

**C. Brian Rose and Gareth Darbyshire, eds., *The Golden Age of King Midas: Exhibition Catalogue/Kral Midas'ın Altın Çağı: Sergi Kataloğu*, University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia 2016, xx+188 pp., color illustrations. Cased. ISBN 978-0-924171-83-3**

*The Golden Age of Midas/Kral Midas'ın Altın Çağı* is the fully bilingual catalogue produced to accompany the eponymous exhibition staged, in partnership with the Turkish authorities, at the University of Pennsylvania, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia, from February to November 2016, edited by Brian Rose (current Director of the Gordion Archaeological Project, who curated the exhibition) and Gareth Darbyshire from the Museum. The exhibition itself combined material at Penn with 123 items, few of which had ever journeyed abroad, borrowed from institutions around Turkey (plus an ivory lion tamer from Delphi and a Midas cylinder from Chicago), in what was, to a great extent, a celebration of Penn's 65-year-long involvement at Gordion in Phrygia, central Anatolia.

The polity based at Gordion, Mushki/Phrygia,<sup>1</sup> flourished between the fall of the Hittite Empire in ca. 1200 BCE and Persian conquest in 540 BCE, covering a large portion of inland Anatolia. In the popular imagination the predominant focus is King Midas, supposedly a real king<sup>2</sup> who ruled ca. 740–700, better known for the legends woven around him by Greek and Roman authors, not least his golden touch. Reliance on such sources for the circumstances his demise – destruction of his kingdom by the Cimmerians – led initially to a false linkage and the misdating by a century of the destruction level found at Gordion.

The first part (pp. 2–80) contains a series of ten essays by the editors and others, not least Rose's 'Gordion and the Penn Museum' (a succinct account of Penn's involvement since 1950, excavating Tumulus MM – the Midas Mound, largest tumulus in Asia Minor until that of Alyattes in Sardis – and other principal finds, dating and re-dating, Midas, the development of and history of Gordion pre- and post-Midas: habitation lasted for almost 4000 years) and 'The Next Decade at Gordion' (upbeat despite the scale of the task ahead) which bookend pieces broad and narrow: 'The Interaction of Empires' (geopolitics, history and material culture), 'Tumulus MM: Fit for a King' (a 'statement of power', buttressed by a comparative tabulation of tumuli, and reinforced by plans and sections), 'The Legacy of Phrygian Culture' (the Phrygian cap, the Gordian knot, even the Phrygian mode in music), 'Architectural Conservation at Gordion' (especially the work of 2006–2014), 'The Myth of Midas' Golden Touch', 'Gold the First Day' (from Tumulus A, March 1950), 'The Role of Science in Gordion's Archaeology' (Voigt's surveys, radiocarbon, GPS and GIS, and the re-dating of the destruction level to ca. 800 BCE), and 'King Midas' Furniture'. Each comes with a short selection of further reading.

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<sup>1</sup> Identifying the Mushki with the Phrygians and Phrygia is still debated. See C. Grace, 'Muški Revisited', *Ancient West and East* 14 (2015) 23–50.

<sup>2</sup> Semi-mythical rather than a real king. See M. Vassileva, 'King Midas' Ass's Ears Revisited', *Ancient West and East* 7 (2008) 237–47.

As we might expect, the catalogue of exhibits forms the larger part of the volume (pp. 82–187),<sup>3</sup> divided into four: ‘The Midas Mound’, ‘Life in Midas’ Kingdom’, ‘Midas and Neighboring Kingdoms’, and ‘Gordion After Midas’ – though the divisions are not made apparent in the catalogue itself, whereas many lower-level divisions are, e.g. ‘Religion in Phrygia’ covering a single page opening. To aid those not attending the exhibition or browsing catalogue-in-hand a modest stab at indexing would have been useful.

Obviously, the core of the exhibition was Gordion, but non-Gordion material from the museum was brought into play as well – neighboring regions stretching from Lydia to the Cimmerians<sup>4</sup> and Scythians (illustrated by the ‘Maikop Shroud’), Assyria (the cylinder of Sargon II and Midas; Nimrud), Persia, Greek Orientalizing pottery, etc. Cybele is to be found in two of the Turkish loan items (pp. 174–175) – welcome, though she might have received a little more attention.

Whatever Midas’ golden touch, the excavators at Gordion, starting with Kenneth Young, had it from a very early stage and had the benefit of participating, albeit later than some, in that golden age of large-scale, long-term projects at important cities and sites undertaken by leading American universities, deploying considerable resources and realizing (in all senses) the responsibilities which had devolved upon them. Nowadays, most universities in the English-speaking world seem incapable of initiating grand projects when the (admittedly rare) prospects arise: if they do, they lack understanding of what they have taken on and the commitment and staying power to bring it to fruition. Perhaps it were best that they should not even try, for, having been suborned by a kind of pervasive short-termism more appropriate to a derivatives trader on Wall Street (if appropriate at all), they negligently betray their very purpose, chase phantoms (rankings with all the solidity and validity of the triple-A rating on a parcel of sub-prime mortgages), and like too many traders, manage to turn gold into dross. This volume is a monument to an older tradition, and proof that it still has life.

The volume offers excellent color illustrations (including plans and reconstructions), and excellent production standards. There are a few minor disparities in modern dates between the English and Turkish versions.

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<sup>3</sup> The catalogue is excellent, providing both information about the objects and very useful explanations. To give just one example, the spouted bowl with handle from p. 94: ‘Bronze; H. 5.5 cm, D. 19.7 cm, L. (with spout) 26.7 cm; ca. 740 BCE; Turkey, Gordion, Tumulus MM; Museum of Anatolian Civilizations 18604. Ancient beer was unfiltered, so people used drinking vessels such as those shown here. The ten strainer holes drilled through the bowl at the spout would have filtered the sediment for smooth drinking. It is one of two spouted bowls found inside Tumulus MM. They were both discovered on the floor near the south wall of the chamber.’

<sup>4</sup> The Cimmerians have never been identified archaeologically, and the matter is subject to continuing debate. See, for example, G.R. Tsetskhladze, ‘Between West and East: Anatolian Roots of Local Cultures of the Pontus’, in G.R. Tsetskhladze (ed.), *Ancient Greeks West and East* (Brill, Leiden, 1999) 483–86.