AGAIN GORDION’S EARLY PHRYGIAN DESTRUCTION DATE: 
CA. 700 +/- BC*

Abstract: It is a pleasure for me to write a paper on an important issue in Anatolian archaeology for my dear friend and colleague Aykut Cinaroğlu, whom I first met in 1984 when he had a Fellowship at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (later in Ankara I met often his wonderful wife and daughters and their sweet dog, Tarçin).

INTRODUCTION

This paper continues the discussion presented in Muscarella 2003 (see also Muscarella 2005/2006: 395, and note 4) concerning the date of the destruction level (DL) at Gordion that terminated the Early Phrygian (EP) period there. I argued that the destruction occurred some time close to 700 BC (+/-), not in the late 9th century BC as maintained in publications and public lectures by the Gordion Team excavators since 2001. The aims of the present paper are to augment some of the issues I raised previously and to present additional and relevant information, thus to expand the data available in the published record. One of the stimuli that generated this review is the growing number of scholars who have uncritically (to me, without reflection) accepted the 9th century BC destruction date, and thereby simultaneously embraced the consequent profound historical and archaeological implications for first millennium B.C. Aegean and Anatolian archaeology and history. For example, Prayon (2004: 611) states that the New Chronology has a “weitreichenden Konsequenz für die historisch-politischen wie auch künstlerischen Entwicklungenun Zusammenhänge,” which he then proceeds to document; Prayon and Wittke (2004: 122–123) note that “das bisherige Bild der phrygischen Kultur und des Phrygischen Reiches grundlegend verändern ...” See also Kelp (2004: 286, 293); Strobel (2004: 259, 265–268); Genz (2004: 221, 224); Dusinberre (2005: 4, 10, 220–222); Crielaard (2007: 223); and Summers (2006: 2).

In January 2001, a laboratory (Heidelberg) informed the Gordion Team\(^1\) that based on C-14 analysis, the EP citadel of Gordion had been destroyed ca. 830–807/800 BC (for details see Muscarella 2003: 225–226, 250). The report was immediately and unhesitatingly accepted: for here, was an “objective scientific” fact presented by a scientist working in a scientific laboratory, and thus the previously maintained, for decades, archaeologically argued and thus “subjective” dating of the destruction, ca. 700 BC, was rejected. The New Chronology, as it came to be designated, was declared a fait accompli, one vigorously upheld by the Gordion Team. The laboratory report was first publicly announced at the Fifth Anatolian Iron Age Conference in Van in August 2001 (where, verbally, I first challenged it; for a modified version of the Van announcement see DeVries et al. 2005). In the same year a brief statement reporting the New Chronology was published (Manning et al. 2001: 2534; see below). Two years later, a more expanded announcement on the revised chronology, here provided with brief C-14 specifics (in Table 1) was published (DeVries et al. 2003); this publication overlapped with Muscarella 2003. To date (2007) my 2003 rejection of the presented C-14 date has been supported in print by only one individual, Keenan (2004)—based independently on his C-14 interpretation of the analysis (see also Porter 2005: 66 and note 2). The Gordion Team has to date never acknowledged the controversial nature of their new dating.

In Muscarella 2005/2006: 395, note 4, I reported briefly (here expanded) that I had been informed (in February 2005) that the Gordion Team had been notified that more recent work on analysis had caused them to lower the originally presented C-14 chronological range by 40 to 60 years. Such a change effectively lowers the destruction date, in this calculation, to a time close to the mid-8th century BC. I made two enquiries about this information via e-mail to two Gordion Team members (August 2005). One did not answer my question, except to claim that a work was in progress on Gordion chronological issues. The other never responded. These unprofessional equivocations and non-responses tell us that something is wrong within the Gordion Team—and concomitantly suggest that the information I received in 2005 is correct. And if correct, then the three-years of silence on the expanded date range is a serious offense to scholarship.

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\(^1\) The Gordion Team consists primarily of a quartet, Mary Voigt, Kenneth Sams, Keith DeVries, and Peter Kunihlom.