

After the Knot: a first look at Hellenistic Gordion
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In the fall of 334 BCE, Alexander led his army to the town of Gordion, home of the legendary King Midas. This was a meaningful moment in Alexander's campaign, as it was here that he cut the Gordian Knot and secured symbolically his future as king of Asia. It was also a crucial point in the history of the site. What once had been the capital of the Phrygian empire was now to become part of a larger cultural milieu in an era marked by new attitudes and lifestyles, wherein people mixed Greek with traditional eastern habits and beliefs. The cultural character of Gordion was to change once again in *c.* 275 BCE when Celtic tribes from central and eastern Europe settled at the site, mixing with the local population which by then likely also included recently settled Greeks. Gordion was home to this mixed community until 189 BCE, when residents abandoned the site to approaching Roman legions.

There is no historical account of the Hellenistic period at Gordion. There was, in fact, no evidence at all from this period until 1950, when Rodney Young and a team from the University of Pennsylvania began excavations at the site. Over the next two decades, their efforts produced enormous amounts of data attesting to continuous habitation from at least the 8th century BCE, when it was the capital of the Phrygian empire, into the Roman period. Most of the work was geared to reaching and documenting the monumental Phrygian period but, on their way to reaching those levels, the excavators found a substantial Hellenistic settlement in the upper, later levels of the mound. Young described this settlement as "a thick deposit...containing the remains of private houses."¹ The archaeologists left detailed field notes, a few plans and many photographs but never systematically collected, analyzed or published their findings.

In this paper, I present the results to date of my analysis of the records for the years 1950-1971, the bulk of Young's tenure as excavation director. I have been able to put together a comprehensive site plan of the settlement, make detailed plans of several of the houses, and work out the stratigraphy for the Hellenistic levels that Young excavated. The structures, both domestic and semi-industrial, and the finds inside them, display a distinct blend of local and foreign elements which highlights the mix of cultural groups that inhabited Gordion during this period. This work represents the first thorough study of the material remains that constitute our only evidence of Hellenistic Gordion. Furthermore, it provides the first vivid physical evidence for assessing the character of small-town life in one of the regions that made up the Hellenistic east.

¹ R. S. Young, "Excavations at Yassihüyük/Gordion 1950," *Archaeology* 3 (1950): 196-201.