

Kilise Tepe 2011

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The teams from Cambridge, Çanakkale and Newcastle converged on Kilise Tepe to start our final excavation season on 5th July as usual, and dispersed a little early with the oncoming of the bayram at the end of August. A special word of thanks must go to Kürşat Kaynak of the Tire Museum, who joined us at very short notice as the Ministry's representative and proved a most diligent and agreeable colleague. Our gratitude also goes in particular to Caroline Steele, for acting as assistant field director, and Bob Miller, who, ever-willing, took countless photos with consummate care, both on site and in the house. As part of our preparations for the final publication we were very pleased to welcome the expertise of Sofie Debruyne, of the Flemish Heritage Institute, who studied all our shell from 2007–2011, and David Heslop, County Archaeologist for Tyne and Wear, who examined all our grindstones and mortars, including those recovered in the 1990s and now stored in the Silifke Museum.

On the site, the three universities pursued their separate agenda in different areas. On the steep northwestern flank, T. Emre Şerifoğlu (assistant director), assisted by three students from Çanakkale, picked up the work of Selçuk University in the Early and Middle Bronze Age levels, when Kilise Tepe must have participated in the cultural relations established between Cilicia and central Anatolia. The aim was to link the stratification in G19 with the Level IV and V sequence established in H20 in the 1990s. Phase Vg was the best preserved: the east wall of a burnt room excavated in 2007 was constructed in medium-sized river pebbles and was found to be still standing 1.5m high: it acted as the western wall of a small room, with a hearth and plastered ledges along the wall bases, which was filled to the same height with heavily burned debris from the structure, including whole mud-bricks and large chunks of wall-plaster, some many layers thick, sometimes alternating red with yellow clays. Above this deep destruction



Early Bronze Age room in Level Vg building

layer, which marks the transition from Early Bronze Age II to III at Kilise Tepe, were renewed occupation surfaces, some with elaborate fire installations, and from the burned debris on one of these floors, to be attributed to phase Vf, came a familiar red-cross bowl and an unusual double-spouted jug (KLT 201).

For the Cambridge team the priority was to address outstanding questions about the era of transition between the Hittite empire in the Late Bronze Age and the seventh century when Kilise Tepe was a participant in the vibrant world of the eastern Mediterranean. In the Late Bronze Age Northwest Building Sarah Blakeney concentrated on sorting out technical details of the architectural history of the IIIc structure, the most striking result being a paved triangular area in the small but carefully maintained Room 33, which had a plastered gutter running along its outer face and was evidently intended to receive waste liquids – water, or perhaps rather beer, wine or blood? Ceramics from the earlier level IIIc, including more pieces of libation arms, some in Red Lustrous Wheel-Made ware, are being studied by Ekin Kozal of Onsekiz Mart University at Çanakkale, who has taken over the Late Bronze Age ceramics at Kilise Tepe from Claudia Glatz and was ably assisted by Sedef Kervankıran.

South of the Church we had one final season in which to enlarge and improve our understanding of the layers separating the end of the Bronze Age from the seventh century. Excavating the north half of square J14, we linked the stratification in our earlier 'Dark Age' sounding in K14 with the two successive Iron Age and Late Bronze Age houses excavated in 1996 in I14. This was successfully accomplished thanks to the concerted efforts of Caroline Steele and Adam Stone, with Melissa Sharp (who also carried out our flotation programme) and Alexander Edmonds, and brought with it two mild surprises: it emerged that the huge Iron Age 'ditch' exposed in the 1990s had a perfectly vertical and thickly plastered eastern side, and has to be interpreted now as an outsize storage pit – with a capacity in excess of 45 cubic metres, considerably larger than our previous record set by the pit in K14 further east excavated in 2009. Grain storage on this scale suggests they were serving the surrounding countryside as well as those living on the top of the mound.

East of this massive silo we traced the continuation of the successive Iron Age surfaces ('Surfaces 1 to 4') already defined further east in K14: while they were indeed present, here they were separated from the top of the Late Bronze Age remains by several earlier occupation phases during which this part of the site seems largely to have been an open space hosting a variety of activities, some involving fairly elaborate ovens. This expands our evidence for both continuity of occupation and changes in the use of space during the 'centuries of darkness', and significantly enlarged the corpus of Early Iron Age ceramics which Christina Bouthillier is preparing, while our first complete example of a pilgrim flask with built-in stand was recovered from the floor of the better preserved Late Bronze Age architecture beneath (KLT 203).

Back at Easter, Mark Jackson and Emre Şerifoğlu, with Alex Turner of Newcastle University, conducted a resistivity survey of the mound using a Geoscan RM15. The aim was to clarify the layout of Byzantine buildings in the unexcavated areas of the site prior to the summer. The work was sponsored by Newcastle University and the RM15 kindly loaned to us by Françoise and Geoffrey Summers (Kerkenes Dağ Project). We were very grateful to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism for permission to conduct the survey early this year when the ground was still moist enough for the technology to work, and it did indeed give us very clear wall lines, in particular a range of rooms to the southeast of the Church.

Domestic architecture, especially in rural contexts, is, perhaps surprisingly, a neglected aspect of Byzantine archaeology and therefore these buildings at Kilise Tepe promised to provide a valuable case-study for the subject, and they became the focus of our work in the summer. Importantly we also wished to establish this year a final date for the early Byzantine phase at Kilise Tepe. Sophie Moore, Alex Sangster, James Dunn and Lauren Proctor excavated four rooms of a Byzantine domestic complex in N11 and N12 measuring ca 10m (east-west) by 12.6m (north-south) with additional structures constructed on the east side in O11 and O12. Thomas Sutcliffe was draftsman for the Byzantine team and in addition to much planning on site also digitised all the Level I plans into our GIS. The four rooms were arranged in a square with several of the walls preserving the thresholds of doorways between them. Each room had a central stone feature for supporting a vertical post, and several had fire installations set into stone and mud-brick benches, similar to those we have found elsewhere in our Byzantine buildings. Floors were usually made from hardened earth, sometimes plastered, but occasionally paved, or partially paved, with stone flags. Especially striking among the range of artefacts were further examples of the repertoire of local painted pottery including a jar painted with fish.

We were also able to clarify some questions in the area northwest of the Church where we excavated a trench 2.5m by 10m along the west side of the mound to investigate several floors identified in section during our work in 2008. Ironically, the floors and associated walls seen in section were cut in antiquity by the construction of a large structure located on the northern side of the Church. An unusually wide and mortared (but robbed out) wall, ca 0.90m wide, had run due north-south very close to the west side of the mound with a return to the east. The surviving floor of this building was cut by a pit which still contained a very dense concentration of burnt seeds (mainly wheat) which will provide further important evidence for crop processing to complement the work of David Heslop on the ground stone.



Byzantine jar from N11



Double-spouted jug from Level Vf floor surface (left) and pilgrim flask with built-in skeuomorphic stand (right)

In N13 and N14, we identified a Hellenistic period floor and associated burnt destruction deposit lying beneath fill which was in turn sealed beneath a Byzantine floor. Jaime Levell and Alex Sangster excavated these contexts and Fran Lalor sorted, reconstructed and quantified the Hellenistic pottery from this destruction deposit which included several Hellenistic cooking pot types as well as larger coarse wares and some fine wares. This work promises to make an important contribution to our understanding of the Hellenistic period both at Kilise Tepe itself and more generally in Rough Cilicia.

At the end of the season, with the agreement of the Directorate-General, we began the process of backfilling our excavated trenches to protect them from natural erosion and potential stone-robbing. The project as a whole for the period 2010–2012 is supported by a generous AHRC grant which brings with it Carlo Colantoni as our data manager and architectural draftsman. We are most grateful to Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, to Dumbarton Oaks, Washington DC and the School of Historical Studies, Newcastle University for their support. In addition, Alex Sangster received a HaSS Faculty Scholarship from Newcastle University and Fran Lalor a grant from the British Institute at Ankara to work on our Hellenistic material. Many thanks, as always, go to İlham Öztürk, Director of the Silifke Museum, and Gülgün Girdivan in Ankara for their readiness to help whenever needed.