



## KERKENES DAĞ PROJECT

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The 2012 season at Kerkenes Dağ was the twentieth season of research at this important late Iron Age site. This milestone was set to be marked by a brief study season, the last under the directorship of Dr. Geoffrey Summers. This would allow work to be completed in advance of final publication of the results of excavations in the Palatial Complex and the Cappadocia Gate. However, plans sometimes change. Instead of a final study season, the time line for the planned shift of the permit from Dr. Summers to me, which had been discussed for years with the General Directorate of Cultural Property and Museums, was accelerated. An abbreviated study season was followed by an opportunity presented to me by the General Directorate to put a team in the field and undertake limited excavations under a permit issued to the local Yozgat Museum. As will be seen in the report that follows, despite the short time frame for assembling a team we were able to take advantage of this opportunity.

### Geophysical Investigations

The range of remote sensing that has been applied on a large scale to the work at Kerkenes Dağ since the 1993 season, as well as the results of those surveys, are a key reason why the site has risen from obscurity to being known around the world. For the 2012 season, only a small amount of resistivity survey was planned in order to finish the large area in the northern portion of the site that was surveyed in 2011. Unfortunately, with the permit not being issued in May, when the soil is wet enough to allow resistivity survey, no geophysical work was able to be accomplished. We look forward to resuming this important work next season.

### Shortened Study Season and Publication

The planned study season was also cut short by permit decisions. Work on final drawings and photography was accomplished in a shorter than anticipated span of time, while the final inventory list was completed. Only a very small team consisting of Geoffrey and Françoise Summers, Ben Claasz Coockson, and Yasemin Özarlan was allowed to participate. The final monographs for the publication of the excavations from the Cappadocia Gate and the publication of the transportation simulations and test excavations have subsequently been submitted to the Oriental Institute Publications Office. Meanwhile, the final publication of the excavations in the Palatial Complex should be completed by early 2014.

### Excavation in Urban Block 8

After receiving word from the General Directorate that I might be able to undertake excavations at Kerkenes Dağ in 2012, we began preparations for that endeavor in June (fig. 1). How-

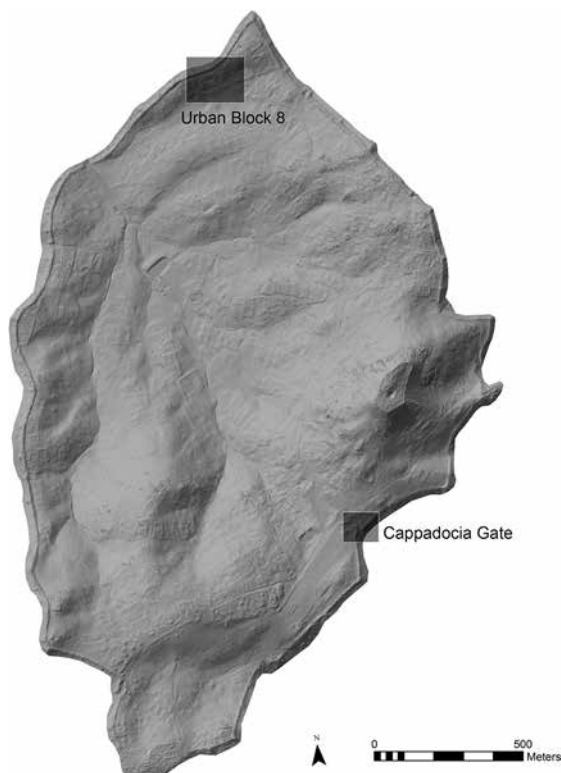


Figure 1. Locations of research at Kerkenes Dağ in 2012

ever, delays in issuing the museum permit, as well as in issuing the necessary research visas, pushed the start of this mini-season well into late August. When the permit and visas were finally issued, only a brief span of just over ten days remained available to us. The museum permit was officially overseen by Necip Becene of the Yozgat Museum, and Yrd. Doç Dr. Abdulkadir Baran, of Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, was appointed as scientific advisor on the permit. Dr. Baran brought with him a small team to work on uncovering a portion of the top of the city wall along the northeastern side of the city. Unfortunately, the money from the Ministry for their excavations was delayed. We were able to assist them by providing enough funding to allow them to start that work and to cover their room and board, thereby allowing ourselves to continue our own excavation in Urban Block 8 in the northern portion of the city. We also did our best to assist them by providing their team with expertise that they were lacking in order to interpret objects they uncovered in terms of broader Phrygian material,

the regional late Iron Age material, and the unique corpus of Kerkenes Dağ material and construction.

Meanwhile, our own excavations within Urban Block 8 have exposed a total area of over 230 sq. m (figs. 2–3). This includes large portions of a multi-roomed structure situated behind a very large columned building within the urban block. It also includes a broad stretch of stone pavement in front of the columned building. This work is part of a multi-year program to clear the full 6,000 sq. m extent of Urban Block 8. It will allow us to get a first glimpse of the range of households that once inhabited the city, as a start to understanding the social organization of the city. It will also provide an impressive example of what one of the 757 urban blocks within the city looked like in the Iron Age.

Trench 31 was a ca. 6 × 7 meter extension of Trench 29. It revealed the entranceway to Room 3 as well as two additional rooms (4 and 5) farther down the slope. A stone staircase comprising six broad steps was found in the northern end of the trench leading from a central stone-paved surface to the entranceway to Room 3. Evidence from postholes suggests that most of this pavement was sheltered by a timber roof. The stone-paved surface comprised two distinct areas of paving stones of different sizes, suggesting phasing in the use of this area. This interpretation was reinforced by a drain within the pavement that originally drew water away from one of the walls. The wall was subsequently altered and the drain filled up to the level of the stone surface in a succeeding phase of use.

The complete exposure of Rooms 4 and 5 awaits excavation in future years when the area can be expanded. However, some interesting finds already suggest some possible uses for at

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Figure 2. Annotated photograph of the area of Urban Block 8, outlined in white

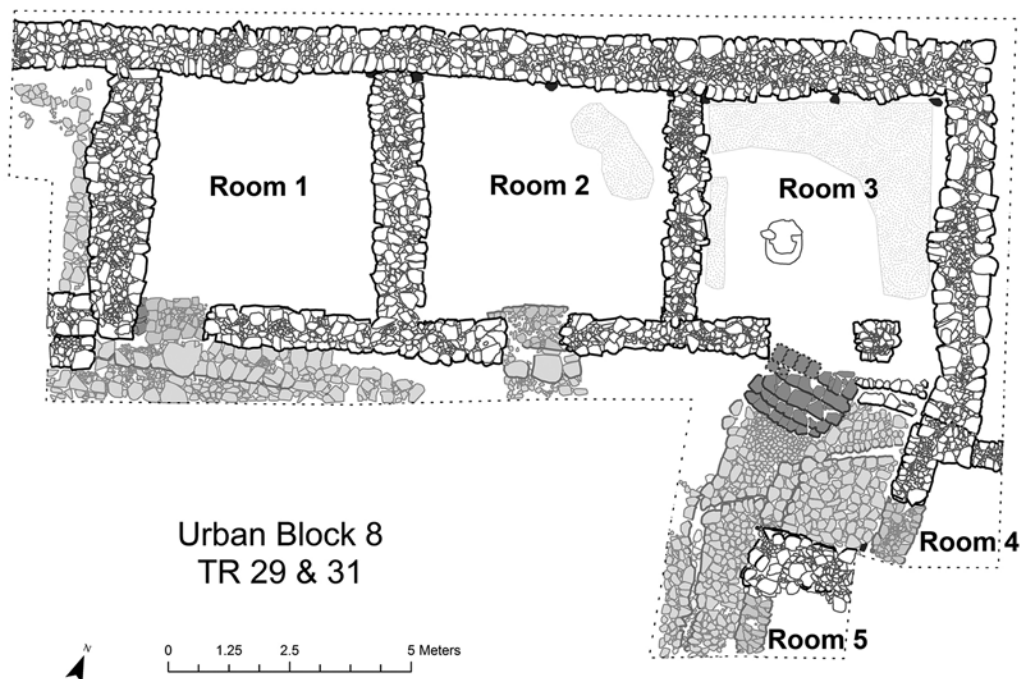


Figure 3. Plan of Trench 29 and 31

least Room 5. Small finds included an iron needle within Room 4, a broken piece of a type XII Phrygian fibula from the southern extent of the stone-paved surface (fig. 4), and fragments of worked ivory from outside the threshold to Room 5 (fig. 5). This latter find is particularly interesting given the unique carved ivory plaque that was found within Room 1 of this struc-



Figure 4. The Phrygian type XII fibula from Trench 31



Figure 5. Fragment of carved ivory from in front of Room 5

ture. Could Room 5 perhaps contain an ivory-working area? Or could it be another room to store more prestigious goods? The answers to this puzzle will have to await future excavation.

Trench 33, meanwhile, was 5 × 8 m in size and located at a distance of 25 m to the south of Trenches 29 and 31. It was situated to reveal 40 sq. m of the area directly in front of the large columned building in Urban Block 8 (fig. 6). A sloping stone paving was uncovered across the



Figure 6. Susan Penacho and Yasemin Özarlan working on photo-recording and planning Trench 33 on the tablet PC

entire area, and six potential postholes in the southern end of the pavement hint that portions of the pavement may have been covered. While there were very few small finds recovered on the pavement, a bent iron nail was found lying in the middle portion of the pavement and a very fragmentary corner of a bronze plaque was found closer to where the doorway of the building would have been (fig. 7).



Figure 7. Corner of a bronze plaque found in Trench 33

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Following these brief excavations all the finds from the two trenches were cleaned and conserved. The walls in Trench 31 were also conserved and capped with new stone. The surfaces of the room as well as the staircase were covered in geotextile and a layer of clean soil. We then constructed a fence around the entire area of the exposed trenches.

### Paleoenvironmental Research

During the 2012 excavations we also systematically collected soil samples for the ongoing scientific analysis of localized activity areas in Urban Block 8. This is part of a larger program to understand who lived in the city, what their connections were to other households in and beyond the city, and what activities they engaged in. It will also allow us to explore the impact that their activities had on their environment, and to compare the results to similar research at the Phrygian capital of Gordion. The very brief season did not allow us to process the over 100 soil samples collected this year. However, next year we will be able to start right away on processing and analyzing these important scientific samples that will offer us new insights into the people who once lived in this place.

### Conservation

In the excavation depot, in addition to conservation and processing of current finds, a major rehousing project for stabilizing iron bands excavated in 2003 was undertaken. The bands were carefully cleaned and then encased in specialized conservation material, tested in earlier seasons (fig. 8). The material is formed into a bag and completely encloses the iron, cutting off the oxygen that can continue to corrode the remaining iron. This effort will help preserve the iron bands for years to come. Continued conservation and maintenance work like this is needed every year in order to preserve previously excavated material. Work was also undertaken to find joining pieces of the statue uncovered last year. Two more significant joins were found during this abbreviated season.



*Figure 8. Noël Siver conserving and stabilizing the iron bands in the excavation depot*

### Site Management

Our brief season required that we scale back our program of restoration and ongoing maintenance in the Cappadocia Gate from past years. We did purchase and install permanent fencing around the entire gate area and did minor maintenance to the restored sections (fig. 9). The fencing will help ensure the safety of those visiting this important monument. We look forward to getting back to restoration work within the gate next year during a longer planned season.



Figure 9. New fencing erected around the Cappadocia Gate



Figure 10. One of the new road signs directing people to Kerkenes Dağ

In addition, we paid to have new directional signs constructed and installed at intersections along the road from Sorgun to replace older signs that had been installed years ago (fig. 10). We also paid to have new signs constructed and installed at the excavation house and at the entrance to the site (fig. 11). These will help welcome visitors to the site and will give them a basic orientation to our past twenty years of work here.

### Community Outreach and Ethnographic Studies

Yrd. Doç Dr. Sevil Baltalı Tırpan of Istanbul Technical University (ITU), the project’s assistant director, not only took part in the excavations but was also able to undertake additional ethnographic interviews during our brief season. As described in last year’s report, this work is a critical component of our public outreach and allows us to better understand how we impact the community. It also provides an avenue for integrating memories and knowledge from the local community into understandings of the site as a living place in the modern world.



Figure 11. New welcome sign installed at Kerkenes Dağ. This sign highlights our past twenty years of research and excavation

### Future Research

Continued wide-area excavations within Urban Block 8 are planned for the next several years. This will provide us with critical data about the social organization of this ancient city as

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well as its connections to the wider world that once existed around it, including Persia and Lydia. In addition, continued conservation and site-management work will progress in the years ahead, with more restoration work planned in the important Cappadocia Gate. Complementing and undergirding this work in important ways will be the continued community outreach and ethonographic research.

Permit applications to the Turkish government have, in recent years, been taking two years to complete. While we have already applied for the permit for next year, and are awaiting the decision of the Ministry, it may well require a second application for work to commence in 2014. Hopefully, we can be back excavating and conserving the site in 2013, but with twenty years of work invested in this site we will see the process through to completion no matter how long it takes.

## Acknowledgments

Our thanks for an unexpected and yet successful short 2012 season go to the General Director, Murat Süslü, and staff of the General Directorate of Cultural Property and Museums. The work could not have been accomplished were it not for the museum permit issued to the Yozgat Museum, so a very special thank-you goes to the Museum Director Hasan Şenyurt for facilitating this and for appointing Museum staff archaeologist Necip Becene to oversee the permit. Our thanks also go to the Yozgat Director of Culture and Tourism Lütfi İbiş, and to Abdulkadir Baran, of Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, for serving as scientific advisor on the permit. We are grateful to the Governor of Yozgat Abdulkadir Yazıcı, Yozgat Mayor Yusuf Başer, the Sorgun District Governor Levent Kılıç, and Sorgun Mayor Ahmet Şimşek, who along with their staffs provided continued critical support for aspects of the project. Finally, we are very grateful to the Turkish Consul General in Chicago Fatih Yıldız and his remarkable staff, who greatly facilitated the rapid issuance of the research visas for the team and have provided critical support to the project over the past years.

The team that assembled upon a moment's notice in order to undertake this research was comprised of myself, Assistant Director Sevil Baltalı Tırpan, Yasemin Özarslan, Dominique Langis-Barsetti, Susan Penacho, Noël Siver, and Sümeyye Açıkgöz. We are also very thankful to Emine Sökmen and Tony Lauricella for invaluable assistance that they provided in support of the team.

Principal sponsors of Kerkenes Dağ in 2012 were the Oriental Institute, the Archaeo-community Foundation, Catherine Novotny Brehm, an anonymous US donor, Hazel Bertz, Andrea Dudek, and Virginia O'Neill. A full list of past sponsors of the project can be found on our web site.