

P R E H I S T O R I C P R O J E C T

Linda and Robert
Braidwood

The Prehistoric Project

The first volume of the Çayönü reports is now printed (June 1980), and copies can be expected to arrive some time during the summer. As our newsletters from the field suggested, we did not do much digging at Çayönü itself last autumn; but our architectural colleagues from Germany, under the direction of Prof. Wolf Schirmer, did some work at Hilar village on late Roman to early Byzantine tombs and reliefs. Our own main efforts were in the expedition-house lab, processing materials from earlier seasons.

When we went over the records of the architectural levels with the German architects and with Halet Çambel's excellent young assistant, Mehmet Özdoğan, it became clear—or as clear as anything can be in a site not stratified with layer-cake regularity—that our broad-pavement-plan building, first exposed in 1964, was indeed very early. We had first thought it was notched in, during mid-phase, on the riverside slope of the mound and not greatly different, chronologically, from the second broad-pavement-plan foundation (the one with terrazzo).

This has interesting consequences. This plan type includes details which pretty well preclude interpretation as a single domestic structure. Indeed, we're bound to assume some special function: religious, political, societal? I have not been afraid to suggest the beginnings of monumentality. This—for at the latest 7000 B.C. and appearing along with the very crystallization of the village-farming community way of life—is, to say the least, remarkable. Çayönü does have a sequence of at least five domestic plan types during the main prehistoric phase but we now see the persistence of this special broad-pavement plan, beginning very early and with the second even larger terrazzo-floored example having been built at about the middle of the phase.

We hope to go out for a few weeks this autumn, if we can secure the necessary permission. Prof. Çambel anticipates substantial financial support, and the Germans care for themselves and throw a bit into the general kitty. We Americans seek only to increase our role of "good grey eminences" as the whole operation becomes predominantly an Istanbul University Prehistory Department field station.