

Boncuklu Höyük

Foragers to Farmers

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& Boncuklu Project team members
with illustrations by Peter Carnavas

Welcome!

Come with Ayşe and Orhan as they explore the ancient village of Boncuklu in Hayıroğlu near Konya and find out what life was like 10,000 years ago in Turkey!



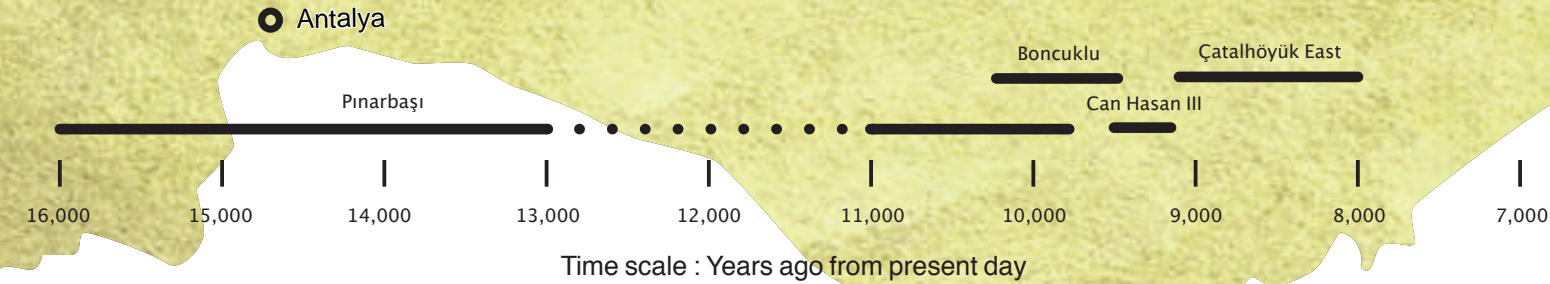
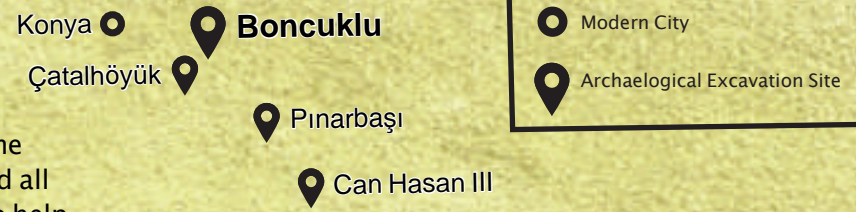
Note for teachers

This booklet introduces what we know about the ancient site of Boncuklu Höyük based on 8 years of excavation and research. It is aimed at a primary and secondary school audience and is supported by a Teachers' Resource Pack. The resource pack, and other information about the site, is freely available to teachers and other education specialists in both Turkish and English at the Boncuklu Project website.

www.boncuklu.org

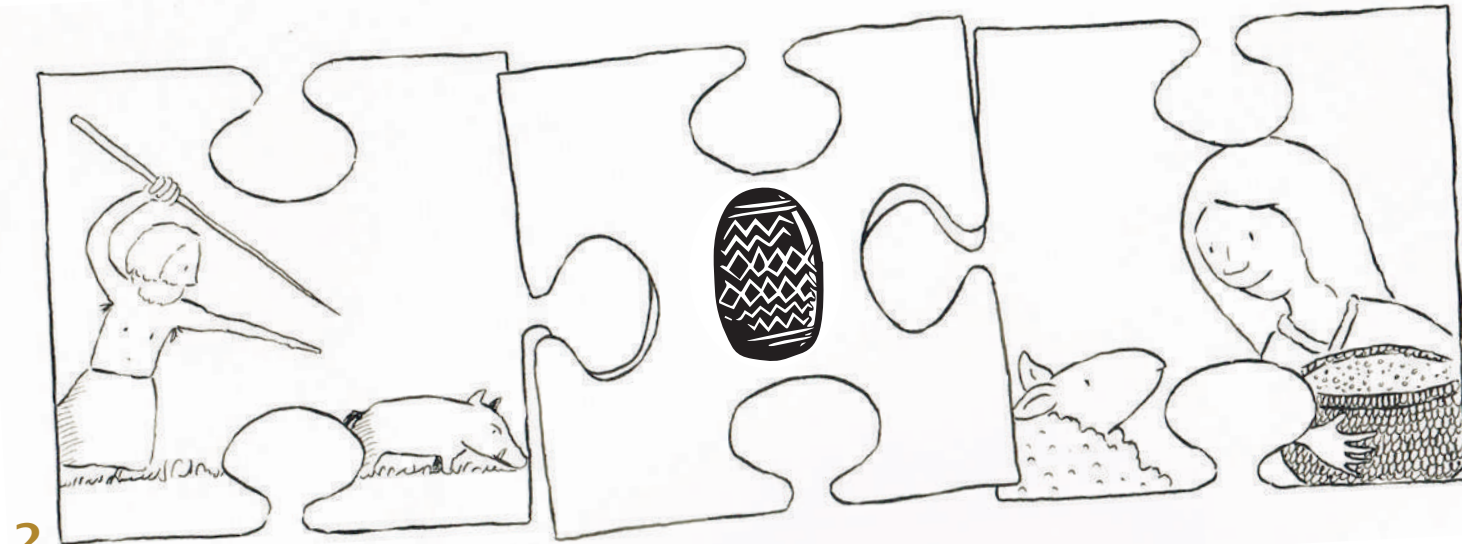
Konya Plain Survey

Boncuklu was discovered by Doug Baird (University of Liverpool) on the final day of the Konya Plain Survey in 2001, which mapped all of the Konya Plain's ancient settlements to help understand the long term history of the region.



Missing piece of the jigsaw

Boncuklu and nearby Çatalhöyük are part of a group of sites dating between 13,000 and 6,000 years ago in and near the Konya Plain. Each site tells a part of the story of how and when people first settled down into villages and began farming. Boncuklu tells the story of what happened between 10,300 and 9,500 years ago



Introduction to Boncuklu

First settlement

Today Boncuklu is a small mound in a dusty landscape surrounded by farmers' fields on the edge of Hayıroğlu village; 10,000 years ago it was part of a revolution which made settled life in houses and farming a normal part of people's lives.

This period of change is known as the Neolithic, or new stone age and people lived at Boncuklu at the start of this period in Turkey

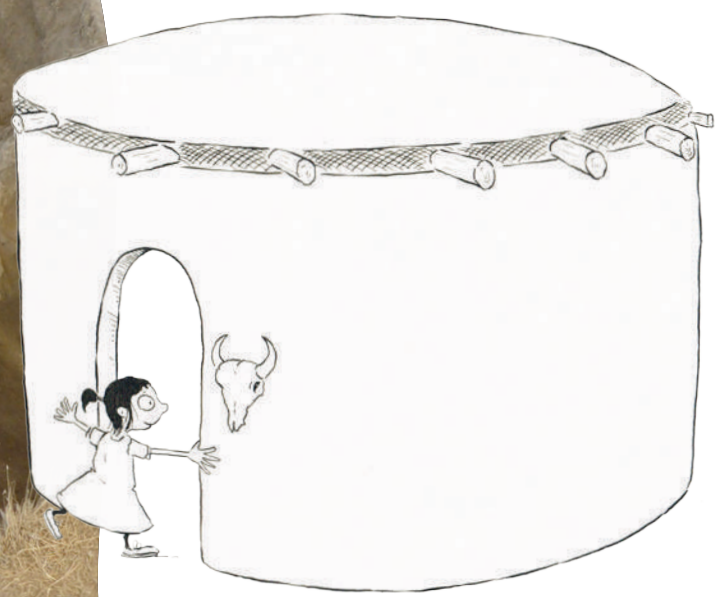
Beautiful beads

Boncuklu, or 'place with beads', is so called by the local villagers because the surface of the site glistened with prehistoric beads ('boncuks' in Turkish) following the spring rains.





This is what our houses probably looked like!



What have we found at Boncuklu?

We find small oval shaped buildings with a doorway and walls made of mud bricks. The roof was made of reeds over timber with a covering of mud. Different types of wild animal bones are found. People at Boncuklu ate everything that walked, flew or swam and the presence of so many wetland birds, fish and plants suggests that wetlands were present nearby.

Discoveries

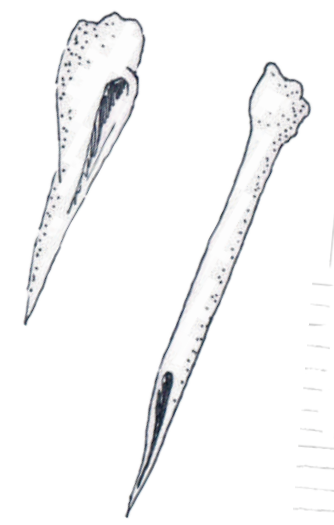
Stone tools

Boncuklu existed before metal tools were available and people used stone tools as knives. The tools here are made of tiny stone blades called "microliths" which were expertly chipped from larger pieces of stone



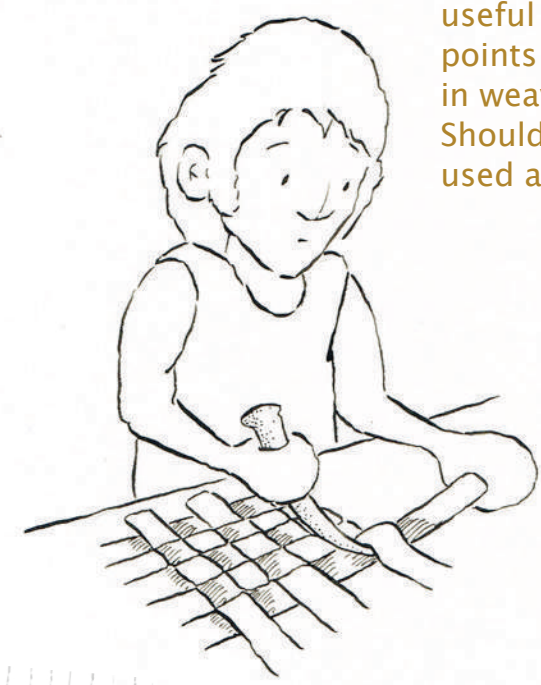
Bone Tools

Bones were shaped to be useful tools, including points and needles used in weaving and sewing. Shoulder blades were used as shovels



Using bone tools to make baskets and mats

Looking at bone tools under a microscope lets us see tiny marks which are made during basketmaking



Living with the in-laws

Unlike today, Boncuklu's dead were buried beneath the floors of the houses in pits which were then covered over and replastered. Following the burials people continued to live in the houses above their ancestors. Most buildings contain 2 or more burials and sometimes the same grave was used for more than one burial.



How did people live at Boncuklu?

Home Sweet Home

The people of Boncuklu lived in oval shaped buildings which were sunk into the ground and had mud brick walls. So far 22 buildings have been found. We often find just the floor surfaces of buildings and not the walls. One well preserved building still has low mud brick walls and an entrance. The space inside the building had a plaster floor divided into an upper clean area and a lower dirty area near the fireplace which contained many stake holes, perhaps the remains of wooden frames used in cooking or other household activities. The clean area was sometimes painted with red ochre and often included a raised plaster platform. In one building we found two cattle skulls which were attached to the wall and covered in plaster.

On the scrapheap

Boncuklu people kept their houses very clean. Near the houses there are areas where rubbish was deposited which are known as middens. We find lots of different animal and plant remains in the middens and sometimes even human skulls.



Finding, Growing and Preparing Food

Neolithic landscape

The mound itself is made of mud brick buildings, each being built on the demolished remains of earlier structures mixed with rubbish and ash from the houses. Boncuklu was built on a small natural hill on the flat landscape of the Konya Plain which was formed by a huge lake that existed here 25,000 years ago.

Foraging and Farming

Boncuklu's people got most of their food and materials used in building and crafts from the local landscape. 10,000 years ago Boncuklu was surrounded by swamps and lakes full of useful plants and animals. We call people who use wild animals and plants for food "foragers" or "hunter-gatherers".

Boncuklu's people were also starting to experiment with farming. Small amounts of primitive wheat (pictured) are found at the site showing people were learning how to grow their own food for the first time in central Turkey.



Image courtesy of Mark Nesbitt

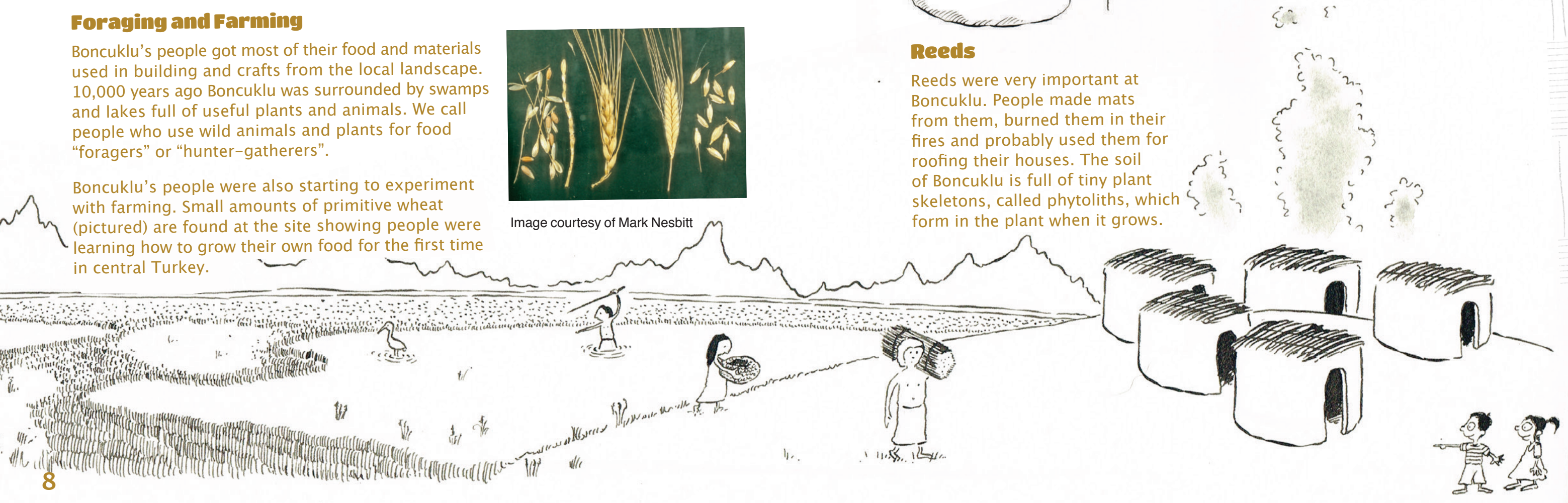


Bone smashing

We find lots of bone fragments but very few whole bones because they were smashed up, probably to get at the bone marrow, which is delicious!!!

Reeds

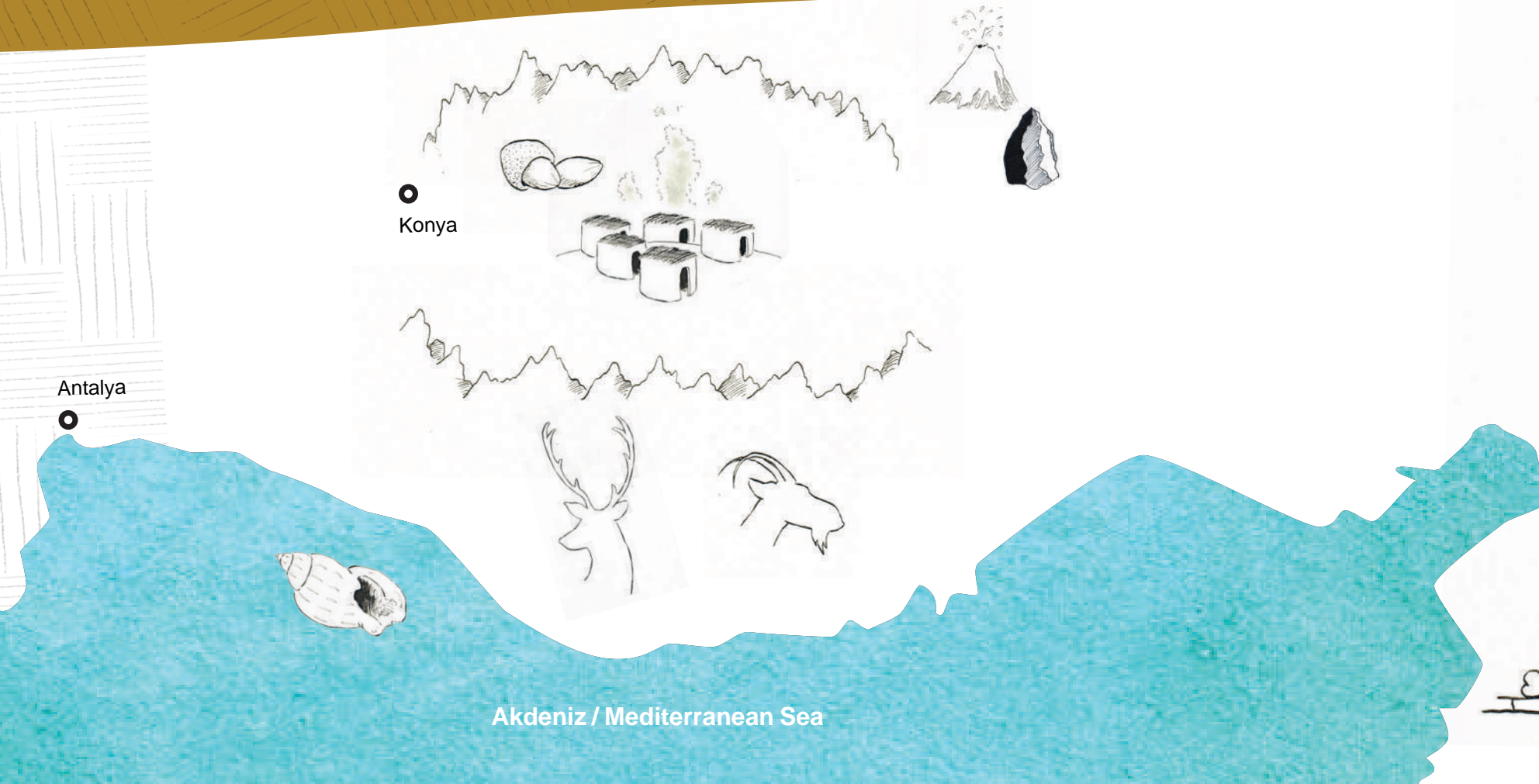
Reeds were very important at Boncuklu. People made mats from them, burned them in their fires and probably used them for roofing their houses. The soil of Boncuklu is full of tiny plant skeletons, called phytoliths, which form in the plant when it grows.



Connections in the Landscape

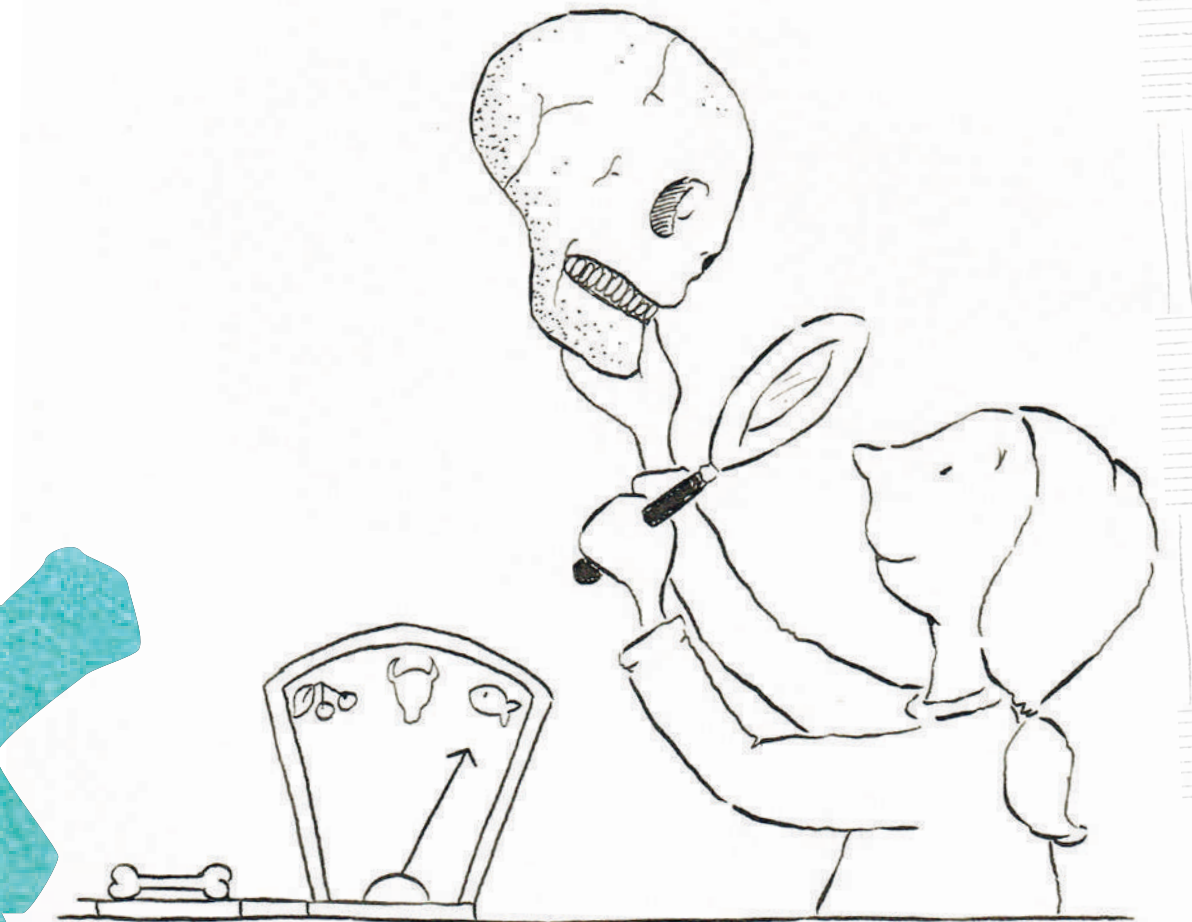
Where did Boncuklu people get their food and raw materials?

People moved some things over long distances in the Neolithic. We know that the volcanic glass obsidian came 190km from Cappadocia. We find sea shells at Boncuklu which come from the Mediterranean 250km away. Some of the plant and animal remains found at Boncuklu are not local wetland species. Deer, goats and almonds come from the mountains surrounding the Plain. Many other sites from this period show connections with far away places. We think some objects may have been traded and some brought back to the site by people from Boncuklu who went on journeys to these areas.



Studying diet and movement of people

Scientific study of chemical isotopes in bones tells us what people ate and where they lived. If people eat meat, the bones contain different chemicals than if they eat fish or plants, such as fruits or grain. People who live together usually have the same diet, however one female skeleton is different. She had spent most of her life somewhere else and ate different foods. We don't know why she moved to Boncuklu. Maybe she moved to live with a new partner? Maybe she had a special skill to contribute?

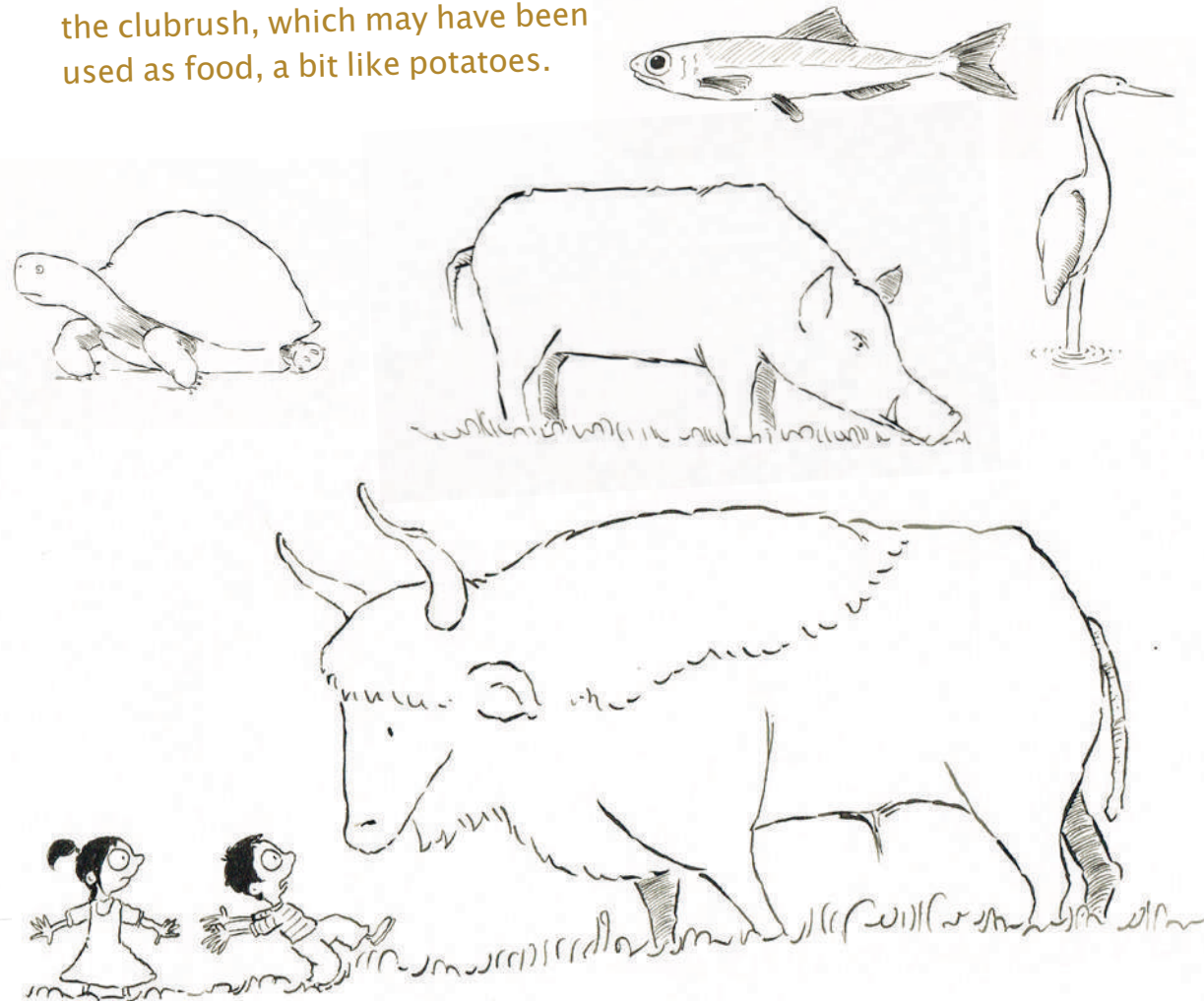


Wetland Abundance

Boncuklu's people hunted aurochs (wild cattle), pigs, wild sheep, tortoise, birds, frogs and fish. They gathered plants from the wetland too, including reeds and tubers found at the base of the clubrush, which may have been used as food, a bit like potatoes.



Clubrush Tubers



Lake Beyşehir



Konya Plain looking south to Kara Dağı

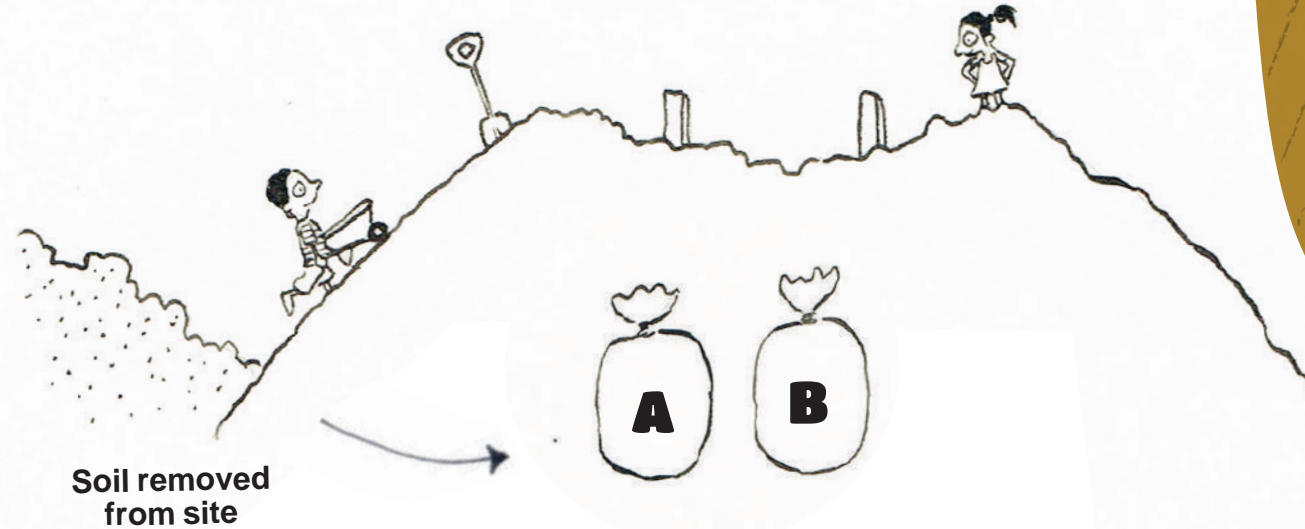
Environmental Change From wet to dry

15,000 years ago there was a big change in the world's climate as the last ice age ended and things warmed up. By the time Boncuklu was occupied the climate was similar to today, but with more rain. Boncuklu's people lived in a wetland area – similar to that found today around lake Beyşehir and were experimenting with farming, though got most of their food from hunting and gathering. Today the environment is very different. Less rain falls now than in the past and the water which once fed the wetlands is controlled so that farmers can grow crops on the Konya Plain. Instead of wetland, there is a landscape of pasture, grain, sugarbeet and vegetables to feed Turkey's people.

Archaeology at Boncuklu

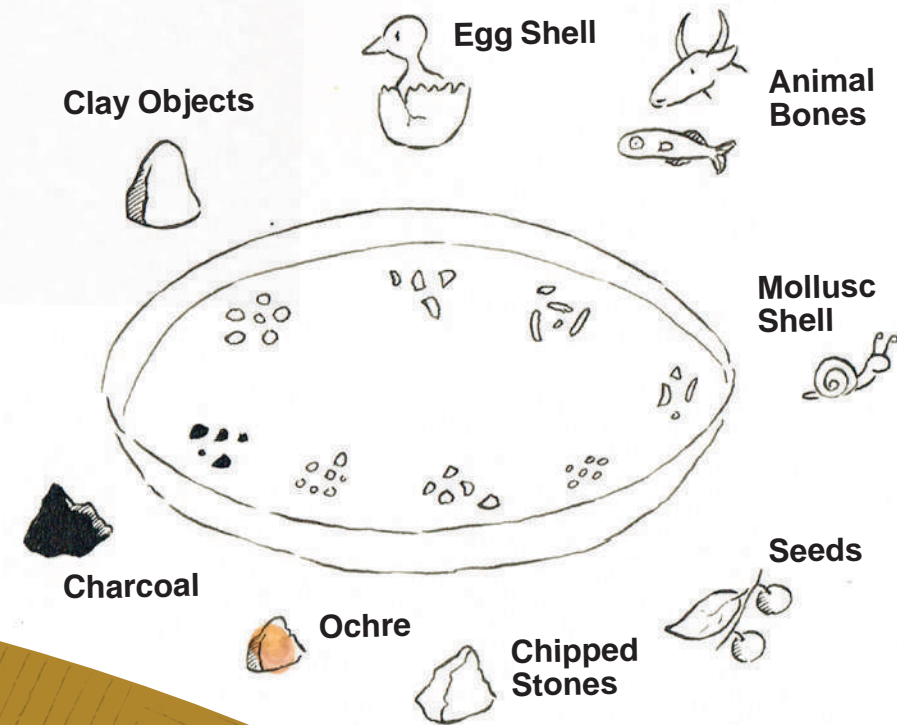
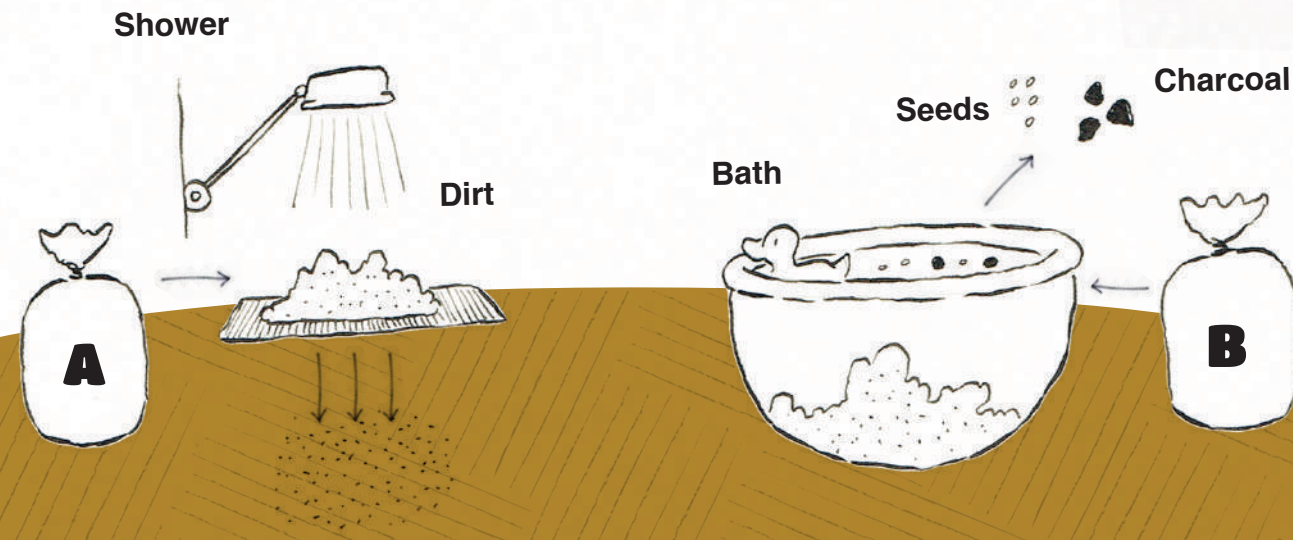
It's all in the process

As we dig down into the mound we carefully record everything we find, including buildings, burials, pits and objects, such as stone tools. But we don't throw away the soil that we dig up – we wash and sieve it to collect all of the tiny objects we cannot see during excavation. We call this “flotation” and “wet sieving” which is like giving the soil a bath and a shower! The bath lets light objects, like seeds and charcoal, float to the surface while the heavy objects like stone tools sink – we call this heavy residue. The shower cleans away the soil so we can see all of the tiny objects. Without flotation and wet sieving we would know much less about Boncuklu and would not find many of the fish bones, eggshell and small stone tools.



How do we know Boncuklu is very old?

We find out the date of the site by using radiocarbon dating, which uses a radioactive form of carbon to let us tell how much time has passed since the site was occupied. People lived at Boncuklu between 10,300 and 9,500 years ago.



Sorting it out

The 10,000 year old rubbish from Boncuklu's houses is found in the heavy residue from wet sieving and flotation. We carefully sift through it and find many things there, including small bones, seeds, eggshell, snail shell, ochre, stone tools and even small figurines.

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