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THE TAHİRLER PROJECT (BEYPAZARI PROVINCE):
PRELIMINARY REPORT FOR 2001 SEASON

Joel Thomas WALKER

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The Tahirler Project is a regional archaeological reconnaissance investigating the Roman-Byzantine road system of western Galatia, with particular attention to the integration of literary and archaeological evidence for the Byzantine period. Initial research for the project was conducted in 1996-1998 with funding from Princeton University¹. Field research was renewed in 2001 with joint funding from Princeton University and the University of Washington in Seattle². As the project field director, I wish to thank the Turkish Ministry of Culture for permission to conduct this archaeological research and the kaymakam and municipal administration of Beypazarı for their logistical support. I also would like to acknowledge Ms. Rukiye Akdoğan, who served as the government representative for the 2001 field season. Numerous residents of the Beypazarı region, especially farmers from the villages of Fasil, Dikmen, and Tacettin, provided invaluable assistance by sharing with us their knowledge of the region's topography and antiquities. For further acknowledgements, please see the end of this report.

Project Overview and Accomplishments of 2001 Season

The reconnaissance zone of the Tahirler Project encompasses a rectangular area of approximately 1200 km² in the district of the provincial capital Beypazarı, which is located ca. 90 km northwest of Ankara. Our survey focuses on the identification, recording, and analysis of sites along the Roman-Byzantine highway that traversed this region en route from Constantinople to Ancyra (Ankara) and the eastern frontier. This region holds particular importance for the study of early Byzantine Anatolia because of the literary sources associated with the village Sykeon, an official rest station on this Roman-Byzantine highway, located halfway between the cities of Juliopolis and Anastasiopolos (Fig. 1). As the home of the Christian ascetic Theodore of Sykeon (†613 C.E.), this village became the center of a substantial monastic complex during the late sixth and early seventh centuries. Modern historians have long praised the biography of "St. Theodore of Sykeon" for its vivid account of village society on the eve of the Arab invasions of Anatolia. Our survey in the Beypazarı region thus offers a superb opportunity to integrate literary and archaeological sources for the study of late Roman and Byzantine Anatolia.

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1 Professor Peter Brown of Princeton University has directed this research, with the assistance of Mr. David Barchard (1996) and the author (1996-present).

2 Funding for the 2001 field season (September 5-24) and the 2002 study season (September 5-19) came from the Royal Research Fund of the University of Washington, with additional support from the Department of History (the Howard and Francis Keller Research Fund) and the Department of History at Princeton University.

Field research during the 2001 field season focused on the recording of Roman/Byzantine sites on both the northern and southern side of the Kirmir River (the ancient Siberis) (Figs. 2-3). The primary goal of this research was to identify and compare Roman and Byzantine material from several different types of settlement along the Roman-Byzantine highway. Accomplishments for the 2001 season include: 1) Confirmation of the general route of the Roman-Byzantine road between the cities of Juliopolis (Gülşehir) and Anastasiopolis (Dikmen Höyük); 2) Mapping of the Byzantine cave complexes above Kiliseler and near Karadağ; 3) Survey and mapping of the archaeological remains at Uyku, where there appears to have been a monumental building (possibly a temple) of the Roman period; 4) Recovery of an inscribed marble capital and other Byzantine material from Pınarcık, near the location of the Justinianic bridge over the Siberis; 5) Interruption and documentation of illegal excavation of major Byzantine building at Dikmen Höyük (Anastasiopolis). In what follows, I offer a preliminary report of the results of these investigations.

1. The Roman Highway Between Juliopolis and Anastasiopolis

Earlier scholarship had already documented the basic route of the so-called "Pilgrim's Way" that traversed western Galatia en route from Constantinople to Ancyra and the eastern frontier (Fig. 1). In his multi-volume study on this Roman-Byzantine highway, Dr. David French, then Director of the British Institute of Archaeology in Ankara, synthesized the evidence of milestones, ancient itineraries, and surface remains to trace the route of this ancient highway as it passed through the cities of Juliopolis and Lagania (renamed Anastasiopolis ca. 500 C.E.)³. The first of these Roman cities, Juliopolis, is well-attested in the literary sources. Pliny the Younger, in his correspondence while governor of Bythnia, describes the city as a "frontier town... with a great deal of traffic passing through it"⁴. The signatures of the Christian bishops of Juliopolis appear regularly in Byzantine synodical records between the fourth and ninth centuries C.E.⁵ The town, renamed Basiliium after the emperor Basil I (867-886), survived in some form into the eleventh century, but thereafter falls completely out of the literary record⁶. The city's location in the modern topography was first established by French, who identified the ruins of Juliopolis on the northeastern bank of the Saryar Reservoir, two km. south of the modern city of Çayırhan⁷. Anderson had visited the same site in 1898 and recorded the stone foundations of a Roman bridge over the Aladag River⁸. Unfortunately, it appears that no fuller documentation of the bridge was completed prior to its submersion under the Saryar Reservoir⁹. The Roman-period chamber tombs

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- 3 David French, *Roman Roads and Milestones of Asia Minor, i., The Pilgrim's Road* (London: BIAA Monograph No. 3, 1981), pp. 33-38, correcting the earlier work of Ramsay (1890) and Anderson (1899), cited below.
 - 4 Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, X, 77-78: in capite Bythyniae, plurimisque per eam commeantibus transitum praebent." Pliny the Elder (*Natural History*, V, xl, 143) explains how the city received its name: a Galatian chief named Cleon, who was a native of the village Gordiu, elevated the settlement to the rank of a polis and renamed it Juliopolis in honor of Augustus.
 - 5 For the references, see Kl. Belke and M. Restle, *Tabula Imperii Byzantini 4: Galatien und Lykaonien* (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1984), 181-82. The earliest attestations are at the Synod of Ancyra, ca. 314, and the Council of Nicaea in 325; Bishop Philadelphos of Juliopolis attended both councils.
 - 6 Belke and Restle, *Galatien*, p. 182. French, *Roman Roads*, p. 34. On the probable date (ca. 886-900) of the adoption of the name Basiliium, see W. M. Ramsay, *The Historical Geography of Asia Minor* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1962; orig. London, 1890), pp. 244-245.
 - 7 French, *Roman Roads*, p. 38, correcting Anderson (1899), who examined the site, then simply known as "Eskişehir" ("old city"), but misidentified it as the location of the Roman village of Sykeon. French's identification of the site as Juliopolis has been accepted in all subsequent scholarship. See, esp. S. Mitchell, *Anatolia: Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor: Volume II The Rise of the Church* (Oxford, 1993), p. 126.
 - 8 J. G. C. Anderson, "Exploration in Galatia Cis Halys: Part II. – Topography, Epigraphy, Galatian Civilisation," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 19 (1899): 52-134, here 66-69. For a similar Justinianic bridge in northwestern Bythnia, see M. Whitby, "Justinian's Bridge over the Sargarius and the Date of Procopius' De Aedificiis," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 105 (1985): 129-148. It is instructive to compare the architectural drawings of the two bridges: Anderson, p. 67 and Whitby, p. 130.
 - 9 C. O'Connor, *Roman Bridges* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 124, 202 (T15). Belke and Restle, *Galatien*, p. 226 ("Skopas"). I. W. MacPherson, "Roman Roads and Milestones of Galatia" *Anatolian Studies* 4 (1954): 111-120 provides only a very poor photo of the bridge.

at Gülşehir, excavated by Turkish archaeologists in 1991, presumably should be associated with the necropolis of the now submerged ancient city¹⁰.

A well-preserved segment of the Roman highway leading east from Juliopolis can still be seen on the southern side of the modern paved road connecting Çayırhan and Beypazarı. Figure 2 shows this segment of Roman highway marked in red. During our field season, two staff members traced the route of this Roman highway on foot. The width of the road (ca. 6.5 meters) and size of its outer paving stones (ca. 0.4-0.8 meters) are consistent with the normal measurements of a major Roman highway¹¹. We were able to trace the path of the road to a point just west of Karadağ butte. The road must have then descended through the broad valley west of the butte into the Kirmir River flood plain. The 'Kirmir River cave complex' described below is carved into the cliffs on the western side of this valley. Although we have now located the Roman road on both the northern and southern sides of the Kirmir River (Fig. 2), the precise location of the Justinianic bridge and breakwater described by Procopius (Buildings, V, iv. 1-6) remains unclear. The most likely crossing point seems to be 6-8 km upstream, at or near the remains of the Byzantine settlement at Pınarcık (Fig. 3), but no architectural features survive in situ in this area. The ferocity of the river's winter floods, noted both by Procopius and the biographer of St. Theodore of Sykeon, may account for this absence. The fine late Roman ashlar incorporated into the Ottoman bridge ca. 8 km upstream from Pınarcık could come from the Justinianic bridge and breakwater, although this is difficult to prove¹².

After crossing the Siberis (Kirmir) River, the Roman road gradually ascends through a broad valley hemmed in on either side by high, sharply eroded mesas (marked 'Tahirler Valley' on Fig. 2). A visible segment of road ca. 2 km. northeast of the modern village of Tahirler indicates that the road passed through this valley, before climbing onto the Tacettin plateau. The documentation of this route confirms that the Roman/early Byzantine settlement at Kiliseler stood in close proximity to the Roman highway. This discovery strengthens the proposal advanced in the First Preliminary Report to identify the ruins at Kiliseler as the ancient village of Sykeon¹³. After ascending onto the Tacettin plateau, the Roman road continues southeast towards the city of Anastasiopolis, correctly identified by French with the ruins at Dikmen Höyük (Figs. 2, 3)¹⁴.

II. The Byzantine Cave Complexes at Kiliseler and Karadağ

A) Kiliseler Caves

Members of the Tahirler Project staff first visited the Byzantine cave complex at Kiliseler in 1996. The site is well-known among local residents since the cave complex is clearly visible in the cliffs high above the modern road leading from Beypazarı to the villages of Tahirler and Tacettin. A direct line of vision connects the cave complex to the "North Churches area" at Kiliseler, where in 1997 we identified and mapped the remains of a pair of early Byzantine churches (Fig. 4)¹⁵. Though clearly visible from below, the caves are difficult to access, and it was not until this past season, in 2001, that we had the

10 T. Günel, E. Yurttağül, and R. Yağcı, "Çayırhan-Gülşehir Nekropol Alanı Kurtama Kazısı 1991," *Anadolu Medeniyetleri Müzesi* (1992): 29-70.

11 French, *Roman Roads*, p. 35. For views, see the images linked to the "North Roman Road" in the sites section of the Tahirler Project website: <http://courses.washington.edu/tahirler/>.

12 For images, see the "Bridge" section of the Tahirler Project website: <http://courses.washington.edu/tahirler/sites/>. The modern bridge leading south from Beypazarı directly abuts the remains of this Ottoman stone bridge. Survey of the riverbed and banks between the Ottoman bridge and Pınarcık revealed no evidence of Roman settlement.

13 P. Brown, "Beypazarı Tahirler Köyündeki Kiliseler Üzerine Alan Çalışması" *Araştırma Sonuçları Toplantısı* 15 (1998): 239-243.

14 French, *Roman Roads*, pp. 38, 42-43; see now Belke and Restle, *Galatien*, pp. 228-229, with full bibliography of the primary sources on the Roman and Byzantine city.

15 Brief visits to Kiliseler during the 2001 field seasons documented continued illegal excavation in and around these basilicas. For a plan of the churches and photo-documentation of the progressive destruction, see the "Kiliseler" section of the Tahirler Project website. The apse of the Lower North Church was completely destroyed between 1998 and 2001.

time and expertise to fully document the complex. Figure 5 provides an architectural plan of the cave complex that extends over three levels (connected by two spiral stairwells) and includes twelve rooms of varying shapes and sizes. The main hall of the complex, oriented north-south, is over 23 meters long and 4 meters wide, with a series of three storage pits on its southern end (where there is more natural light and less dampness)¹⁶. There are further sunken, large rectangular rooms at the north end of the main hall, with a short, dead-end hallway (once sealed) at the northeast corner of the hall.

Adjacent to the first set of pits and adjoining the main hall is a doorway with a raised niche on its left side and the indentation of a Maltese cross above its lintel. The interior of the niche preserves fragments of ancient plaster, on which there are traces of paint (and abundant modern graffiti). This door leads into a rectangular room (4.2 by 3.5 meters), oriented to the east, with a slightly raised and roughly apsidal area on its eastern end. We have tentatively identified this room as the "chapel room." The chapel room has a light well on its southern side, and the indentation left by a second cross is visible on the interior of the sill where the light well joins the chapel room. A further series of indentations on the north wall and floor of the room (marked with a dotted line on the plan) may indicate the placement of a wooden dividing wall or iconostasis.

Although there is limited evidence to determine the exact use and occupational history of these caves, the basic architectural layout of the complex, combined with its surviving Christian decoration, strongly suggests a Byzantine origin for the complex. Few sherds were found within the cave, and of these sherds only one can be dated as early Byzantine. Careful survey of the steep and badly eroded slope immediately beneath the mouth of the caves, however, produced a more substantial concentration of ceramics. The ceramics collected from the slope included several fine ware indicators with green and brown glazes that can be firmly dated to the Middle Byzantine period¹⁷. Courseware rims found at the same location suggest an earlier phase of Byzantine occupation and may provide a direct link to the late Roman/early Byzantine ceramics from the "North Churches" area at Kiliseler¹⁸.

B) Karadağ Caves

Members of the Tahirlir Project first visited the "Kirmir River Caves" on the north side of the Kirmir River immediately west of Karadağ in 1998. During the 2001 season, we mapped this cave complex and began photography of the badly-faded, but still beautiful, fresco cycle contained in the "chapel room" on its main floor. Figure 6 shows the architectural layout of this complex that contains eighteen rooms extending across three levels. The main level has two long exterior porches on its eastern and southern sides. The eastern porch overlooks the path of the Roman/Byzantine highway, where the road descended to cross the Kirmir River. Inside the complex, the chapel room (marked with a "C" on the diagram) contains the remains of a Byzantine fresco cycle of standing saints. Complete figures can still be discerned on both the northern and southern walls. Additional figures are noticeable around the window apse and light well at the eastern end of the room. I am currently seeking a Byzantine art historian or graduate student qualified to assist with the publication of these frescoes. Further photography and on-site examination, however, will be necessary for this publication. Survey of the slopes and fields beneath the complex produced only very small quantities of pottery, though at least one piece of green-glaze ware recalls very similar sherds found at the Kiliseler Cave complex.

III. Uyku

The 2001 field season also provided an opportunity to begin detailed mapping of other major sites in the region not discussed in previous archaeological literature.

16 For images of the cave interior, see the "Kiliseler Caves" section of the Tahirlir Project website.

17 Catalogue numbers: CAV-01-1 (rim and handle); CAV-01-2 (polychrome glazed base).

18 Catalogue numbers: CAV-01-3 and 4.

The site of Uyku lies approximately 3 km. north of the paved modern highway that connects Beypazarı to Çayırhan. The site, covering an area of ca. 300 by 400 meters, spreads across a series of narrow stony terraces above a dry streambed. On the lowest terrace (marked area A), we identified and photographed the remains of a monumental building with steps on its southern side. Located immediately above these steps are several enormous marble blocks (one possibly a lintel; another with architectural carving), presumably from the same ancient building. At the eastern end of this building are the remains of what appears to be a very large apse constructed with re-used marble blocks. Beneath this building there is a streambed, dry in summer but clearly subject to heavy flooding in winter. Above the eastern side of the streambed, a robber hole has revealed the remains of a second monumental building composed of medium-size marble blocks, some of which are apparently still *in situ*. Humps under the ground suggest the presence of several further stone buildings located on the narrow terraces rising above terrace A. Aerial photography could probably confirm this hypothesis, but weather conditions stymied our attempt to use a balloon for this purpose.

The map in figure 7 is based upon readings taken from an electronic total station set atop the high flat ridge (Area B) that overlooks the lower terraces. Project staff collected ceramics from across these terraces, using a combination of systematic walking (along transects that followed the contours of the terraces) and 'random grab' across the whole area. Due to the abundance of sherds in this area, only fine ware and indicators were collected. Initial analysis of this material suggests that there was Bronze and Iron age settlement on top of the ridge (Area B), while the lower terraces were occupied primarily during the Roman and Byzantine periods. Finds of early-mid Roman fine ware were concentrated around area A. Other finds confirmed that settlement at the site continued down to the end of the Byzantine period. We found one coin, later identified as a fairly common late twelfth-century Seljuk denomination. And in an emergency excavation approved by the Department of Antiquities, we excavated a large Middle Byzantine storage jar, which had been exposed by erosion along the eastern bank of the streambed marked on the map as area C. This Byzantine ceramic vat has since been reconstructed and is now stored in the Museum of Ancient Anatolian Civilizations in Ankara.

Although our research on Uyku is still at a preliminary stage, we have developed the following hypotheses about the site. The monumental building at Uyku was probably a Roman temple, with its earliest phases of construction during the early-mid Roman period. From the Roman highway approximately four km south of Uyku, one has a clear line of sight up the narrow, flat valley that leads north towards Uyku; a monumental building on terrace A would thus have been visible to travelers along the Roman highway between Juliopolis and Lagania. It is our theory, therefore, that the ruins at Uyku represent a rural Roman shrine, with a series of modest 'service' buildings surrounding a central monumental temple. The apse at the eastern end of this temple may indicate that the building was converted into a church during the early Byzantine period. Settlement at the site continued until at least the eleventh-twelfth centuries, when growth of the new Seljuk city at Beypazarı diverted attention from Uyku.

IV. Pınarcık and Maltepe

At this stage of our research, less can be said about the archaeological remains at Maltepe and Pınarcık, two sites in the vicinity of the village Fasil, on the northern side of the Kirmir River (Figs. 2, 3). Maltepe is a complex site, as it includes both: a) a höyük with extensive evidence for Iron age and later settlement, adjacent to b) a high and defensible mesa, on top of which are visible the foundations of several hundred small rectangular and square buildings (but very little pottery). The buildings atop the mesa at Maltepe appear to be late (i.e. Ottoman)¹⁹, but perhaps with earlier phases. The cera-

19 Anderson, "Exploration in Galatia," p. 65 reports that the site was formerly used as the summer residence (yayla) by the citizens of Beypazarı.

mics collected from the adjacent höyük have not yet been studied; they include a wide range of fine and coursewares, prehistoric through Roman.

The finds from nearby Pınarcık are, by contrast, from a much more limited chronological range: virtually all of the ceramics from the site are early-mid Byzantine coursewares, with little or no evidence of Roman or late Roman fine wares. The Karaaslan family who own the land at Pınarcık also brought us several items uncovered by their plow. Foremost among these items is beautiful Middle Byzantine capital with a very finely carved Greek inscription. The inscription which reads "...to you, the servant [of God] Theod[ore?]" can be dated by orthography and verbal formula to the eleventh-twelfth centuries. We do not yet have the context to determine whether this formula refers to a saint (i.e. Theodore of Sykeon)²⁰, a lay or episcopal donor²¹. This dedication suggests that the capital -- which deserves to be placed on public display in the Ankara or Beypazarı museums -- comes from a Middle Byzantine church at or near the place where the Byzantine road crossed the Kirmir River²².

V. Dikmen Höyük (Anastasiopolis)

We concluded our survey work during the 2001 field season with a brief visit to Dikmen Höyük, where there is a large höyük and extensive evidence for urban settlement during the Roman and Byzantine periods. The site can be identified as ancient Lagania/Anastasiopolis, where the Christian 'holy man' Theodore of Sykeon was bishop during the late sixth century C.E. Our visit to Dikmen was timely, as it drew attention to (and hopefully ended) an illegal excavation that has exposed the remains of a Middle Byzantine church. Although the illegal excavation had already extensively damaged this medieval building, we were able at least to photograph some of its architectural elements, including incised soft-stone floor with geometrical decorations and crosses.

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20 For the cult of Theodore in the Middle Byzantine period, see Nicephorus Sceuophylax, *Encomium in sanctum Theodorum* 44, ed. C. Kirch *Analecta Bollandiana* 20 (1901): 249-272.

21 Inscriptions from the vicinity of Juliopolis, which Anderson copied in the village of Sarılar ("Exploration in Galatia," pp. 68-69, no. 17-18), document the use of "Theodore" and "Theodotus" as episcopal names in the early Byzantine period; and in the sixth century, a certain Theodosius and later Theodore of Sykeon served as bishops of Anastasiopolis. No "Theo-" compound names, however, are preserved in the (fragmentary) synodical lists for Juliopolis and Anastasiopolis.

22 It is significant that the capital was found at Pınarcık, in the midst of a Byzantine site located just a few hundred meters north of the Kirmir's riverbed. The Justinianic bridge over the Siberis (Kirmir) was supplemented by a church built on the western (i.e. northern) side of the river as a "refuge for travelers" (Procopius, *Buildings* V, iv, 16). It is tempting to propose that the Pınarcık capital comes from the Middle Byzantine successor of this Justinianic church.

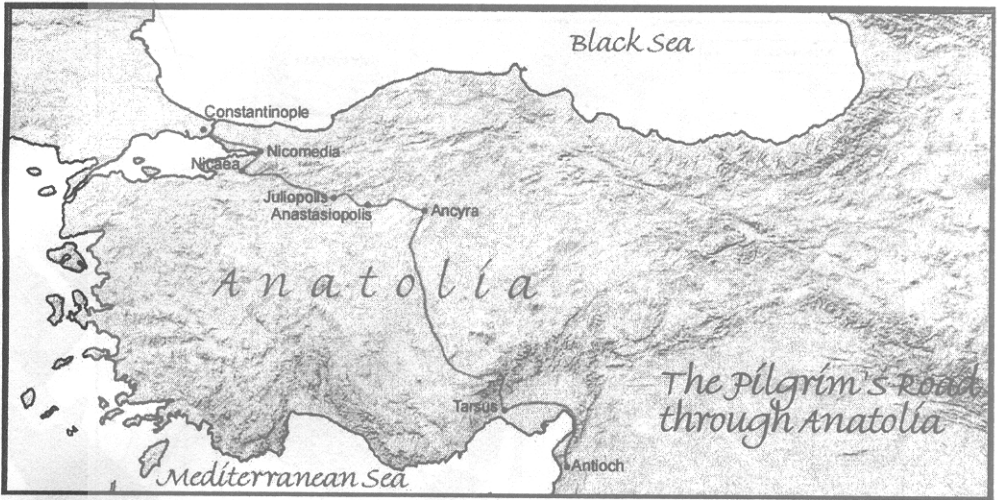


Fig. 1

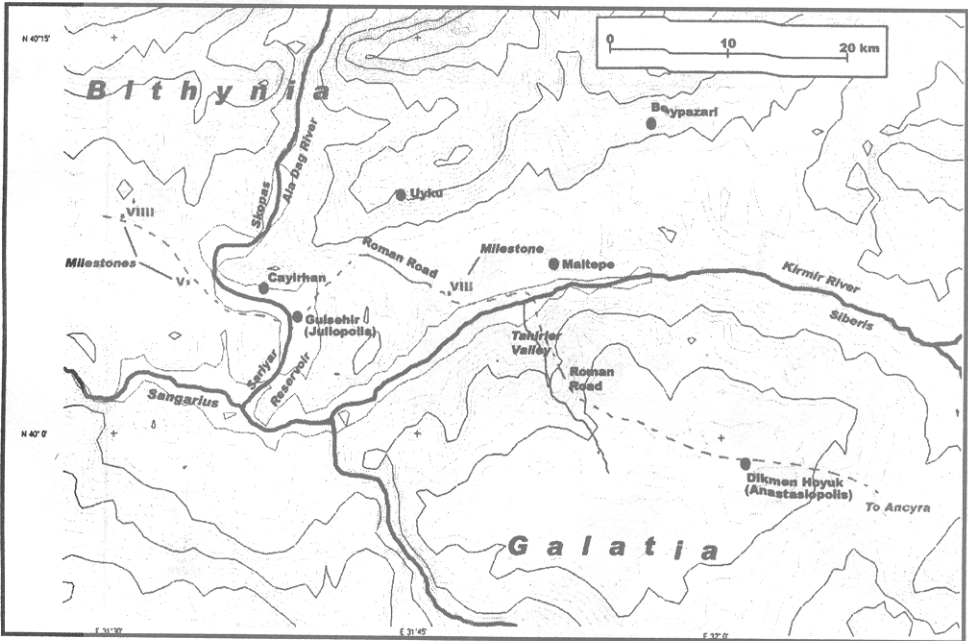


Fig. 2

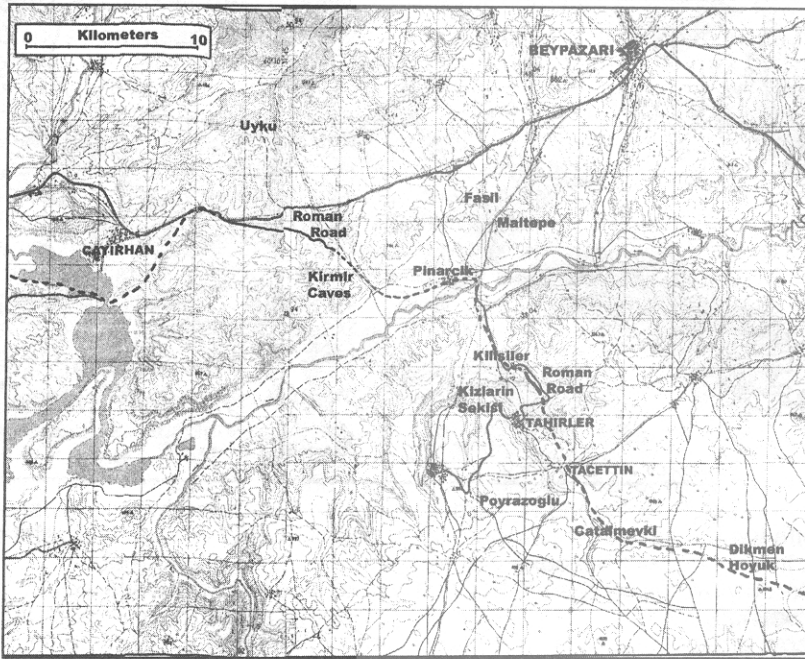


Fig. 3

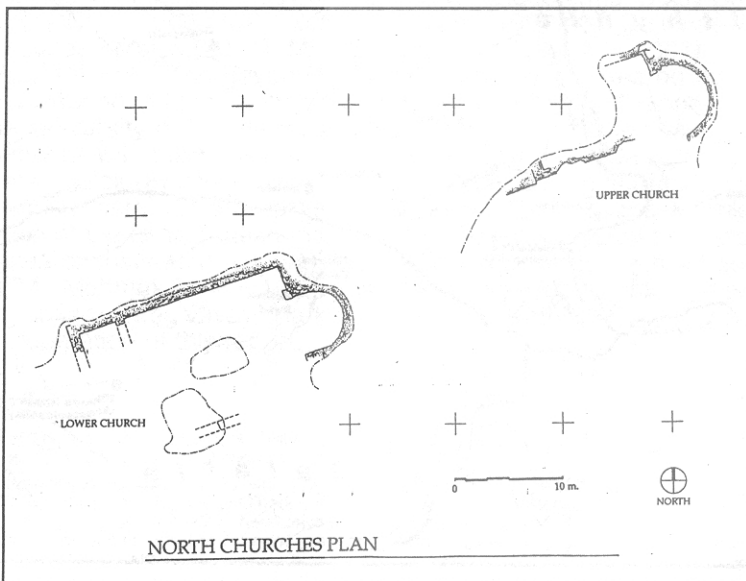


Fig. 4

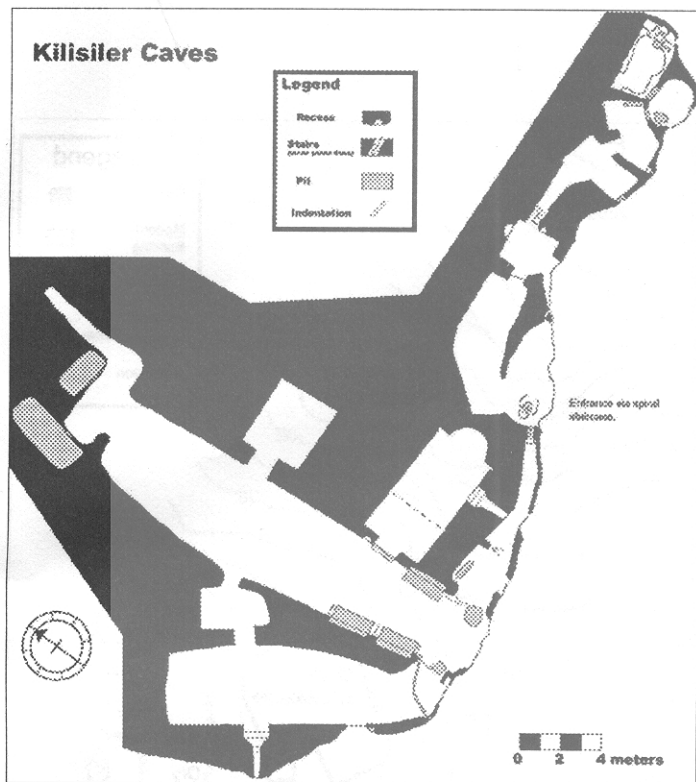


Fig. 5

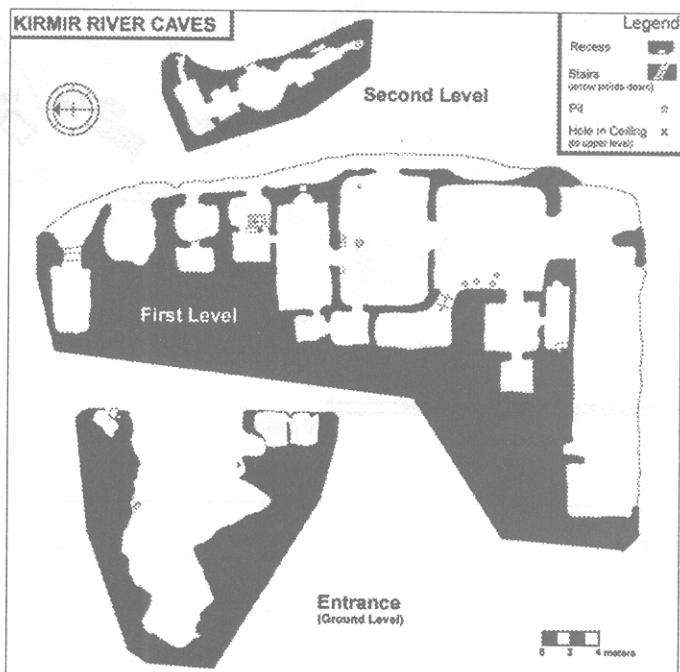


Fig. 6

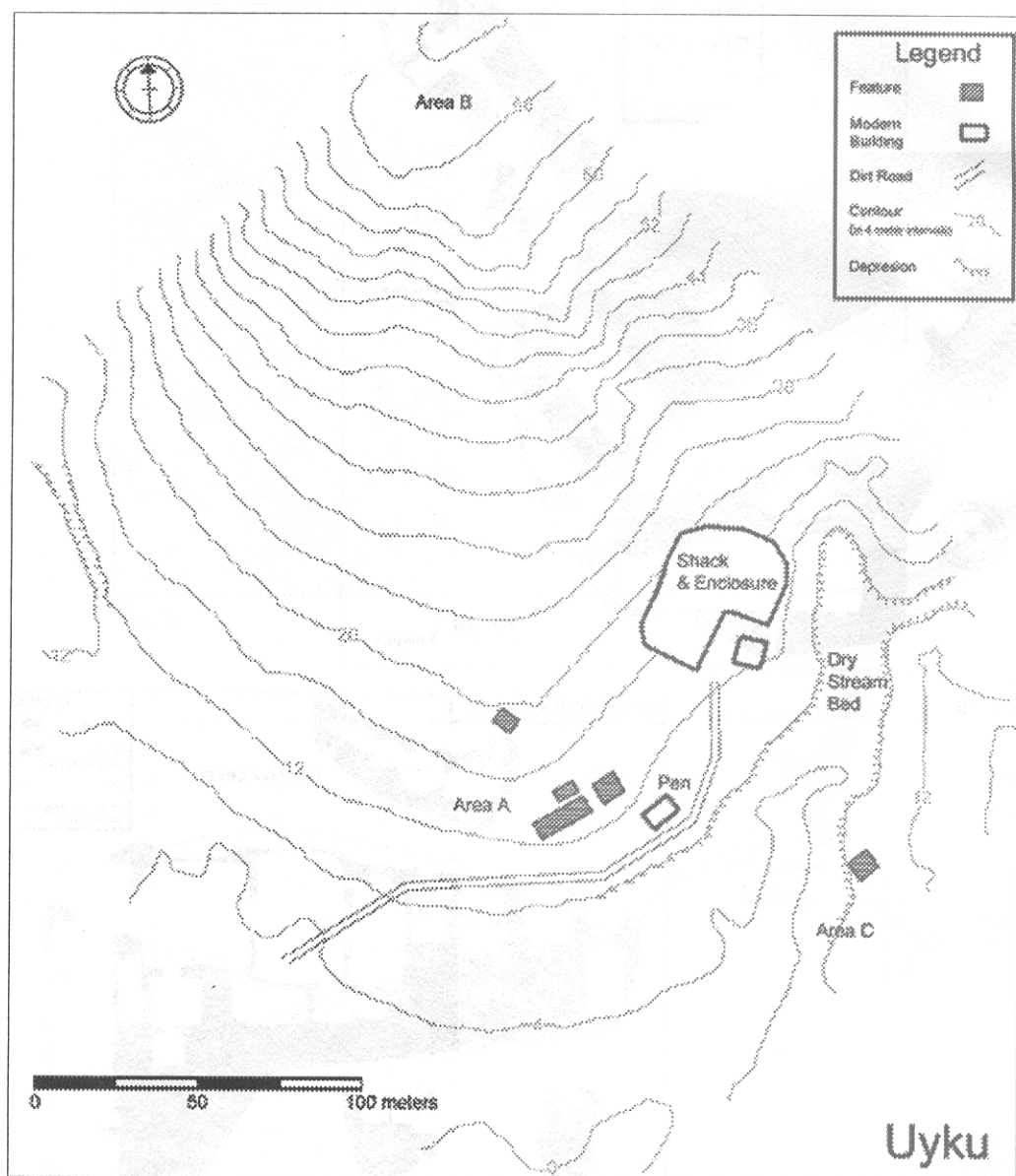


Fig. 7