

THE JOINT PREHISTORIC PROJECT

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The Oriental Institute's *Annual Reports* for 1988–89, 1989–90, and 1990–91 cover the story of the Joint Chicago-Istanbul Prehistoric Project's most recent field seasons. We submitted no report in 1991–92; the PKK bands of guerrilla Kurds in southeastern Turkey made fieldwork at Çayönü far too dangerous. Nor has there been fieldwork in 1992–93, for the same reason. When the next field season will come remains a question. We had hoped, at least, to get the roof of the expedition house repaired since there is still a large quantity of material stored there, but that hope remained unfulfilled by mid-summer.

There has, however, been considerable activity in Istanbul. We were able to send out John Sanders, Head of the Oriental Institute Computer Laboratory, for a fortnight's advising session in Istanbul's Prehistory Department. Most of his time was spent with Asli Özdoğan who is in charge of getting all of the Çayönü artifacts entered. (Aslı's husband, Dr. Mehmet Özdoğan, is the current active field director of the Çayönü field staff). Aslı, Erhan Bıçakçı, and Michael K. Davis are the senior staff members responsible for publishing the stratigraphy of the site—an extremely complicated matter.

The Chicago end of the Joint Prehistoric Project assumes some of the expenses incurred in processing the materials in the Istanbul Laboratory, such as wages for the artist and for the girl, who under Asli's supervision is entering all of the Çayönü artifacts into the computer, photographic materials, xeroxing, and

various other laboratory expenses connected with Çayönü. Modest expenditures made in Ankara by Metin Özbek, the physical anthropologist, in connection with the study of the human skeletal remains are also covered. In regard to the famous skulls, our stalwart volunteer, Andrée Wood, who is working with Tom Loy on the recovery of ancient blood crystals, took herself last year first to Ankara to obtain special specified samples from the Çayönü skulls that Tom needed and then took the samples out to Tom in Australia this spring. This is in connection with his work on the DNA of the Çayönü remains—most exciting.

We, ourselves, were also able to make a quick (three week) run to Istanbul for editorial work and general planning with our long-time colleague, good friend, and co-director, Halet Çambel. It was a most useful visit.

An added bonus was that since we flew on Alitalia, we were able, both coming and going, to see Dr. Isabella Caneva of the University of Rome, who is now a member of the Çayönü team (along with other Italian senior scholars who are experts in various fields useful to archaeology). Isabella has her own excavation site, with early materials slightly later than Çayönü, in a nearby village, but she is also an expert in the analysis of lithic materials and has undertaken the analysis of all the Çayönü flint and obsidian artifacts, for which we are most grateful. It is an overwhelming job. In January 1993 she took a team of six (including an artist and a person to study edge wear on the tools) to work on the lithic materials for a month. She gave us a short written report on the month's study, which we were able to read while in Istanbul. We are most happy with her approach and were able to discuss it with her on our return to Rome. She hopes to have a longer study season this coming January/February. The University of Rome took care of most of the expenses connected with the trip this year. Happily, the Prehistoric Project was able to assist in funding some of the living expenses of the team, as well as providing materials needed for the work.

In Istanbul there was much to do. Up to a point one can do much by letter, facsimile, and phone, but there is really no good substitute for actually seeing people when discussing matters and problems. Our trip also had a very sad aspect. Over some years, friends of the expedition have assumed the costs of graduate work at the University of London—over and above a variety of scholarships—of one of Halet's students, a many-seasoned Çayönü field assistant, Berrin Kuşatman. Berrin, with concentration on the identification and understanding of animal bone remains (especially of domesticates), finished her doctorate in late 1992 and was finally able to return to Istanbul and her helpful, supportive husband of only a few years. She began the work she had been preparing for and was looking forward to—studying the great bulk of Çayönü animals. She was most happy to be doing so. Just before we arrived in May, however, Berrin died most suddenly—the cause is still not known. This was and is a tremendous blow to Halet and all who knew her. Berrin was already recognized in Europe and, to a lesser extent, in this country for her work. And she was the only person in Turkey who was doing work in this field.

We spent much time with Halet on publication matters in general and also some time with the individual contributors. We were especially impressed by the scholarly workmanship of their work. Various questions came up that will need answering or solving by the Oriental Institute's Publications Office.

We have mentioned the re-roofing of the expedition house—high time since the tile roof was installed in 1968 when the house was constructed under Nail Çakıran's (Halet's husband) supervision. We had known for the last two years that we needed a new roof and since it was a major investment we had worried that it be done as economically as possible. It was a great piece of luck that Nail was in Istanbul just at this time (since winning the Ali Agha Khan award one year for the best Moslem architecture of the year, Nail is much in demand all over Turkey). He called in the men who are to be in charge of the job and went over the expedition house plan with them and was able to advise them where they could save money on the construction. He will also follow through on the work. So that is a great relief.

Our earlier reports have remarked on the fact that Turkish law forbids the export of artifacts, and therein lies this year's real archaeological news. In 1988, we recovered an antler haft slotted along one edge so as to hold several flint or obsidian blades (fig. 1). Adhering to one end of the tool were the semi-fossilized remains of a piece of cloth (fig. 2). (We were most excited because the only traces of cloth we had found, in so early a context, up to then, were minute impressions of weaving on a tiny clay ball and a disk, both from Jarmo and published.) The artifact has remained, carefully stored, in Turkey. But finally, early in 1993, the expert on ancient textiles, Dr. Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood of the Stichting Textile Research Centre of the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden (already collaborator with the Oriental Institute on Egyptian textiles from Aqaba) was able to see it. She reports that the textile is most probably linen, and furthermore that no such tangible evidence of textiles is available elsewhere until at least a thousand years later. The Çayönü textile should date to about nine thousand years ago.

On our receipt of Dr. Vogelsang-Eastwood's report, our friend Bill Harms, in the University of Chicago's News Office, drafted a press release that we took

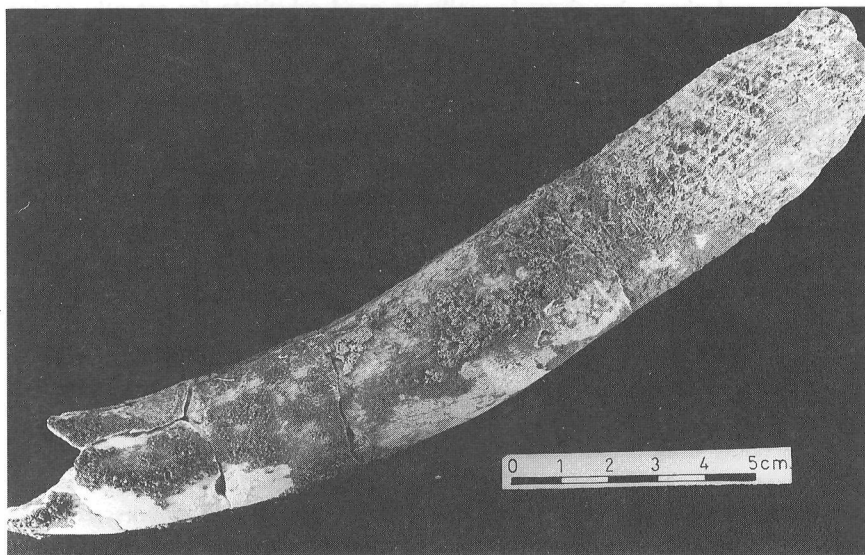


Figure 1. Antler haft with remains of cloth, from excavations at Çayönü

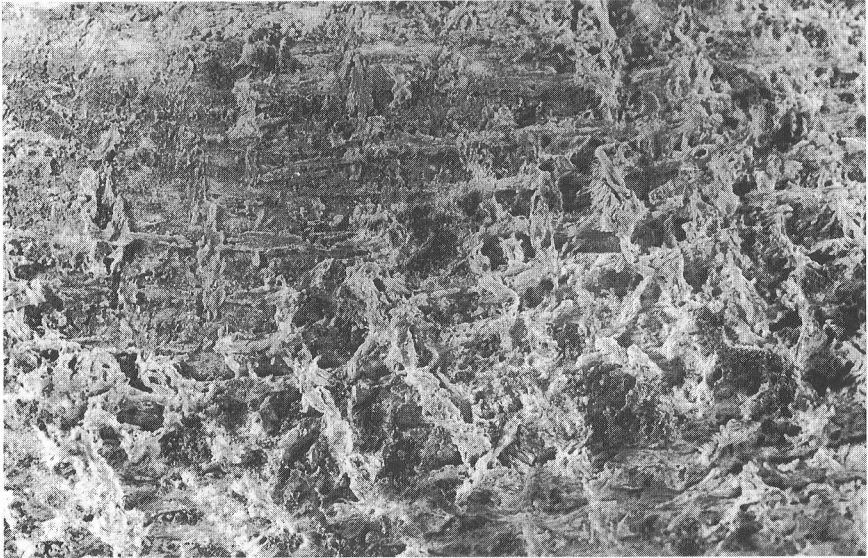


Figure 2. Enlargement of fossilized remains of cloth, from excavations at Çayönü

with us to Istanbul to clear the wording with Halet and the younger colleagues with the thought that the release would be made the same day in both Turkey and the United States. The resultant publicity in this country was amazing and almost overwhelming. (At the same time, Halet reported that the Turkish reaction to the press release was more blasé and that it was only when repercussions came in from the BBC and the International Press that the reporters woke up.)

We were curious as to why the evidence on textiles—even though it is the earliest such find—should arouse such public interest. We had already reported, some time back, that the Çayönü people annealed copper in order to form small tools (the actual smelting of copper ore came later) and roasted limestone to make cement for the terrazzo floor in one of their special buildings—both were the earliest known examples, but neither attracted such public attention as the textile evidence.

We are most pleased, however, that the Prehistoric Project has presented Turkey—so long well recognized for its fine textiles—with evidence of the crafts' great age there.

And last, but not least, we want to thank all of you who have been such supportive friends of the Prehistoric Project.
