

**The Tahirler Project:  
Archaeological Survey in Western Galatia**

**Preliminary Report on Fourth Field Season (September 4-21, 2001)<sup>1</sup>**

Director: Professor Peter Brown, Princeton University

Field Director: Professor Joel Walker, University of Washington, Seattle

Field Staff: Gregory Civay, Kathleen Moles, Mark Stallings

The Tahirler Project is a multi-year, collaborative research project investigating the Roman-Byzantine road system of western Galatia, with particular attention to rural and urban settlements of the early Byzantine period. Our field research focuses on the identification, recording, and analysis of archaeological material in the Beypazari region, ca. ninety kilometers northwest of Ankara. During the first three field seasons (1996-98), the project documented sixteen previously unknown sites in this region, located on both the northern and southern sides of the Kirmir River (the ancient Siberis). Project staff also re-examined and confirmed the identification of Dikmen Höyük as the site of the Roman/Byzantine city of Anastasiopolis (formerly Lagania). From these sites, we systematically collected and recorded ceramics and other material including coins, marble inscriptions, and decorative architectural fragments; all of this material is now stored at the Museum of Ancient Anatolian Civilizations in Ankara. As the field director for the project, I wish to express here our appreciation to the Turkish Ministry of Culture for permission to conduct this archaeological research (1996-1998, 2001). I also wish to thank the *kaymakan* and municipal administration of Beypazari, whose logistical support has been critical for the success of our research in the field.<sup>2</sup>

During the 2001 field season, the Tahirler Project staff continued our documentation of late Roman and Byzantine sites within our survey zone. We mapped the Byzantine cave complexes at Kilisiler and near Karadag, and collected diagnostic ceramics from both sites. We also made substantial progress recording the topography

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<sup>1</sup> For a Turkish version of this report, please see the “Reports” section of the Tahirler Project website: <http://courses.washington.edu/tahirler/reports.html>.

<sup>2</sup> For the 2001 field season, in particular, we wish to recognize the assistance of Ms. Rukiye Akdogan and Ms. Belma Kulucoglu of the Museum of Ancient Anatolian Civilizations. Ms. Akdogan served as the official government *temsilci* during our survey in the Beypazari region, September 4-21, 2001. During our survey, we also benefited greatly from conversations with the residents of the villages of Tacettin, Fasil, and Dikmen (all in the Beypazari district). Our work would not be possible without their generous cooperation and assistance.

and surface remains at Uyku, with additional work at Pinarçik, Kizlarin Sekisi and Dikmen Höyük. Finally, we re-examined and confirmed the route of the Roman highway (as first recorded by David French) from the vicinity of Cayirhan to the ruins at Dikmen Höyük (Roman/Byzantine Anastasiopolis). In what follows, I offer a preliminary report of the results of these investigations.

## I. The Roman highway between Juliopolis and Anastasiopolis

Earlier scholarship has already documented the general route of the major Roman/Byzantine highway that traversed western Galatia en route from Constantinople to Ancyra (see map #1).<sup>3</sup> In his multi-volume study on the “Pilgrim’s Way,” Dr. David French, former Director of the British Institute of Archaeology in Ankara, synthesizes the evidence of milestones, the ancient itineraries, and surface remains to trace the route of this Roman/Byzantine highway as it passed through the cities of Juliopolis and Lagania (renamed Anastasiopolis ca. 500 C.E.).<sup>4</sup> The first of these Roman cities, Juliopolis, is well-attested in the literary sources. Pliny the Younger, in his correspondence while governor of Bythynia, describes the city as a “frontier town... with a great deal of traffic passing through it.”<sup>5</sup> The signatures of the Christian bishops of Juliopolis appear regularly in Byzantine synodical records between the fourth and ninth centuries C.E.<sup>6</sup> The town, renamed *Basilium* after the emperor Basil I (867-886), survived in some form

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<sup>3</sup> All the maps and diagrams in this report are the work of Mr. Gregory Civay, with assistance from other members of the project. Special thanks to the Cartography Department of the University of Washington Suzzallo Library for consultation and acquisitions.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> For the references, see Kl. Belke and M. Restle, *Tabula Imperii Byzantini 4: Galatien und Lykaonien* (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1984), pp. 181-182. 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.

into the eleventh century, but thereafter falls completely out of the literary record.<sup>7</sup> Its correct location in the modern topography was first established by French, who identified the site on the northeastern bank of the Sariyar Reservoir, two kilometers south of the modern city of Cayirhan.<sup>8</sup> Anderson had visited the same site in 1898 and recorded the stone foundations of a Roman bridge over the Aladag River.<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, it appears that no fuller documentation of the bridge was completed prior to its submersion under the Sariyar Reservoir.<sup>10</sup> The Roman-period chamber tombs at Gulsehir, excavated by Turkish archaeologists in 1991, presumably should be associated with the necropolis of the now submerged ancient city.<sup>11</sup>

A well-preserved segment of the Roman highway leading east from Juliopolis is still clearly visible on the southern side of the modern paved road connecting Cayirhan and Beypazari. Map #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)

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<sup>7</sup> Belke and Restle, *Galatien*, p. 182. French, *Roman Roads*, p. 34. On the probable date (ca. 886-900) of the adoption of the name Basilium, see W. M. Ramsay, *The Historical Geography of Asia Minor* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1962; orig. London, 1890), pp. 244-245.

<sup>8</sup> French, *Roman Roads*, p. 38, correcting Anderson (1899), who examined the site, then simply known as “Eski Sheher” (‘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 by all subsequent scholarship. See, e.g. S. Mitchell, *Anatolia: Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor: Volume II The Rise of the Church* (Oxford, 1993), p. 126,

<sup>9</sup> J.G.C. Anderson, “Exploration in Galatia Cis Halym: Part II. – Topography, Epigraphy, Galatian Civilisation,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 19 (1899) 52-134, here 66-69. For a similar Justinianic bridge in northwestern Bythina, 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.

<sup>10</sup> 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. I have not yet seen G. Tunc, *Tas Köprülerimiz* (Ankara, 1978), nor W. v. Dienst, *Von Tilsit nach Angora* (Gotha, 1898), pp. 46-50.

<sup>11</sup> T. Günel, E. Yurttagül, and R. Yagci, “Cayirhan-Gülsehiri Nekropol Alani Kurtama Kazisi 1991,” *Anadolu Medeniyetleri Muzesi* (1992) 29-70.

are consistent with the normal measurements of a major Roman highway.<sup>12</sup> We were able to trace the path of the road to a point just west of Karadag 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 (see map #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 seem to be 6-8 kilometers upstream, at or near the remains of the Byzantine settlement at Pinarcik, 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 kilometers upstream from Pinarcik (see map #3) could come from the Justinianic bridge and breakwater, although this is difficult to prove.<sup>13</sup>

After crossing the Siberis (Kirmir) River, the Roman road gradually ascended through a broad valley hemmed in on either side by high, sharply eroded mesas (marked ‘Tahirler Valley’ on map 2). A surviving stretch of road ca. 2 kms. NE of the modern village of Tahirler confirms that the road passed through this valley, before climbing onto the Tacettin plateau. Its route confirms that the Roman/early Byzantine settlement at Kilisiler, first identified by the Tahirler Project survey, stood in close proximity to the Roman highway. This discovery strengthens the argument proposed in our 1998 field report to identify the ruins at Kilisiler with the Roman/Byzantine village of Sykeon, where the local Christian ‘holy man’ Theodore of Sykeon was born and later became abbot of a substantial monastic complex. After ascending onto the Tacettin plateau, the Roman road continued SE towards the city of Anastasiopolis, correctly identified by French with the ruins at Dikmen Höyük (see maps #2 and 3).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> 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/>.

<sup>13</sup> For images, see the “Bridge” section of the Tahirler Project website: <http://courses.washington.edu/tahirler/sites/>. The modern bridge leading south from Beypazari directly abuts the remains of this Ottoman stone bridge. Survey of the river bed and banks between the Ottoman bridge and Pinarcik revealed no evidence of Roman settlement.

<sup>14</sup> 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.

## II. The Byzantine Cave Complexes at Kilisiler and Karadag

Members of the Tahirler Project staff first visited the Byzantine cave complex at Kilisiler 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 Beypazari to the villages of Tahirler and Tacettin. A direct line of vision connects the cave complex to the “North Churches area” at Kilisiler, where in 1997 we identified and mapped the remains of a pair of early Byzantine churches (ca. sixth-century C.E.).<sup>15</sup> 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 time and expertise to fully document the complex. Diagram #1 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 N-S, 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).<sup>16</sup> 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

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<sup>15</sup> Brief visits to Kilisiler 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 “Kilisiler” section of the Tahirler Project website. The apse of the Lower North Church was completely destroyed between 1998 and 2001.

<sup>16</sup> For images of the cave interior, see the “Kilisiler Caves” section of the Tahirler Project website.

surviving Christian decoration, strongly suggests a Byzantine origin for the complex. Can we be more precise? Few sherds were found within the cave, and of these sherds only one can be dated as probably 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 period.<sup>17</sup> Further study of these ceramics during the proposed 2002 study season in the Ankara museum will allow us to confirm this dating. Several pieces found in this area also appear to date to much earlier phases of Byzantine occupation and may provide a direct link to the late Roman/early Byzantine ceramics from the “North Churches” area at Kilisiler.<sup>18</sup>

Members of the Tahirler Project first visited the “Kirmir River Caves” on the north side of the Kirmir River immediately west of Karadag 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. Diagram #2 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 Kilisiler Cave complex. The Tahirler Project’s ceramic expert, Dr. Daniela Cottica, will study these sherds during our proposed museum work in September, 2002.

### III. Uyku

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

<sup>18</sup> Catalogue numbers: CAV-01-3 and 4.

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. The site of Uyku lies approximately 3 kms. north of the paved modern highway that connects Bey pazari to Cayirhan. The site, covering an area of ca. 300 by 400 meters, spreads across a series of narrow stony terraces above a dry stream bed (see map #4). On the lowest terrace (marked “Area A” on the diagram), 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 stream bed, dry in summer but clearly subject to heavy flooding in winter. Above the eastern side of the stream bed, a robber hole has revealed the remains of a second monumental building composed of medium-size marble blocks, some them 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 (lack of wind) stymied our attempt to use a balloon for this purpose.

The attached map is based upon readings taken from a electronic total station set atop the high flat ridge (Area B) that overlooks the lower terraces. Tahirler 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 stream bed marked on the map as area C. This Byzantine ceramic vat has since been reconstructed and is now on display in the garden of 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 kilometers 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 Beypazari diverted attention from Uyku. We hope to continue analysis of the ceramics and other finds from Uyku during the museum study season in September 2002.

#### IV. Pinarcik and Maltepe

At this stage of our research, less can be said about the archaeological remains at Maltepe and Pinarcik, two sites in the vicinity of the village Fasil, on the northern side of the Kirmir River (maps #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),<sup>19</sup> but perhaps with earlier phases. The ceramics collected from the adjacent höyük have not yet been studied; they include a wide range of fine and coarse wares, prehistoric through Roman.

The finds from nearby Pinarcik are, by contrast, from a much more limited chronological range: virtually all of the ceramics from the site are early-mid Byzantine coarse wares, with little or no evidence of Roman or late Roman fine wares. The Karaaslan family who own the land at Pinarcik also brought us several items uncovered by their plow. Foremost among these items is a 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 know (at least not yet) whether this formula refers to a saint

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<sup>19</sup> Anderson, “Exploration in Galatia,” p. 65 reports that the site was formerly used as the summer residence (yayla) by the citizens of Beypazari.



(i.e. Theodore of Sykeon),<sup>20</sup> a lay or episcopal donor.<sup>21</sup> This dedication suggests that the capital -- which deserves to be placed on public display in the Ankara or Beypazari museums -- comes from a Middle Byzantine church at or near the place where the Byzantine road crossed the Kirmir River.<sup>22</sup>

## V. Dikmen Höyük

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 building (apparently a church). Although the illegal excavation had already done extensive damage to this medieval building, we were able at least to photograph some of its architectural elements, especially its ornate incised floor. Diagram #3 shows a close-up of one segment of this Middle Byzantine floor which is decorated with a geometric pattern and crosses incised into a soft, gray stone. Study of the ceramics from Dikmen will continue during the 2002 museum study-season, and it is hoped that we can continue field survey and possibly excavation at Dikmen during the summer of 2003 or 2004.

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

<sup>21</sup> Inscriptions from the vicinity of Juliopolis, which Anderson copied in the village of Sarilar (“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.

<sup>22</sup> It is significant that the capital was found at Pinarcik, 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]. Could the Pinarcik capital come from the Middle Byzantine successor of this Justinianic church? It is possible, but less likely, that this fine architectural piece was brought from another nearby site such as Kilisiler, Juliopolis, or Anastasiopolis.

