

## ANNUAL REPORT: Boncuklu 2021 FIELD SCHOOL

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*Students in our experimental area (masks removed temporarily for the photo)*

### SECTION A

Please discuss your research accomplishments, student contributions to this research, and the ways that you anticipate research to be disseminated (e.g., conferences, reports, articles, etc.). How were your field school students involved in your research? Do not provide specifics about your research, just describe highlights and accomplishments in the most general terms as well as any extracurricular activities such as field trips.

This section of the report will be viewable by the general public- including potential future students and faculty- as well as by the IFR Board of Directors. We ask that you write with all of these audiences in mind. You can find previous seasons' reports [here](#).

In addition, we would like to promote yours' and students' academic output on our website. In the bottom of the report please include a bibliographic list of all relevant publications that resulted out of this specific field school and project, if any. This can also include any

**conference papers, posters, websites, and other type of collaborative efforts. If the resource is open access, please also include the link to view/download.**

## **Project aims**

There has been much controversy about the mechanisms by which the earliest farming spread around the world. There are few sites where we are able to observe direct evidence for earliest adoption or development of farming. In addition, a focus on how the spread of farming occurred has distracted from understanding how the adoption of farming affected those caught up in the process and changed the relationships between people, plants, animals and landscapes. At Boncuklu we have demonstrated adoption of farming by indigenous central Anatolian foragers (Baird *et al* 2012, Baird *et al* 2018) so the project gives us a chance to understand what this uptake of farming meant for such foragers, in terms of their household organisation and practices, engagements with the landscapes, ritual and symbolism, as well as understanding the spread of farming to the west, ultimately into Europe. The ritual and symbolic practices at Boncuklu are especially intriguing given that Boncuklu seems to be a direct predecessor of Çatalhöyük and located only 9.5 kms to its north and we can thus investigate the factors involved in the appearance of large population aggregations that typify the Neolithic of SW Asia.

This season we excavated 3 trenches to achieve a series of specific aims.

Area M – west. To excavate the sequence to natural to get a complete sequence through the site.

Area M – east. To investigate the use of the open areas in this part of the settlement, the human toilet area and Buildings 24 and 26.

Area P. To investigate a well preserved Neolithic building.

In Area M west we achieved our aim and reached apparently natural deposits in some areas, documenting the earliest occupation in this area of the site. This early occupation has a distinctive set of features not common in later phases. Firstly, there were a number of concreted layers, surfaces that appeared to have been formed in relatively wet conditions, unlike those in later phases at the site. In addition, midden deposits are relatively compact unlike later midden deposits in this area, and they have few artifacts and larger animal bone. Secondly, we found a number of small oval features, apparent basket settings or the like, some small channels lined with phytoliths and 2 instances of small oval clay platforms, apparently some form of work installation. There were also small external hearths result in the same location. There were 2 large pits that may have been part of structures, one large pit contained several phases of hearth, another phytolith surfaces with patches of ochre.

Overall in M east we also achieved our main aims. We exposed much more of the wall external surfaces connected to Building 26. We also identified an animal installation, a bucranium attached the wall of this building faced out to the external areas unlike most of the others from the site and indeed in contrast to Çatalhöyük, perhaps this was more common than previously surmised. This extends our repertoire of the ritual elaboration of buildings. In front of the bucranium was a carefully constructed external hearth. We have not often been able to document external activity contemporary with use of a building so this is providing important new information on use of areas next to buildings. We traced a number of other extensive external surfaces, documenting pits and

external hearths within them, adding to our knowledge of the use of external areas. We also exposed an extensive part of a building of which we had excavated only the western edge previously Building 24. Within this building we identified 2 hearth areas, probably successive and burnt roofing material over the final floor.

In Area P we excavated 2 buildings, Buildings 21 and 22. We have excavated Building 21 previously and continued to work in the kitchen area at the north-west of the building. We identified several phases of hearth rebuilding, wherein the structure containing the hearth was remodelled. We also identified a small storage pit in this kitchen area, these are rare features in other buildings, which adds to our understanding of storage arrangements at the site. Building 22 was the most exciting find of the season, as it turned out to be very well preserved, up to 6 courses high and to be the biggest building excavated to date (indeed we have not yet exposed its full limits. It also has an unusual layout, with 2 hearths. At the moment it seems to be a distinctive house, and might be one of the limited signs of household differentiation at Boncuklu. We await further excavation in 2022 to give us further insights. In open areas between these buildings we found thick clay floors with collections of tortoise and turtle shells, some of which contained objects such as ochre and incised stones

Other highlights include a significant number of visitors to the site and our visitor centre despite Covid19. These visitors were not able to approach the trenches when we were excavating and we did not use the visitor centre and experimental area when they were there.

Recent publications in 2021, include one in *Current Biology* on aDNA and kinship at Boncuklu, one in *Science* on Hepatitis B evidence from 1 burial form the site and 1 in *Communications Biology* on aDNA evidence for early sheep domestication in central Anatolia.