

The Joint Istanbul-Chicago Prehistoric Project

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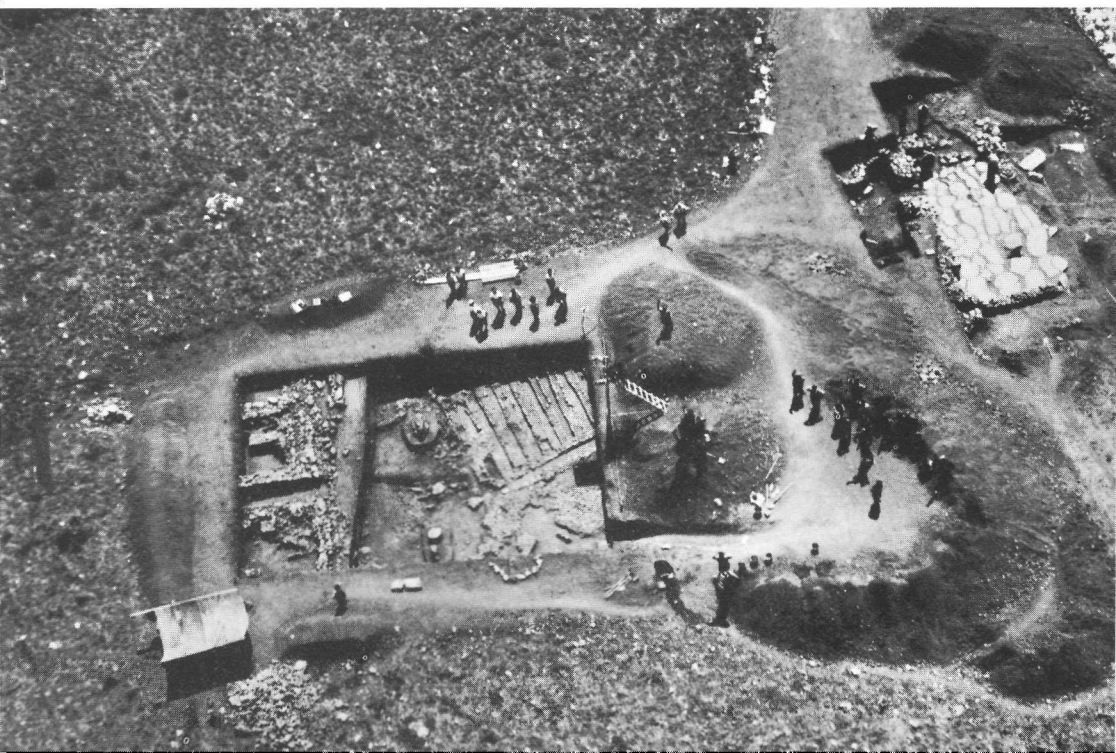
The Joint Prehistoric Project of Istanbul University and of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago returned to south-eastern Turkey in the autumn of 1968 to resume research begun in 1963. The budgeting commitments of the two universities were supplemented by a grant from the National Science Foundation (GS-1986) and by a student training grant from the Ford Foundation. Prof. Dr. Halet Çambel, of Istanbul University's Department of Prehistory, acted as the other co-director.

In the autumn of 1963 we had undertaken a surface survey for sites which might yield information about the beginnings of food-

production in the archeologically unknown southeastern provinces of Turkey. In the spring of 1964, test excavations indicated that the mound called Çayönü (38°-16' N, 39°-43' E), near Ergani, northern Diyarbakir province, had been occupied by farmers as early as the latter part of the eighth millennium B.C. Çayönü is a low mound of about 200 meters in diameter, adjacent to a tributary of the upper Tigris. Our rather restricted exposures yielded a superficial surface occurrence of pottery and then an inventory of flint, obsidian, ground-stone and bone artifacts without pottery, all normal enough in an early village site in southwestern Asia. The unusual features of the inventory were the stone foundations for at least one rather substantial building and the use of hammered native copper in a pottery-less context.

During the season recently terminated, we re-opened Çayönü after an intensive collection of its surface yield on 83 randomly selected five-meter squares. Two of these squares, one with a rather heavy yield of surface potsherds and one with no sherds but with a heavy flint and obsidian yield, were selected for test excavation. In the former, a stone slab crypt, containing the flexed skeleton of a juvenile

Aerial view of the archeological expedition at Çayönü, Turkey, where scholars have found 9,000-year-old evidence of village life. The excavation at lower left is where three small copper oxide "pins" were unearthed. This is probably the earliest known instance of man fashioning tools from metal.



and three pots of the late third millenium B.C. appeared. Occupation of this age appears not to have spread over the whole mound or to a very great depth. In the second test square, the inventory was essentially that of our deeper exposures in 1964, without pottery but with quantities of flint, obsidian, and ground-stone tools and a portion of a curious "grill" plan building (another example appeared in the 5th level in 1964).

As well as the above two test squares, a pair of larger exposures were made to enlarge architectural clearances begun in 1964. The natural sciences members of the staff (Barbara Lawrence, zoology, Harvard; Robert B. Stewart, botany, Sam Houston State; Richard A. Watson, Washington University and Gary A. Wright, Case-Western Reserve, natural obsidian sources survey) made, as usual, their own very considerable contributions to the understanding of the evidence. Indication of domesticated wheat is still not specific but impressions of barley continued to appear in fragments of mud brick. Sheep, pig, the dog and very probably the goat are evidenced by the animal bones as domesticates.

During the latter part of the season, a second small mound, Girik-i-Hacıyan (38°-14' N, 39°-58' E), again in northern Diyarbakir province, near Ekinciyan village, was tested as a joint Istanbul-American Schools of Oriental Research venture (supported by the same National Science Foundation and Ford Foundation training grants) with Dr. Patty Jo Watson, of Washington University, in charge of the excavations. Intensive systematic surface survey of 105 five-meter squares both confirmed our gross 1963 impression of a Halafian phase occupation and indicated more homogeneity in surface artifact densities than had Çayönü. With time very limited, only 3 five-meter squares were opened, and these to no great depth. The Halafian painted pottery of Girik-i-Hacıyan is very similar to that from such Iraqi sites as Arpachiyah and Banahilk, but is present only in low percentages in the tests (and in the systematic surface collection). The bulk of the Girik-i-Hacıyan pottery is simple ware.

Even our modest exposures here add much to general knowledge of the total inventory of Halafian artifacts in chipped flint and obsidian, ground stone and bone. Five samples for radio-carbon age determination were collected at Girik-i-Hacıyan; with luck, we may soon have a better understanding of the chronological place of the Halafian phase. Present guess-dates are somewhere in the late sixth, early fifth millenia.

The late prehistory of the slopes and piedmont of the Zagros mountains in Iraq and Iran, and of the hill country and higher hinterland of the east Mediterranean littoral is now available in broad outline. Çayönü and Girik-i-Hacıyan lie between these two regions on the piedmont of the southward slopes of the Tauros mountains. Present evidence would include the Tauros piedmont as one of the typical stretches of the natural habitat zone of the potential plant and animal domesticates of southwestern Asia. What gives the Tauros piedmont region special interest is its inclusion of or proximity to sources of obsidian (the basis of the earliest bulk carrying trade) and of copper. The hammered bits of native copper of Çayönü are hardly true metallurgy, in a pyrotechnical sense, but they pre-
sage mankind's general use of metals.