

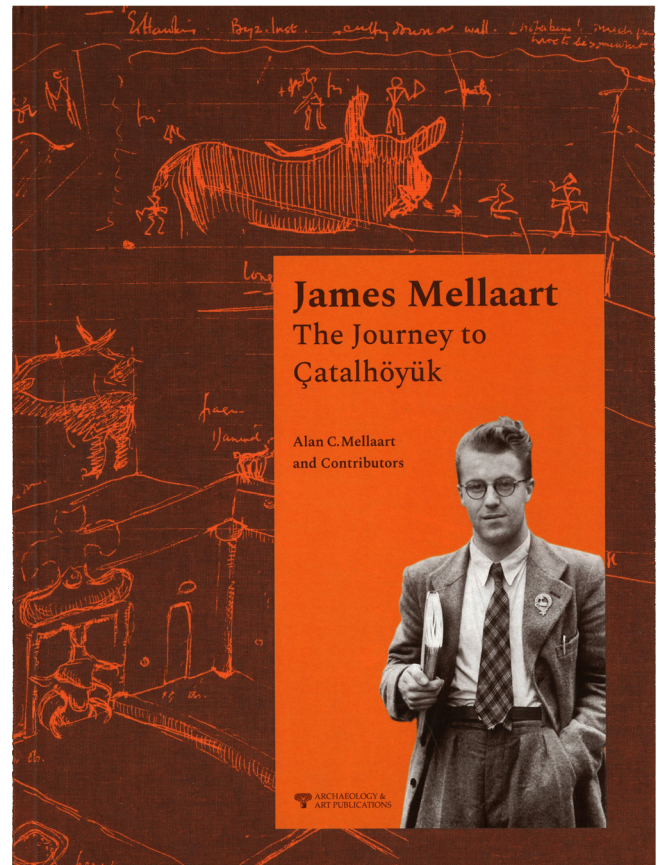
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Review of Alan C. Mellaart and other contributors, E. Baysal (ed.), 2020. *James Mellaart – The Journey to Çatalhöyük*. Istanbul: Archaeology and Art Publications. ISBN: 978-605-396-523-7. € 99.

James Mellaart is for sure one of the well-known names in archaeology of the second half of the 20th century and especially in the archaeology of prehistoric Anatolia. “James Mellaart – The Journey to Çatalhöyük” was compiled and written by Alan Mellaart and other contributors, edited by Emma Baysal and published in 2020 by Archaeology and Art Publications in Istanbul. It took over seven years to produce this well-illustrated volume which is dedicated to the memory of James and Arlette Mellaart. On its 476 pages it compiles memories, personal accounts, and tributes of colleagues, contemporaries and family members. Naturally, such a personal approach leaves gaps in the picture. However, it does encourage the reader as well to start digging in the published material, libraries, and archives to learn more about the circumstances under which archaeological works took place in the 1950ies and 1960ies. On the other hand it is Alan Mellaart’s attempt to understand his father better and to shed light on his own family history and to piece together the scattered jigsaw puzzle and missing bits of a family history that is closely entangled with the European history of the last century. It is a complex history. There is light: *e.g.* the discovery of nowadays well-known sites like Hacilar and Çatalhöyük or the cosmopolitan life at Safvet Paşa Yalısı at Kanlıca. There is shadow: *e.g.* traumatic World War II events during his childhood and the excuse of illicit trafficking of archaeological finds. There are dramatic twists: *e.g.* the loss of the excavation license for Çatalhöyük or the destruction of the family’s Yalısı at Kanlıca. There is disillusion and imagination, too.

The volume sets out with a Preface (9-16) by the editors reflecting upon the difficulty to do justice to “such a complicated character and those places and people with which he was – and still is – associated.” This is followed by a Prologue (17-32) with Alan Mellaart’s childhood memories on his days at “the Skeleton Cleaning Club” at Çatalhöyük and the rich social life on the shoreline of the Bosphorus.

The next five chapters are dedicated to the family history. Alan Mellaart presents all the information he has gathered about his parents, starting with his father’s account (33-102): a troubled youth, difficult family circumstances – caused by the early death of his mother as well the death of his aunt in the bombing of Rotterdam in 1940. World War II experiences studying Egyptology at University College London, excavations with Kathleen Kenyon, first steps into Anatolian archaeology. The following years (1951 to 1965) dealing with archaeological survey and excavation work as well the “Dorak Affair” are presented via Jimmy’s own biographical notes. The years in London as a lecturer



after the termination of the excavations at Çatalhöyük are filled with the hope to return to the field; especially the hope to return to Çatalhöyük to continue excavations. As history knows, this was only possible decades later as a visitor, when Ian Hodder had started his re-examination of the site. The next chapter is dedicated to the fascinating family history of his mother Arlette (103-122). Alan’s mother Arlette Mellaart contributes her own reflections on the life at the Safvet Paşa Yalısı at Kanlıca, originally published in a magazine back in 2002 (123-142) (Fig. 1). Due to the fact that this grand Ottoman wooden summer house on the Asian shore of the Bosphorus was a central place of the family and research life of the Mellaarts, consequently a brief excursion written by Sinan Kuneralp looking at the builder of the house Safvet Pasha falls in place here very well (143-160). As the house burned down to the ground in 1976 it is also a closed chapter – especially because a lot of James Mellaart’s notes and documents *etc.* were consumed by the fire as well.

The final chapter of the family history section is dedicated to Arlette’s Cenani family branch, another complex story (161-188).

The next sixteen chapters are – archaeologically speaking – re-contextualizing James Mellaart and his work. This section is starting off with Mehmet Özdoğan’s re-evaluation of Mellaart’s place within archaeology (189-240). Some passages from Seton Lloyd’s autobiography (1986) where James Mellaart is mentioned are shedding light on the close ties to the British Institute at Ankara (241-270). David Stronach

shares his very personal memories of his work with Jimmy and Arlette from 1955 to 1958 on the surveys and at Beycesultan (271-276). Maxime Brami provides a fresh view on Mellaart's research at Hacilar (277-292), while Refik Duru gives his own account on "Jimmy Bey of Hacilar" (293-302). Ian Todd contributes in his notes on the excavations at Çatalhöyük not only valuable insights on the works there but in addition as well many of his marvellous colour and b/w-images taken back then (303-318). His reflections are accompanied by the transcripts of Grace Huxtable's Letters from Çatalhöyük she sent home to her family (319-346). Those letters give a lively insight into the work and daily life on site and her task of drawing all the wall paintings.

Emma Baysal takes a look at the beginning of the Çatalhöyük excavations by examining James Mellaart's notebooks, displaying the speed of work and the excitement about the well-preserved finds (347-392). Revisiting the diaries gives a good insight. The chapter is supplemented by the reproduction of the pages of the notebook of the first 13 workdays at Çatalhöyük (Fig. 2). Peder Mortensen recalls his days working with Arlette and James at Kanlıca in 1964 on the lithic and obsidian assemblages from Çatalhöyük and Hacilar; adding as well some rare shots from his archive to the book (393-408). He gives a lively account on the daily rituals, work atmosphere and visitors at Kanlıca. In his short contribution John Ingham tells some memorable anecdotes from his visits to Çatalhöyük and later encounters

with James and Arlette (409-412). In his contribution Ian Hodder presents some of the latest results from his 25 years of archaeological research at Çatalhöyük in comparison with the results from the four seasons of work by Mellaart (413-430). In contrast to Mellaart's speed of excavation and in some cases over-enthusiastic interpretation of features, the long-term project by Hodder worked at a much slower pace and had a much more analytical approach to re-assess earlier interpretations. Hodder states that "many changes in interpretation at Çatalhöyük have resulted from the application of analytical techniques that were not available to Mellaart in the 1960's." Simple methods, which are nowadays a standard procedure, *e.g.* dry sieving of sediments to catch smaller artefacts, bones *etc.*, were not commonly used in the 1960's to provide further insights. The same holds true for the available funding and the size of the team. Mellaart had a small team with a few specialists managed by his wife Arlette. Hodder's team had over 30 research groups with many researchers included.

No work about James Mellaart would be complete without discussing the infamous and still not fully explained "Dorak"-affair. Here the case – caused by Mellaart's publication and the possible disappearance or inexistence of exceptional finds from an unknown Bronze Age culture in Western Anatolia, leading finally to be banned from work in Turkey – is represented through recollections by Seton Lloyd, Kenneth Pearson, Patricia Conner and David Stronach. Despite all the



Fig. 1 James Mellaart and his wife Arlette Mellaart at the Safvet Paşa Yalısı on the Bosphorus in the early 1960s. (Photo: by courtesy A. Mellaart)



Fig. 2 James Mellaart with workman at work at Çatalhöyük.
(Photo: D. Kirkbride, Diana Kirkbride-Helbæk Archive, University of Copenhagen)

different accounts regarding this case, we have to accept that it will not be solved or explained fully in detail as James Mellaart took the secrets of the events that have taken place to his grave and we only can speculate what really happened (431-444). However, in his account David Strochan is trying to reconstruct the context in which the story took shape and developed around the “search of the Early-Bronze Age in West Anatolia”.

In the following contribution “Gordon Square – London” Donal Easton is remembering Jimmy as a University teacher and his appearance each Monday for his class at the Institute of Archaeology (445-450). In his second contribution Ian Hodder shares some of his personal memories about meetings and various occasions with Arlette and James (451-454). The two last contributions by John Carswell (455-462) and Trevor Watkins (463-467) are reprints of Obituaries and Tributes published in 2012 to commemorate Jimmy Mellaart. John Carswell remembers his first meeting with Jimmy at Kathleen Kenyon’s excavation at Jericho alongside Diana Kirkbride and Neville Chittick in 1952, which all had studied Egyptology and could not work in Egypt due to the political circumstances. Just imagine what the world of archaeology would have missed if all three would have went working in Egypt as initially envisioned. The volume is completed by a full bibliography of James Mellaart’s works (468-473) and an Index (474-476).

Easily “the Journey to Çatalhöyük” could have been an appraisal of the “genius” of James Mellaart. It is not.

Luckily Alan Mellaart and Emma Baysal have collected a great variety of contributions that piece by piece laid out a mosaic that shows the complexity of James Mellaart as a human being and not only the archaeologist. It is a great kaleidoscope, with reflections that avoid to be only black or white. The rich illustrations and reproductions *e.g.* of his notebooks make it a pleasure to turn page by page and give as well an insight into his way of documenting. The high quality paper, the well-made binding, and beautiful layout turn this book not only into a great read, but also into a real pleasure to look at and to dig into.

When Alan and I met shortly after the manuscript of this volume went to the press, we could agree upon that if we would have known the letter correspondence about Çatalhöyük between Diana Kirkbride and Jimmy Mellaart – kept in the Diana Kirkbride Archive at the University of Copenhagen – a bit earlier, it would have made a great addition to this volume – however, we are going to publish this material in not far future somewhere else. At least some of Kirkbride’s images from the 1963 season at Çatalhöyük found their way into the volume.

In conclusion, “the Journey to Çatalhöyük” is a treasure box of anecdotes and reflection of James Mellaart’s life and contribution to the archaeology of Southwest Asia and especially Anatolia. The manifold contributions by friends, colleagues, and his son Alan offer insights into a life with dramatic twists and unforeseen turns, but also dedicated passion for archaeology and the struggle to tell a captive story with convincing narrative. Alan Mellaart and Emma Baysal put the immensely diverse material beautifully together to tell a very complex story. Congratulations!

Or, to put it in James Mellaart’s own words “It’s a corker!” (Letter to Diana Kirkbride, 20.05.1967)

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