

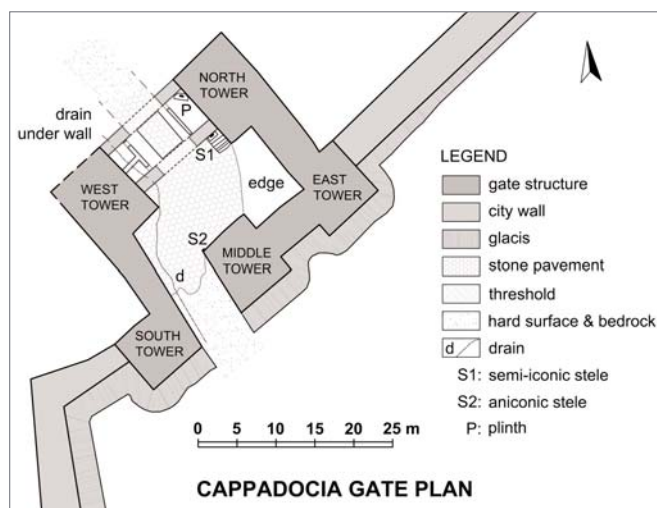
The Kerkenes Project 2011

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2011 was a momentous year for archaeology at the Iron Age capital of Pteria on the Kerkenes mountain in central Turkey. First, excavations at the truly monumental ‘Cappadocia Gate’ were concluded in spectacular fashion. We began by lifting the second human victim of the destruction, horrendously crushed as the towering walls collapsed in the midst of the fire. Then came the discovery of a pair of crouching sphinxes, largely complete, carved on the front of a large sandstone plinth that supported an extraordinary sculpture of a scaly beast carved from soft limestone. Only parts of this statue, smashed into thousands of pieces, were preserved. This discovery was made in the rear section of the gate, between the two sets of double doors each housed in monumental timber façades. At some stage before the fire this sculpture was walled off. The wall was of very poor construction, comprising footings of small stones below mud-brick and incorporating wooden uprights to support a flimsy roof.

Why should the sculpture have been hidden from view in this manner? It will not be possible to address that crucial question before the slow and arduous task of putting together enough of the incomplete three-dimensional jigsaw puzzle, being undertaken by Noël Siver, has revealed exactly what was represented.

Finally, in the closing days of the excavation, out of the ground popped the exquisite gold and electrum ornament featured on the front and back covers. This unique piece lay directly beneath the burnt doors of the rear façade in the centre of the entrance. Surely it was lost in the panic of flight as escapees dashed through the burning gate. Whether it was dropped by one or other of the two whose remains we found in the destruction, or by someone more fortunate, we shall never know.



The plan of the Cappadocia Gate is now fully revealed. A slanted entrance passage gave way to a rectangular court in which cultic idols were set up. At some stage, inclined stone paving was laid. The wide façade at both the front and the back of the rear section housed double doors of wood above which we may reconstruct elevated walkways. An enemy force ascending the unroofed entrance passage would have found itself trapped in the court, assailed from above on all sides as it attempted to attack closed doors.

This sophisticated military architecture is utterly different from that of the Late Bronze Age, and indeed from the Iron Age gates of Neo-Hittite cities. However, the ninth century citadel at Gordion and, contemporaneous with our gate, the city gate at Lydian Sardis, bear some resemblance, again demonstrating the depth of west Anatolian characteristics at Kerkenes. Although the Cappadocia Gate was destroyed by fire when the city was torched, there is no evidence that it was taken by force.



Looking across the court to the newly excavated rear section of the Cappadocia Gate with the carved plinth in the far corner to the right of the central paved passage



The sculpted block with a pair of crouching sphinxes.

Also momentous in 2011 was the exceptionally large area at the northern end of the city over which electrical resistivity survey was conducted. This work, supervised by Sema Bağcı and Dominique Langis-Barsetti, fully places new long-term excavations, directed by Scott Branting on behalf of the Oriental Institute, in their urban context. Notable in this geophysical survey was the density of rather small buildings within a mega-urban block and the surprising absence of broad streets. Space does not permit inclusion of this imagery here, nor does it allow description of the new excavations. All the results are however presented in the 2011 Preliminary Report that can be found on the Kerkenes website.

Study of the Kerkenes metals and metalworking was continued by Joseph Lehner, while assistant director Sevil Baltalı Tırpan, from Istanbul Technical University, initiated an investigation of current land use, memory, myth and heritage. Nilüfer Yöney, also from ITU, supervised architectural conservation. At METU Ferhat Can will continue to maintain the Kerkenes website, while Güzin Eren underpins the drive towards final publication.

2011 was also momentous at a personal level, bringing to a suitable conclusion my own fieldwork at the same time as being my last year as excavation director. Scott Branting, a key member of the project since 1995, is my designated successor. Scott will undoubtedly continue to lead the project down new paths that will maintain it at the forefront of innovation, and he cannot fail to make yet more astonishing discoveries.

The list of friends and colleagues who have been fruitfully involved since 1993 would fill pages. Here I would nevertheless like to mention Françoise, who has been the central pillar of all that was done, in addition to setting up, and

continuing to run, the Kerkenes Eco-Center, and our daughters Natalie and Pamela who each came to play full roles in the work and life of the annual campaigns in their school years.

Key members of the present team will continue to be fully involved in Scott's work while I myself plan study seasons over the next few years in order to prepare our final excavation reports and other studies.

Acknowledgements

Contributions of team members, colleagues, Yozgat Museum Directors, Provincial and District officials, Directors and staff at the General Directorate, local state organisations and corporate bodies, and many others, can be found on the website and, since 1998, in the *Kerkenes News*.

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