

THE FIRST TOWNS

As the farmers were able to grow more food, families were better fed and more children were born. The population of many villages grew so much that some larger ones absorbed smaller villages nearby. In this way the world's first towns began to appear.

MASTER BUILDERS

North of the Dead Sea in Palestine, the lowest and one of the hottest places on earth, lies the ancient site of Jericho, the oldest town ever discovered.

Apple trees

A small group of farmers settled in Jericho in about 8000BC, attracted to the site by a spring of fresh water. A thousand years later, it had grown into a bustling town of over 2,000 people, living in small, round mud brick houses surrounded by a strong, high wall.

Another early town was Çatal Hüyük in Anatolia (part of Turkey), which was inhabited from around 7000BC by about 5,000 farmers and cattle breeders. The people of Çatal Hüyük also appear to have been skilled artists. Beautiful wall paintings have been found in some of the houses.

This is how Çatal Hüyük probably looked. The town was carefully planned, with neat groups of houses tightly packed together, arranged around courtyards, with narrow streets between them.

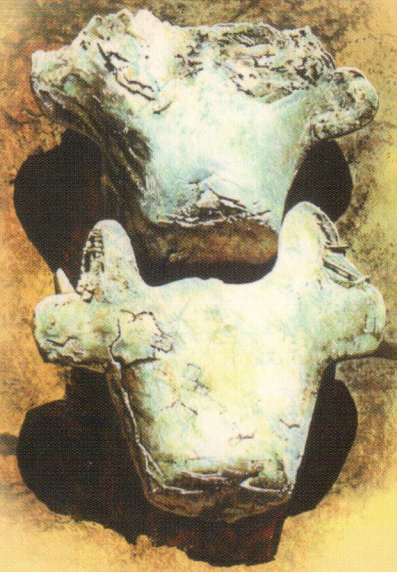
People climbed into the houses through a hole in the roof.

Each house had one main room.

The builders used wooden beams and bricks made of mud mixed with reeds which were baked in the sun.

If enemies attacked, the ladders were pulled up.

Cattle and goats were kept for meat and milk.



These plaster bulls' heads from Çatal Hüyük would have had real bulls' horns attached, and probably had a religious purpose.

EARLY RELIGIONS

The first signs of religious belief were discovered in these early towns. At Jericho, human skulls were buried under the floors - suggesting people followed some sort of ancestor worship. At Çatal Hüyük, some buildings had paintings and elaborate plaster models of bulls' heads and leopards. Archaeologists think these buildings were probably religious shrines.

These walls have been cut away so you can see inside.

