

HACILAR - BURDUR EXCAVATIONS 1957

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Under the auspices of the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara a short test excavation, lasting 16 days was carried out by James Mellaart, sometime Fellow of the SAI Institute, during the month of September 1957.

Hacılar lies in the Vahayet of Burdur, 25 kms. west of Burdur on the main road to Yeşilova and Denizli. The prehistoric site, discovered in December 1956, lies about a mile west of the village, just beyond the orchards, watered by a powerful spring, which comes from under the great rock which overlooks the village and was also responsible for the prehistoric settlement. The mound, about 150 metres in diameter, rises 1.50 m above the level of the surrounding fields and is under cultivation. Numerous holes have been dug in the mound by the locals in search of antiquities, many of which have found their way to the İstanbul market.

The objectives of the expedition were: a) to ascertain the cultural assemblage to which the fine red-on-white pottery, acquired in the village in December 1956, belonged and to establish its relation to a somewhat different pottery which litters the mound. b) To make a sounding, if possible down to virgin soil to find out what culture or cultures preceded the chalcolithic one with painted pottery. Both objectives were reached and it was established that the 5 m. high mound of Hacılar contained at least nine building levels, five of which belonged to the early chalcolithic period and four more belonging to the preceding neolithic period.

The top building level (Hacılar I) was terribly denuded and disturbed and only fragmentary stone foundations of rectangular buildings were found. With

them went the pottery which littered the mound; mainly large bowls with both interior and exterior decorated with chevrons in red paint on a buff slip, and afterwards burnished.

The second building level had been destroyed in a conflagration. Three burnt houses of rectangular shape, preceded and surrounded by courtyards were found with all domestic utensils and pottery in situ. The houses were built of mud-brick without stone foundations. Approximately square rooms contained a square built-up hearth in the middle and had internal buttresses, thus providing the room with alcoves. Wooden posts carried porticoes. Red-on-white painted pottery and red and brown monochrome wares, querns with pounders for grinding red and yellow ochre littered the floors. Bone, stone and obsidian tools are common, also stone bowls and celts. Steatopygous clay figurines, often of large size (20 - 30 cms), red slipped or painted - standing female figurines - occur in many fragments. In the pottery two styles are found: a fantastic one with oval cups and bold curvilinear and sometimes uncanny ornament and another with large geometric designs of a solid rather than linear type. Spirals occur.

Three earlier building levels were found in the sounding. The pottery of level III resembles that of II, but the two earlier levels (I and V) have simpler shapes and predominantly geometric ornamentation in which chevrons and wavy lines occur, but solid patterns with an infinite variety of triangles, filled or solid, and diagonal and vertical lines form the bulk. Monochrome wares continue and both painted and plain wares are invariably burnished.

In the neolithic levels,, painted pottery does not appear, except for a handful of primitive painted ware, non-ancestral to that of Level V, in the last neolithic Level VI. Monochrome wares with tubular vertical lugs on jars and bowls occur in all levels from VI - IX, but there is a steady development in the pottery in colour and in shape. The earliest wares are cream burnished, then follows a mottled (and sometimes black-topped ware) followed by red burnished ware in Level VI.

No burials were found. Agriculture is known from carbonised wheat, barley, vetch (burçak) and lentils. (Level II). Animal bones are common, especially in the neolithic levels and include ox, sheep, goat, dog, two types of deer and a variety of smaller animals. Carbon for C. 14 tests was collected in the chalcolithic Level II and in the burnt (last) neolithic Level VI. Arms consist mainly of slingstones and a mace-head was found. There are no arrow-heads.

External parallels are plentiful for the neolithic period, which links up with the neolithic culture of the Lake District (Çukurkent) and Neolithic Mersin. The following chalcolithic phase may have strong links but is superior to the "Hassunaphase" levels of Mersin XXIV-XX, having contacts with the East both at its beginning and at the end. There is no evidence to suggest that Hacilar outlived the Hassuna period. These links are of the utmost importance for dating the two Hacilar cultures in Mesopotamian terms, even if, as it now seems, the conventional dating of Hassuna and Halaf is *too low*. Prof. M. E. L. Mallowan now redating the beginning of the Halaf period and therefore the end of Hassuna period and Hacilar to 5000 instead of 4000 B. C. Any change in the Mesopotamian dating now affects Southern Anatolia and through it that of the Aegean and Eastern Europe, for it is here

that the Hacilar excavations have made the most spectacular contribution.

It can now be shown that the Neolithic of Hacilar and its following Chalcolithic are contemporary with the Proto - Sesklo and Sesklo cultures of Neolithic Greece. A multitude of parallels have been established with the help of Prof. F. Schachermeryr of Vienna (who was present at Prof. V. Milovčić's spectacular new excavations in Thessaly). The number of parallels at Hacilar for these two cultures is staggering and there can be no doubt about the dependence of these two cultures in Greece on Southwest Anatolian prototypes. Techniques, styles, shapes, of pottery, painted or monochrome, figurines, architecture, stone bowls, celts, sling-stones, flint, chert and obsidian objects all have close parallels in Greece, even though both cultures each show a great amount of individuality. The fantastic style of the Hacilar pottery and the strange oval shapes is unparalleled in Greece. Squatting marble figurines made in Greece, pedestal bowls and clay altars are unknown at Hacilar, but the wealth of comparisons, leaves no doubt about the approximate contemporaneity of the two cultures.

The discovery of the "missing link" now at last fills the gap between the Mesopotamian and Greek earliest cultures and provides a fine chronological basis for the Greek Neolithic, which hitherto has been dated far too low. Sesklo becomes the contemporary of Hassuna, not Ubaid.

In applying for the renewal of my permit to excavate at Hacilar in August and September 1958, I wish to thank the Ministry of Education and the Department of Antiquities for their kind help and collaboration, as well as that of the Vali of Burdur, which has made these discoveries possible and for which I am very grateful.

