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## Gordion and the Kingdom of Phrygia

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The observations in this paper are generally limited to the Early Phrygian period, from sometime after the collapse of the Hittite empire down to the end of the 8th century B.C.

Gordion lies about 100 km southwest of Ankara, on the Sangarios (modern Sakarya) river, and also on the Eskişehir - Ankara railroad line. During the construction of the railroad, the site was visited in 1893 by Alfred Körte, who identified it as Gordion<sup>1</sup>. The location concurs with Classical testimonia, which also relate that Gordion had been the capital of the kingdom of Phrygia and the ruling seat of Midas<sup>2</sup>.

The Classical sources further inform us on Midas and the Phrygians. The Phrygians were said to have come into Anatolia from southeastern Europe; they were known for the breeding of horses, elaborate textiles, and distinctive music. They worshipped a mother goddess, sometimes known as Kybele. As for Midas, if we exclude the mythology and assume that the testimonia refer to the same individual: he founded Ankyra; he married a Greek princess from Aiolian Kyme; he was the first non-Greek ruler to make a dedication at Delphi; and he died at the onslaught of the Kimmerians. For the last event, we have a date of 696/695, provided by the Latin and Armenian translations of Eusebios. The same translations tell us that Midas became king in 742 or 738; if we can accept either set of dates, he would have ruled for somewhat over 40 years<sup>3</sup>.

We receive corroboration for his dates from the contemporary annals of Sargon of Assyria, which show "Mita" as being politically active in Tabal and northern Syria from 717 to 709<sup>4</sup>. We also see Midas in a Phrygian inscription in the Phrygian Highlands, on the Midas Monument at Midas City<sup>5</sup>. The district is noted for its rupestral architectural facades. Most seem to be of a religious nature; several mention Phrygian Matar in their inscriptions. The inscription directly above the facade, where Ates dedicates to "Midas, leader of the people and king," may refer to the late-8th-century Midas. Yet current thinking among several scholars would place the monument itself in the 6th century.

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<sup>1</sup> Körte (1897), 1-28.

<sup>2</sup> For the testimonia, Körte and Körte (1904), 28-35.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Hawkins (1982), 417-422.

<sup>5</sup> Brixhe and Lejeune (1984), 6-9.

One view is that Midas continued to be revered, and that by the time the monument was carved he had achieved heroic or possibly even a semi-divine status. If so, the facade would be a telling reflection of the once greatness of this Anatolian monarch<sup>6</sup>.

In the year 1900, Alfred and Gustav Körte came to Gordion to carry out a single season of excavation. Most of their attention was concentrated on burial mounds or "tumuli," about which more will be said below. The richest, Körte Tumulus III, contained an array of luxury goods, including bronze vessels, wooden furniture, and elaborate pottery. Assuming the tomb to be Phrygian and to belong to the time of Midas, Alfred Körte dated it to the late 8th century B.C., a date that today cannot be improved upon<sup>7</sup>. The tomb presumably belonged to a member of the royal house of Phrygia.

In 1950, Rodney S. Young began excavations at Gordion, on behalf of the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania. His work continued through 1973; excavations resumed in 1988. In what follows, the results of Young's investigations in the Early Phrygian period first will be summarized; afterward will come an assessment of how the more recent work has complemented what had been known about the period.

The focus of the excavations under Young came to be a fortified citadel of the 8th century B.C. Much of the citadel had been destroyed in a great fire, which Young early on attributed to the Kimmerians. The destruction can thus be dated to around 700 B.C., if the standard interpretation is accepted<sup>8</sup>. The excavated citadel lies in the eastern half of the City Mound; we know practically nothing about the western half of the mound during this period. The most impressive monument of the site today is the great gate complex giving access to the citadel, still standing to a height of about 10 m. In its final phase, the passageway consisted of a ramp paved with carefully laid cobble-stones; the well preserved condition of the cobbles suggests that the gate did not see wheeled or animal traffic, and even pedestrian traffic may have been limited.

Within the citadel, excavation has revealed two major precincts<sup>9</sup>. The one, which is taken to have been the Palace Quarter, consists of two large courtyards separated by a wall and flanked by monumental buildings. The second precinct, on a terrace at the southwest, consists of two large row-buildings. The type of building regularly seen here is a variety of megaron, with a large central room and an antechamber or porch. Megarons have a long history in Anatolia, for example in the citadel of Troy VI, and it is possible that the Phrygians borrowed the concept from local Anatolians. We also see echoes of earlier Anatolian traditions in Phrygian building techniques. The smallest of the megarons, Megaron 1, was built entirely of mudbrick and wood. Vertical insets in the walls originally held upright timbers; timbers also ran horizontally and transversely through

<sup>6</sup> DeVries (1988).

<sup>7</sup> Körte and Körte (1904), 38-98.

<sup>8</sup> Sams (1994A), 1. Bossert (1993) argues on textual grounds, that the destruction, and the death of a subsequent Midas, occurred about a quarter of a century later, matching a date of 675/74 for the demise of Midas given by Julius Africanus. Her argument raises a number of archaeological difficulties, not the least of which have to do with stages of ceramic development.

<sup>9</sup> Sams (1994A), 2-7.

the building<sup>10</sup>. The technique can be traced back for millennia in Anatolia, and even specific combinations of wood and mudbrick find parallels in earlier times.

Neighboring Megaron 1 is Megaron 2, a somewhat larger building with similar timbered construction; but here, instead of mudbrick, blocks of soft limestone were used in the timber frame. Megaron 2 was a special building. Its main hall contained a richly-patterned mosaic of different-colored pebbles<sup>11</sup>. The building is also exceptional for the wide variety of figural and abstract designs engraved on its exterior walls. Also found incised here are building facades, invariably shown with doors or windows, a double-pitched roof, and hornlike roof crowns or akroteria, as occur on the Midas Monument and other facades in the Phrygian Highlands, e.g., the nearby Areyastis Monument<sup>12</sup>. The device is also depicted on reliefs from Ankara that presumably show the Phrygian Matar standing in a doorway, perhaps the entrance to her temple<sup>13</sup>. Megaron 2 itself may have had an akroterion, a well preserved stone example found near the building<sup>14</sup>. The possibility presents itself that Megaron 2 was a temple. If so, the engravings on the walls could perhaps be interpreted as offerings to the deity, who may have been Matar herself. The building held no contents that might help to secure this (or any other) identification.

The largest of the megarons, Megaron 3, stood prominently within the inner court of the Palace Quarter. Series of wooden beams in the floor served as underpinnings for timbers that would have supported balconies and the roof; the main rows of supports divided the spacious hall into a nave with flanking side-aisles. When the citadel was destroyed, Megaron 3 burned with its contents intact — furnishings that reflect wealth and a luxurious life-style<sup>15</sup>. These include ivory furniture, which is essentially a Middle Eastern idea. Among the most precious finds from Megaron 3 are finely-woven textiles, sometimes appearing in technique to be miniature kilims. Along the rear wall of the building apparently stood a low, fabric-covered couch, perhaps not unlike an Ottoman divan. Size, furnishings, and the prominent yet secure location of the building suggest that this was the center of the Phrygian palace. Next to Megaron 3 stood Megaron 4, elevated on a terrace and approached by a cobble-stone ramp. The purpose of the building is not clear.

The row buildings on the terrace behind the Palace Quarter tell a different story. Each is essentially a single building; that at the northeast has been excavated for its total length of over 100 m., with eight individual units. All the units are of megaron plan, similar to Megaron 3 in having a nave and side-aisles. Almost all the rooms were lively centers of domestic industry, primarily food and textile preparation<sup>16</sup>. In the main rooms, grain was made into flour on grinding stones set on low platforms. The grinders worked beside spinners and weavers, whose implements are found in abundance in the rooms.

<sup>10</sup> Young (1960) and Young (1962), on Phrygian architecture and building techniques.

<sup>11</sup> Young (1965).

<sup>12</sup> Young (1969). For the rupestral monuments, Haspels (1971), 73-80.

<sup>13</sup> Prayon (1987), Taf. 9 a-b. See also Mellink (1983).

<sup>14</sup> Young (1956), 261-262 and Pl. 93, Fig. 41.

<sup>15</sup> DeVries (1980), 38-40.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 39-40; Sams (1994A), 4-6.

The side aisles contained hundreds of clay vessels for dining, food preparation, and storage. The anterooms were the kitchens, where cooks baked bread in large, domed ovens and prepared other foods on grills. A single one of these units would perhaps have been sufficient for the basic domestic needs of the citadel. Yet since the same activities were repeated many times over from one hall to the next, the units surely bear witness to a high level of economic and social organization, with an administration to supervise it. Perhaps raw foodstuffs and other goods were brought here for processing and redistribution, as in a centralized palace economy. The large number of ceramic dining vessels found in the units might indicate that meals were taken either in the halls or nearby.

The finds from the destroyed citadel are rich and varied. Pottery, which is especially prevalent, reflects a high level of craftsmanship and the originality of the potters who supplied their wares to the capital<sup>17</sup>. Theirs would have been but one of several specialized trades contributing to Phrygian material economy; others include wood and ivory carving, ironsmithing, carpentry and cabinetmaking, bronze production, and textile manufacture. Yet only for textiles and food processing does evidence exist for production centers for this period. Signs of foreign contact also occur, as with a group of horse-trappings in ivory, found in what may have been a treasury. Stylistically, they belong to the world of Syrian art. We know from Assyrian records that Mita-Midas had dealings with Pisiri of Carchemish. Ivory was a highly prized material in antiquity, worthy of kings. The horse-trappings could have been part of a royal or diplomatic gift exchange between the Phrygian court and a prince of Syria<sup>18</sup>.

Our view of Phrygian civilization at this time is supplemented by the evidence from contemporary tumuli. This type of burial had not been indigenous to Anatolia, and it is likely that the concept was introduced from southeastern Europe. Over 80 tumuli mark the landscape around Gordion. They range in date from the 8th century into Hellenistic times. In all periods, they would have been for the elite of society. Körte Tumulus III can now be seen as typical for the period, in that the burial had been in a tomb-chamber of wood. Opposite it, on the other side of the Gordion Museum grounds, Young excavated Tumulus P, the burial of a child around five years old when he or she died<sup>19</sup>. The tomb contained much fine pottery, including zoomorphic vessels that might have been specially made to delight a youngster, either in this world or the next. Equally suitable for a child's burial are a number of carved wooden animals, which might have been toys. The important child was also surrounded by elegant inlaid furniture. Roughly contemporary in date with Körte Tumulus III, the late 8th century, the burial could have been that of an offspring of Midas or another child within the royal household. The earliest tumulus so far excavated is W, which lies about 2.5 km to the east of the citadel prominently situated on a ridge. The second largest tumulus at Gordion, it is dated on the basis of contents to *ca.* 750 B.C.<sup>20</sup>. According to limited skeletal remains, the occupant was a small adult, prob-

<sup>17</sup> Sams (1994A), 187-192.

<sup>18</sup> Sams (1979), 45-46; Sams (1993), 552.

<sup>19</sup> Young (1981), 1-77.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 191-218.

ably male. The siting of the tumulus is intriguing, for it is precisely aligned with the main (east-west) axis of the monumental gateway of the Early Phrygian citadel. For some reason, the occupant of the tomb, or his survivors, wished to establish this visual connection. Perhaps the monumental gate and fortifications had been a project of the deceased.

By far the largest of the early tumuli at Gordion is MM, which lies at the top (i.e., north) of a triangle it forms with Körte III and the child's tumulus. This impressive earthen monument originally rose to a height of about 50 m. Excavated in 1957, the tomb measures over 5 by 6 m. and has a double-pitched roof rising over 4 m. from the floor<sup>21</sup>. Made primarily of pine, the tomb was surrounded by a casing of juniper logs, and the entire structure was enclosed by a massive stone wall. Recent investigations in the structure have revealed the curious presence of reused timbers. The occupant, a shortish man who had died in his early to mid 60s, lay in a wooden coffin against one wall<sup>22</sup>. Altogether, nearly 400 items accompanied him to the grave<sup>23</sup>. These included several pieces of wooden furniture, such as a pair of inlaid serving stands and a highly intricate table, textiles, hundreds of bronze fibulae, and bronze vessels. Also among the bronzes is a pair of large cauldrons with bird-demons, so-called "Sirens," on the rim, and a third with bull protomes<sup>24</sup>. Like the ivory horse-trappings mentioned earlier, these are stylistically of Syrian origin and may again reflect the exchange of gifts between rulers. Whether the inhabitant of the tomb was actually Midas or another member of Phrygian royalty is a continuing matter of controversy. The date of the burial, as gained archaeologically, appears to have been close to the time of the destruction in the citadel, which is associated with the invasion of the Kimmerians and the death of Midas. Yet others contend that the Phrygians, in the wake of the Kimmerian disaster, would have been in no position to undertake so ambitious a project as the construction of the tomb and the mounding up of the gigantic tumulus<sup>25</sup>. Among the earliest Phrygian inscriptions we possess are five from the tumulus, some possibly being the names of those donating gifts to the burial<sup>26</sup>. Assuming that the Phrygians borrowed their alphabet from the Greek world, its adoption could have resulted from Midas's dealings with the Greeks; in any event, Gordion has not yielded any firm evidence for Phrygian writing before the end of the 8th century.

By the first half of the 6th century, the Phrygian citadel is rebuilt at a much higher level. If one compares the new plan with that of the 8th-century citadel, the resemblances are striking: large megarons continue to be used, and the buildings almost one for one match those of the older complex. The builders, in other words, took pains to replicate the old citadel of Midas, as though in an effort to restore the greatness that Phrygia once

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 85-100.

<sup>22</sup> Simpson (1990).

<sup>23</sup> Young (1981), 100-190.

<sup>24</sup> DeVries, *ibid.*, 219-223.

<sup>25</sup> Sams (1994A), 195-196. The lower dating of the Kimmerian onslaught proposed by Bossert (1993) would admittedly eliminate the dilemma, since in her view this tomb would remain that of the late-8th-century Midas, while the destruction of the site occurs a quarter-century later.

<sup>26</sup> Brixhe in Young (1981), 273-277.

had under him. As Keith DeVries has argued, this major renewal may belong to the same social and cultural climate that produced the Midas Monument at Midas City<sup>27</sup>.

The new program of activities begun in 1988 includes resumed excavation and regional survey, both under the direction of Mary M. Voigt. The new work builds on, and very much complements, what had been achieved under Rodney Young. One important undertaking has been the investigation of the earlier history of the Phrygian citadel. The sector chosen was the outer court of the Palace Quarter. Some excavation in these earlier levels had already been carried out, but much remained that was not understood<sup>28</sup>.

Since 1950 the excavators had been aware of a variety of handmade pottery that began to occur in the earliest Iron Age levels, directly above those of the Late Bronze Age<sup>29</sup>. The pottery finds its closest parallels in Troy VIIb and in southeastern Europe, especially the region of Thrace, and thereby lends substance to the ancient tradition of Phrygian origins. Yet the pottery was always found as refuse in fills or dumps, with no architectural setting to indicate the context of use. This situation changed in 1989, when for the first time the pottery was found in association with an architectural level<sup>30</sup>. One of the structures was a modest house, set partially in the ground, with cooking and storage facilities. There was no admixture of the handmade pottery with earlier Hittite pottery, i.e., no indication that these presumed European newcomers were here mingling with local Anatolians. The date of the level could be as early as the 11th or 10th century, not far removed from the time of Troy VIIb and its European-oriented handmade wares. We have no indications that the newcomers played a role in the collapse of the Hittite Empire; nor that they took the site by force. The likeliest scenario is that they migrated sometime after the Hittite collapse<sup>31</sup>.

In the next habitation level in this area, the architecture is again modest and domestic, a house whose walls were made of poles, reeds, and clay<sup>32</sup>. Something may be missing in going from the previous level, with its handmade pottery, to this one, because here is found wheel-made pottery that differs little from advanced Phrygian pottery, as known from the *ca.* 700 Destruction Level<sup>33</sup>. In other words, a considerable development in ceramic technology has occurred. A situation may here exist in which the levels preserved are not providing a complete picture of the sequence of habitation. One of the vessels from the house bears close resemblance to a Thracian type of jug, as known in quantity from a burial at Taşlıcabayır, near Kırklareli in European Turkey<sup>34</sup>.

At some time subsequent to the burnt-reed house and its pottery, perhaps around the middle of the 8th century, pottery impressed before firing with a variety of decorative

stamps begins to occur<sup>35</sup>. In the Anatolian Iron Age, such pottery-stamping is known only at Gordion, Ankara, and Midas City. The technique thus appears to have belonged exclusively to the Phrygians of west-central Anatolia. The only other region where such pottery-stamping is a common feature at this general time is Thrace. Certain motifs are also shared between Thrace and Phrygia, particularly the S-spiral, which also finds analogies in European wire-made jewelry. It is perhaps not a coincidence that the S-spiral stamp is among the first to appear at Gordion.

As argued elsewhere, the picture that seems to emerge is that southeast European elements do not appear all at once at Gordion, but rather in a diachronic sequence that suggests renewed or continuing influxes of people and ideas over time, and perhaps not all coming from the same precise area<sup>36</sup>. Even the ancient sources do not agree on the homeland of the Phrygians: alternately Thrace and Macedonia. Yet in the material record at Gordion, primarily pottery, occur elements that find their closest parallels in one or the other of these two regions. Others are in a far better position than the present author to discuss whether Phrygian as a distinct language might have emerged in this new Anatolian setting. From the archaeological point of view, however, it seems likely that what we call Phrygian civilization emerged in Anatolia from an amalgam of European and Anatolian elements<sup>37</sup>.

The Phrygians eventually came to establish a prominence in west-central Anatolia, presumably with a sophisticated state administration and other institutions, such as kingship. This evolution may well be reflected in subsequent stages of the Palace Quarter. The site was fortified by a massive defensive wall with a gate complex at the northeast. Later, a second gate was added at the south. These activities are related to the transformation of the site into a citadel, perhaps as early as the 9th century. So much had been known from the excavations under Young<sup>38</sup>. The Phrygians later built a new, expanded fortification system, with the major gate mentioned earlier, perhaps around the middle of the 8th century, and perhaps under the sponsorship of the occupant of Tumulus W. A part of that project had been the covering over of the old gate at the north, the installation of a new megaron (Megaron 9) directly over it, and the paving of the outer court with large stone slabs<sup>39</sup>. At least one Phrygian building had been dismantled in the process, because *membra* were found reused in several contexts connected with the new project. The building was especially intriguing because of its finely-cut limestone blocks and special building elements, including lunate blocks perhaps connected with columns, sloping blocks that might belong to a roof, and a large akroterion, considerably larger than the

<sup>27</sup> DeVries (1988).

<sup>28</sup> DeVries (1987); Sams (1994A), 7-15.

<sup>29</sup> Sams (1994A), 19-28.

<sup>30</sup> Voigt (1994), 267-268; Henrickson (1994), 106-108.

<sup>31</sup> Sams (1992).

<sup>32</sup> Voigt (1994), 269-270.

<sup>33</sup> Henrickson (1994), 108-110.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125, Fig. 10.5.e. Cf. Özdoğan (1987), Figs. 7-14.

<sup>35</sup> Sams (1994A), 123-133.

<sup>36</sup> Sams (1988), 12-13; Sams (1994A), 175-176.

<sup>37</sup> Drews (1993) has argued that the Phrygian migration from Europe was a fiction of the 5th century B.C., and that the Phrygians had been in Anatolia since the earlier 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium. The contentions are based largely on literary evidence, and are not particularly well informed by archaeology. Even without the ancient tradition of a Phrygian homeland in Europe, the archaeological record alone would bear the indications of a non-Anatolian, European component at Gordion in the Early Iron Age.

<sup>38</sup> DeVries (1987).

<sup>39</sup> Sams (1994A), 10-12; Sams (1994B), 211-212.

one that may have belonged to Megaron 2<sup>40</sup>. The mystery building may have been found in 1993, lying directly inside and between the gates in the older fortification system<sup>41</sup>. As to be expected, it had been badly marauded by the later builders. Yet enough remained to show that the building was a megaron, constructed from well-cut limestone blocks. The blocks have the same kind of masons' dressing marks that are found on the displaced series. To the building's south, an added surprise came with the discovery of a stone paving in red and white slabs forming a checkerboard. The building is presently under study, to see how all of its parts might have fit together. In regard to the building's purpose, there is no internal evidence to serve as a guide. Might it have been a temple or shrine, perhaps the predecessor of Megaron 2? Both megarons show similar stone-cutting. Both also may have had akroteria crowning their roofs, as seen in the depiction of Phrygian shrines elsewhere, in Ankara and at Midas City.

After the activities that brought about the end of the newly discovered megaron, the Phrygian citadel began to take on the configuration that was discussed above. The next major renovation project was the installation of the terrace with its service buildings. Then came Megaron 4, the last major building before the destruction that is associated with the Kimmerians. At the very time of the destruction, the Phrygians were engaged in yet another major building program, one that somehow involved the dismantling of the gatehouse and the construction of massive terraces in the southeast<sup>42</sup>. The form that the new project was to have taken will never be known.

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