The City Mound at Gordion: The Discovery, Study, and Conservation of the Wooden Fragments from Megaron 3

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Dedication

Oscar White Muscarella has long been an advocate of collaboration between scholarly disciplines. As a tribute to his career, this paper illustrates the importance of close collaboration between archaeologists and conservators, and the benefits to be gained by a continuing dialogue between related academic specializations. The subject is particularly appropriate for Oscar’s Festschrift, as it was he who discovered Megaron 3 in 1957 and initiated its excavation.¹

Introduction

During the campaigns of 1957, 1959, and 1961, Rodney Young and his team uncovered the remains of Megaron 3, a palatial structure that was located close to the main gate of the Phrygian city of Gordion (Figure 8.1). The building had collapsed as a result of a massive fire that destroyed much of the early Phrygian city—as indicated by a widespread “Destruction Level” in those areas that have been excavated. Just when this destruction occurred is a matter of debate, with Muscarella adhering to Young’s low dating, now referred to as the “old chronology.” Based on an analysis of the finds from the destruction level and related contexts, Muscarella and other proponents of the old chronology maintain that the destruction of the city occurred ca. 700 B.C. or shortly thereafter.²

¹ All illustrations are published courtesy of the Gordion Furniture Project, except Figures 8.1–8.4 and Plates 8.1, 8.10, and 8.13–8.14, which are courtesy of the Gordion Archives, University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. I am grateful to Elizabeth Simpson for contributing information on the finds from Megaron 3, the excavation of the building, and the dating of the destruction level. Complete data on the conservation and analysis of the furniture from the City Mound will appear in Spirydowicz, Appendix 1, in Simpson, Gordion Wooden Objects 2 (forthcoming).

² Muscarella, “Date of the Destruction of the Early Phrygian Period at Gordion,” and “Again Gordion’s Early Phrygian Destruction Date.”
A “new chronology” has been proposed based on C-14 analysis of charred seeds from the nearby Terrace Building, which were dated by the radiocarbon-dating laboratory at Heidelberg University to ca. 800 B.C. According to the new chronology, taking into account the C-14 dates and what are seen to be anomalies with the old chronology, the destruction is placed at ca. 800 B.C. Although the new chronology has gained traction, Muscarella stands firm, and the date of the destruction of Early Phrygian Gordion remains unresolved.

The thick deposit of burned debris in Megaron 3, consisting mainly of charred building materials, measured up to 2 m deep in some sections. A detailed study

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3 Rose and Darbyshire, *The New Chronology of Iron Age Gordion*.
4 The date of the destruction of Megaron 3 and the wooden objects recovered from the building will be addressed in detail in Simpson, *Gordion Wooden Objects 2*.