

EINKORN TALKING, AUGUST



Hello from your Einkorn.

It's August, the heat burning over from July. The Fahrenheit scale gives us the 100-degree mark that sticks to the mind like sweat on skin. On the Columbia Plateau, yes, temperatures here will climb to over 100 degrees in the summers, some years as early as in June. Such severe heat though doesn't persevere, not normally, but for a stretch of several days at a time. You know what, in the 90s it feels rather hot as well... At least the nights cool down some.

It's a dry heat in August and that makes it somewhat bearable. Although the arid aroma of the lands raises dust, dust, dust, the stands of grain desiccated, waving in any breeze now no longer pliant but with a harsh rustle. It's hot and the busiest period of the year. Harvest. The exact harvest dates change from year to year, it's up to the spring and early-summer weather patterns to determine the timing of grain maturity. At Lentz Spelt Farms the winter Farro crops usually stand harvest-ready by late July.

For grain harvest the kernels' moisture has to drop to 12 percent or less. Storage is the issue, if grain moisture is much above 12 percent, the mass of grain in the grain bin will heat up to where it spoils. That's horrible, and it can even get so hot as to start the whole grain bin burning from the inside out.

The amount of green weeds in a field is a matter of calculation now, because green weeds are wet and so contribute to the overall moisture of the crop to be harvested. An organic grower with a weedy field must swath it before harvest. Swathing is extra work, of course, the grain and the cut weeds drying in windrows for a week or two before the combine – with a bean header – picks up the windrows for the threshing. A yield loss of 10 to 20 percent is normal when you have to swath your field before harvest.

It's always a relief to look at your ripe field and not see too many weeds out there.

In the offices of the wheat elevator silos by the railroad tracks, high-tech moisture testers

ascertain moisture and protein of a wheat sample within a minute. But these machines have no calibrations for Farro grains. The Farro grower has to dehull his field sample by hand – a kitchen blender does an approximate job of dehulling, a cup's worth of in-hull grain at a time; separation of the empty hulls from the kernels happens by patient shaking of hand-screens and the occasional huff and puff that blows the chaff away. An ag lab in town gets to run a moisture-and-protein analysis.

The test results come by fax the following day.

That evening the harvest machinery moves into the farm yard. The lead protagonist of the machinery is of course the combine harvester.

From afar the combines are crawling metallic insects chewing up crops. Close-up, those harvesters are Herculean machines, amazingly much technology on wheels: up front the big header, a wide span of sharp triangular cutters clipping a big swath of crop that falls into the turning rakes to disappear into the belly of the machine. There the threshing mechanism separates grain from straw, forced air blowing most of the chaff away, the grain then traveling by elevator up into the hopper while "straw walkers" hustle the straw to the open back of the machine where it gets chopped and blown out to add to the soil. The motors always sound a loud whine, regardless of the make of the combine. Colors: John Deere is green, Case red, Gleaners silver. Like different species of giant bug.

Harvest mornings begin slow. There is much coffee drinking, a good breakfast. Grain harvesting is not an early morning endeavor because the cooling air in the night brings a hint of dew. It's barely perceptible, that slight night moisture under the moon, but dew there is in the morning and the farmer waits until around 9 o'clock in the morning to check the field. He wants the stand so dry that the grain heads don't bend but snap right off. Then he's ready to roll.

The first day of harvest. The combine roars as the engine warms. The harvest crew's gathered, tractor driver, truck drivers, the two guys who'll run the augur at the big grain bin. They all look up at the combine driver in the cab who's now checking the gauges, testing levers. He engages a clutch and the header starts its rotation. He pushes a lever and the header lowers to cutting height. The driver shoots a glance at everybody so far down on the ground, then he gives the thumbs-up sign, smiles. The combine moves forward, the header cutting and then grabbing the first grain stalks at field's edge. As the combine rumbles into the field, a wide swath of stubble gapes behind it.

The term for that first swath of the first pass: Opening up the Field.

Farro grains are harvested in-hull, weighing considerably less than naked-grain wheats do, so when cutting Farro the combine stops after some 50 yards of cutting and the ground of the cut swath is checked. It won't do to have in-hull grain blowing out the back of the combine together with the straw. What's in the combine hopper also gets checked, that the grain heads are broken up into individual spikelets without an undue amount of chaff being carried along. Combines are complex machines, it usually takes a few stops before the various adjustments add up to a high quality threshing.

Once the driver is satisfied that the combine settings are right for the Farro, the cutting

commences in earnest, pass after pass after pass from one end of the field to the other, the whine of the engine rising from the cloud of chaff and dust that embroils the combine.

Combines are expensive, over \$200,000 for a new one. You need to cut a lot of grain to pay for that, so farmers use bank-out wagons, huge square hoppers on tall wheels. When the hopper of the combine gets close to full, a tractor will pull the bank-out wagon parallel to the combine; the combine swings out the arm with its fat spout and augurs the grain from the combine hopper into the bank-out wagon; it does so on the go, the combine never stops cutting. The tractor then pulls the bank-out wagon to field's edge where a grain truck is waiting; the bank-out wagon's load is augured into the truck and then the bank-out wagon returns to the combine that cuts, cuts, cuts without a stop. It's superbly efficient.

A million acres of dryland wheat in the Pacific Northwest – the amount of grain getting harvested is mind-boggling. Almost all the wheat gets hauled directly to the big elevators. After weighing at the scale, and a protein, moisture, and purity check, the wheat truck drives over a pit where the load gets dumped. At this point the wheat farmer's job is done, except for the phone call he'll make to sell his wheat. Of course, that sale won't be the actual wheat from his field. In the elevator the wheat from many farms gets stored, the loading in and loading out blending the crops together. The wheat company or co-op simply keeps tabs on the number of bushels, and pays accordingly.

In contrast, the Farro crops in on-farm grain bins are tracked by lot. The industry term for the specialty grain system is IP, which stands for Identity Preserve. Down to the last sale, from 2000-pound tote to 50-pound bag to one-pound consumer pack, the Farro can be traced to a specific farmer and a specific field. If you want you can track even further back and ascertain the specific field where the seed came from, and the foundation seed before that.

In the big picture of wheat, Farro and other specialty grain are minuscule in scale. Harvest is hard work and looms big, but all around the enormity of grain production dwarfs the individual farmer. For weeks and weeks, grain trucks rumble on the roads. When the winter grains are harvested the spring grains are ready. Wheat is fairly pouring off the land.

In the old days Eastern Washington raised different classes of wheats, Turkey Red the most famous variety old-timers talk about. Back then local mills turned out bread flour; some of the wheat went to the Fisher Mill in Seattle. After the Second World War the wheat industry was streamlined across the country; the Pacific Northwest it was decided would raise primarily the soft white wheat that Japan prefers for sponge cakes and noodles. Soft white wheat is a low-protein wheat; over 80 percent of Washington state wheat production goes to Portland for export: ships of grain.

Watching those ships get loaded with wheat is a strange experience when you're not hungry. There is a disconnect between watcher and wheat, as though the sheer volume of material is just that, industrial material getting shifted globally. Of course it's food, your brain knows that. Millions of cakes and Asian noodle meals will be processed from the flour that'll be milled from the wheat mountains getting loaded at the port just today. It's astounding what we take for granted.

Turn your back on the ships and you see Mount Hood before your eyes, this grand, active volcano impervious to human activity and ant behavior. No better reminder of nature: for all the

ships of grain, wheat's a plant of nature.

We shall travel to the beginning. Think: butterfly.

When a tiny change affects huge changes in far distance of space and time, we speak of butterfly effect. No tiny flutter illustrates this phenomenon better than the seed from an Einkorn plant that capricious nature had given an extra measure of patience, we're guessing about 15,000 years ago. Instead of rushing toward the soil, falling as soon as it had reached viability, this particular seed lingered longer high on the plant. This was small mutation, yet as non-shattering genotype Einkorn now held the potential to coevolve with humans: Einkorn's benefit would be species spread, while humans could harvest the spikelets clinging to the stem in unprecedented quantities, allowing for change in human behavior which would lead to Mozart's music, the nuclear bomb, civil war in Syria, Emmer pancakes for breakfast.

First though the newly mutated Einkorn subpopulation had to have an evolutionary means to spread. Women gatherers obliged. They learned to select the non-shattering Einkorn, they learned to encourage its spread by some sort of propagation. This is universally recognized as the first step of cereal domestication.

Conventional prehistory tells of small farms at this juncture. Domestication of plants and animals results in settlements of the Fertile Crescent, which settlements grow in size and become the first cities of Mesopotamia, the "Land between the Rivers" Euphrates and Tigris. Arise city states, kingdoms, empires. Come Sumer, Assyria, Babylon, Akkad. But by now they're writing things down, so we've bumped out of prehistory into history.

The civilization that agriculture enabled is traced forward in time as "the Ascent of Humanity." The alternative would be to spell that "the Ass End of Humanity," with a nod to our favorite anarchist philosopher John Zerzan.



Regardless if you look at the advent of agriculture as an advancement or as a curse, the farm-to-settlement-to-empire scenario (summed up as "Neolithic Revolution") is no longer the picture for Stone Age experts. Now we're asked to put religion before agriculture in the timeline. This new perspective arose in 1995, when an archeologist made an astonishing

discovery at a place called Göbekli Tepe.

Göbekli Tepe lies in Mesopotamia, though not in the generally famous part that's now Iraq. Göbekli Tepe is of Upper Mesopotamia; maps label the region Southeast Anatolia, Turkey, Asia Minor. It's the heartland of the Kurds, the Turkish part of Kurdistan (the other parts in Syria, Iraq, Iran).

Göbekli Tepe can be translated as Belly Hill or Navel Hill. The archeologists chose Potbelly Hill in their publications, but we prefer Navel Hill after we hear several locals express their belief that humankind exited Eden at Göbekli Tepe. "That's where Adam appeared on this earth."

Yes, Göbekli Tepe generates much myth, interpretation, speculation, inference.

The stone-hard fact is that something very, very strange happened here 12,000 years ago.

Our sojourn to Mesopotamia is focused on Karacadag, pronounced "Karadsha Daa." Karacadag means Deer Mountain; researchers peg it as the place of origin of Einkorn. Diyarbakir is the biggest city close to Karacadag, but a Turkish friend had suggested we make our base at Sanliurfa, about 60 miles west of Karacadag: "If you stay in Sanliurfa you can check out Göbekli Tepe. It's near there."

We followed his suggestion. Urfa – as everyone calls the city, Sanliurfa ("Shawnli-oorfa") meaning "Beautiful" or "Glorious" Urfa – is a town with a strong traditional bend, population 700,000. Most residents, above 40 percent, are Arabs; a little less than 40 percent are Kurds who make up the great majority in the old part of town. About 20 percent are Turks.

Sanliurfa Province numbers 1,700,000, with a large Kurdish majority. Agriculture is predominant, and growing into a big regional industry since dams on the Euphrates enabled large-scale irrigation here in the mid-1990s.

We book into the Manici Hotel that's spaciouly outfitted with soft chairs and sofas on which lounge colorful cushions. An invitation to recline, these gently contoured seating arrangements glow with deep velvety colors that would rank gaudy were they not so pleasingly calming. We're in a different culture alright: the heads of Ottoman personages painted on walls, doors, and on the back of chairs; elaborately inlaid wooden side tables; wooden partitions painstakingly jigsawed; and the inner courtyard, you have to love that small environs of restaurant tables in nooks and under awnings, a contained space away from the street-side bustle, water murmur from a stone fountain in the center while across the high walls walk shadow silhouettes of doves somewhere on the roof.



Our first breakfast in that pleasant courtyard, and we drink the worst coffee ever after filling our cup from a large urn at the buffet. It's early morning so it takes a second sip to realize that this hot drink isn't trying to be coffee – it's the ubiquitous tea, *çay* ("Tshai"), tasting stark and a bit acrid until two sugar cubes turn it into a quite nice taste for the sipping.

Soon my contact, Ali Ihsam Yilmaz, arrives. A friend of our Turkish-American friend, Yilmaz is an electrical engineer. Today we're to drive out to Göbekli Tepe.

The landscape is the result of a climate borderline desert. It's early June and 100 degrees, the spring weeds long desiccated, the grasslands, already past their regrowth, grazed almost bare. We pass a few small pistachio groves, the trees hunkering in the sun, adapted to the climate. We cross a big canal; it's five meters deep, Yilmaz notes: assessing its large width, we estimate this canal to be about 10 times the size of Columbia Basin Irrigation Project canals.

The water looks cool and turquoise, its job

to irrigate Harran Plain below us: 325 kilometers of waterway supplying 874,000 hectares (200 miles/ 2,270,000 acres).

We get lost in a village. A child looks down the street at a corner, aimless, chickens squawking, rock walls for by-the-house fencing, a skinny cow. This is a poor place. Mostly cinder block. Life here is not easy street, and it shows.



We find the road that takes us further up the hills to the end-of-road parking place.

A short, dusty walk takes us to the big excavation. Stone Age spreads below us. Rubble, really, to the untrained eye, at first – what's a wall, and what's fill still to be removed? Amid the seemingly haphazard rocks and boulders rise monumental stones.

The area is fenced. A wooden boardwalk describes a half circle on the high perimeter of the site. No, a visitor cannot see these monuments as the ancestors did, stone looming up ominously or grandly, stone to awe. Instead the visitor looks down into a wide pit. The gigantic stones have been re-erected there, T-shaped megaliths now held in place with cables and support beams. Imagine: these megaliths once stood up in a circle, towering, each directed toward the two central columns that summoned the outer stones' energies to yet further power. Standing on the ground before them you'd behold stone and sky paired.

Animals on the standing stones, sculpted in relief, add to our astonishment. The place is hugely more complex than famed Stonehenge which was erected millennia later.

The air is still. The lone mulberry tree at the crest of the rise beyond the diggings reassures us that we won't succumb completely to a spell of the Stone Age. Wild oat and thistle crowd the approach to the site, timeless weeds.

We return to the pillars in the pit: tons, many tons of stone, every pillar. Some stand 18 feet tall, weighing as much as 16 tons apiece.



Therein lies the main mystery of the place. Because the people who erected these monuments did not come from a civilization. No city existed nearby to supply as many men as it would have taken to hew these huge stones with stone tools, to transport the T-shapes from the quarry, drag the weight somehow to the site on the Navel, and there pull and push that stone T upright, into a place fairly concise geometrically relative to the other Ts.

No nearby city, not even villages of 12,000 years ago, means that hunter-gatherers built Göbekli Tepe. But hunter-gatherers do not live in large groups, they move about in nomadic bands each numbering but several dozen people. How did they gather here in a big population? And why was this population not a permanent one?

Who were they?, in an era before pottery, long before metal, 7000 years before Egypt's greatest pyramids, 10,000 years before Rome's Colosseum, 11,000 years before Chartres Cathedral, 12,000 years before Micky Mouse...

We'd gone to Berlin, Germany for the answer, a few days before flying to Urfa. At the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut we sought

out the Orient Haus. Upstairs, Professor Doktor Klaus Schmidt, the discoverer of Göbekli Tepe in his academic's office: tall book shelves, cabinets overflowing with thumb-ed-through science papers and stapled theses, on the desk just enough clutter to qualify for a don't-clean-up-or-I-can't-find-anything system, on the wall large posters of, you guessed it, Göbekli Tepe.

Schmidt oversees the digs at Göbekli Tepe to this day. Spring and fall are the excavation periods; when not in Turkey, Schmidt engages in research in Berlin, and he also teaches as adjunct professor at the university in Erlangen.

He seems a personable fellow, considering his fame – Schmidt's discovery has been featured in scores of articles, the most prestigious a lead article in National Geographic. Certainly he's earned his comfortable chair wherein he leans back, relaxed and ready to answer questions, most of which he's probably been asked before.



Was he excited when he realized the significance of his Göbekli Tepe find? For a short moment he'd been human: "Well, yes, *ich war begeistert!*" Then the archeologist took over: "But quickly I took the professional view."

Schmidt had worked in Turkey since 1978, under archeologist Harald Hauptmann of Heidelberg university. The Stone Age his specialty, Schmidt was on hand when a great rush of digging commenced in southeast Anatolia, a rush to gather as much archeological evidence as possible before many ancient valley sites would drown behind the dams being built.

By 1994 Schmidt was looking for a new project near Urfa. A 1960s report by an American archeologist had listed Göbekli Tepe; the site was by-passed because it was thought a Byzantine outpost. "In the 1960s, archeology was not as advanced as it is today," Schmidt comments.

He asked a farmer in the area if there was a place nearby with an unusual amount of flint stones. The farmer happened to know such a place. He told a boy to take Schmidt and a colleague there.

"I knew right away that this was an important site," Schmidt recalls. It was obvious to him that the site was much, much older than Byzantium.

The times are long gone when cultural heritage was dragged from the four corners of the world to Berlin and London. Hauptmann negotiated for the right to dig at Göbekli Tepe. It would be a joint project with the Sanliurfa Museum. Up to 50 local Kurds would be seasonally employed. Young Turks studying archeology would be in on the project. Not one stone would leave the country. And, no Muslim graves would be disturbed – that’s a permanent taboo in Turkey.

Are Turkish archeologists different in attitude or scientific scope than their European or American counterparts? “Not really,” Schmidt replies. “Most of them have studied in Germany or America.”

Lentils and wheat grew on the acreage where Schmidt wanted to dig. “We rented the land from the farmer. We paid him what he’d be getting for the crops.”

Geomagnetic surveys show at least 20 more rings of stones in addition to the several stone rings already uncovered. The work’s going slow because Schmidt is proceeding very carefully. Archeology isn’t an empirical science where proof of your theory relies on replication; you can’t repeat a dig, and a hasty mistake will erase the context of what you’re finding. “The work at Göbekli Tepe will go on for at least 50 more years,” Schmidt says. Not a bad deal for that farm family.

Having reached ground level in one area, Schmidt is certain that Göbekli Tepe and several other archeological sites in Upper Mesopotamia give us a new perspective on early humanity, specifically in what science titles Pre-pottery Neolithic A and Pre-pottery Neolithic B. Of the various sites, Göbekli Tepe is the preeminent one, the largest monument of its day. “It’s a temple,” Schmidt concluded early on.

The temple interpretation turned Göbekli Tepe into a sensation. For the first time there seemed to be evidence that not agriculture but religion gave rise to civilization.

The people who came to Göbekli Tepe were worshippers, Schmidt postulates. “They were followers of a cult.”

He gives us a book he wrote about Göbekli Tepe. The subtitle describes the site as “A Stone Age Sanctuary.”

The day after our first visit to Göbekli Tepe we devote to wheat. Yilmaz is driving, Mehmet Çelen the interpreter rides in the back. We’re on the road to interview a broker at Viransehir, 80 miles east of Urfa.

At city’s edge, a youth with a stick herds goats foraging field residue right next to New Holland and John Deere dealerships as spiffy-fancy as any in America.

From the road we see small fields of maize, eggplant, tomatoes, peppers, melon, and grapes without trellis. We see flood irrigation, and irrigation by rill and by hand-lines.

Almost all the wheat’s already harvested. Some fields lie charcoal black after recent stubble fires. “Field burning is against our religion, and there is a law against it, the government fines you if

they catch you at it, but farmers keep burning their fields,” Çelen says.

We pass a long, open-sided structure: “That’s a farm for 10,000 antibiotic cows,” Çelen says.

“Cotton is the white gold,” he notes as we pass a new planting. “To harvest it with a combine harvester, the farmers spray a chemical that kills everything green, so only the cotton is left.”

Çelen explains the measurements of Turkish agriculture. “We go by *Dönüms*. One *Dönüm* is 1000 square meters. (1 acre equals 4046 square meters.) The wheat sells by *Kiles*, a *Kile* is about 18 kilograms” (an Ottoman unit of volume measure.)

Irrigation changed the farms a lot. Before the dams, many farmers got around with a horse pulling a small wagon. Now they all have cars: irrigation more than doubled some of the yields, Çelen notes.

The farmscape changes as we get farther from town. The fields are larger, almost exclusively wheat, barley, lentils; in other words, the same crops these farmers had once grown on dryland. Now that they have irrigation, where are the high-value crops?, the orchards?, the expensive vegetables?, at least alfalfa? We experience *deja vu*: we’re back in the 1960s Columbia Basin when farmers there, too, were slow to optimize their returns by taking full advantage of their then relatively new irrigation system.

Before we reach Viransehir we pass an area of shallow ground, lots of rocks. The open-space view is a respite from the wide farmland surrounding.



Viransehir is a small city. We ask directions. The wheat brokerage: a jumble of trucks, cars, motorbikes on the access road that leads to a big square. On cement slab, mounds and mounds of wheat and barley, a hillscape of grain. Augurs re-load some of the wheat into trucks even as other trucks arrive to dump their load. On two sides the square is bordered by large open-ended sheds that also hold tall piles of grain. As we walk

toward the brokerage – the entrance central to the square – we see that the wheat hills aren’t exactly separated, mounds molding themselves onto other mounds.

The grain brokerage is a huge construct. The main floor’s arranged in bazaar fashion, office next to office next to office, each but a narrow room. The bustle is constant, boys carrying tea trays, runners with bowls of grain flitting by, farmers milling around office doors, truckers. It’s not a loud place but the hum of conversation and negotiation is persistent. Çelen tells us that the brokers can not offer less than government-set minimum prices for the wheats.

We enter the office of Mehmet Yagmur. His son, Muzzafer Yagmur, sits at the desk in the back

of the room. Cushions on chairs next to the desk, two sofas by the door. No computer on the desk but a large calculator that the younger Yagmur's fingers play like an instrument. Also on the desk several bowls of wheat grain, with a torn piece of paper stuck into the grain – the name of the farmer, the type of wheat, the weight of the load delivered.

A boy comes with a tray of tea glasses. We all take a glass, stir sugar in the *çay*. Muzaffer Yagmur hands the boy a *chit*. Exit boy. Of all the people on this trading floor, not a one is a woman.

Yagmur the elder and Yilmaz settle themselves by the door for a chat while the younger Yagmur answers our questions, Çelen translating.

Altogether there are 78 brokers buying and selling wheat here, and lentils: we're in the largest such brokerage of the region. Mainly they deal in durum wheat. Two kinds of bread wheat also go through this place.

With all those brokers under one roof, there is less competitive aura than you'd expect. Most farmers sell to the broker to whom they're most closely related, Yagmur says. You don't have to sell to that person, but most do. "It's family stuff. Just trust is enough."

It doesn't take much skill to be a broker, he volunteers. "You just need to have a lot of money."

While we're talking, several bowls with wheat appear on Yagmur's desk. He runs his fingers through the grain. A farmer comes in, sits by the desk. Yagmur's quick with the calculator. He pushes it toward the farmer who looks at the read-out. Nods. A 30-seconds transaction.

By now it strikes us how fluid this wheat trading is, imprecise. No four-foot grain probes are in sight for taking samples from the middle of the wheat piles, and when we ask Yagmur if the grain is tested for moisture and protein, he shakes his head.

This fluid system begins in the field, we find out. Most farmers back-plant their own wheat, often buying the seed from their own wheat through their broker, Yagmur says. "There is certified seed you can buy," he notes, but adds that farmers are suspicious of it. "They plant back some grain that they grew from certified seed, and the yield was only 30 percent in the second year. The seed company who sold the certified seed was Burgess."

Only 30 percent, really? Yes.

We ask Çelen to find out about the crops of the farmer sitting by the desk. "He grows crops on 200 Dönüm. Mostly he grows durum – that pays the most money. This year he's also happy with the money for his lentils."

Where does all this wheat end up? Yagmur shrugs. The brokers here buy directly from the farmers, and sell the wheat on to larger dealers. This is but the first step in a series of wheat selling, the local faces of the global commodity market.

We ask Yagmur about Einkorn, Emmer. We've drawn up a heredity chart, beginning with *T. monococum*, *T. diccicum* etc. Yagmur looks at the chart but shakes his head. He knows of no

such old wheat in this area. He doesn't say so, but we think he doesn't see the point of raising such ancient grain.

We tell him about Italy's export business in Emmer and Einkorn. We tell him that farmers in Garfagnana get 80 Euros per 100 kilograms for organic Emmer. Yagmur acts astonished but we don't think he believes us.

He says that neither specialty grain nor organic production exist here. Nobody is offering a premium. No, he's never heard of anyone offering a premium, not here nor anywhere in Turkey. Wheat's wheat, and that's that.



After the interview we go together to one of the restaurants in the building. Yagmur the elder has invited us there. After the meal a stop in another restaurant for tea. Yes, another *çay*. By now we've noticed that Kurdish and Turkish mouths are a lot tougher than ours. Every time we drink tea with them, their glasses stand empty before the tea in ours has cooled enough for us to start sipping it.

We take leave of Muzaffer Yagmur. His father comes with us to show us the way to a field of one of his farmer relatives.

Very few farmers here have their own combine harvester, he tells us. Custom harvesters come through the area every year; they drive mostly yellow New Holland combines.

Through the stubble we walk over to where the combine's cutting. We see not one green weed in this stubble – it's obvious this field's been sprayed with heavy doses of herbicide.



The harvest operation is little different from how it's done in Europe; compared to America, the combine header is of much smaller width.

Behind the combine a wagon into which the straw gets blown. That is the big difference, here in southeast Anatolia straw figures as a very important livestock feed. When the straw wagon is full,

a tractor takes it away to a place where women sack the straw. The straw sacks get loaded sky-high onto trucks. On the highway we'll see a lot of these straw trucks.



After photographing the wheat harvest we're invited to the nearby village where we join six men in the shade of a tree before a house. You guessed it: soon tea appears on the table. Tobacco is rolled. Two of the men wash their feet and, first one then the other, stand on a rug a few feet away, praying for some minutes.

Just as we make ready to go, a car pulls up. The gent who gets out is an older man, the house here is his home. He's our host and he won't let us go. After introductions he makes the motion of killing a goat, we'll have to let him serve us a meal. Yilmaz negotiates a compromise – we'll stay for some watermelon.

Our host is being treated with great respect by the other men. We ask if he's the mayor of the village. "No, he's a leader here because people respect him as an elder."

He hands us a book. It's in Turkish but we can tell what it is, a training manual for chemical farming issued by the government extension. The elder says he attends extension seminars occasionally.

He says he's been to a few countries in Europe. He says he prefers life in Anatolia because of its hospitality; the way he says it gives us to understand that, in his view, hospitality is the measure of civilization.

"Do you have this hospitality in America?" Mostly not, we reply.

The watermelon tastes fine. Then, after lot of handshaking, we're off.

Yagmur directs us out the other end of the village and we return to Viransehir on back roads. In almost all recently harvested wheat fields forage sheep and goats, and cows, too. Stubble grazing is obviously an integral part of their farming system.

Urfa. We've come for Einkorn and find ourselves in a city with a past of 11,000 years. Or more.



Yilmaz gives us a tour of the large, manicured gardens around *Balikli Gol* that draw crowds of people every day. But they're not vacationers, Urfa has nothing to offer holiday makers, those are drawn to Turkey's coasts with many spectacular resorts on beaches. Urfa's visitors come to see religiously important places and/or archeological sites – 465,000 visitors in 2012, of which 45,000 were foreigners. Urfa is the city

of Ibrahim/Abraham and of Job, so it holds importance for Muslims and Christians alike.

It is said that Ibrahim/Abraham was born here, although one school has it that Ibrahim was born in what's Syria today. But there is no question that Ibrahim lived here in Urfa, and died here.

The story of his death about 2000 BC: Ibrahim had gone around bashing old artifacts he didn't like, which infuriated a bunch of archeologists who chased him up the mountain and tossed him off the cliffs. An older version of the story has it that King of Urfa Nimrud bin Kenan told his subjects to kill Ibrahim. Thus it's written in the Koran – "They: If you will do something, burn him and help and serve your Gods."

When Ibrahim was thrown off the mountain, a great fire was burning at the foot of the mountain. God couldn't bear to see Ibrahim land in those flames, so He changed the fire into a bed of roses, He changed the burning trees to fish that to this day swim in the lake of the gardens. That's what *Balikli Gol* means, Fish Lake. They're holy fish, not to be eaten.

We hear a shrill whistle; a uniformed man is running past us with an angry face, blowing the whistle as if there were no tomorrow. What's going on?, we ask Yilmaz. "He is stopping those people from feeding the fish. Only on certain days is it allowed to feed the fish."

Baliki Gol is embedded in flag stone, serene architecture surrounding. A small stone building, "exactly where Ibrahim has fallen," is a holy place with a fountain of holy water; elsewhere in the gardens are tombs of religious leaders. A great mosque rises on one end of the gardens; along the other end beckon restaurants.

We follow a walkway that leads up the mountain. Yilmaz shows us a restaurant inside a large cave. "There are many caves in this city." A little farther on we stop for tea. Would we like to smoke a water pipe? OK. A waiter brings it over. The waiter fills the bowl, closes it and puts glowing embers in the bowl directly above the tobacco. He then proceeds to draw on the mouth end of the long, colorful hose. He



draws and draws, until he's sure the embers will stay lit. Then he hands the hose to us, with a packaged, short plastic mouth piece for us to insert in the hose end. The whole procedure seems so much like a rite.

The tobacco burns very sweetly, with a distinct fruity flavor. It's like smoking peaches. We're glad to experience this, but we'll stick with Turkish rolling tobacco.

We walk around some more, then Yilmaz invites us to a meal in a restaurant. A basket of flatbread. A plate with fried tomatoes, eggplant, pepper, chicken. Yilmaz shows us how this is eaten – the flatbread, similar to a Mexican flour tortilla, you fill from your plate, then you roll it up; you eat it as you would eat a wrap in America, holding it in your hand.

Beer? It's hard to find in Urfa. Very hard. It's nice of Yilmaz to drive around looking for a place that sells beer. He's a Muslim so he doesn't drink himself. It takes him half an hour to locate a tiny shop for us where, in a small cooler, *Efes* Pilsner is for the selling. At 4.25 Turkish Lire a can. We thank Yilmaz for his troubles.

Back at the hotel we find out that they serve *Efes* here, too. At 8 Turkish Lire a bottle. That's about 4 American bucks. Most of the diners who drink alcohol seem to prefer Yeni Raki. That's a traditional Turkish liquor. Like the Greek ouzo, Yeni Raki has a full anise aroma. In the bottle the liquid is clear, but after a shot is poured into a glass and water is added, the drink turns milky white. Two ice cubes are slid into the drink. Always there is a second glass of water. Watermelon is served with Yeni Raki; a strange taste sensation happens when you eat a cut piece of watermelon after a sip of the Yeni Raki drink – the watermelon in your mouth unlocks an aftertaste of aniseed.



We take delight in the strangeness of this world of Urfa. After Yilmaz has taken his leave we wander the streets around the hotel; even after dark there is a bustle by the shops, many of which stay open very late. Who'd be buying spices at 10 at night? Someone must, or the shops wouldn't stay open.

Yilmaz has a contact in the local agriculture research institute of the Republic of Turkey Ministry of Agriculture, Murat Aydogdu. We tell him we're looking for Einkorn. Well, says

Aydogdu, he knows just the place. Down by the Syrian border. It's an area that used to be a mine field. The mines have been cleared. But the area is still off-limits. "So sorry."

We tell him that we'd like to speak with a wheat scientist. Aydogdu knows just the man, a wheat breeder. But this breeder is not at Urfa. He's harvesting his plots that are also directly on the Syrian border. Yilmaz doesn't think it a good idea for us to travel there. It's a war zone with many Syrian refugees coming across the border right in that area. There is also a rumor that guerrillas

are gathered along the border, on the Turkish side during the day, in Syria fighting at night. (“Everybody knows that.”)

Then Aydogdu thinks of a university professor, an English speaker we could interview. We’ll have to check if he’s back from Italy where he’s gone to participate in a durum wheat breeding and genetics symposium at Rome. Yes, he’s back. We call him and schedule the interview.

Harran Üniversitesi lies 12 miles from Urfa. You follow the freeway through landscape much like the one along the road to Viransehir, mostly flat fields. In the distance mountain contours. Not unlike the Columbia Basin. Then a big sign directs you to turn off at an overpass. You approach a manned gate: this campus has a strange existentialist quality, with its groups of large, two-decades-new modern structures placed so far apart from each other that the big open spaces between seem unavailing. A lone private guard in soldier garb sits on a bench in front of the Faculty of Agriculture. He’s holding a rifle.

In building C we find Professor Doctor Irfan Özberk, scientist of wheat, his specialty the breeding of temperate cereals, and quantitative genetics. What defines the man comes to the fore when we ask him if he doesn’t tire of wheat after a long career, first as wheat breeder in governmental research and then as university educator: “No, I don’t get tired of wheat. I’m a wheat addict man.”

We’ve come to the right person. Özberk has developed nine durum, two bread wheat, and two barley varieties. The latest release of one of his wheats is called Özberk in his honor. “I made the crosses for that in 1989.”



He hails from western Turkey, Özberk says. He graduated from Aegean University in Izmir in 1981. Later his university studies took him to England for 2 1/2 years. He received his PhD from Çukurova University in Adana, Turkey. After he’d started research and breeding in southeast Anatolia in 1986, he spent just short of nine months training at the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center, CIMMYT, east of Mexico City – no better way to get to know the turn modern wheat has taken these past 60 years. “We use some genetic material from CIMMYT in the breeding here in Turkey.”

Counterpoint to CIMMYT is Karacadag east of Urfa, not only the place where wheat began but also where evolution of the species proffers an almost playful multitude of wild wheats and wheat relatives. “The American Jack Rodney Harlan came here (Anatolia) in 1964 on an expedition; he collected 2121 types of wheat here.” No typo: two thousand, one hundred and twenty-one wheats.

Ah, but doesn’t Jack Harlan (1917 - 1998) fit our story! His biography states that, “he destroyed the

prevailing paradigm that hunter-gatherers were driven to cultivate plants. In Turkey he demonstrated that he could gather the equivalent of more than two pounds of clean wild einkorn grain per hour using a stone-blade sickle. Thus, in about a three-week period a family could gather more grain than it could possibly consume in a year.”

Altogether Harlan collected over 12,000 types of germ plasm on several continents, including tree seed and wild sorghum.

One of his collected wheats Harlan had thought “ugly,” Özberk remarks. “It was kept in a gene bank for a long time. But that wheat turned out to have resistance to Karnal bunt, yellow rust, fusarium, so it became very important for breeding.”

Search for wild wheat genotypes continues to this day. Özberk shows us several specimens he collected and pressed for display in a sort of scrap book – they’re grasses with little resemblance to modern wheat, their loose spikelets containing but a single, long, skinny seed, yet these wheat relatives, too, add to the gene pool. One realizes how rare and special that once-upon-a-time accession was, the Einkorn which would play such an enormous role in humanity’s story.

Edible seeds from a number of plants were available to hunter-gatherers before agriculture here: “Einkorn, lentil, chickpea, barley, bean and vetch grew by Göbekli Tepe,” Özberk quotes from an archeobotanical report.

But wait – no Emmer? Since Emmer is offspring of Einkorn from 500,000 years ago, why would the two not be found together 12,000 years ago? You’d expect two such closely related species to grow in mixed populations; if not, what would cause them to naturally separate at their point of origin? Or could it be that the ancients of Göbekli Tepe selected against Emmer for some reason?

“If the *T. dicoccon* or *diccoides* (Emmer/wild Emmer) exist in a place, the wild ancestors are expected to be there,” Özberk concurs. “This is also true for Anatolia. Wherever we have *T. diccoides*, we have *T. monoccocum*, *boeiticum* or *urartu* (Einkorn) which are the donor of the AA genome of wheat (AABBDD). *Aegilops speltoides* (BB) also exists at those environments. That is another wild relative of *T. monoccocum*. In case of Göbekli Tepe, I checked my notes once again and I could not find *T. diccocum* listed. But at the rest of oldest civilization areas (near Urfa) such as Çatalhöyük, Nevalı Çori, Hacilar, Çayönü, the ancestors of wheat and their offsprings are often found together.”

Thus we have yet another Göbekli Tepe enigma.

Anatolia unquestionably is the center of wheat – “all (modern) American bread wheat varieties have as one of their origins a Turkish wheat called Centurk,” Özberk says. “And the Turkish Atlas barley is thought to be the mother of the modern barley varieties in the United States.”

Yet despite this history, Turkey was slow to get in on industrial wheat advances. “In Turkey, wheat breeding started in 1925,” Özberk notes.

For cultural and ecological reasons the tetraploid durum is the main wheat in Turkey. Of hexaploid wheats, soft and semi-hard white wheat, and soft and semi-hard red wheat are raised.

“In this area the semi-hard white wheat is preferred for *pide* bread and flatbread. Semi-hard red wheat such as Bezostaya is sometimes blended in, for strong gluten.”

Use of durum includes a product similar to Grünkern, whereby the durum is harvested green, then smoked until the kernels are dry; after that the grain is parboiled, dried again, then cracked like bulgur. “It’s called Frik Bulgur,” Özberk says. “Urfa is famous for it.”

In town we’re told by a chef that Frik is often used in soups, and in a yoghurt concoction.

We tell Özberk of our impression that farming on Harran Plain in 2013 resembles farming in the Columbia Basin in the 1960s, the days when geese were let loose in mint fields as a weed control, but otherwise it was the great boom of farm chemicals.

In response Özberk gives us some background on Harran Plain: “The annual precipitation is 350 to 400 millimeters (about 13 to 15.5 inches); to the north it’s about 600 millimeters (23.5 inches), which is needed for a good crop. The farmers were poor in rain-fed (dryland) conditions, many of them were less educated; now that they have supplemental irrigation (since 1996), they’re rich but not well educated. The chemical companies push them to use chemicals often. If farmers see even one harmful pest in their field they run to the chemical dealer. They are not patient, they do not want to wait for the long-term (ecological) stability they could have with biological controls.”

Also like the 1960s Columbia Basin growers, Turkish wheat farmers are not (yet) under the yoke of privatized cultivars such as Clearfield wheats, except some seed wheat growers. “There are different paths for wheat seed,” Özberk elaborates. “Some new varieties come out of research institutes that sell the multiplication rights to state farms or private companies. The state farms sell the certified seed to dealers who sell it to the farmers. Another way is when private companies pay royalties to research institutes, and have contracting farmers grow the seed of the varieties. In that case the farmer has to give the whole crop back to the company. But the farmers who grow the commercial grain do not pay royalties. They can save seed and back-plant. The government encourages the farmers to grow their crops from certified seed, by paying additional financial support.”

A third path of wheat seed entails international trade with Spain, Italy and France, Özberk notes.

As for the huge yield losses in case of a back-planted “certified” wheat, as we’d been told about at the grain brokers, Özberk is stumped. “Wheat is self-pollinating, it’s not likely that there would be yield losses unless it suffered physical mixtures (off-types). If a wheat gets back-planted over several generations, it’s no longer homogenous due to physical mixtures and may produce somewhat less yields, but yield losses to such a great extent (70 percent) are not likely.”

He does not share farmers’ suspicion that genetically modified (GMO) wheat seed is being sold. “As far as I know there is no GMO wheat being grown in Turkey. The cotton here is also not GMO, I believe. I’m not sure about the corn (maize). We also do not have Clearfield mutagenic wheat. In Italy they have a wheat that’s mutagenic, for breeding reasons. For the goat-grass problem (that Clearfield technology addresses) we have a chemical herbicide.”

We’re saddened that there seems to be no clear-cut Yes or No reply to the GMO question in Turkey. For if there is GMO wheat, now or in the future, the wind-blown pollen outflow of man-

made transgenic combinations would destroy the multitudinous treasure of cereal genotypes that's Turkey today, even though wheat is 99 percent self-pollinating. If there ever was a case for a No-GMO, No-Mutagenics mandate, this is the place.

For the next generation of Harran farmers, Özberk has some hope, although agriculture is not a preferable science in Turkey. "When a new university starts up, agriculture is the first faculty to be established. There are now 25 faculties that teach agriculture, that's more than we need. Because of that, the grades required to enter agriculture are quite low, they used to be high. The background of many students is quite weak. Still, some students are interested in agriculture."

We'd noticed young women around the agronomy buildings of the campus. Özberk says that they're not likely to become farmers: "They will become extension specialists."

Under irrigation, Harran Plain allows for three rotational crops in two years, Özberk notes. Wheat is planted first, harvested early in June, and a second crop of maize is planted immediately thereafter. So you have crop rotation in the first year, monoculture cotton the second year. However, wheat plus a second crop of maize in the second year are more common recently."

Barley also is raised, mostly on dryland because the returns on wheat are better under supplemental irrigation. This barley must all go for livestock feed, we're thinking, what with the local scarcity of beer. "Oh no, that's just Urfa where beer is hard to find," Özberk corrects us. "Western Turkish people like beer. In fact, the province north of here, Adiyaman, is famous for its malting barley production."

According to recent agricultural statistics, ancient grain production still does exist in Turkey, at a little over 400 hectares (about 1000 acres) of "*Kaplica*" (hulled wheats). But Özberk wouldn't know where to look for farmed Einkorn – "*Siyez*" – and farmed Emmer – "*Gernik*." "It's probably farmers on top of mountains who still grow it, self-sufficient farmers," he muses.

Spelt, meanwhile, never grew in Turkey, not to this day, he says. That makes sense in view of the fact that the outcross of Emmer resulting in Spelt is traced by some to the Transcaucasus, by others to the Carpathians; possibly it occurred in both places from where it spread into Europe and Russia.

Anatolia's cereal diversity was intensely researched by Doctor Mirza Gökgöl. "In the 1950s he collects all the land-races," Özberk says. "In the Urfa area alone he found over 30 land-races."

Now we're on a subject close to his heart. Perhaps it's unusual for a wheat breeder to speak so reverently of land-races, but since the early 1990s Özberk's focused on a project to preserve old genotypes by "in-situ genetic conservation" – "the preservation of land-races in their own environment."

Lately he put a proposal to the Global Environment Facility of the United Nations, "an in-situ genetic conservation project by organic production."

This concept works well in Italy's Garfagnana and in Spain's Asturias, thanks to the European Union awarding local land-race products DOP (Denominación de Origen Protegida) and IGP (Indicación Geográfica Protegida) terroir designations. But there we're talking a single land-race

(in the case of Garfagnana, in 1996 Professor Tallarico of the University in Florence selected a low-growing Emmer Farro variety from germ plasm that originated in Garfagnana).

Conversely, the in-situ genetic conservation envisioned by Özberk would preserve a good many land-races. “With the project we want to preserve the biodiversity of organic land-races.”

The UN turned the project down. But Özberk is not deterred. “Maybe next time...”

For our next trip you must put on your Deer mask. We shall dance to a place wondrous, a mountain rise above a high plateau where green grass grows in abundance on the slopes. The temperature difference between intense heat below and cool air mountain-high causes the wind to blow downhill. Look how the constant breeze bends the grasses. At pollination this wind circulates a pollen mix uncommonly diverse.

Yes, the conditions are just right for genetic blending. Your Deer taste buds find much varying sweetness in the grasses – you have a mind to pick and choose from nature’s buffet. With all these grasses crowding thickly in their diversity, sure, you can be choosy.

Less picky is the herd of lumbering aurochs on the grassland further on, their taurine nature leaving a wide swath grazed.

You see a fox, a quick streak of fur, and gone. You see a ram grazing. A wild hog traverses the slope, snout close to the ground, oblivious to everyone else.

On a little lake below, ducks. You hear *grulla-grulla* bird calls, looking up you see cranes soaring on updrafts.

Snakes under an outcropping. Scorpion by single rock. Spider on a shrub.

You can take off your mask now. You’re on Deer Mountain: Karacadag.

All the animals you’ve just seen in your dream have turned to stone at Göbekli Tepe.

The wild grasses in your dream are the relatives of wheats. One of which, great-grandfather Einkorn, has led us here to this far-away place in Mesopotamia.

We’d left Urfa early. “Karacadag?” Our Kurdish guide, Muslin Akay, tells us it’s not a typical destination. “There is nothing there, nothing for tourists.”

Akay is a former high school teacher who grew up in a Kurdish village 25 miles from Urfa. In addition to his mother tongue Kurdish he’s versed in Turkish and English. For the trip he’s rented a German-made Ford.

To the north the mighty Taurus mountain range accompanies us. Now there is an area worth visiting. Ancient places of kings under that peak there, Akay says. Farther in, wild mountain nature where wolves howl to this day. The Taurus looms as an impervious border to the plain, its sharp folds stabbing the sky.

By contrast, Karacadag to the southeast looks like a bump in the landscape.

The side road to Karacadag – “24 Kilometers” the sign says at the small city of Siverek – is paved but not very wide. We’ve read that the land climbs so imperceptibly from Siverek that it’s impossible to tell exactly where Karacadag starts. That’s true. Not until we get out of the car to look at a wheat field do we realize that we’re at considerably higher altitude than Urfa, by the temperature difference, it’s pleasant here. “About 24 degrees” (Celsius, i.e. about 74 Fahrenheit), Akay guesses. “It feels nice.”

Karacadag is a three-fold term, Akay explains. This high plateau is one part, he notes. “Beneath all the houses here is volcanic rock.”



The mountain proper frames the horizon east-southeast; it’s a long, long ridge, its basalt features gentled by millions of years since lava last erupted. The rise happens to resemble Saddle Mountain between Mattawa and Othello, although this old shield volcano here is a lot longer and at over 6400 feet elevation.

Thirdly, there is a village called Karacadag. Maybe 40 homes or

50, flat roofs carried by walls of stone and cinder block. Mid-village a school. Before the school the public drinking water supply where women and children are busy filling plastic jugs.

Later in the day Akay will ask the young Kurdish farmer who’s riding with us, just how much of the plateau counts as Karacadag? After some thinking the farmer answers: “If you were to drive around the whole area, including the mountain, it’d be about 400 kilometers.” (A little more than 250 miles the circumference.) “There are 32 villages. But some of them are small villages, only 10 houses.”

Karacadag definitely has a remote feel, an insular bearing. It’s a land of basalt and wheat. For fields the ground had to be cleared of dark boulders and rocks; most commonly they form long piles at fields’ edge, a dark mark around the bright ripe wheat. In some fields, in addition to the border pile, basalt rock is also piled into mid-field mounds. We see a few fields where the rocks are neatly stacked along the border, mostly though one sees such stacked rock walls in and by villages, there they’re stone corrals.

Akay slows down for a man walking roadside. “We’ll give him a ride. He probably knows where we need to go to find what we’re looking for.”

It’s been difficult to explain Einkorn. The big difference to regular wheat is the “hulled,” or “covered” aspect, and that alone is not easy to describe in simple terms. “There is a husk around the kernel that does not come off easily.” But it does come off with some effort, otherwise it’d be

barley. Neither Akay nor the farmers we will speak with today know the terms *monococum*, *diccocum*, Einkorn, Farro; the terms *Kaplica*, *Siez*, *Gernik* that professor Özberk had cited must be Turkish terms, because they're not known here, either.

The farmer who gets into the car wears traditional Kurdish clothes, except for tennis shoes. Kurdish men's pants do not define the leg shape until below the knee. Around the head a cloth is wound in particular fashion.

At one point in the conversation the farmer gets excited. "He thinks he knows what we're trying to find. He knows where a whole field grows of the ancient wheat," Akay says.



We turn off onto a yet smaller side road. After a few miles we reach a village. We park. Before the houses we notice large stacks of something like adobe bricks, some rectangular, others round. "That's what the people use for heat in the winter," Akay explains – animal manure from stalls is shaped in a frame, then allowed to dry, and then stacked. In some cases a little wheat straw is strewn on top of the burn-bricks.



On the way to the field we follow a wide dirt path; we meet several small sheep bands returning to the village, led by herders. These sheep seem to be of three or four different breeds; some goats also run in the band.

We've been joined by a second farmer, apparently a neighbor of our ancient-wheat guy; at the field a third farmer joins us.

The field: irregular in shape, it's a very dense stand of tall cereal. The wheat heads are nicely elongated, elegant almost, with a nice number of spikelets – our ancient-wheat guy will harvest a good crop, having seeded at a higher rate than that of commodity wheat to make up for less tillers per plant that the land-race produces. About 10 percent of the field's lodged, leaning low. We break a head off the stalk; by rubbing, the naked grain separates effortlessly: it's a land-race durum we're looking at.

If not the Einkorn or Emmer we'd been hoping to see, this old land-race durum is very much an impressive wheat.

It's nice to hear pride in the grower's voice as he describes his family's bond, with the land, yes, but also with this land-race. It's a bond no mainstream commodity farmer will ever experience, switching from newly bred wheat to ever more newly-bred stuff, always heeding the call for more production. Here what counts is tradition, this is his father's wheat and his grandfathers' and his great-grandfather's... His family calls their land-race durum "Mazika."

Walking back to the village we ask if his family mills their own wheat. The ancient-wheat guy's hands describe the roundness of a small quern. Akay translates: "Up to about thirty years ago, yes, they milled their own grain in their house. Since then they get their flour from the big mill in Siverek."

What does the farmer get paid for his wheat he takes to Siverek? "About half a Turkish Lira a kilogram," the farmer calculates. (About 12.5 American cents a pound, \$7.50 a bushel.)

One of the sheep bands now mills about by a corral in the village. A woman milks one of the sheep who struggles in a way that seems more of an assertive rite than a real struggle. It's not a very big pail into which the woman is milking.

We shake hands with the farmers, thank them. Then we're driving further into the farm scape of black rock and yellow wheat.

A group of three farmers, walking. Akay slows, stops, rolls down the window. Again he tries to explain what we're after. The men discuss the matter, ask questions of Akay, then one says some decisive sounding words. He climbs into the car. We make a U turn and are directed onto a track between fields. We see women working with pitchforks in one field. A crop of lentils has been swathed here, now the cutting is being raked into small piles that are then loaded onto tractor-pulled small wagons.

We stop. The farmer reaches down for a handful of swathed lentil plants, rubs the lentils from their pods. They're red lentils, he shows us. Red lentils are traditional in Karacadag. They're great in soup, he says.



We negotiate jumps across two irrigation ditches. By a barley field an area of standing water. The farmer pulls up a young grass by its roots. It's rice, a new crop they're trying here.

Then we're told to wait. The farmer starts running across a fallow field. What's he doing?, we ask Akay. He's going to his field of the ancient wheat, he will bring us a sample. His sense of hospitality won't let him make us to wait too long. That's why he is running.

A few minutes later we watch him running back. The grain heads he's brought us look a lot like the square-head wheat land-race we'd seen in Germany. A very unusual wheat, the story is the same as with the first field, it's an old, old land-race continuously propagated by one family. We thank the farmer; we get back in the car and bring him back to his two

friends still walking roadside. They, too, get in, and we take them to the village to which they'd been on their way.



Further on we see a wagon of lentil crop being unloaded at one of the stationary threshers. We take a photo of the unloading.

We continue on side roads. Once Akay stops where he sees two farmers talking by a house. He honks the horn. One of the men comes over. Akay asks questions, but then shakes his head, and we drive on.

At at T in the road a group of men sit in the shade of a tree. Akay pulls up, cuts the engine. We climb over loose rock to join the half-dozen farmers. We find a rock to sit on. We take out tobacco to roll a smoke, but one of the farmers insists that he roll a cigarette for us from his tobacco tin. OK. We take a small bow as we light up: Thanks.

A long discussion ensues. What exactly could it be that the foreigner searches? Akay, not quite sure himself of what we're looking for, watches the farmers' animated talk, questions bouncing back and forth. A couple of the guys get on their cell phones, to discuss with yet more farmers: a wheat who adheres to its husk, but not in a cemented-on way as the barley husk?

One farmer has an idea. He and two others get up; we go to the car. Akay follows their directions to the middle of Karacadag village. One fellow gets out. Then we turn onto a rocky road that leads past the village. Soon we're driving between basalt piles separating wheat stands. We stop between two fields. One field has turned color, the stand almost ripe. The other field lies green, mostly still in the grass stage except for tall grasses here and there. We understand why the farmer brought us here: these off-types in his field, are they what we're seeking? We walk closer. It's not Einkorn, could it be wild Emmer? Close up we see that it's wild barley. We take a few heads with us to add to our dashboard collection.

The farmer asks a question of us regarding the green field. He doesn't understand why this wheat isn't growing right, Akay translates. He says he planted the green field at the same time as he planted that one – the field with the nicely ripening stand. Did he plant in spring?, we ask. Yes. We try to explain vernalization. A wheat of winter habit needs cold temperatures for the plants to come into their grain-producing phase, this is called vernalization. Without vernalization, the stand will grow lots of grass but little grain. Conversely, the ripening stand of grain adjacent must be a spring-type wheat which does not need to vernalize.

We drive back to the shade tree under which the group of farmers still sit, though somehow some plastic chairs have appeared. More cigarettes are rolled. Then one farmer tells the story of

a group of Israelis who came here a few years ago. They were looking for wild wheats. If we want, he can show us where the Israelis collected specimens. We want very much.

But first we must go to his house for a meal. OK. In the car we bump along the path feeling sorry for the Ford's scraping underside. Good thing it's a rental.

Before the farmer's home sits a brand-new New Holland tractor, mid-size.

A veranda. The entrance to what appears to be a kitchen. We're directed to another entrance; the room beyond is all carpeted. We take our shoes off. It's an ante-room to a large room that's about 50 by 14 feet. Carpets are spread across the whole floor here, too; rectangular cushions all along the walls which have been stuccoed but not painted. No wall hangings, no pictures, no furniture. An electric heater on a pole in the far corner. We sit. Again we're offered the tin with the tobacco.

It's nice and cool in this long room with one small window. The farmer's older brother joins us, and his son. They farm together. An elder woman also sits, a little ways away from us, she won't be eating with us but she participates in the back-and-forth between Akay and the two brothers. A boy about 12, the farmer's grandson, will bring the food and the tea.

A table cloth is spread on the carpet before us. The five of us each get a tall glass of that favorite Kurdish drink, buttermilk. A bowl with yoghurt gets placed next to it, Frik grain mixed into the yoghurt. Bread appears, tortilla-like flatbread, and plates with fried tomato, pepper, eggplant, onion, spices. The yoghurt with the Frik tastes delicious. "This is a traditional Kurdish meal," Akay tells us. It's a simple meal and tastes very, very good.

After the dishes are cleared it's time for tea. A small teapot sits on top of a larger one. From the larger pot one of the tulip-shaped glasses is filled with steaming water. This hot water then is poured from one cup into the next, and into the next, until every glass on the tray has been warmed. Then the glasses are filled from the second, smaller pot; there is tea for about a third of each glass, then hot water is added from the large pot to fill the glasses close to the brim. A sugar bowl is passed around.

With the tea comes another kind of flatbread and a bowl of sheep cheese the family makes. This sheep cheese tastes pleasantly sharp and slightly salty. In America such cheese would be a great hit with the foodies, we tell the farmer. He seems pleased by that.

The farmer describes his work; he works hard, many days from early in the morning until late in the day, and he feels that for as much work as he's doing he should be able to live more comfortably, Akay translates. What about the new tractor outside?, we ask. Well, yes, learning to work with machines has made things somewhat easier, the farmer allows. Still, by the time the tractor payments are made from his crop returns, he never seems to get ahead.

Gee, we're thinking, where have we heard this lament before? Oh, from just about every farmer everywhere who's depending on commodity prices... We think about what we've seen so far of Karacadag, the fields that are less chemically sprayed, if at all, than those of Harran Plain, you can tell by the weeds in the fields; the soil, where freshly tilled, lies darkly fertile, it's good loam; and the size of the fields, because of all the basalt rock, seems just right to be farmed with

agrarian detail. Professor Özberk had pointed out this much in the interview – “Karacadag would be a good area for organic farming.” But what little demand exists in Turkey for natural foods, is far away in the west of the country, in Istanbul, Izmir, he had noted. From insular Karacadag that might as well be on the moon. And exporting a product such as the delicious sheep cheese, for example, the logistics of that seem overwhelming.

“Oh, we’ll be alright, I guess,” the farmer sums up.

We ask about the next generation. Do young people here want to become farmers themselves? “Sure.” So at least there is no farmer exodus as you have in so many regions across the globe.

The house is so simple that regular tourists would be shocked by what they’d perceive as poverty. For us the penny drops when we roll a smoke after the tea: this isn’t really a house, in concept it’s like a big, huge nomad tent, only that floor, wall, and ceiling are not of canvas and tarps but of stone and cement. It feels very comfortable to be in this room.

It’s obvious that the Karacadag farmers don’t have much, but you know what, driving around countryside and through villages, all the people we see in Karacadag look very healthy. By city standards they may be poor, but they’re well-nourished by the fruits of their farms.



After the meal the farmer leads us past the house into an expanse of weeds. He bends to pick a plant with many burrs that are still soft and green; this plant’s a favorite forage of sheep, he says. The purple flowers of the thistle are sought out by the bees who make the best honey from the lasting bloom, he notes. Here and there, growing in tufts, stands the wild wheat he wants to show us. It’s a low-growing *Aegilops*, about 18 inches high, with three individual seed sheaves per plant branching from the stem upward-laterally. Not far away a similar wild wheat relative, also low in growth.

Do these wild wheats turn as yellow in color as the land-races? No, we’re told, in maturing they turn to a reddish color. The farmer points up the mountain. The big areas with a reddish hue are slopes covered with the wild wheat, he says, noting that those plant populations are a great resource for grazing livestock.

We decide to check out some of those areas. The farmer’s son and the grandson ride with us on the way up the mountain. Akay drives slowly so that we scan the



fields as we pass them, tall stands, clearly land-race wheats and barleys.

And then – “Can we stop? Stop.”

We scramble down the embankment, then over basalt rocks.

Hello, Einkorn.



We stand before Einkorn monoculture. Almost all of it has lodged, it's leaning far down. We pull some up, it's over four feet in length, the small heads with their tight rows of spikelets of which each contain *sein korn* – one kernel. We peel the husk away from the seed, it's in the dough stage, soft yet.

We're looking at an enigma, though. What a strange patch, a triangular area measuring about 80 feet across, irregular-shaped edges of barley fields on two sides. Not likely that it's a farmed

plot, it's too small for that, unless someone planted it to hand-harvest with a sickle. Earlier we'd passed a field where a woman was cutting at field's edge with a sickle.

Perhaps this patch was deliberately planted at some point back in time. But why? – when we test the grain head for shatter, it does. This is not a land-race Einkorn, it's a wild type.

We take a few plants. They join the other grain head samples on the dashboard. A few days later the professor will confirm our identification of wild barley, wild Einkorn, *Aegilops*.

When we reach the reddish slopes we see wild wheat as the predominant plant, the *Aegilops* type mostly, one of the goat grass ancestors of modern wheat. And wild Einkorn's waving at us everywhere, but it's growing in small groups or even as single plants. The *Aegilops* is much more competitive at this place and time, with the Einkorn like a tall off-type in the wild wheat stands.

We stand in the wind, taking in the nature of the place, a unique kind of grassland: a wheatgrassland.

This is how it must have been, 15,000 years ago, a mix of wild wheats spreading down the mountain, one species the most successful on one slope, another species the



successful one on another slope, and the wind over the years moving them down onto the plateau, and onward from there to the plain, eventually reaching the great rivers and touching the Taurus. How many early summers did the ancient nomads migrate through here before they realized Einkorn's offer of coevolution, before they grasped what role they'd have to play themselves in selecting the non-shattering mutation? Standing on Karacadag's slopes, it's easy to envision the wheatgrassland's beauty surrounding the few nomad bands wandering about.

Further up the mountain we find ourselves in a zone of shrub steppe, cowering shrubs two feet tall among the wild wheats. Here, too, wild Einkorn grows everywhere, but also not as the predominant species. Still higher up the grasses give out, it's all shrubs and rock now.



As we approach the broad top of the ridge we see several camps, house-size nomad tents by small rock corrals. Some people come up here to graze their livestock for the summer, the young farmer tells us. They're seasonal nomads, in the winters they live in village houses.

At the very top of Karacadag looms a plowed slope – it's a little ski area with tow lifts. On the peak beyond a military installation with good view far into Syria.

On the way down the mountain we stop again at a few areas where wild Einkorn has its place among two, three types of *Aegilops*. Akay decides to make a stop at one of the summer-nomadic beekeeper camps. Surrounded by bees' hum we get to sample the honey, sweet and very aromatic.



We drop off the farmer and his son in their village. Traveling on we see storks in nests atop power line poles. Four stork pairs in less than a road mile. We pass a few fields where new New Holland tractors pull the old type threshers.



In one field we see wheat getting cut like hay. After raking, it'll be on its way to a stationary thresher in the next village, we assume.

On the road down to Siverez the land's incline is more noticeable than it was driving up. Soon the shimmering heat of the Harran Plain envelopes us.

We'd asked the farmers in Karacadag village who they thought built Göbekli

Tepe. “Kurdish people,” they had answered without hesitation. Now, back on the freeway to Urfa, we put the question to educated Mister Akay. “They’re right, Kurdish people built it.” By the way he says it we know he means it.

We’ve been reading Professor Schmidt’s book *Göbekli Tepe*. It’s slow going. He’d said that he wrote the book with the popular press in mind. But there is so much detail as he follows the timeline of his excavations, he describes various earlier digs in Upper Mesopotamia because findings there tie to Göbekli Tepe. The English translation is awkward at best.

In fact, the text contradicts the subtitle of the book that defines Göbekli Tepe as a “Sanctuary.” Thousands of animal bones have been unearthed, bones that were cracked to get at the marrow, so Schmidt rightly concludes that great feasts must have taken place at and near the site; but big feasts don’t fit “sanctuary.” Nor does sanctuary stand for the great crowds of pilgrims whom he envisions 12,000 years ago.

You know what it’s like to have a contrary thought nagging in the back of your mind – you know it won’t stop, not until it’s satisfied, right or wrong. Well, the farther we read in Schmidt’s book, the more unquiet it gets upstairs.

We decide to do something about it. We will return to Göbekli Tepe. But we’ll go on a special day. We want to be there on the day the sun stands still. Maybe then we’ll catch the ancients at their rites in their monumental ring of stones.

Follow us: what’s clear is that an unusually large number of bands were drawn to this region by an uncommonly voluminous food source, Einkorn.

Small-grain crops on the Harran Plain mature mid- to late May; this ripening window may have shifted a little since the cooler climate of 12,000 years ago, but even then it would have been an early harvest, compared to Europe, say.



Now ask yourself this: what would people be celebrating after a harvest in early June? The solstice, of course.

We want to see and feel Göbekli Tepe how animists saw and felt it.

Recognizing Göbekli Tepe as a site of solstice celebration explains a few of the enigmas.

Those big round circles carved from limestone, for

example, like huge wheels without spokes. Nothing like them has been found anywhere else. Thousands of years before carts and chariots, the people of Göbekli did know a wheel, the Wheel in the Sky. Not that they'd have called it a wheel, of course.

Another enigmatic aspect is the exclusive maleness of the animals on the megaliths. In almost all cultures the sun is male, so if you're making a mask or a rock carving for the day of sun celebration, the male in nature is precisely what you would choose. (Curiously, in German it's *die Sonne*, female.)

And how would you present a male predator? At its fiercest, naturally, because animism does not distinguish between physical prowess and spiritual power.

In his book Schmidt connects the bared teeth of depicted predators with human fear. But for humans who live in nature, fear does not contribute to survival. Fear inhibits. Fear of something stops you from really knowing it, and it's by knowing the predators, by knowing their habits, dispositions, appetites that one learns caution of, protection from, and countermeasures against them. Fear of the Big Bad Wolf didn't occur until after human and nature had become separated.

The snakes on the pillars, the scorpion and the spider are similarly a fear-inducing factor, in Schmidt's interpretation. Gee, a child of three had better know to stay away from those poisonous critters, no stone carving needed for instruction. Could it be that the poisons of some of the species were used as a hallucinogenic to induce trances?



From the start Schmidt was onto the interpretation of Göbekli Tepe as a religious site. Is it a bias? He even gives paleolithic humans religion; burials, his argument runs, indicate a belief in an afterlife and therefore religion. Since when does religion have a monopoly on afterlife?

The male aspect of Göbekli Tepe's stone carvings: it could mean there was a "death cult," Schmidt writes – since female symbolism represented fertility, male symbolism could have stood for death.

Wait a minute. Schmidt has probably not been around farmers much after their harvest. Because farmers are the most upbeat when they've brought in their crops successfully, the period after harvest is the least likely time in the year for a farmer to dwell on death. It's a cinch that a society of hunter-gatherers felt the same kind of elation after Einkorn harvest on Harran Plain.

Then there is the matter of homogeneity implied by Schmidt's writing. The people did this, they must have thought that..., is how he interprets. What with the big number of people necessary for the building of Göbekli Tepe, it's likely that not one but several tribes' bands met on Harran Plain when Einkorn ripened.

Do the math: a band of hunter-gathers would have counted around 15 young men, 15 young women, 20-plus old people, 25 to 30 children. So of about 80 people you have but 15 who could actually do the extremely strenuous work at Göbekli Tepe. Assume that five to ten bands formed a tribe – traveling parallel on their nomadic journeys –, and you have a pool of up to 150 stone workers per tribe.

Schmidt calculates that 500 to 1000 men were needed to construct Göbekli Tepe. So we picture more than one tribe at work.

The Harran Plain is a big, big place. As for the Einkorn that must have grown profusely to attract so many people at harvest, its stands surely varied, some stands consisting of a more dense population than other stands. Because a more dense stand is harvested with greater efficiency, competition among the tribes for the better stands was likely. Also, when you have different tribes you have different human characteristics; on one end of the spectrum you have a peaceful, industrious people, on the other end you have a more war-like people, raiders.

A tribal relationship with lots of tension is well-recorded in the case of the Pima and the Apache near Superstition Mountain in Arizona. Early settlers described the Pima as peaceful native Americans who had developed a primitive way of farming on the Gila River. The Apache, in contrast, couldn't be bothered with farming, in fact they looked down on the settled Pimas, and regularly tried to raid their stores.

On Harran Plain 12,000 years ago, you would very likely encounter such tribal character differences, perhaps not as drastically different as Pima and Apache since here all tribes were nomads, but they'd be different enough for strife between them, raids would occur, and skirmishes. The more people at the Einkorn harvest, the more fighting.

Picture this then: a few elders of one tribe decide to pay a visit to another tribe on Harran Plain. Since they come as official delegation, so to speak, they're welcomed. They're led into the tent of that tribe's elders. They're offered food and drink.

After a few minutes of silence one of them speaks, about the weather maybe.

More silence. Then another elder tells a hunting story from the winter before.

More silence.

You see, it's impolite to get to the point quickly. First every elder must have had time to assess the speaking partners, their body language, their manner.

Then: "Every year more people come here to gather the Einkorn."

"That's true. We also have no stories of this many people ever coming here at once."

“Our young men fight, your young men fight.”

“Wounds hamper a man’s hunting.”

“It irritates the women to have to care of the wounded when they need to get into the harvest rhythm.”

Silence.

“Soon we all celebrate the solstice. Every tribe here will set up a ring of stones, you will set up yours, we will set up ours. What if we build one together? Who knows if next year we’ll have the same unprecedented number of young men? This could be our best chance to build a really, really big ring of stones.”

“Men who work together on a big task are less likely to fight one another. And the building of megaliths is in the DNA of all of us.”

“Let them build the greatest ring of stones on earth!”

Of course this new idea was not discussed. The elders knew that each of them would want to give it thought for some time, before a discussion.

That night the idea of the Greatest Ring of Stones on Earth spread by pillow talk.

Somehow, by noon the next day all the young men were talking about it on their cell phones. By evening they had convinced themselves that they’d been the originators of the idea. They went to their elders: ‘We’re going to build the Greatest Ring of Stones on Earth. Will you help us work out a plan?’

“Go see the shaman. Ask him to have a dream vision about the big stones,” the elders said.



Ok, this is where you ask: what archeological evidence supports such a possible scenario?

The back-filling does.

It’s one of Göbekli Tepe’s mysteries that after a period the site was covered with debris from just outside the ring of stones. This back-filling must have been a huge job. Why do it, only to build another ring of stones on top of the old

one? Again and again, a new ring of stones, and here is another Göbekli Tepe mystery – not the later but the earlier rings of stones are the most skillfully sculpted. Altogether the time span of Göbekli Tepe megaliths building roughly equals that of Christianity.

For the archeologists the periodic back-filling is fortunate. For one, it's the reason why Göbekli Tepe is so well preserved. And, in the back-fill debris they find a wealth of clues, all those bones, for example. (It's by archeozoological analysis of the bones that we know the critters eaten at the feasts were not domesticated animals.)

In Berlin Schmidt had told us that the back-filling at Göbekli Tepe was “part of their program.” No guess why they did this.

For us the back-filling indicates that the process of building the ring of stones was of greater importance than the rites performed therein.



This time we get to Göbekli Tepe in a *taksi*. The driver talks about the lone mulberry directly above the excavation; he says local people believe in its power as a wishing tree – tie your handkerchief to a branch, and the wind will take care of your wish.

We've timed our solstice visit for the sunset, according to a local meteorological web site that's at 19:47. Göbekli Tepe faces south, as you'd expect from a place for mid-summer sun celebration; but to come

here at high noon today would have meant enduring 100-plus-degrees heat, and likely gobs of tourists.

Even at this late evening hour we see a family of four and a couple on the boardwalk above the megalith site. Otherwise it's quiet, except for some birds rustling around in the olive grove planted on the north slope of the hill. The Kurdish guard on a rock by the end of the boardwalk appears like a statue himself.

The megaliths look the same as before.

We choose a point on the trail above the boardwalk to stand still. Quiet. The family and the couple are heading back to their cars.

We feel an emanation. And not tenuously.

It's not the same vibration we experience when we're at an Etruscan religious site or at a Greek

pagan temple on Cyprus; we do not feel an energy as that from old Islamic mosques or Christian cathedrals.



Arising from the excavated pit at Göbekli Tepe before us is not religion but animism.

OK, you say feelings are subjective.

They are.

But consider the question of why hunter-gatherers, an animist people, would take to religion on their own volition. They wouldn't. Just as a religious person perceives animists as missing out on out-of-this-world glory, so, from an animist point of view, religion is a huge step down in spirituality.

We must clarify the difference between religion and animism.

The spirit quest is one component at the core of animism. It's a coming-of-age rite. You begin by fasting; then you complete a physically strenuous task, such as climbing a tall mountain and building a cairn on top. Then you dissolve time into solitude. By now you've fasted so long you no longer feel hunger pains. That's when you take a hallucinogenic substance like peyote.

It would be unnatural for you not to have a dream vision then, especially if a vision is what you've been told to expect.

This vision is an individual's direct connection to the spirit world.

Because no two individuals could possibly have an identical dream vision, no one will ever question another's spiritual connection. It would be laughingly pointless for me to say that my vision is right and yours is wrong. Animists may kill each other but never over spiritual matters.

Religion, on the other hand, separates us from nature, and separates us from each other. The definition of religion is that it puts gods, or God, beyond nature, somewhere else abstract. No longer do you have an individual connection to the spirits, now you're part of a collective that needs priests as go-betweens. Your instructions are not to live with nature but to dominate it.

What possible reason would an animist have to change to that kind of thinking, a thinking that contradicts his/her whole being-in-nature? Only brute force or maybe a very strong compulsion would cause an animist to become religious. Neither of which is evident at Göbekli Tepe.

We've long lived in the Age of Separation. A most thorough analysis of this is presented by Charles Eisenstein in his *The Ascent of Humanity*, © 2007. Which title he means ironically. The prism through which he has us view the world is that of a great unraveling as multiple crises are escalating around us. How did it come to this?, he asks, and blames the imminent collapse on our separation from nature and from one another.

“At the crux of human/nature distinction is technology,” he writes, noting that our separation is often blamed on agriculture and religion, but in fact began many, many millennia earlier. It's just that agriculture “...marked an epochal acceleration of a pre-established trend, an inevitable expression of a long-gathering latency.”

The question becomes if Göbekli Tepe is the high point of Eisenstein's “long-gathering latency,” or is it here that the line was crossed to where we have “epochal acceleration?”

Another way to put the question is to ask if the fox in the stone is a fox or a symbol.

Animists don't have symbols because there is no distinction between each being and its essence. In some indigenous languages there are no words for fox, coyote, tree. What exist are words that mean the “essence/spirit of fox,” “the essence/spirit of tree.” When you want to talk about a specific fox or tree, you need a qualifier along the lines of “this-particular-manifestation-of-the-essence/spirit” of fox, of tree. A person who speaks and thinks like that would carve a fox to be a fox, not as a symbol.

Which makes the T-shape of the megaliths a bit problematic to explain. Schmidt rules out a functional reason for the shape, the megaliths were not pillars to support of some sort of roof.

Schmidt ascribes a human form to the pillars because a few of them have lines that are arms and hands. But why would people who were able to carve life-like foxes, cranes, boars, aurochs, use a T to represent their own ancestors? A life-size stone man dating back to 9000 B.C. was found at Urfa, so people clearly could carve a human so it looked very much like a human.

Could it be that Harran Plain was the landing site of extraterrestrials whose heads pointed forward and backward? Were little green Martians the template for the T stones?

Again, looking at Göbekli Tepe from an animist viewpoint might offer an explanation.

Animists go for spirit quests to holy places, locations where energies of essences are especially concentrated. These holy sites are unusual places physically, a grove where trees grew in a perfect circle, say, or a spring in a most unexpected hollow. Well, T rock formations do occur in nature. A horizontal stone balancing on an upright boulder is a very rare sight but not out of this world. Is it not possible that a natural site of such an unusual rock formation had long been a holy site somewhere in this region? That would account for the fact that T-shaped pillars are only found at Göbekli Tepe and a handful of other sites nearby.

Perhaps the archeologists should search for a natural T formation in the region and dig around there.

Carvings of the fox, too, present an enigma. Could it be that the fox is also a pointer that Göbekli Tepe represents animism not religion? Though not as vocal as coyote, fox has in common the wily streak. Indigenous creation stories across the American West feature coyote, he's wily, he's the jokester, the trickster. In the stories he's an acknowledgment of the role of chaos in creation.

Well, if the fox had a similar role in Göbeklian creation stories, wouldn't the priests of a new religion drop him from their pantheon like a hot potato? "We can't have animals laughing at us," they would have said. According to Schmidt, the enigma of the fox is that after the Göbekli Tepe period our fox is never seen again.

A trance-induced vision has no time. You never know if you'll be transported to what's forward or backward in linear terms. Imagine a Göbeklian catching a glance of Urfa in 2013. What would he have made of it?



Old town Urfa is a maze of streets so narrow, most are too small for cars. It's like walking through an endless hollow, because walls rise high on both sides. If there are windows facing the street they're above head-height, small, behind short iron bars. Yilmaz tells us that the courtyard defines the dwellings. The inner courtyard is the center around which rooms are built onto the four walls. "From the street you can't tell who lives there, a Moslem family or a Christian family," Yilmaz says.

At this time of year the streets walled in by stone catch a lot of the day's heat. Walking, you hug any little bit of shade.

None of these old-town streets follows a straight line for long. This is the perfect place to get lost. And you never know what's around the next corner. A mosque. Or an open street with cars moving hell-bent, honking at anyone daring to cross to the other side. There Yilmaz shows us a famous church that became a mosque centuries ago. The bell tower still has its proudly arched openings

on top, but of course no bells ring there anymore. Instead a big clock crowns the structure – it's a clock tower today.



Many old-town streets turn into the walkways of the bazaar. The Urfa bazaar is famous, it goes on forever, someone told us more than five miles. Most of the bazaar walkways are covered by arches of varying material, stone, glass, canvas. This gives the bazaar a subterranean feel. From early morning to late night, crowds, great crowds, at a walk, a shuffle, a run. It's Seattle's Pike Place Market a thousand times over!



The shops are so much like holes-in-the-wall. Little rooms, as small as 6 by 6 feet; most are 12 to 18 feet deep, but not much wider than 6 to 10 feet. For us it's a mystery that shops of a feather (so to speak) crowd together. If you see one shop selling copper items, the next five to ten shops adjacent sell identical copper items. When you come upon a shop hawking spices, the next six shops will offer the very same spices. Gold jewelry, 10 shops next to each other. Hand-made knives, five neighboring shops. We ask Yilmaz, but he has no explanation for such arrangement of small commerce. He finds it funny, too.

Despite the big crowds, most shops lie idle. Up by the shop front a boy usually is on look-out, the shopkeeper himself in the back of the shop. Like a spider...

You can escape the walkway labyrinth of shops by entering one of the many squares. They're open spaces, typically with a big old shade tree in the middle, and restaurants with large awnings for shade. It's a favorite place for men to gather and drink tea while they play card games. In one such square we count over 80 tables, with at least 40 groups of four men engaged in playing cards, or domino-sized wooden chits that have playing card symbols painted on them. Many of the tables are low because the stools traditional for this region are low to the ground; they're of upside-down pack-saddle construction, about 18 inches high. They don't look it but they're actually comfortable to sit on.



Back among the shops we try to gauge the direction, but so confusing is the lay-out of this place that Yilmaz has to ask a shopkeeper. Actually, if you have time, the bazaar is not a bad place to loose yourself wandering about as a Westerner. So much seems entirely foreign, the six shops in a row where men sew with old treadle sewing machines, the cell-phone shop in stark contrast to everything else (this is one case of a single shop of its type), the metal shop where a 12-year old boy hammers round plates, the carpenters shops where beautiful cradles are crafted.



Young boys at work is a common sight. Many Westerners are shocked by this. We, too, abhor the early-industrialization misuse of youngsters in coal mines and factories, but the general principle of boys doing work does not offend us. In fact, it seems more natural for children to learn to work than to be captured at an ever earlier age by the brainwashing machine called school.

We remember the Arkies and Okies who used to come to Washington for apple harvests; traveling together as families, those migrants always had their children with them out in the orchards, the older children picking alongside their parents. This was repeated when the Arkies had stopped coming and rural

Mexican families took their place. But then the government outlawed children in orchards. What we see in Urfa is at par with the fruit pickers' children's work situation, nothing terribly strenuous. "They're boys from poorer families who have many children," Yilmaz explains.

The newer parts of the city have more spacious shops, mostly, but along those streets are rows of bazaar-style shops as well. It's striking to see amid the rows of hole-in-the-wall shops a blank wall with a money spout, an ATM.

During one of our wanderings we espy a sign "Pub." No, we're thinking, not in Urfa. We walk into what's little more than a dead-end alley, and sure enough, it's a "Pub" that sells beer. Right next to it another pub, and another, five altogether. The next time we're in the neighborhood we ask Yilmaz if he knows of these pubs. He's lived in Urfa four years and he's never heard of the pubs. We take him there to show him. He's surprised.

There are other things about Urfa he doesn't understand. The city is growing enormously fast, now that irrigation has resulted in fast-expanding agriculture industries, but all that growth translates to high-rises. "There is so much space here (around the city), I don't know why people don't build houses with gardens, instead of moving into flats."

Yilmaz was born in Belgium but reared in western Turkey. He misses western Turkey; he's not the only one to tell us, "Urfa is not Turkey, if you want to get to know Turkey, go to Istanbul, go to Izmir, that's Turkey!" We hear that from two dozen Turkish folks we meet.

We play a game of chess in the courtyard of the hotel. A dove swoops down to drink from the fountain. I tell Yilmaz that I'd noticed a board sticking out of a wall a few doors down from the hotel; obviously there was some kind of bait on the board because doves kept landing on it, whereupon a net swooped in to catch a bird or two. Yilmaz is appalled that we're assuming the caught birds will be Urfa food. "No, no, people here don't eat pigeons. They catch them to release them later, they enjoy seeing them fly away."

Yilmaz doesn't like pigeons too well, and he really doesn't like carrier pigeons. "They make people addicts," he says. "I know someone who traded his car for a carrier pigeon. That's crazy."

Compared with most of Europe, life's hard in Turkey, Yilmaz remarks. He doesn't need to convince us of that, although, Turkey has grown its economy considerably in the last decades. In fact, the people here who told us that they're in favor of Turkey joining the European Union are mad at the EU because it's allowed Balkan states to join whose economy is rather warbling compared to Turkey's, yet Turkey's EU admission is still being discussed in Berlin and Brussels. Yilmaz is against Turkey joining. "We're an Asian country, our culture is very different from Europe," he says. "And we're a Muslim country, Europe's all Christian. No, I don't think it's a good idea for Turkey to join the EU."

Turkey's a large nation with several minority populations. Relations with neighboring countries – Syria, Iraq, Iran, Armenia, Georgia, Greece – are chronically strained, Yilmaz notes. While we were in Urfa, big demonstrations happened in far-away Istanbul and Ankara. "People got killed."

As visitor we note Yilmaz' conflicting emotions over his country, but for us the cultural experience

is a great one. It's not just the blending of Arab, Kurd and Turk culture here in Urfa, it's also the timeframe of 11,000 years to which this city can trace its roots. When you visit the archeological museum of Sanliurfa, the first exhibit as you enter is a stone man from 9000 BC. It was found during construction of an underground parking garage in the old town. You stand before it and look into its obsidian eyes – the statue is life-size. Three feet away, you try to fathom his thoughts. Is he a happy camper? Is he troubled? Is he filled with foreboding, or filled with hope for the 500 generations of his descendants?

None of the above. Stone Man stands silent. And yet he's not mute. He's telling us something. We just don't know quite what...

We've finished Schmidt's book. The aggregate of the writing is almost depressing because Göbekli Tepe 12,000 years ago is sketched darkly, gloomy and somber, lurking. Was all the world calamitous, threatening, the humans full of fear? Was there no humor? Laughing? Come on, at least a smile... We're in the Stone Age not the Dark Ages. Besides, people who quaff copious amounts of beer usually get in a boisterous mood, don't they?

Beer?

It's one of Schmidt's latest theories. As co-author of a science review published in 2011, he ponders if the first wheats were toxic to humans. This would explain celiac disease (but would



Not explain why celiac disease and wheat allergies have become so common so fast in the past three decades). His hypothesis is that the first Einkorn was not consumed as bread or Müsli (porridge), but as beer. In the science review he writes: "...adverse reaction to gluten

proteins...(may have been)...the result of a missing evolutionary adaption. Malting and fermentation could have been a method to weaken these toxic effects, as gluten is de-branched, agglomerated and filtered to a high extent through malting and brewing."

Was Göbekli Tepe not the first temple but the first pub? What if at the very last "campaign" of excavation 50 years from now the archeologists find a Budweiser sign? What if they find evidence that the animals on the megaliths represent brands of beer?

There is a chemical test by which it can be ascertained if alcohol was present at Göbekli Tepe. Thus the question of beer or no beer is likely to get a definite answer as excavations continue.

One aspect that Schmidt repeatedly notes is that for the building of Göbekli Tepe a division of labor had to be organized. That makes sense. That this division of labor did not add up to a class distinctions – no special rooms for the rich priests, no royal funerals – is also logical.

Because as long as humans were nomads, property as we know it today didn't exist. Goods were exchanged as gifts, Eisenstein writes in his *Ascent*, quoting anthropologists. In a system of gifting, surplus moves to the poorest in society. In contrast, once you have a trade and money system, which works due to artificial scarcity, surplus moves further away from the poor to the rich who get richer.

Somehow it seems fitting that the last was not the case at Göbekli Tepe.

Nor did Schmidt find any sign of sacrifices. Which only confirms that Göbekli Tepe was built by animists, because in animism sacrifices were unknown (although gifts were routinely offered the spirits); conversely, sacrifices are exactly what primitive religions had in common.

In the Berlin interview Schmidt had actually backed away a little from his religion theory: "The people who held the rites at Göbekli Tepe were something between shaman and priest," he'd said.

Is a hybrid shaman-priest even possible? We think not. Their spiritual spheres are diametrically opposed to one another.

The same goes for the nomad leaders. They couldn't have been "something between" elder-chiefs and kings. Kings exert power, control. Elders of a tribe give their counsel, and usually the tribe follows their advice, their direction. But elders do not and can not enforce their decisions. They wouldn't think of it.

A couple of examples of the non-government character of Native American leadership: on the long trail of running battles as the Nez Perze were driven from their homeland by Lapwai, Idaho, during one battle the U.S. soldiers started to gain the upper hand. When more and more wounded were returning to the Nez Perze camp, the women simply took down the tipis and started moving away from the army. The war chiefs had no choice but to follow their women.

Years later, after only the New Perze who'd accepted Christianity were allowed back to Lapwai, while the rest of the tribe had to go onto the Colville Reservation, Chief Joseph and Chief Moses became good friends. One autumn they told their respective tribes that winter camp that year would be at Nespelem. But the people did not take to the idea, moving downstream for the winter instead. Tales are told of Joseph and Moses spending that winter in their neighboring lodges, two grumpy old men miles from their tribes.

This non-government, in essence anarchist aspect of nomadic animism makes Göbekli Tepe even more astounding. It must have been a momentous impetus that created the consensus required to accomplish such an enormous task as building the ring of stones. Was beer the grand impetus? Schmidt, as a German, can't help but wonder about that.

You know what, we've come to like those Göbeklians. We'd rather that Schmidt would not burden them with religion. True, Stone Age technologies had already caused cracks to appear in the wholeness of animist spirituality. Certainly Göbekli Tepe was the largest of those cracks to date. But we like to think that those peoples' world was still whole. It would be soon enough that a crack would completely open, making possible the emergence – emergency – of the big cuckoo that we call civilization.

For now, let the peoples of Göbekli Tepe have their wholeness for another 100 generations.

Come on, Professor, come out of your chair. Put one foot down and then the other, raise your arms and wave them high like tall Einkorn waving in the wind that blows off Karacadag.

Look, it's the brightest day of the year, the different tribes have pitched their camps below the ring of stones. One large common area has been cleared for the powwow (maybe that level area where you're building your Interpretative Center, "Göbleki Tepe will become more famous than Stonehenge"). At the powwow foot races are going on, and much gambling (something like the stick games of the Salish; here they're gambling with those strange stone buttons you've found); young women eye teenage boys surreptitiously, the boys, overly self-conscious, show off. Young mothers hold their newborns, smiling at their relatives. Toddlers underfoot. Life is good because once again the Einkorn harvest was good.

Do you hear the drums? Up above in the ring of stones. Those are the drums that drove every missionary crazy, because drumming travels right along your spine down to your feet. You're not thinking when you're dancing ceremonially. You are your mask, the Deer, or the Crane, or the Aurochs. It's not magic. It's real.

The sun is sinking.

We're up by the mulberry that the *taksi* driver had called a wishing tree. Before us the big metal roof structure protecting the latest "campaign" of digging. They do take great care with their excavations.

The sun is sinking.

The last ancient people to see the last ring of stones? A small group. Old men. They chant the old songs. A drum sounds. Not a booming circle of drums, just a drum. Like an echo.

The old men don't talk much. Not about the future. At their old age, what's the point of learning the new technologies that herding entails, goats and sheep, camels and computers.

The tribes now follow other routes than they once did. Some maybe are settling.

The sun sinks by the old men. The last Greatest Ring of Stones on Earth will stand alone, then totter. Not men but nature will fill it in. What will endure, and grow and spread, is Einkorn, albeit mostly by proxy, its daughter Emmer quickly becoming the predominant grain in ever new environments.

Solstice sun touches horizon before us, transforming the great stones to a vanishing point.
Like lint. Fuzz upon the planet sailing through an endless multiverse.



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