The Joint Istanbul–Chicago Prehistoric Project

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The Joint Istanbul University–Oriental Institute Prehistoric Project continued its excavations in southeastern Turkey in the autumn of 1972. Our concentration throughout this season was on the mound called Çayönü, the site of an early village-farming community of about 7000 B.C.

By the end of this fourth digging season, approximately 5 per cent of the total mound area of Çayönü had been exposed (at least in the upper levels). This is a gratifyingly impressive exposure in proportion to overall site size, as prehistoric excavations go, and there was a correspondingly impressive yield of interesting finds. This should (and does) make us happy, but it has complicated our task of understanding the life-ways of Çayönü's original inhabitants.

As an aside, let me explain why. In archaeology—within some limits, of course—the smaller one's exposures and yields, the easier it is to make seemingly simple and apparently consistent interpretative generalizations. But the larger one's exposures and the bigger one's yield of evidence, the more complicated the task of generalization and interpretation becomes. Obviously, a realistic and honest interpretation of the human past is our real goal, the whole point of our interest. Having no reason to believe that prehistoric men (or any men) ever behaved with automaton-like uniformity, we have a somewhat rueful satisfaction in the increase of evidence that our ancient people could be just as perversely idiosyncratic as people still are. Thus there is a certain sobering effect as evidence increases. We are not so easily tempted to accept facile and mechanistic answers to the important "how" and "why" questions in culture history.

By the end of our 1970 field season, we had reason to believe that Çayönü contained five sub-phases of its earliest (and major) prehistoric occupation. We also thought we had evidence, in this major prehistoric occupation, of a transition from the use of wild plant and animal forms to domesticated ones. We had learned in even earlier seasons of excavation that, given its date, *ca.* 7000 B.C., the site's architectural remains suggested surprisingly sophisticated buildings—hardly the efforts of transient food-collectors. At the same time, the general inventory of objects seemed a relatively simple one. Portable pottery vessels were not yet being made, but native copper lumps were being hammered into simple pins, reamers, and rolled metal beads.

The considerably expanded exposures of 1972 showed us that our assumed 1970 succession of five sub-phases appears to be one of architectural plan types only, but not necessarily one of five successively stratified layers over the whole mound's area. The sequential order of the plan types is essentially correct, although there is now the hint of still another plan type we had not exposed in 1970. At the same time,

we now believe that at least the impressive "broad floor" type of plan (including the terrazzo-floored building found in 1970) *may* have been in use contemporaneously with buildings of another of the plan types. As matters stand now, we are not quite sure exactly how many subphases (in the sense of stratified layers) the site may contain.

As for the matter of a transition from wild to domesticated food sources, Dr. Willem van Zeist of Groningen University, our field botanist in 1970, actually identified cultivated wheat and legumes by detailed study of his collections well after he returned home. In 1972, Dr. Robert B. Stewart, of Sam Houston State University, last season's field botanist, identified still more cultigens (emmer and einkorn wheat, peas, lentils, chickpeas and vetch) from the basal levels onward. Among animals, however, only the dog was a domesticate from the beginning, but Barbara Lawrence, of Harvard, our 1972 field zoologist believes that sheep and probably goat may have been domesticated by the next to last sub-phase and certainly by the last subphase, thus confirming Charles Reed's opinions from the 1970 season. Curiously, Stewart found that oily seeds such as pistachio were common in the lower levels but became scarce in the upper levels as Lawrence's sheep and goat bones began to bulk large.

At the moment, the reworking and study of the very considerable new bulk of antiquities goes forward in the prehistory laboratory in Istanbul University under Professor Halet Çambel's direction. It appears likely that she will be able to come to Chicago this summer, so that we two co-directors may coordinate the final manuscripts on our preliminary reports. The 1972 staff was an excellent one: Dr. and Mrs. Redman, Mike Davis, and three of Professor Çambel's graduate students were veterans (as were Lawrence and Stewart); Dr. Howe was again resident in the Istanbul laboratory. Thomas Rhode, who had previous architectural experience on German excavations, joined us, and there were French and Swedish as well as Turkish and American beginning student assistants. We benefited by support from the National Science Foundation, the Ford Foundation student training program, the Department of Anthropology's research funds and from anonymous friends of the Oriental Institute. Hopefully, our next field season at Çayönü will come in 1975, if not before.