

## ÇATALHÖYÜK EXCAVATIONS, 1961

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Çatal Hüyük is situated on a branch of the Çarşamba Çay 1.5 km. south of the village of Küçük Köy and 52 kms. southeast of Konya. in the kaza of çumra. The site consists of two parts on either side of the old river bed. The eastern more than 500 m. long, 300 m. wide and 17.5m. high, belongs entirely to the neolithic period. The western part, roughly circular, with a diametre of over 400 m. and a height of c. 7.5m., is covered with Early Chalcolithic painted pottery. But for two small soundings in this area, our first season concentrated on the eastern and earlier mound, where an area of about one acre was uncovered.

The expedition was financed by the late Mr. Francis Neilson, the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, the Institute of Archaeology of the University of London, the Australian Institute of Archaeology, the British Academy and B.P (Aegean) Ltd.

The staff consisted of James Mellaart, Director, Mrs. Mellaart, Mr. Peter Winchester, a London architect, Mr. Perry Bialor, an American archaeologist, Bay Refik Duru, from Istanbul, University and Bay Ali Riza Bütüklevent, Representative of the Department of Antiquities. A maximum of 35 workmen, all trained at Beycesultan and Hacilar, were employed under our foreman, Veli Karaaslan and our three 'ustas', Rifat Çelimli, Mustafa Duman and Mustafa Ari. Local workmen were unobtainable. Work started on 17th May and lasted until 29th June.

Although this first season was necessarily an exploratory one, it has already given results which can be regarded as spectacular. and a fair indication of the things to come in future years. Not only has this season's work already settled a point of great importance in establishing the ancestry of the Hacilar culture, but it has shown how ill informed one was regarding the potential wealth and scope of early neolithic *civilisation*. At Çatal Höyük, we have uncovered not a village but a town, equal in size to sites famous in Classical times, and an art centre in the seventh millennium BC.

So far, our excavations have revealed remains of the Early Neolithic in ten successive building levels, which form a deposit 11.5 m. thick. In all of these pottery is found, but it should be emphasized that, especially in the lower levels, it is by no means common and rarely exceeds half a dozen pots per house. Furthermore of great interest is the fact that many are evidently copied from stone and wooden vessels. Stone vessels are not common, as the material had to be brought from the mountains, the nearest of which are more than a day's march away. It may be suggested that the difficulty of producing stone bowls for the population of a city like Çatal Hüyük, which may have run into the thousands, contributed to the early production of pottery vessels. Local clay of good quality is abundant in this alluvial plain, marble and limestone are not. However we still do not know the transi

tion from non-pottery to pottery neolithic, even though we may be approaching it. The pottery is usually brown burnished and bears no ornament. Lugs are common from the beginning; bases flat. In the later levels, lighter coloured wares appear beside the brown ware and the cooking pots develop ledge handles. Painting of pottery is unknown and coars wares are absent.

The houses of this settlement were of rectangular plan, each with a main room and one or two storage rooms. These houses were grouped in blocks around courtyards or along narrow alleys. Houses in the middle of a block were entered through a shaft in the flat roof (Fig.1) Walls were built of mudbrick without stone foundations and walls and floors were covered with a fine white plaster, frequently renewed and often partly painted red. Each house had raised platforms and a bench against the east wall and the south end of the house contained a raised hearth, an oven in the wall and sometimes a pottery kiln with separate firing chamber. Bins are common and so are posts, engaged against the wall, plastered over and painted red. The walls have panels and ribs in plaster, sometimes plaster shelves and niches for lamps. All these are standard features in every house and they betray great sophistication.

The dead were buried beneath the platforms, but often after decomposition of the flesh. Bone heaps are common (Fig.2) complete contracted burials are rare. Funeral gifts are scanty and consist of beads of stone and shell or of a wrist-guard. Pottery was not buried with the dead. The human remains have not yet been studied but the heads, like those from Hacilar, are dolichocephalic. The teeth are well preserved, suggesting a balanced diet.

The people of Çatal Hüyük prac-

tised agriculture, growing wheat and lentils and bitter vetch, considerable quantities of which were found in a carbonised state. They dehusked the grain in mortars and ground it in saddle querns made of volcanic stone, they had ovens to parch it or bake bread, some of huge size. Sickle blades are rare or have not been definitely recognized as such.

Hunting was evidently still important and the chipped stone industry, almost entirely in obsidian, was rich and varied. Knives and daggers (Fig.3), lance and arrowheads abound and are bifacially pressure-flaked. Scrapers for cleaning skins are common both in obsidian and chert. Borers are rare and their place was taken by bone awls. Cores show the preparation of knife blades up to 12 cms. in length, but even larger ones occur. Microliths are unknown. The polished stone industry shows a prevalence of adzes over axes as well as stone bowls, palettes, mortars, pounders, querns and articles of personal adornment such as beads of copper ore, pendants, maceheads and wall and floor polishers. Bone was extensively used for awls, pins, weaving needles, punches, spoons and spatulae, etc., some carved with animal heads. Slingstones and balls of unbaked clay were found in nearly every house and spindle whorls were made of the same material. Stampseals were made of baked clay and richly ornamented. Knucklebone games (aşık) were played in nearly every house. Most of these come from sheep and goat, but some are calf. Impressions show the presence of mats and baskets. Wooden objects have not survived in these building levels, nearly all of which are burnt.

Animal bones are common and include sheep and goat, cattle, wild ass, boar, red deer, fallow deer, probably dog possibly wolf, badgers and several birds.

Professor Reed's preliminary inspection of the material indicates a) the rarity of sheep and goat in comparison to cattle, a rare occurrence in the Near East. b) A strong probability that cattle, sheep and goat were being domesticated. c) The probability that the Çatal Hüyük canine is the first *definite* domesticated dog in the Near East. The fauna, especially wild cattle, red deer and leopards, shows that during the neolithic period there still were forests in the Konya plain.

We have some clay figurines of wild animals that were used in hunting-magic and they are covered with wounds, probably inflicted with arrows. Others are maimed and broken and on the whole they are exceedingly crude.

There are several instances where the horns of wild cattle were preserved and either put in a small chamber or set in plaster and put near the hearth. These are the first instances of the 'horned altars' and of the bull cult so popular in later Near Eastern and Mediterranean cultures.

Figurines of Mother Goddess type occur in most building levels and whereas the earliest are clumsy and schematic, those from the later levels are naturalistically modelled in clay and sometimes painted, or carved in soft stone, alabaster, marble or white limestone. They show a seated or standing goddess and are the predecessors of the remarkable series of statuettes from Late Neolithic Hacilar (Figs. 4-7).

The most spectacular contribution made by Çatal Hüyük to Near Eastern Archaeology consists in a series of wall-paintings, the earliest yet found on man-made walls. They were discovered in two buildings in Levels III and IV, which we regard as shrines, and in two private houses of Level VI.

The cream plaster of the walls is used as a background and bears decoration either in red ochre or in polychrome,

using various shades of red, mauve, black, a pale yellow or white. The paint is applied with a brush in a flat wash technique. In most cases it was found that these wall paintings were renewed, sometimes with important differences. All were found beneath a thick coating of white plaster.

The best preserved paintings come from the Level III shrine and are now in the Archaeological Museum in Ankara. In the antechamber was found a painting in red of a deer hunt (Fig. 9), in which several men armed with bows and clubs and wearing animal skins around the waist, attack a group of stags, does and fawns.

In the main room, we have a scene with a great auroch bull (Fig. 10) surrounded by small men and to the left of it beyond a fence, a second scene of hunters advancing on a now greatly destroyed animal. This picture also is mainly in red but there are some polychrome figures, including a 'harlequin', half white, half red, dressed in a leopard skin.

The finest fresco comes from the east wall, but is very damaged. On the left is a group of men executing a ritual dance in which they are dressed as leopards, wearing the skins around the waist and on their heads (Fig. 11). One figure is shown beating a drum, two others perform acrobatics. Once again there is a 'harlequin' without head. Over the pictures were the remains of a second polychrome fresco of hunters moving at even greater speed to the right (Fig. 12). Later in date, it was painted over the first one. Finally, some lifeless figures in red belong to a third phase of painting. Beyond a great gap were some more figures and fragments of two stags. At the end of the wall, there was another stag.

The subjects depicted in this building all seem to belong to hunting, but those found in a shrine of an earlier building level (IV) show fragmentary figures

of human beings (Fig.8). Discovered very near the surface, the paintings in this shrine had suffered terribly. All we could make out was a row of figures in white loincloths proceeding towards an enigmatic scene, some geometric figures and a little fat woman painted in white, with red necklace, leopard-skin dress and red boots, remarkably like a clay figurine found in the same building level, and a fragmentary scene with a man's head in polychrome. Several other fragments are at present enigmatic.

Hardly less remarkable are the geometric wall-paintings found in a private house of Level VI, the earliest so far discovered. Again they are in polychrome style and the patterns are evidently derived from textiles or kilims.

The earliest buildings of all, in level VII, had no figurative wall-paintings with patterns but plaster reliefs of unknown significance.

The discovery of Neolithic wall-paintings in the Near-East is so far, unique and immediately raises a number of important questions. What is their

origin? How are they related to the Upper Palaeolithic art of the Franco-Cantabrian region, the Mesolithic art of East Spain or that of the Tassili massif in Algeria? It is yet too early to try to answer any of these questions but it is undeniable that we are dealing here with a tradition that has its roots in the Upper Palaeolithic period, still largely unknown in Anatolia. It is hoped that further excavations at Çatal Hüyük may trace this tradition a little further back, for what we have found so far is a fully developed art of painting, well beyond its early stages.

Before ending this preliminary report, we should like to express our grateful thanks to the Eski Eserler ve Müzeler Umum Müdürlüğü and its Director General, Bay Rüstem Duyuran, as well to the Directors of the Arkeoloji Müzesi in Ankara, Bay Raci Temizer and of the Konya Museums, Bay Mehmet Önder, to the Vali of Konya, Bay Rebi Karatekin and to the numerous officials in Konya and Çumra who by their generous and constant help, so greatly contributed to the success of the excavations.