

The Joint Istanbul-Chicago Prehistoric Project

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Prehistory deals with those times before written records were made. The sites a prehistoric archeologist chooses to dig seldom have names already familiar to us through biblical or classical sources. Prehistorians characteristically choose instead, a "problem focus" (as the jargon has it) and the names of the sites they dig are incidental to this overall problem.

Since it was formed in 1947, the Oriental Institute's Prehistoric Project has concerned itself with gaining understanding of the beginnings of food production in the Near East. Some nine or ten thousand years ago the peoples of the Near East domesticated certain plants and animals, thus laying the foundations upon which their subsequent civilized urban society might develop. Such a "problem focus" as the beginning of food production understandably demands that as much attention be given to certain ancient natural environments as to the artifacts and other more direct traces of the cultural activities of the humans who lived in those ancient environments.

Archeologists characteristically have the training and experience to deal with and interpret the traces of culture. Few archeologists, however, have professional competence for the identification and interpretation of the evidence of natural environments. We archeologists need help with the bones of animals and the remains of plants we recover, whether these had been domesticated or customarily utilized by, or simply part of the surrounding environments of, our ancient peoples. As archeologists, we are ill prepared to interpret evidence of ancient climates, land forms, soils and so on. Indeed, the goal we seek is a matter of understanding interrelationships (in the full

sense of that fashionable word, *ecological* interrelationships). How did the cultural activities of our ancient peoples fit within their natural environments?

As the Prehistoric Project's excavation program developed—first in Iraq, then in Iran, and now in Turkey—our field staff has come to include a formidable team of naturalists. Thanks especially to support by the National Science Foundation, we have had colleagues in agronomy, botany, geography, geology, palynology (fossil pollen studies) and zoology in the field with us. Unfortunately, of course, the Prehistoric Project has not been able to command the full-time participation of these colleagues, most of whom come from other universities. The materials returned for interpretation have had to await their turn for laboratory analysis and such time as our naturalist colleagues could bootleg away from their normal university duties. Of course, we university-based archeologists are fragmented in the same fashion.

The Prehistoric Project has also gone out of its way to encourage graduate student participation, both as junior field staff and in allowing the analysis and interpretation of blocks of excavated materials to be used for theses and dissertations. Unfortunately, it has not always been easy to wring a final publishable report, on schedule, from some of these efforts. We often think with envy of the core of full-time professional field and laboratory assistants many of our European archeological colleagues have.

In sum, however, the Project's field campaigns since 1947 (eight campaigns, all told) have resulted in some very substantial contributions to knowledge, a new level of dialogue between naturalists and archeologists, and the opportunity for field training for students who have since begun fruitful careers of their own. I only wish we could point to more in the way of published final reports—for reasons I suggest above, a field director's lot is not always a happy one.

Within the last year, however, the editing of old Jarmo final reports has inched ahead. Linda and I are both deeply involved in the final editing of old manuscripts of reports, and Jane McRae has been working on the detailed analysis of one early block of Jarmo flint materials. The report on the animal bones from a 14,000 year old cave occupation at Palegawra, near Jarmo, is now in press. Written by Charles A. Reed and Priscilla Turnbull, it includes a momentary "first." (The business of "firsts" is a popular archeological game—the

first this, the earliest that, the richest what's-its-name—but yields only ephemeral glory, because next week someone is sure to find something still earlier or richer!) For years Reed has known there was a fragmentary jaw of a domesticated dog from Palegawra, but it came from a transition zone which included some later materials. Last winter, however, tests were finally completed, in the British Museum of Natural History, which indicate that the dog jaw belongs with the upper paleolithic (14,000 years old) of the main Palegawra deposit. Thus, for the moment anyway, the oldest animal domesticate known is the Palegawra dog.

The only other news dealing with our early work in Iraq and Iran was a typical academic storm in a teapot in the form of a sharp exchange of letters in the journal *Science*. An American and a German colleague misused evidence based on animal bone samples and received a scolding from Reed, Sandor Bökönyi (our Hungarian zoological colleague), and me.

As for our joint program with Istanbul University at the early village site of Çayönü in southeastern Turkey, there was no excavation during 1973/74. Our prehistorian associate Bruce Howe and zoologist Barbara Lawrence were both in Istanbul, however. Bruce continued his analysis of the flint tools in the Istanbul University laboratory (no artifacts may leave Turkey, by law) and also continued his seminar with students of our co-director, Professor Dr. Halet Çambel. Barbara worked on the cataloguing and interpretation of the large bulk of Çayönü animal bones, again with the involvement of Turkish student trainees. She also consulted with a young Turkish zoologist concerning his collection of further skeletal samples for the reference collection of modern animals needed for our comparative studies. Some seventy soil samples which botanist Robert Stewart took in stratigraphic order at Çayönü in 1972 are now undergoing microscopic study in the palynology laboratory at Texas A. and M. University. We anticipate new and important evidence concerning the vegetation and climate of the region about Çayönü during the time of the site's occupation (*ca.* 7250 B.C.).

Prof. Dr. Halet Çambel herself is now in London, and we anticipate that she will visit Chicago for further editorial work with me before returning to Istanbul. The long introductory background paper which she and I prepared on the work of our Joint Prehistoric Project to date is already completed in both its Turkish and English versions and

awaits publication in the Turkish Historical Society's bulletin. The preliminary report on the work of our autumn, 1972, field season at Çayönü, prepared jointly by Halet Çambel, Barbara Lawrence, Charles Redman (the field superintendent), Robert Stewart, and me appeared in the *Proceedings* of the National Academy of Sciences last February.

I myself have spent some time on a long overdue new (8th) edition of my book, *Prehistoric Men*. At least I'm fighting to have that old title kept while the publisher—under pressure from militant feminist teachers of anthropology—wants that "Men" de-sexed!