

BEYCESULTAN EXCAVATIONS 1957

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In July 1957 the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara brought to a conclusion its fourth annual season of excavations at the site of Beycesultan in south-western Turkey. The Director was as usual assisted in the field by Mr. James Mellaart and by members of the Institute including Messrs. C. Burney, D. Stronach and J. MacQueen. The architectural recording was in the hands of Mrs. S. Tomlin and Miss E. Beazley while Mrs. Nihal Dönmez represented the Turkish Government. A full season's work was made possible by a generous grant from the Walker Trust of St. Andrews.

The year's most outstanding discoveries were related to the evolution of religious ritual during the fifteen or so centuries of the Bronze Age a subject on which we have hitherto remained in almost total ignorance. The first clue had been provided at the very end of the 1956 season when traces were found of something resembling a religious shrine in the narrow "barrow - passage" through which the earth was being extracted from our Early Bronze Age sounding. In 1957 a new sounding was begun at this spot, and its area and plan subsequently proved to have been unusually fortunate, since it exactly covered the building complex of which the shrine found in 1956 formed a part.

This complex was recorded and subsequently carried down through four major building-levels (XIV - XVII), at each of which the same ritual features were repeated, and their gradual evolution could be studied. The primary composition of the sanctuary architecturally speaking, consisted of twin shrine - chambers, with an average measurement of about five metres by ten. Certain features distinguishing one shrine from another, could be recognised at each successive rebuilding and

gave the impression that male and female elements in their dedication could be differentiated.

Features common to both were as follows. An entrance doorway in the middle of one end - wall; facing this door at the other end of the room, a complex erection of the sort described in last year's report, (*Anatolian Studies VII-1957*.) consisting of two clay stelae and a pair of clay "horns": behind the stelae, built-in or buried receptacles for liquid and solid offerings: a line of wooden post or columns, screening the part of the chamber behind the shrine, from which a second door led into a small "priest's chamber": quantities of ex - voto pottery vessels and small objects both in front of and behind the shrine. In front of the shrine a low curb enclosed a semi - circular space with some ritual significance. Some shrines had two concentric curbs of this sort, and the "male" shrine was usually distinguished by an upright wooden post or pillar set axially on the perimeter of the outer circle. The "female" shrine seemed always to be furnished with a small clay platform built against the neighbouring wall. This has been described as a "blood - altar", since it resembled a small operating - table with channels for liquid to drain into a built-in pottery vessel. Flat marble figurines of the "mother - goddess" type were also found exclusively in the "female" shrine.

The period of time covered by these shrines corresponds to the earlier part of the Early Bronze Age. Meanwhile, in a sounding begun in a neighbouring part of the site, a most fortunate coincidence had revealed to us precisely the same sequence of religious buildings in its later phases. Starting near the surface with a pair of shrines dating from the Late Bronze Age (Level II) we were once more able to trace

back their development throughout the whole Middle Bronze Age period, and by the end of the season were engaged in clearing a pair of such buildings dating from the time of the Burnt Palace, about 1900 B. C. These later shrines demonstrated some features of their Early Bronze Age predecessors completely unchanged, as for instance the "blood-altars", with their built-in pottery receptacles, votive vessels and objects. Other features, such as the horns of the shrine itself had reached a more advanced stage in their evolution. These were now pairs of elaborately shaped terracotta symbols, covered with stamped ornament; and a new feature of the structure they decorated was a ritual cooking niche, with a pottery vessel on a small vertical column; a more pretentious version, in fact, of the little shrines previously found in private houses.

The Late Bronze Age shrine-rooms took the form of long narrow galleries normally with a small "priest's room" behind the shrine itself at one end. The Middle Bronze Age examples beneath, on the other hand, still retained the form of a *megaron* with a small altar replacing the conventional hearth. In one case, the "male" shrine was distinguished by a free-standing wooden pillar, set in a high square plinth, from which a stone-paved causeway led to the megaron porch. Each shrine again provided an interesting collection of ex-voto pottery and small objects.

One feature which the two series of buildings, earlier and later, had in common was their siting on the periphery of the settlement. The earlier pairs were built endwise-on to the enclosure-wall, so that the worshipper faced towards the open country beyond. The same situation was chosen for the later sanctuaries, only their orientation being different owing to the shape of the settlement having changed in the interval.

As for the period of time which they cover, the earliest Early Bronze Age example should perhaps be dated to about 2600 B.C. and the latest Late Bronze Age

sanctuary to about 1200 B. C. There is a gap between the two groups of about four hundred years, which could not be filled by penetrating deeper beneath the Middle Bronze Age buildings. We thus have a not-quite-complete sequence of religious buildings, providing very detailed material evidence of the ritual practices common in south-west Anatolia during almost a millennium-and-a-half of Bronze Age. The information on this subject hitherto available was extremely scanty, depending mainly on evidence derived from the remains of domestic shrines, in private houses.

After the earliest Early Bronze Age shrine had been cleared, the main sounding was continued into the Chalcolithic levels beneath. Unfortunately the settlement now proved to be so much reduced in size that we had access only to layers of rubbish which had accumulated outside the enclosure wall. This did not prevent us from obtaining a pottery sequence extending well back into the Late Chalcolithic to a date perhaps approximating to 3200 B. C. Here, at an estimated depth of about five metres above virgin soil, house walls again began to appear during the last few hours of the dig, and we were able to trace the ground-plan of a perfect miniature *megaron*, with all its usual appointments, including benches and sleeping platforms.

Our new archaeological sequence for southwest Anatolia has now therefore been completed from the Late Chalcolithic to the end of the Bronze Age. This would be a satisfactory accomplishment if it concerned a single site only; but the extended scope of our work makes the results still more comprehensive. For the sounding at Beycesultan provides a chronological skeleton on which to hang the whole sequence of changing material cultures of which evidence has been found throughout south-western Turkey. The definition of each major period at our site may now indeed be supplemented by a map, showing the geographical distribution of settlements where its salient characteristics are known to be represented.

