

# Prehistoric Project

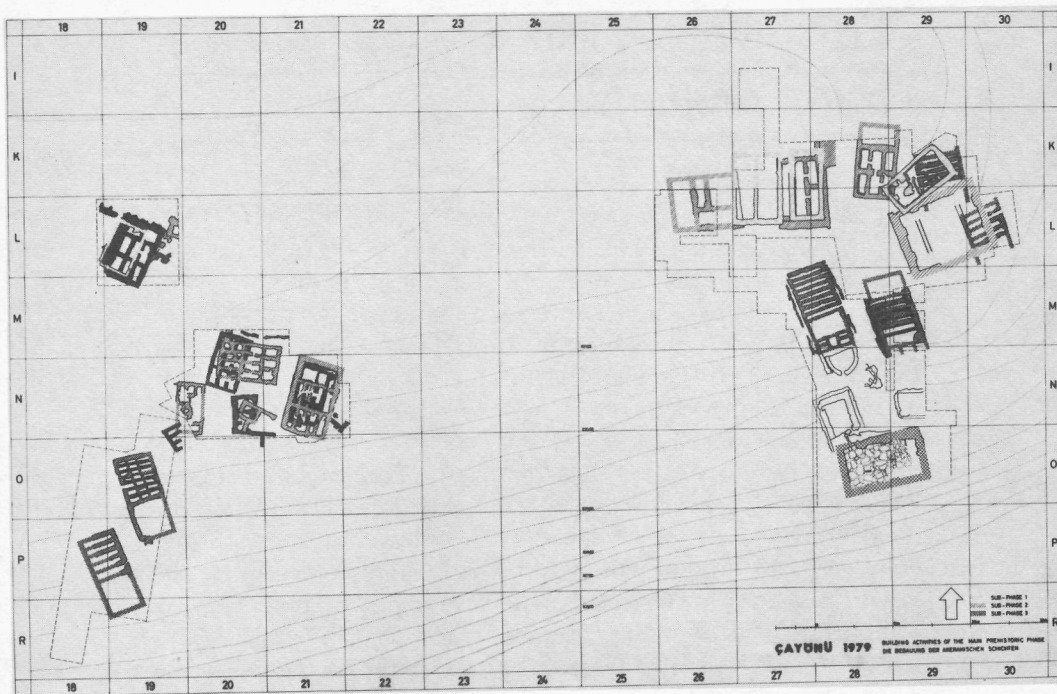
*Linda and Robert J. Braidwood*

The Istanbul-Chicago Universities' Joint Prehistoric Project excavated again, in autumn 1980, at the early village site of Çayönü. It was our seventh season of work at the site near the headwaters of the Tigris in the Diyarbakir province of southeastern Turkey. Halet Çambel, the Turkish co-director, insists that we are in Anatolia. We, knowing that the Tigris, little more than a brook, lies east of us and the Euphrates to the west, choose to think we're in uppermost Mesopotamia!

There were four of us on the American staff, on a National Geographic Society grant covering only travel and per diem. Again, for their third season, eight of our German colleagues from Karlsruhe University's Institute for the History of Building joined us, covering their own field expenses. The main funding, however, came to Halet's Prehistory Section of Istanbul University (in part from the University itself, in larger part directly from the Turkish Government). As earlier, Halet's graduate students and assistants were aboard and Dr. Mehmet Özdoğan again served as excavation superintendent, and an excellent one.

The major prehistoric phase at Çayönü represents the remains of a sizeable village community of ca. 7250–6750 B.C. (Libby-uncalibrated), the inhabitants of which appear to have been still upon the very threshold of an effective food-producing way of life. In the deeper levels the two earliest domesticated wheat varieties and several pulses are evidenced; but sure traces of animal domestication do not appear until late in the phase. The normal artifactual assemblage is not greatly different from those of equivalently early village sites of southwestern Asia. It is in the category of architectural remains that the Çayönü evidence is truly remarkable. As we have noted in earlier reports, there is a sequence of at least three well-standardized domestic-plan types expressed by clear stone foundations. There are, also, two examples of a non-domestic (and essentially monumental) plan type—whether for sacred or secular purposes has not yet been established.

The autumn 1980 plan of campaign was for further exposure of the near surface levels in two areas of the mound, in order to clarify understandings of the overall village plan and of how the main



*Three phases of building at Çayönü (Institut für Baugeschichte, Universität Karlsruhe)*

prehistoric phase came to its end. The equivalent of five new  $9 \times 9$  meter squares was exposed in the upper "cell-plan" building horizon. In one further square, however, the evidence was for a completely new plan type (probably not for strictly domestic purposes, but more exposure is needed).

Çayönü's challenge to culture-historical understanding thus continues to be with the meanings behind its sequence of well-conceptualized, standardized, and well-built domestic plan types, and also with the very impressive non-domestic building type which persisted over several changes in the ordinary house plans. What does all this architectural activity mean for its time and developmental context, in a milieu in which food production was still in its infancy and in the general region of its naissance?

At least two or three more field seasons at Çayönü are planned by the Turkish and German colleagues and there is general agreement that a small American presence—for continuity—is highly desirable. Hence we will undoubtedly return to Çayönü again in the autumn of 1981.