

# The KRASP 2019 field season and the discovery of an Iron Age capital at Türkmen-Karahöyük

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The Konya Regional Archaeological Survey Project (KRASP) was initiated in 2016 with support from the British Institute at Ankara and completed its third season of fieldwork in 2019. The results of this year's season have contributed to our understanding of the transition from the Neolithic to the Chalcolithic on the Konya plain, have added yet more evidence for a period of profound region-wide instability during the Early Bronze Age and have given us high-resolution aerial images of a number of features, including fortified hilltops and large settlement-mound formations. The most spectacular results, however, follow the first season of an intensive survey at the mega-site of Türkmen-Karahöyük in the eastern region of the plain.

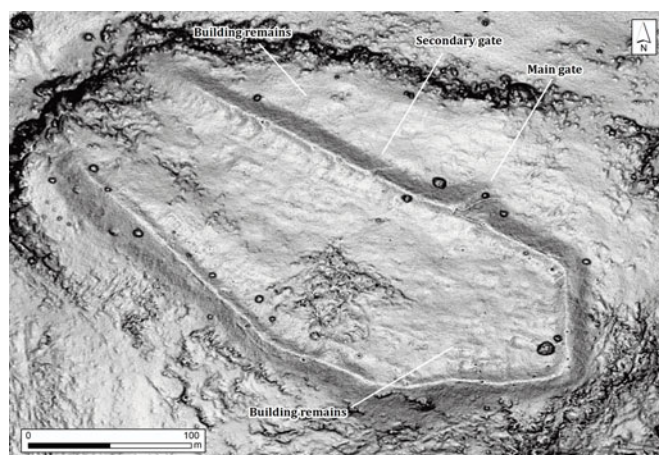
Following earlier preliminary reports of Late Neolithic sites discovered by Hasan Bahar on the Yenisu plain south of the Çarşamba alluvial fan, KRASP revisited two of these in 2019 at Alkaran Höyük and Kısıkyayla Höyük. We confirmed that they are contemporary with the latest phases of Çatalhöyük East. One of the principal research questions for KRASP is the relationship between Çatalhöyük and other Neolithic and Early Chalcolithic sites in the region. Earlier surveys have recorded sporadic pottery and chipped-stone finds from several mounded sites in the Çarşamba delta. These finds raise the possibility that Çatalhöyük East was not an isolated farming settlement on the Konya plain during its apogee (seventh millennium BC). Yet after three seasons of fieldwork KRASP has not yet identified a settlement beyond the delta that is earlier than the very end of the seventh millennium BC (the Late Neolithic periodisation of Alkaran Höyük and Kısıkyayla Höyük). The unprecedented settlement on the Yenisu plain informs a primary stage of dispersal away from Çatalhöyük, which Douglas Baird, Arkadiusz Marciniak and Ian Hodder, among others, have already suggested began in this transitional period between the Neolithic and Chalcolithic.

In each field season KRASP has collected more evidence for a region-wide horizon of settlement destructions in the latter Early Bronze Age (roughly 2500–2300 BC), which James Mellaart first recognised over 60 years ago. We recorded two such sites in 2019, at Batum Höyük and Yavşan Höyük. To what extent the destructions across the Konya plain were contemporary is another major research question for KRASP, and exploration of this issue will move us closer to an explanation for so much evidence of conflict. For example, our understanding of the 'horizon' will differ if the settlements were destroyed within a short period of time (<10

years) rather than over a long period (>200 years). KRASP has collected radiocarbon samples from a number of these sites in an attempt to achieve greater chronological resolution.

Many of the survey methodologies that KRASP is developing are improving our understanding of the landscapes of early cities and states during the Bronze and Iron Ages. For example, in 2019 we flew an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV, or drone) over several large settlements and hilltop fortifications in order to create high-resolution digital surface models of surface features like architecture (for example the walls that enclose hilltop forts) and settlement-mound formations. Regarding fortified hilltops, we are now able to reconstruct networks of such sites in the upland landscapes that surround the Konya plain. We believe that the fortification networks relate to the formation of early state territories in this region.

Drone survey is also proving effective in identifying and mapping off-site activities and modifications to the landscape, including channels, canals and quarrying pits. We are combining these aerial approaches with other ground-based methodologies, such as identifying and defining the extent of lower settlements/towns of some of the largest mounds on the Konya plain through intensive survey. Through these varied data, KRASP is arriving at a composite image of Bronze Age and Iron Age settlement on the Konya plain. For example, we can now observe with confidence that, together, the Konya and Karaman plains formed one of the most densely settled landscapes in Anatolia during the third to first millennium BC (roughly the Early Bronze Age through to the Iron Age).



A digital surface model showing the multi-period fortified hilltop at Seçme Kalesi, including the Middle Iron Age fortification walls.

Furthermore, following discoveries made at Türkmen-Karahöyük in the 2019 field season KRASP has a much better understanding of early state polities in this region. Türkmen-Karahöyük has been prioritised since we first visited the site in 2017. Rising about 35m above the plain and at about 700m × 500m in size, the settlement mound dwarfs the village immediately to the south that shares its name. The site is enormous by any measure, yet it has attracted almost no archaeological interest in over 70 years of surveys and related historical geographic assessments of this region. Site visits made by KRASP in 2017 and 2018 demonstrated the existence of a Late Bronze Age and Iron Age lower town. In 2019 we invited our colleague James Osborne (University of Chicago) to lead an intensive survey of the upper mound and lower town. The discoveries made in 2019 by the Türkmen-Karahöyük Intensive Survey Project (TISP), operating under the aegis of KRASP but independently funded by the Oriental Institute (University of Chicago), have now confirmed our suspicions about the importance of this site. In short, the results of the intensive survey were nothing short of remarkable.

TISP has confirmed that the site was apparently continuously inhabited from the Late Chalcolithic to the Hellenistic period, which accounts to some extent for its size. In the transition from the Middle Bronze Age to the Late Bronze Age the site grew from a respectable 30ha settlement to a 125+ha city with an upper walled citadel and lower town, making it one of the largest Bronze Age or Iron Age settlements in central and western Anatolia. By way of comparison, the Hittite capital and mountain city of Boğazköy-Hattuša is 180ha. Türkmen-Karahöyük continued to be a 125+ha centre during the Early and Middle Iron Ages, before beginning to retract back towards the upper mound in the Late Iron Age.

The most important discovery during TISP's 2019 field season was made in the context of the Iron Age settlement. Local dredging operations in an irrigation canal about 600m

east of the upper mound revealed an inscribed block.

According to the account of a local farmer, he discovered the inscription in the spoil heap of canal fill while quarrying the fill for mudbrick manufacture. The same farmer (who has asked to remain anonymous) alerted TISP to the stele while surveying was being conducted nearby.

The block (95cm × 45cm) is inscribed in Hieroglyphic Luwian. The inscription (hereafter TÜRKMEN-KARAHÖYÜK 1 = TKH 1 following the Luwian inscription labelling conventions devised by David Hawkins) was composed by 'Great King Hartapu', long known from the nearby Kızıldağ and Karadağ complexes. A translation and analysis of the text by Petra Goedegebuure and Theo van den Hout (University of Chicago) is in preparation.

The discovery of TKH 1 in the context of such a large Iron Age centre is revolutionising our understanding of the archaeology and early history of central Anatolia. First, it provides a context for the nearby Hieroglyphic Luwian-inscribed monuments at Kızıldağ and Karadağ, located in the volcanic massifs just south of Türkmen-Karahöyük, which were also commissioned by Great King Hartapu. We suggest these may represent hilltop sanctuaries of the Iron Age capital, in much the same way that Yazılıkaya was the sanctuary of the Hittite capital at Boğazköy-Hattuša. The TKH 1 inscription will also loom large in historical and geographical assessments of an enigmatic territory that the Assyrians called Tabal, located at the western frontier of the Assyrian empire and beyond effective imperial control.

In 2020 the priority for KRASP will continue to be the investigation of urban and early state landscapes of the Konya plain. In addition to more drone and intensive surveys at Türkmen-Karahöyük and other large Bronze Age and Iron Age sites, we will begin a programme of geophysical survey with the aim of visualising the sub-surface architectural layout of these settlements. We expect to be able to map lower towns, city walls and gates, and other sub-surface monumental features.



The moment of discovery of the TKH 1 inscription: James Osborne in the canal with the inscribed block (photo Suay Erkuşöz).