish to explore these basic questions.

## **Shamanism Rituals in Palaeolithic**

Siberian shamans believe that shamanism emerged in the period when hunting and gathering was the main means to support life (Basilov 1999: 39). Ethnographic evidence suggests that hunter-gatherer groups would have seen the environment as giving and reciprocating, and that their spirit worlds would have consisted largely of animals and natural features with which shaman-like figures may have mediated. From this point of view, it is best to begin investigating prehistoric shamanism in Palaeolithic rituals and related cave paintings of Europe. The shamanic hypothesis that cave art is based on a fusion of direct evidence from the caves themselves with observations of more recent hunter-gatherer societies that still produce rock art.

However, not all cultures have specific shamanic ritual locations, and even when they are present, shamans will perform some rituals away from them. Ritual areas are typically viewed as the literal doorway between the spiritual and physical worlds, and are often an opening into the earth, like caves or springs, or elevated spaces such as mountains and even caves in mountains.

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper I did not present Palaeolithic of Near East because the Upper Palaeolithic era has only been minimally explored and requires a brief glance to distant Europe for parallel examples. Also during the Epipaleolithic shamanism restricted only with burials and mortuary activities.

These are viewed as literal entrances down to the underworld and world above (Pearson 2002: 69-70; Lewis-Williams 2002). Although, for Breuil (1952: 153-167) and Leroi-Gourhan (1966: 114), the ornamented caves were sanctuaries, it is a common and pervasive assumption among ethnographers and archaeologists that large caves such as Altamira (Conkey 1980), Castillo (Conkey 1980), Lascaux (Leroi-Gourhan – Allain 1979), Trois-Frères (Maringer and Bandi 1953) and Tuc d'Audobert (Maringer 2002, 101) were used as aggregation sites.

The aggregation site is an a priori type of hunter-gatherer site which social and ritual factors bring people together (Lee 1972; Wilmsen 1974; Lee 1979; Conkey 1980). Gamble (1999: 381-387), argues that, in hunter-gatherer bands, contact was face to face, in other words, people met other people and exchanged artefacts and information. To this end, most of the Palaeolithic hunter-gatherers bands follow an annual cycle characterized by periods of concentration and dispersion (Conkey 1980: 609). On theoretical and ethnographic grounds, the size of aggregation sites could be varied between 50 people to several hundred (Hayden 2012: 11).

Early during the Middle Palaeolithic some caves consist of the existence of difficult to access, had been used as ritual areas. The best example of this occurs at Bruniquel Cave. (Rouzaud *et al.* 1996). This cave would have been able to accommodate 4-5 people. It seems certain that this could not have been a normal habitation structure and the most plausible alternative is that it was the meeting place for some type of ritual group. Such a group may have consisted of important members such as shamans from several neighbouring local bands who engaged in common rituals in order to cooperation between bands, just as was the case with Aboriginal bands in the Australian Western Desert (Hayden 2003: 32, 99-103).

Aggregation sites did exist also for some Upper Palaeolithic populations of south-western Europe (White 1978; Conkey 1980). The large and decorated caves of Europe might have served as periodic centres of assembly where seasonal ceremonies were conducted on behalf of the congregated population of a large surrounding area. If, as is usually assumed, south-western France and north Spain in the Upper Palaeolithic were relatively rich in resources then we should expect clearer evidence for different ethnic groups with aggregation centres within each ethnic groups. According to Lewis-Williams (2002: 266), these different ethnic groups used symbols of various kinds to stand for social groups and were thus able to extend their influence and power beyond face to face. For instance, if a number of groups came together at Lascaux,

shamans from all the participating groups may have wanted to integrate their vision and experiences with those of the wider community (Lewis-Williams 2002: 267).

Like recent hunter-gatherer groups, in the prehistoric periods the most important structural element of shamanism rituals is the trance, in other words, the journey to the other world (Eliade 1964). Like recent shaman groups, the evidence from Upper Palaeolithic caves show that there were music and dance during this early period too. Regarding singing, bone and ivory flutes were probably the oldest form of music. Foremost amongst Upper Palaeolithic finds are two assemblages of flutes from Geißenklösterle, Hohle Fels, Vogelherd and Isturitz (D'Errico *et al.* 2003: 39; Conard *et al.* 2009). In addition to these, which are clearly music instruments, a number of other artefacts that are plausibly interpreted as instruments have been recovered, such as bullroarers and a mammoth bone marimba like percussion instrument. It is also likely that drums and rattles, that are ubiquitous today in all shaman cultures, could not have been found in archaeological deposits because they made of perishable materials (Fitch 2006: 197).

Palaeolithic cave paintings in Europe and rock art associated with ancient hunting-gathering peoples elsewhere have also been interpreted as representing shamanistic trance states and hallucinations (Lewis-Williams – Dowson 1988; Bednarik *et al.* 1990; Clottes *et al.* 1998; Price 2001; Lewis-Williams 2003; Lewis-Williams 2004). Shamanic rituals with animals- that assist them during their rituals- frequently involve individuals, usually other shamans, caring for the shaman's "spiritless" body (Wilbert 1987: 157–158), but tutelary spirits, such as bears or jaguars, snakes, aurochs, wild boars, felines and especially bird are ritually sent with the shamans to guide and aid them during their flights (Harner 1973; Wilbert 1987; Bawden 1996: 65–70; Whitley 2000, Whitley 2001; Hays-Gilpin 2004; Yakar 2009: 296-297).

The occurrence of protective animal spirits in shamanism suggests possible earlier links with totemism that its roots may go much further back into early prehistoric periods (Durkheim 1995: 84-98). In totemism an animal or plant could be identified with a particular group (Lévi-Strauss 1963). This totem is presumed to transmit special or superhuman power to its human partner or owner. In most native societies, group totem remains in the clan and is passed on from generation to generation, mainly because of the belief that ancestors were born from it (Yakar 2009: 302). According to Peters and Schmidt (2004: 210), each animal species will be preferentially depicted at sites within the territory of the group for whom it is the totemic emblem.

Apart from single animal depictions, human-animal linkages, indicating the physical and symbolical attachment of human with animals, are also present at numerous Upper Palaeolithic sites (Maringer – Bandi 1953: Fig. 142; Leroi-Gourhan 1965; Freeman – Echegaray 1981; Campbell 1988: I, 1, 74, 76, 78; Gimbutas 1991: 176; Balter 2000).

Similarly, the famous Lascaux painting of an ithyphallic man lying in front of bison (Campbell 1988: 65) has found various interpretations: as hunting magic, as the memorial of a wounded or slain hunter (Breuil 1952: 144-146) or as a shamanistic séance (Campbell 1987: 310). Anyway, this human figure has been interpreted as shaman who is involved in the magic of hunt (Lewis-Williams 2002) and insures the success of clan in hunting and other activities. Furthermore, like Palaeolithic period, Siberian shamans help the hunt with magic, by releasing the souls of the animals or letting a killed animal tell others to be killed (Witzel 2010: 42).

## **Shamanism Rituals after the end of the Palaeolithic Period**

After the end of the Palaeolithic period, early Prehistoric people moved some distance from the underworld of the caves and now they find themselves in the open areas remote from the settlement. The location of these sites which are signed with the rock carvings are not randomly chosen but are often associated with significant natural features in the landscape. These sites is found in rocky terrain and surrounding areas of good pasture where the hunters could observe their prey or catch them while on the move it (Boado – Romero 1993: 192; Zvelebil 2010: 49). Since the Mesolithic period access to spiritual realms was no longer gained through caves and eliminated the complexity of the subterranean passages and replaced it with the greater predictability and simplicity of structures of their own design (Lewis-Williams – Pearce 2005: 59).

The ritual life of Mesolithic period is still marked by symbols and rituals associated with the transitional hunter-gatherer cosmology. The rock art of Mesolithic period contain a range of symbols, which in ethnographic contexts could be clearly identified with shamans (Zvelebil 2010: 48, 58). The depicted animals which appear most frequently are deer, goat and bulls. Bulls are the dominant animals in the earliest phases of the art, and horses, dogs, reindeer and insects only rarely occur. In general the repertory of animals hunted coincides with those most frequently represented in the rock art of Mesolithic period (Boado – Romero 1993: 189, 198).

Dancing in trance was still important during this period. In a larger camp of hunters at Star Carr in east England there were found twenty-four masks made from skull of stags which must have served for ritual dances (Clark 1954: 168-171). Whether or not the dancers wearing the masks were shamans, there must have been a leader of ceremonies (Maringer 1977: 107).

Also in the rock art, we find anthropomorphic figures with horns and masks, besides numerous petroglyphs of individuals wielding elk-headed terminals. This corresponds to numerous finds of the actual artefacts: elk-headed stone carved sculptures, mace heads and terminals carved from wood. The symbolic referent for both these symbols is the shamans' "turu" or tree of life, symbolizing the ability to undertake a journey between the different world, aided by reptiles or horned animals. A number of petroglyphs show anthropomorphic figures with drums and other musical instruments. These depictions correspond to shamans performing rituals (Zvelebil 2010: 48-49).

The transformation from a mobile hunter-gatherer way of life into the highly productive farming and sedentary or semi sedentary communities reflects the degree of control exerted by a human group over a particular territory and its resources (Bar-Yosef 2000). During the multi-staged socio-economic evolution which started in the Pre-Pottery Neolithic period and lasted for up to six millennia the conscious mind became progressively more imaginative, diversified and saw an explosion of symbolism (Hodder, 2001: 108; Yakar 2009: 291).

Verhoeven (2002: 245, 248-249) suggested that especially Pre-Pottery Neolithic B period ritual symbolism was very marked because ritual played a crucial role as an expression of the desire to control ritual behaviour and the supernatural world, in order to control human world in communities. Recent archaeological discoveries from Anatolia have identified large ceremonial structures that occur very early in the development of settled life.

The notion that fundamental social and economic changes were presaged in religious and spiritual dimensions of life is the site of Göbekli Tepe (Schmidt 2000; Peters and Schmidt 2004; Schmidt 2006; Yakar 2009), Gusr Höyük (Karul 2011), Nevalı Çori (Hauptmann 1999) and Karahan Tepe (Çelik 2000) where the monumental monoliths within ceremonial structures have been found in southeastern Anatolia. These sites have produced clear evidence for public ritual which were provided by shaman-like ritual practitioners and also point to the existence of communally celebrated rites and rituals since the 12<sup>th</sup> millennium BC (Özdoğan and Özdoğan 1998; Erdoğan 2009, 129; Yakar 2009, 293, 296; Karul 2011).

Cauvin (2000) signifies the emergence of ideas about the relationships between humans and wild animals and supernatural beings which are the central theme in the art of the southeast Anatolian Neolithic. Throughout the Palaeolithic period there are images that suggest humans may have mediated with the spirit world, but there is no evidence of a central human divinity over animals. On the other hand, human-animal linkages seem to have played an important role in Pre-Pottery Neolithic B rituals (Verhoeven 2002: 252).

The symbolic world of animal spirits is here dominated by human figures. On these huge stones are the carvings of an array of wild animals and human arms. The snake and bird figures depicted on some of the stone pillars of Göbekli Tepe are among the well-known symbols in shamanism; considers important agents of communication between the separate domains of cosmos. The snake could have represented as spirit of the ancestor or the domains of living and the dead. It may well be that stone pillars decorated with powerful animals such as aurochs, bears, wild boars and felines in the round semi-subterranean structures at Göbekli Tepe could have symbolized the traits of various divinities and mythical ancestors. Alternatively, they perhaps portrayed the acquisition of animal traits by shamans towards their mission (Yakar 2009: 297).

The human and animal figures carved on totem like stone pillars at Göbekli Tepe, including figures of hybrid creatures combining human and bird features from Nevali Çori could have been illustrations of mythical ancestors or stories related to them (Hauptmann 1999: 76, Fig 12-14; Yakar 2009: 301, 304). Given the anthropomorphic nature of T-shaped pillars at Göbekli Tepe and the fact that these abstract monoliths bear representations of particular animal species, it is tempting to interpret these megaliths as three-dimensional representations of shamans (Peters – Schmidt 2004: 212). Besides, combining features of man and bird from Nevali Çori could be a Neolithic example for transformation into a bird. Another example from Nevali Çori is two symmetrical female figures on the broken upper part of the pillar. In here, two female figures crouching back to back with a large bird perching on their heads (Hauptmann 1999: Fig. 14). According to Hauptmann (1999: 76), it is obvious that the representation of a bird perched upon the human head has to do with a particular spirit belief.

Non-domestic ritual Pre-Pottery Neolithic B period sites like Göbekli Tepe were probably special sites were serving a large region (Verhoeven 2002: 253). Schmidt has found no traces of Pre-Pottery Neolithic houses in Göbekli Tepe. He therefore concludes that Göbekli Tepe was a ritual centre to which



Pre-Pottery Neolithic groups came for ritual purposes (Lewis-Williams – Pearce 2005: 32). The presence of a series of broadly contemporaneous enclosures each with a unique iconography would imply that each space demarcated by pillars was frequented by different clans (Peters – Schmidt 2004: 210). Thus, it can be suggested that these sites were perhaps representatives from surrounding settled sites may have visited them in order to perform rituals. These rituals may have been accompanied by communal feasting and the consumption of hunted wild animals. Apart from these, the occurrence of Aswad, el-Khiam, Helwan, Nemrik and Nevali Çori arrow heads in the Pre-Pottery Neolithic debris at Göbekli Tepe is not due to the trade but results from visits by human groups to perform their rites in their own enclosure (Peters – Schmidt 2004: 210). These people came from Çayönü, Nevali Çori, Tell ‘Abr, Mureybet, Jerf el-Ahmar, Tell Qarameland certainly many other sites that are still unknown. These places describe a radius of approximately 200 km around Göbekli Tepe (Schmidt 2005: 14). Moreover, since the largest of the stone pillars; 7 m high and 3 m wide across the top, weights more than 50 tons, it is obvious that the quarrying and their transportation from the surrounding quarries would have required coordinated effort and planning involving a large number of people (Schmidt 2000: 47-48; Yakar 2003: 311-312). Also, compared to rock paintings of the Palaeolithic period, the fabrication of these huge monoliths did not take few hours, but weeks, may be months. It is therefore impossible to think that this task was carried out by few shamans. It is highly probable that besides shamans, a considerable number of skilled labourers participated to accomplish this task (Schmidt 2000: 47-48; Yakar 2003: 311-312). Besides these, the material which has been found in the debris consist mainly flint, but also fragments of stone vessels, grinding stones and other ground stone tools. All these show the existence of large social groups consisting of a number of village communities (Yakar 2003: 311).

There are major differences in the setting of ritual and symbolism during Pre-Pottery Neolithic and Neolithic periods: For example while at Göbekli the symbolism is focused in separate “temples”, at Çatalhöyük the art and symbolism occur in domestic houses (Hodder – Meskell 2010: 33). The early “shamanistic” overtones of this were clearly objectified in the way that bull horns (*bucrania*), vulture and other skulls were embedded in walls so as to appear to be emerging from these liminal structures. Animal heads that are not only part of the walls, but also look out from the walls indeed seem to be powerful arguments for an early form of shamanism (Lewis-Williams – Pearce 2005: 111; Hodder 2006: 70). Van Huysteen (2010: 119) also shows that *bucrania* installed on the walls of Çatalhöyük houses were the main



markers of significant feasting events and rituals and that these events, along with foundation rituals and burials, were fairly rare occurrences, involving highly charged cultural myths and practices. Bulls were preferentially selected for feasts and ceremonies at Çatalhöyük. We also see wild animals in large group activities in the paintings. So there could be a social focus on male prestige and feast providing, and the memorialization of this in the house and ritual symbolism (Hodder – Meskell 2010: 48).

Mellaart remarks that the wall paintings had ritual meanings. His view is supported by the dancing figures and the presence of a drum in some of the wall paintings, like the deer hunt scene<sup>2</sup>. Besides, the combination of bow and drum for cultic dances of the so-called hunting shrine of Çatalhöyük could be related with shamanism rituals. In this respect, one may also think of functional relations between the two tools, as known from Paleoasiatic cultures, where the magical function of the bow seems to have been adopted by the shamanistic drum (Stockmann 1985: 25).

At Çatalhöyük some of the figures painted or molded on walls may have been spirit animals, spirit people or the representations of shamans transformed into animals or supernatural beings (Clottes *et al.* 1998: 26; Yakar 2009: 301). Altered states of consciousness were probably a central characteristic of Neolithic religion, and the early shamanistic overtones of this were clearly objectified in the way that bucrania, vulture and other skulls were embedded in walls so as to appear to be emerging from these liminal structures. Animal heads that are not only part of the walls, but also look out from the walls indeed seem to be powerful arguments for an early form of shamanism (Lewis-Williams – Pearce 2005: 111; Hodder 2006: 70).

One of the wall paintings of Çatalhöyük on which depicting two hybrid figures with vulture head, body and wings but with human legs might depict shamans disguised or spiritually transformed into vultures and a crane dance has been suggested by Russell and McGowan (2003) on the basis of the treatment of some crane wing bones at the site. It is possible that the dressing up of people as birds is indicative of the 'trickster' figure seen in many myths and rituals (Whitehouse – Hodder 2010: 130). For the Buryat of Siberia, the eagle is the prototype of the shaman (Clottes *et al.* 1998: 26). Such transformation

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<sup>2</sup> During this period, like in the earlier periods music and dance continued to be important in the rituals. Beginning with the Neolithic period, tube drums, vessel drums made of clay, vessel rattles and flutes, pan flutes, animal horns, and possibly also frame drums have been seen (Stockmann 1985: 25).

of the soul according to the shamanic perception is necessary for the guidance of a soul into the underworld, communicating with spirits and contacting mythical ancestors or supernatural forces (Hoppál 2007).

Just as in the Upper Palaeolithic parietal art, human figures at Çatalhöyük appear as elaborated silhouette in contrast to a more 'naturalistic' rendering of animals. Lewis-Williams (2004: 29-31) suggests that they may have been produced by special people like shamans in the society who used it to contact the other world.

It follows, therefore, that both the images depicting these patterns found on cave walls and the figures both on the stone pillars of Pre-Pottery Neolithic and on the shrine walls of Neolithic are evidence of shamanism in prehistory.

## Conclusion

As the numbers of inhabitants of early prehistoric communities grew, they required new modes of thinking, imagining and representing in order that new kinds of community could be formed. It seems evident that ritual centers for social and ritual life existed long before sedentary communities. While Upper Palaeolithic of Western Europe where it was characterised by caves for public ritual, the Pre-Pottery Neolithic period of southeastern Anatolia and Levant were characterised by buildings for public ritual. These early prehistoric sites were places where people came together on specific ritual occasions, presumably seasonal and played a fundamental role from at least Upper Palaeolithic not only for performing rituals but for exchanging information, rare materials, gifts and technical knowhow.

Both some Palaeolithic caves and Mesolithic rock shelters in Europe and Pre-Pottery Neolithic B sites in Near East are non-domestic special sites which were serving a large region and perhaps representatives from surrounding settled sites may have visited them in order to perform rituals. These rituals which may have been accompanied by communal feasting and the consumption of hunted wild animals, were not an act of few people, but activities of an entire community, large enough and organised even in these early periods.

On the other hand, in the pottery Neolithic site of Çatalhöyük, domestic and ritual activities were not rigidly separated both spatially and conceptually. If meeting in these sites throughout Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic periods, were used ritually to affirm alliance relationship between local bands, such events would most likely take place during seasonal or episodic aggregations of several local bands.

The life ways of early prehistoric groups are presumed to have been the most ancient prototypes for shamanic beliefs. This shamanic hypothesis is based on a fusion of direct evidence from the caves of Palaeolithic, rock art of Mesolithic, stone pillars of Pre-Pottery Neolithic and shrine walls of Neolithic themselves with observations of more recent shamanist societies that still produce figurative art. These shamanistic interpretations of art and ritual might help us to understand more comprehensively the imagistic mode of religion, so prevalent in the early prehistoric periods.

Also, the Upper Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Pre-Pottery Neolithic and Neolithic art probably allowed communication with, or contained the living spirits of the ancestors. Animal figures and scenes on the walls of the Palaeolithic caves show similarities to human figures and scenes on reliefs and paintings from Göbekli Tepe, Nevalı Çori and Çatalhöyük. Within this general frame there is a particular focus on dangerous wild animals or on the dangerous parts of wild animals from Palaeolithic and Mesolithic to throughout the Neolithic period. Scenes consist of symbolic killing, teasing, hunting wild animals have been found both on the cave walls of the Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic Europe and also on the walls Neolithic Çatalhöyük houses. Although there may be no direct connection between artefacts and paintings created during these two periods, clearly the same symbolic human minds were at work.

Presuming the Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic art of Europe and Pre-Pottery Neolithic and Neolithic art of Anatolia simulate scenes, one may think that the prehistoric belief system is animistic in nature. The similarities between these periods suggest a very long term and very far flung set of myths, ideas and orientations, even if there were many local variations. Also it is possible to concur that the adopting of farming and the settled life style did not totally replace the belief system of the earlier periods of hunter-gatherers. However, socio-economic restricting could have brought certain changes in the organization of spiritual activities.

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## Erken Prehistorik Dönemde Avrupa ve Anadolu'da Şamanist Ritüellerin Kanıtları

Dünyanın en eski inanış biçimlerinden birini yansıtan ve yalnızca antropoloji ile etnografyanın değil ayrıca son zamanlarda arkeolojinin de ilgi alanına giren şamanizm inancı ve ritüelleri ile ilgili veriler hem avcı-toplayıcı topluluklardan hem de küçük ölçekli ziraat toplumlarından bilinmektedir. Hiç şüphe yok ki, erken dönem toplumlarındaki şamanizm inancının varlığı sembolizm ile yakın ilişkilidir. Hem arkeolojik hem de etnografik veriler şamanizm inancının yerleşik hayata geçmeden çok daha önce, Üst Paleolitik dönemde ortaya çıkmış olduğunu göstermektedir. Söz konusu düşüncenin ortaya atılmasındaki en önemli etken ise, entellektüel düşünme kapasitesinin geliştiğini kanıtlayan sembolizmin bu dönemdeki varlığıdır. Burada konu edilen sembolik tasvirler Avrupa'da G.Ö. 30.000'lerde yapılmaya başlamışken, Anadolu'da bu sembolik tasvirler ancak G.Ö. 12.000'lerde görülmektedir. Diğer bir deyişle söz konusu tarihlerde Avrupa kıtasında Üst Paleolitik ve Mezolitik dönemlerde, Anadolu'da ise Akeramik ve Seramikli Neolitik dönemlerde sembolizmin etkileri yoğun bir şekilde hissedilmiştir.

Paleolitik Çağ'dan itibaren prehistorik insan doğayı, özellikle de kendine rakip olarak gördüğü vahşi hayvanları kontrol altına alma isteğini sembollerle anlatma yoluna gitmiştir. Bu bağlamda, sosyal statü farklarının ortaya çıkma-ya başladığı söz konusu toplumlarda duvar resimleri ile kabartmaları, üzeri bezemeli sütunlar, heykelcikler ve taşınabilir sanat eserlerinde tasvir edilen yabani hayvan, insan ve hayvan-insan karışımı figürlerde şamanizmin etkileri açık bir biçimde görülmektedir. Sözü edilen ve prehistorik sanat eserleri olarak değerlendirilen bu tip buluntuların ele geçtiği merkezler hem Paleolitik, hem Mezolitik, hem de Akeramik Neolitik ve seramikli Neolitik dönemlerde toplantı yerleri olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Bu toplantı yerleri, yılın belli dönemlerinde, çevre bölgelerde yaşayan ve farklı kılavuz ya da totem hayvanları ile temsil edilen erken Prehistorik dönem topluluklarının bir araya gele- rek toplu olarak avcılık yaptıkları, bilgi birikimlerini paylaştıkları, malzeme ve prestij ürünlerini takas ettikleri ve en önemlisi de ritüellerini gerçekleştirdikleri ve çoğunlukla da yerleşim yeri olarak kullanılmayan, besin kaynakları bakımından zengin olan alanlardır. Bu alanlar Avrupa'da Orta Paleolitik Çağ'dan itibaren, ancak ağırlıklı olarak da Üst Paleolitik dönemde mağaralar iken, Mezolitik ve Akeramik Neolitik dönemlerde daha çok yüksek alanlarda yer alan açık hava toplantı yerleri şeklinde karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Seramikli

Neolitik dönemde ise, en güzel örneğini Çatalhöyük buluntu yerinin temsil ettiği ve içinde hem günlük hayatın geçtiği hem de yine aynı şekilde ritüellerin yapılmış olduğu mekânlardır. Diğer bir deyişle Paleolitik, Mezolitik ve Akeramik Neolitik dönemlerde şamanizm törenleri genellikle yerleşim alanı dışında yapılmışken, yerleşik yaşam tarzının iyice benimsendiği seramikli Neolitik dönemde söz konusu ritüeller yerleşim alanı içinde yapılmaya başlanmıştır.

Söz konusu törenlerin, belli bir organizasyona bağlı olarak şamanların önderliğinde yapılan ritüeller olduğunu gösteren veriler de arkeolojik kazılar sırasında açığa çıkarılmış olan çeşitli buluntular ile temsil edilmektedir. Bu şaman törenlerin varlığı Avrupa'da Paleolitik dönemde mağara duvar resimleri ve kazımaları, Mezolitik dönemde yüksek alanlardaki kaya resimleri, Anadolu'da Akeramik Neolitik dönemde üzerlerine çeşitli figürlerin kazınmış olduğu taş sütunlar ve Neolitik dönemde de *shrine* duvarlarında yer alan kılavuz hayvan tasvirleri, transa girmiş olan ve kılavuz hayvanın ruhuna girmiş olduğunu gösteren yarı insan ve yarı hayvan şaman tasviri ve tören sahneleri ile tanımlanmıştır.

Bu çalışmada Avrupa'da Paleolitik ve Mezolitik dönemlerde çeşitli buluntu yerlerinde tespit edilen şaman törenlerine dair kanıtlar ile Anadolu'da Akeramik Neolitik dönemde görülmeye başlayan ve çeşitli araştırmacılar tarafından son yıllarda yapılan çalışmalar ışığında şamanizm inancının varlığını ortaya koymaya başladığına inanılan ritüeller arasındaki ilişki üzerinde durulacaktır. Bu bağlamda da, şamanizm ideolojisi ile Erken Prehistorik dönemlerdeki ilk ritüeller üzerinde ve bu ritüellerin söz konusu dönemlerde yaşayan toplumların sosyo-ekonomik yapısı üzerindeki etkileri üzerine odaklanılmaktadır. Sözü edilen amaç doğrultusunda Avrupa ve Anadolu'da açığa çıkarılan mağara ve kaya resimleri ile kabartmalarında yer alan ve bir taraftan şamanizm, diğer taraftan da totemizm ile yakın ilişkili olan bazı hayvan figürleri ve şamanları temsil ettiği düşünülen insan-hayvan tasvirleri ile bu törenlerinin vazgeçilmez öğeleri olarak kabul edilen müzik enstrümanları gibi bazı taşınabilir sanat eserleri incelenmiştir. Bunların yanı sıra, yılın belli dönemlerinde farklı grupların bir araya gelerek şaman ritüellerinin gerçekleşmiş olduğu düşünülen mağara, açık hava buluntu yerleri ve dini yapılar ile etnografik kayıtlar da kullanılarak, geçmişteki söz konusu ritüeller daha iyi anlaşılmasına çalışılmıştır.

Bu çalışma ile Avrupa'da Üst Paleolitik dönemde başlayıp Mezolitik dönem boyunca devam eden şamanizm inancını ve ritüellerinin, Anadolu'da Akeramik Neolitik'ten itibaren görüldüğü ve bu farklı dönemler arasında

gerek sembolizm, gerekse ritüeller bakımından birtakım benzerliklerin olduğu fark edilmiştir. Aslında yerleşik hayata geçiş, daha önce yaşamış olan avcı-toplayıcı grupların inanış biçimini tam anlamıyla değiştirmemiştir. Diğer taraftan yerleşik yaşam ile birlikte sosyo-ekonomik yapıdaki değişiklikler bu ritüel aktivitelerin organizasyonunda bazı yeniliklerin yaşanmasına neden olmuştur. Birbirinden farklı bölgelerde ve zamanlarda erken prehistorik toplumların benzer inanış şekilleri ve törenleri ile temsil edilmeleri, bu insanların yaşamında doğanın ve sembolizmin çok önemli bir yere sahip olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

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