

The Joint Prehistoric Project

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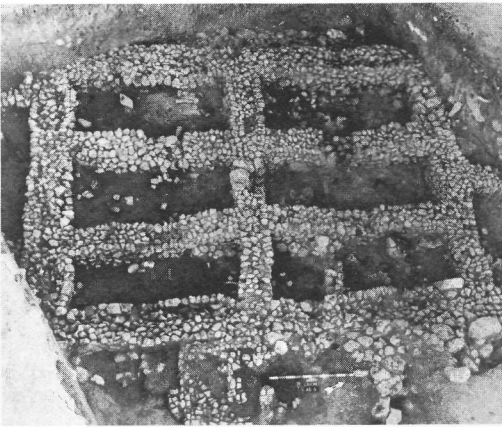
In September of 1978 it became possible to resume excavations—with Prof. Dr. Halet Çambel and her younger colleagues and students from Istanbul University—at the prehistoric village site of Çayönü in southeastern Turkey. As well as seed money from the Oriental Institute itself and from some of its friends, we had a National Science Foundation research grant and Prof. Çambel had, for the first time, a significant grant from her own government.

Our joint interest in Çayönü and its archeological yield is part of a long-range research concern with recovering evidence of the beginnings of the village-farming community way of life in southwestern Asia. The 1978 season was our fifth joint field campaign at Çayönü with Istanbul University. We ourselves had had, however, earlier field seasons along the Zagros mountain flanks: one in Iran and three in Iraq, beginning in 1947. All of this research has been focused on the same culture-historical problem—how did an effective agricultural economy come into being, and what were its social and cultural consequences for the peoples who achieved it some nine or ten thousand years ago? We have learned a great deal in these nine field seasons and other colleagues have added much more information over the last two decades but, so far, we're sure that only the surface has been scratched.

What we propose to do in this note is to concentrate briefly on only one aspect of the archeological yield from Çayönü. With respect to what we know of other sites of the same general early time range and level of cultural development in southwestern Asia, the Çayönü people seem to have given remarkable effort and aesthetic attention to architecture. Finds from other sites of comparable time and cultural level in the Near East tend to

suggest excellence in the production of one or another particular category of usually smaller artifacts. High competence in the making of clay figurines or of decorative stone objects is an example of this and, of course, there may well have been whole categories of excellence such as in woven materials or in wood or leather objects which are no longer preserved for archeologists to find. At Çayönü, however, most of these early food-producers' creative efforts—in what we have recovered—seem to have gone into their architecture.

It was thus particularly lucky for our 1978 joint effort



Stone foundations for a cell-type plan.

that Prof. Çambel had inveigled the promise of a visit to Çayönü by her old friend Prof. Dr. Wolf Schirmer, director of the Institute for Architectural History at Karlsruhe University in Germany. Prof. Schirmer did come, bringing with him two of his assistants. We feel sure they expected to see traces of architectural activity much more primitive than what we could proudly show them at Çayönü already at the beginning of the season. It now seems likely that we may anticipate a useful collaboration with the Karlsruhe architectural institute in the future.

In brief, we may now have—in at least partial sequential order—as many as seven reasonably distinct types of architectural plans, although at least two of these have not yet been cleared as fully discrete units. We illustrate here, first, two of the three plan types already exposed

in earlier seasons and which show the clearest examples of what were undoubtedly domestic structures. The later (or younger) of these two plan types is that which we call the cell-type plan. What we find of it is the stone foundations for a set of very small cell-like rooms or bins. We believe these cell-like units to have been little more than crawl spaces and that the living floor proper would have been supported on wooden beams above the stone foundations. Here are also clear instances of the use of mud-brick for the upper walls which rose above the stone foundations.



Stone foundations for a grill-type plan, looking south, with the grill-like portion in the foreground. In the background is the stream which flows by Çayönü.

The second reasonably understandable remnants of plans of undoubtedly domestic structures are of what we call the grill-type plan. An example of a grill-type foundation was already encountered in our first field season: we know now, however, that the grill-type plan was earlier than the cell-type plan. The overall grill-type structure appears to have been larger than the cell-type was, and again we believe that the living floors were supported on wooden members resting on the stone joist-like grill lines of the northern part of these foundations. Also, again, this would give air spaces below the main living floor. The southern end of the grill-type structures appears to have been a single large pebble-floored room or open court.

There is even one instance of the stone lines of rather thin foundations for walls of a cell-type plan superim-

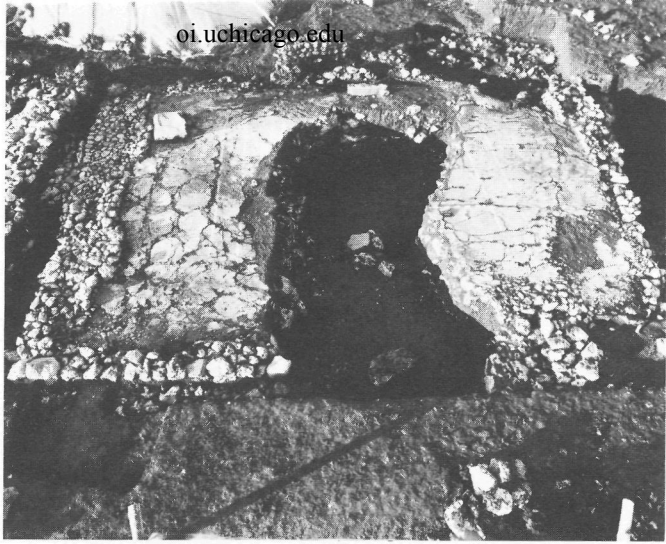
posed exactly above the northern grill portion of a grill-type plan.

Next we would like to note two examples of the foundations and floors of a plan type which we feel bound to assume must represent the remains of something more than a simple domestic structure. We call these remains the broad-pavement type plan: it appears that the original structure consisted simply of one large room with a specially constructed floor. We have even speculated that part of the building may have been roofless, with a



The remains of the flagstone floor and some walls of a broad-pavement type plan. At some subsequent time, a high level of the stream in flood washed away the front portion of the building.

central opening to the sky. While in each of the two cases of this plan type that we have exposed so far there was accidental or purposeful destruction as—or soon after—the buildings went out of use, the area and proportion of the prepared floors seem to have been about the same. The first example, with a carefully laid flagstone floor, was originally encountered during our 1964 field season. During our last (1978) field season, however, we finally established to our almost complete satisfaction that this flagstone-floored example had been built at a very early moment of the site's occupation. The second example, with a fine salmon-colored terrazzo floor, appeared during our 1970 field season. It clearly overbedded a foundation of the grill-type plan and was



The remaining wall foundations and terrazzo floor of a second broad-pavement type plan. There is good evidence that the hole in the center was made during or very soon after the prehistoric occupation of Çayönü site.

thus of considerably later date than the flagstone-floored example. This naturally suggests that the purpose this building type served was a persisting one. Both examples have features such as pilasters, limestone slab columns, and partial orthostatic base-boards, and—in the case of the terrazzo-floored example—a broad stone slab with a human face sculptured on one edge. We have no evidence at present to allow us to guess at the probable original function of this plan type—whether sacred or secular—but we can hardly bring ourselves to believe that the purpose was simply a domestic one.

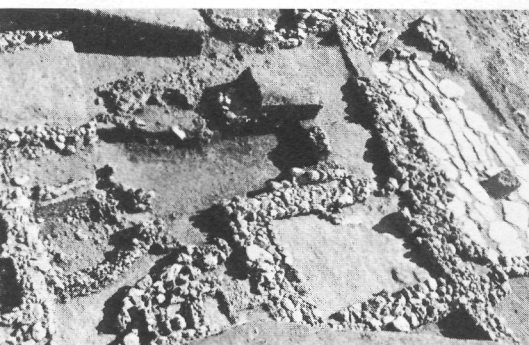
The architectural surprise of the 1978 field season was the appearance of two (still incompletely exposed) instances of the remains of round or ovoid structures. The smaller of these was of mud plastered over a wooden framework of saplings—a type of construction called wattle-and-daub. The larger example consisted only of the foundation stones for an ovoid structure of approximately four meters in diameter. It was overbedded, after it went out of use, by the foundations of a grill-type plan, thus giving it a relatively early date, and the wattle-and-daub example was at least equally deep nearby. Remarkably, however, these hut-like remains were evidently not so early as the flagstone-floored broad-pavement plan building.

We say these round or ovoid plans were a surprise to us because until now the Çayönü plan types have each been (for their time range) quite formal rectilinear affairs. Round structures of simple small size, and indeed

the wattle-and-daub type of construction itself, suggest a linkage back into still earlier (and pre-agricultural) times when simple huts were the rule if caves were not easily available.

It is especially fascinating to speculate about the broader meanings of this evident link the Çayönü people must still have had with their not too recent past. This is particularly so if we are right in our assessment that the flagstone-floored example of the broad-pavement plan—quite certainly a building of some special and non-domestic purpose—was even earlier than our round or ovoid plans. Does that non-domestic purpose, for which the broad-pavement buildings were built, suggest a rather quick evolution of some cultural pattern which had already existed back in the time when all buildings were simple huts? Or, on the other hand, with the appearance of an effective village-farming community way of life, does the broad-pavement plan type hint of some quite new cultural expression, either sacred or secular in nature, which called for a special edifice?

So much for a sample of our still undigested post-season speculations. We hope to return to Turkey and Çayönü in the coming autumn and look forward very much to the warm reunion we know we'll have again with Prof. Çambel and her younger colleagues and students.



Air view, showing portions of the two round or ovoid foundations. The wattle-and-daub example is in the upper center, just left of an unexcavated block of earth: the stone-founded example is in the left center, partially covered by later stone foundations.



A detailed view of a portion of the wattle-and-daub hut remains showing the burned out sapling holes in the mud daubing and stones used to strengthen the base of the wall.