

# The Joint Istanbul-Chicago Prehistoric Project

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Several things happened during the 1974/75 academic year—the Institute’s Rockefeller Centenary celebration, our meetings with old field companions the Haineses and the Lloyds—to make us reflect on how different archeology was in the early 1930’s. Those were years when the Near East was essentially a tranquil region. Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria were mandated territories of Britain and France, and as such those were really the last days of nineteenth-century colonialism. For us foreign archeologists, there were archeologically well-educated British and French officials to deal with, al-

though I must say that our “divisions” of finds always seemed to be as fair to the local museums as to the foreign excavators. Further, those of us on the various Oriental Institute expeditions had no worries, either financial or operational (for all that it was the time of the Great Depression, come to think of it). The Institute’s founder and director, James Henry Breasted, had a genius for providing us with both adequate field budgets and comfortable living and working quarters. In retrospect, what we thought we were doing and how we did it may now seem naive, although I still think that if Breasted’s ideas (as he set them forth in the handbook called *The Oriental Institute*) were translated into the contemporary jargon of the so-called “new archeology,” he himself would seem surprisingly modern.

It is quite clear in that book, for example, that Breasted was already seeing the “problem focus” under which the Prehistoric Project first began to operate; but in fact we did not begin until well after Breasted’s death, we were not conscious of having been stimulated by him, and we were in a quite different financial, operational, and political milieu. The prehistorian’s link with anthropology and the reasons for his concern with paleoenvironments, which necessitates aid from a variety of natural scientist colleagues, were all in Breasted’s mind. It even seems very probable, given his concern for making the Oriental Institute field-effective as soon as possible in the earliest 1930’s, that Breasted sensed (well before his death) that the prevailing political milieu, which favored an older-fashioned type of archeology with a division of the yield, would soon end, as indeed it did.

Since its start in the northeastern hill country of Iraq in 1947, our Prehistoric Project has had eight field seasons. We were forced to move from Iraq because of the political sensitivity of our region after three seasons there. We anticipated moving next to southeastern Turkey but had one field session in Iran before arrangements for our joint effort with Prof. Dr. Halet Çambel’s Prehistory Department in Istanbul University were completed. There have now been four field seasons in Turkey, at the site of Çayönü near Diyarbakir, in what is actually uppermost Mesopotamia. From the beginning what we have been investigating are the conditions that prepare the way for effective food production, and the achievement and consequences of it. The archeological sites we have sought and excavated, we hope, contribute to an understanding of how, with the effective domestication of plants and animals, a new way of life became possible some time around ten thousand years ago.

There was no digging this last year. We are, in effect, victims of our own success. In those eight field campaigns, we have accumulated a very substantial amount of raw evidence. This poses the strong moral responsibility, which any archeologist must face, of seeing to the adequate publication of the results of his field work. Naturally, the greater the bulk and variety of evidence, the more difficult it becomes to get it down clearly and adequately on paper. So our efforts went toward completion of the editing of the variety of final manuscripts on the materials recovered in our earlier field seasons' work on sites in Iraqi Kurdistan. It is clear that we were too generous in allowing Ph.D. candidates to work up different categories of materials as a basis for dissertations—many hours have been committed to the almost total rewriting and reanalysis of studies of this sort, which studies turned out to be far less complete than anticipated.

Both Bruce Howe and Patty Jo Watson have been able to spend two short periods in the Project's laboratory, checking manuscripts against the objects in the Chicago collections. Linda and I have spent a major portion of our time in checking and coordinating manuscripts, tables, drawings, and photos. Mrs. Blair has completed most of Howe's flint drawings and they are of very high quality. There *is* beginning to be light at the end of the tunnel!

There is a further dimension to the tardy publication problem. Today's milieu of archeological financing is quite different from those great days when Breasted provided all by simply firing the imagination of another millionaire or two. Now, over and above our basic expectations from the Oriental Institute's budget and friends, we must seek funds which will provide us with such expenses as the leave-of-absence salaries of three or four senior colleagues in the natural sciences as well as in archeology (all from other universities), and also funds to maintain our role in training promising graduate students and to cover the ever-inflating costs of operations and travel. We have, with some success, turned to the National Science Foundation. At the same time, however, the Foundation now begins to wonder, not at all unreasonably, where the final reports are on those earlier field seasons for which it provided grants-in-aid.

All is not completely bleak, though. We did recently receive a modest NSF grant for the further support of the processing for publication of the excavated materials in the Istanbul University's laboratory. (Contrast this, incidentally, with the 1930's, when under the system of divisions much processing for publication could go on back home in Chicago!) At least I am somewhat heartened to know that I

am not completely on the Foundation's blacklist. The masses of editorial markings, blue and red pencilings, and retypings of old manuscripts and drawings is at last beginning to make coherent sense. With luck, I anticipate that we can soon, in good faith, make a new proposal for a grant which will give us a long wind-up field season at Çayönü.

There have been times, though, when I've had the feeling that it would have been much simpler to leave all those sites undug in the first place: I've always hated editing. But had there been no digging, Linda and I would have found life very dull indeed.