

Beycesultan Excavations

The Beycesultan excavations were undertaken by Seton Lloyd, then director of the BIAA, across six seasons between 1954 to 1959.

The 1954 season lasted from the first week of May to the beginning of July. The major accomplishment was the excavation of a number of ancient structures that were believed to have comprised a Bronze Age city. A palace-like building was discovered towards the centre, thought to have been destroyed by fire and to date to the fifteenth or fourteenth century BC.

Work was taken up again between 1 May and 8 July 1955. This season focused on clearing the upper levels, so that additional parts of the 'Burnt Palace' could be excavated. Stratification suggested that it could now be dated to around 1800 BC. A large number of bowls designed with red crosses was discovered.

The third season was necessarily shortened to six weeks of work and occurred between the beginning of June and 15 July 1956. This season the team determined that the site had been continually occupied until the mound was abandoned sometime in the 11th century BC. Also, a stamp-seal discovered during this season lent insight into the language spoken and maybe written during one of the periods of occupation. Shortly before the season ended, they discovered a structure appearing to be a religious shrine. The pottery analyses undertaken during this season were significant, as they appeared to suggest continuity between the site's inhabitants from around 2300 BC to the Late Bronze Age.

The fourth season of excavations at Beycesultan occurred in the summer of 1957. They conducted a sounding at the Early Bronze Age shrine and uncovered the larger building complex surrounding it. The stratigraphic evidence this season continued to point to an uninterrupted occupation, starting in the Late Chalcolithic period and ending around 1000 BC: "an archaeological sequence almost without parallel in Anatolia" (Lloyd, Mellaart 1958: 94).

The fifth season of excavations at Beycesultan occurred in May and June 1958. The team continued to work on projects begun the previous season, including the clearance of a large religious building which had begun to be uncovered in 1957, and a deep sounding in the Chalcolithic levels. In addition, a metal hoard was discovered, believed to date back to the second half of the fifth millennium BC, which would comprise "the largest group of metal objects known from any context of similar date" and which is significant for its variety and the information it provides on Near Eastern metallurgy of the era (Lloyd, Mellart 1959: 47).

The sixth and final season occurred between 15 September and 28 October 1959. The priority for this season was the clearance of the Middle Bronze Age palace, which had been partly excavated in 1954 and 1955 in order to create a more comprehensive plan of this area. Though no removable objects were discovered, the building itself exhibited unique architectural features. The absence of any articles or objects led to the speculation that perhaps the site was abandoned when news of a hostile army's approach reached them, allowing the inhabitants time to evacuate with their belongings.