

The Turkish Prehistoric Project

After four preceding seasons of fieldwork in Iraq and Iran since World War II, in 1963/64 the focus of the Prehistoric Project's attention shifted westward into Anatolia. The problem with which it dealt remained essentially the same, contributing to an enhanced understanding of the interrelated cultural and natural conditions contributing to the first development of settled village life based on agriculture. However, with the changing geographical emphasis has come not merely a more accurate and certain picture of the time and place of this crucial transformation in the human condition but also a growing awareness of its variability and complexity.

In the fullest sense of the word, fieldwork in Turkey was carried out as a co-operative undertaking. On the international level, this involved joint sponsorship of and participation in the program by the Oriental Institute and the University of Istanbul, with Professor Robert J. Braidwood and Professor Halet Çambel serving as co-directors and with Turkish and American professional archeologists and their graduate students collaborating as teams in the conduct of fieldwork. In the disciplinary sense too the co-operative model of past Prehistoric Expeditions was continued, with support from the National Science Foundation and the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research. Since the problem of the origins of food production is one on which the interests of many scholarly disciplines converge, the research team working directly with the archeologists included a geologist, a paleobotanist, a zoölogist, an agronomist, and a cultural geographer, as well as a number of younger research assistants.

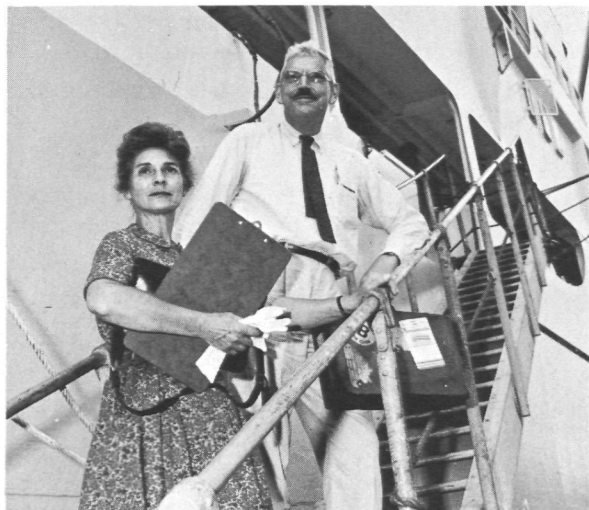
Needless to say, the logistic problems of an enterprise of this scale, since many of its individual members needed to pursue investigative programs of their own in areas remote

from major Turkish roads and settlements, were often very difficult. Not the least important lesson of the project was an increased confidence in the fruits of such international, interdisciplinary research—a broadening of academic horizons that easily counterbalances the red tape.

While a fuller report on activities and personnel of the expedition must await Professor Braidwood's return, the first phase of fieldwork began in September 1963. An intensive reconnaissance was conducted in selected valleys along the southern slope of the Anatolian plateau overlooking the Syrian plain. Before the onset of heavy snow in December forced the closing of operations for the winter, some 134 archeological sites had been visited and recorded, most of them previously unknown and many of them having begun during the era of early village farming, with which the project was especially concerned. Collections from the fall surveys then were processed during the winter months by both Turkish and American students attached to the expedition, the staff occupying a spacious old house overlooking the Bosphorus and commuting by ferry to its seminars at Istanbul University.

With spring, the time was at hand for the archeological investigation of some of the most promising sites found in the survey, and teams began work on Çayönü Tepesi, near Ergani, and on two sites near Bozova. The two latter sites, where excavations were directed by Dr. Bruce Howe, of Harvard University (on behalf of the American Schools of Oriental Research, which supported his work), were occupied during a late pre-agricultural horizon, while the former apparently spans at least a part of the transition to full food production and settled life.

In spite of the early dating of Çayönü Tepesi, probably assignable to the early seventh or



Professor and Mrs. Braidwood boarding S.S. Topdalsfjord, July 1963, on way to Turkey.

Mrs. Robert J. Braidwood and Dick Johnson packing expedition materials for shipment to Turkey.



even eighth millennium B.C., this site provided its excavators with some surprising features hardly to be associated with primitiveness in the usual sense. Its architecture, for one thing, included a number of surprisingly imposing buildings, one of them with a broad paving of flagstones and large stone “megalithic” slabs placed upright along its long axis. In a letter from the field as this report goes to press, Professor Braidwood holds to a cautious course in interpretation: “We shall *not* take the conventional easy way out and call these buildings ‘temples’ or ‘shrines.’ We still know far too little of the site to do this.” But it would not be surprising if armchair archeologists at home feel less restraint than he does in leaping to this conclusion.

Even more suggestive of unanticipated cultural richness than the architecture were artifacts of malachite and native copper occurring well down into levels of habitation that antedated the appearance of pottery. The site lies only a few miles away from one of the great historic copper lodes of Anatolia, still being mined today, and perhaps part of its prosperity came from working and distributing copper artifacts to a wider region. It would be difficult not to join in the enthusiasm of Professor Braidwood’s letter: “Çayönü shows us—on the doorstep of a magnificent source of raw materials—a moment when man might first have begun to ‘feel’ the properties of metal *as metal*, rather than as stone. Reflecting on this from the full daylight of our metal age, those first faint streaks of dawn are an exciting thing to think about.”