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DECEMBER 1989 \$2.00

THE GUIDE TO THE CIVILIZED WORLD

ACTOR DANIEL DAY LEWIS: PUTTING IT ALL ON THE LINE

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In his new film *My Left Foot*, he assumes the body and soul of the cerebral-palsy victim Christy Brown. In *A Room with a View* (top), he was an effete twit. On the London stage, he exploded as a revolutionary Russian poet (center). What draws him to such intractable parts? "The inner life," he says, "the metabolism." See page 87.



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THE DIG THAT IS SHAKING ANCIENT HISTORY

BY ÖZGEN ACAR AND SUZAN MAZUR

A complex of Phrygian tombs near the southwestern coast of Turkey! The archaeologists were astounded. Not very much is known about the Phrygians, but their relics should not have been found there, so far south, where no one had ever imagined that the Phrygians lived. According to the ancient Greek historian Herodotus and the Lydian historian Xanthus, the Phrygian people were perhaps Thracians who migrated to Asia Minor sometime in the second millennium B.C. They settled at Gordium, near the present Turkish capital of Ankara, and, in time, extended their rule over most of central Anatolia. They were master craftsmen, excelling in fashioning ob-

riational mounds, known as tumuli.

Scholars were not altogether surprised by the discovery of the tombs. The village was at the edge of the Elmali (which translates literally as "Appleville") plain, an area of orchards and meadows between the Mediterranean Sea and the entrance to a ten-mile-long pass over the snowcapped Taurus Mountains. This fertile plain seems to have been a natural stopping point for ancient caravans and military convoys to pause in their travels to and from Mediterranean ports, and there were settlements here as long as 5,000 years ago. The Lycians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, and Ottomans all passed this way. Several previous discoveries of antiquities had been made in the area, including that of a fabulous hoard of coins (*Connoisseur*, July 1988) at Elmali, just half a mile away. Indeed, an archaeologist at Bryn Mawr College, Machteld J. Mellink, had mentioned the mounds in a paper she wrote in 1971, referring to them as tombs.

So, after Dönmez's confession, museum officials hurried to the site to see for themselves. At first, they thought the field-

stones had been put there by peasants clearing the land. Kayhan Dörtlük, who oversaw the excavation and is director of the Antalya Museum, noticed, however, that the stones were arranged in some order, suggesting tumuli, and Turkish archaeologists began to dig. He designated each of the five mounds with a letter (A to E) and, because it was the least damaged, started with C. No one expected to find much, nor did they find anything at all for three weeks. Skepticism mounted.

Then, says the archaeologist Harun Taşkıran, who headed up the field-excavation team, they discovered "a layer of big, flat, disorderly stones under the surface layer." Beneath that was a sealing layer of brown clay, one foot thick, and under this the first hint of an actual grave—pieces of an iron tripod.

"The excitement of the excavation team was excessive," Taşkıran recalls. "We suspected we were opening a new



Shaded area indicates the commonly accepted boundaries of Phrygian rule. The newly discovered tombs are far to the southwest.

page in Anatolian history." He widened the investigation of the tumulus—a roughly circular tomb that eventually turned out to measure 100 feet in diameter and 13 feet in height—to reveal first one cremation hollow, then another. Here, remains of a funeral banquet were found: charcoal, ceramic pieces, bones and teeth, arrowheads, and the remains of figs, grapes, almonds. It was clear that a body had been burned and animals sacrificed.

Unfortunately, most of the funeral gifts had been consumed by the intense fire. Nearly 218 grams of gold, electrum (an



Is it Phrygian? This petaled omphalos bowl, made from one piece of silver, was found in tumulus D.

jects of wood, ivory, metal, and cloth. Why were there Phrygian tombs in an unexpected part of Turkey? Or were they really Phrygian?

The unsettling discovery was made on November 29, 1984, when a watchman, Mustafa Şenel, saw someone who he thought was a would-be tomb robber loitering near several piles of fieldstones near the village of Bayındır. Şenel chased the fellow away, but an old man in the village later identified him as Süleyman Dönmez, a known looter, who was soon arrested. Şenel described the mounds of stones as "apartment size." Turkish museum authorities suspected they were ancient bu-



Superb craftsmanship: this lion's-head pin, with granulation, was found in tumulus C.

DISCOVERY

alloy of gold and silver), and silver were melted into unrecognizable form. "We had to operate very carefully," says Azize Özgür, a conservator at the Antalya Museum. "If you touched the iron and bronze pieces, they disappeared like dust."

Still, a number of objects survived, and some of them, surprisingly, looked Phrygian. These included an iron dagger with gold reliefs on the handle, two griffins that once adorned a bronze caldron, a ring of phallus-shaped knobs probably made as a fertility symbol, and a bronze bowl with swiveling ring handles. In addition, a lion's head and a pin in the shape of a duck were found, each made of electrum decorated with semi-granulation. And after the soil was sieved, a pair of gold tassels turned up. The tombs were Phrygian in appearance, and the artifacts contained within them seemed typical of Phrygian artistry—enough so that the researchers were genuinely excited by the possibility that they had come across a treasure house of Phry-

gian archaeology. "Was this a coincidence, or did the Phrygians come to this place?" Taşkiran wondered.

Dörtlük and his team then moved to an adjacent tomb, D. There were signs—most notably, a three-foot-deep hole—that someone had attempted to break in at D, and museum officials were not optimistic about recovering anything of note. As the excavation continued, Taşkiran remembers, "some six feet under the surface, gifts presented to the dead started to show up." Clearly, there had been no cremation fire in this tomb.

In the north part of the tumulus, they found signs of a disintegrated wooden chamber (only postholes remain) that had once been placed on a floor of pebbles. Inside the chamber were skeletal remains resting on what was probably a log coffin, with iron reinforcing bars at the head and foot. Wrapped around its waist was a silver belt in unmistakable Phrygian style; ten bronze fibulas (a type of ancient safety pin) were on its chest. The head faced east, and near the chin were nine silver fibulas. Two vessels with bronze bull protomes lay near the skeleton's feet. Silver harness works, iron horse bits, silver horse breastplates, numerous silver appliques, and hundreds of beads were scattered on the floor. "We thought we were in a silversmith's shop," Taşkiran marvels.

This time the evidence was compelling. The artifacts were not only Phrygian in style but also representative of the highest quality of Phrygian art. The silver belt, for instance, is made of one continuous strip of sheet silver, incised with three rows of linked squares with a fibula-like catch. By way of comparison, the experts knew that a tomb thought to be of Phrygian royalty that was excavated near Ankara in 1957 did not contain a single gram of precious metal—even though the find was important enough and contained so many funerary objects that it came to be called "the Midas Mound," after the legendary King Midas, who scholars believe built it.

The most spectacular objects to turn up in tomb D are four votive statuettes. One is silver, apparently of a eunuch priest with an otherworldly expression on his face; the other three are ivory. The largest depicts a woman with a sweet smile, holding the

hands of two children. Another represents a woman holding a bird in her outstretched hand; the last, a priest. Perhaps these latter two are Kybele and a follower of Attis, her castrated lover—the two principal Phrygian deities. Matar Kybele (mother goddess) was the most revered figure, the object of cult worship that lasted well into Roman times. According to Phrygian belief, Attis castrated himself in atonement for an infidelity to Kybele. Thereafter, all of Kybele's priests ritually emasculated themselves.

Oscar White Muscarella, of New York's Metropolitan Museum, an expert on Phry-



Moment of truth: when the archaeologists opened tumulus D, they thought they had entered a silversmith's shop.

gian culture, dates the contents of the tombs to the late eighth or early seventh century. Further confirmation came from a computer analysis of the description of all the 1,565 bronze and silver fibulas discovered over the years at different sites throughout Anatolia. The printout ran to more than 2,000 pages, and the conclusion was to date the Bayındır pieces between 730 B.C. and 670 B.C.

For some experts, the find raises the possibility that the Phrygian area extended much farther south and west than has been previously thought. Does the discovery indicate that the Phrygians established a permanent presence in southwest Anatolia? asks the Met's Muscarella. An affirmation may require the rewriting of a chapter of ancient history. The Bayındır area was supposed to have been controlled by the Lycians, though Phrygian pottery and metal objects had been found there before the new discoveries. Perhaps the tombs indicate cultural exchanges and trade. Maybe the burials were those of Phrygians who had escaped a Kimmerian attack. Or were they pilgrims on the way to temples of Kybele in the vicinity?



A masterpiece: a superb ivory statuette, probably depicting the goddess Kybele, with two children.



"Purely Phrygian," a top expert said on seeing this beautiful silver statuette of a priest.

Whatever the answers to these questions may be, the artifacts will continue to fascinate scholars for years to come. Professor Ekrem Akurgal, the doyen of Turkish archaeologists, describes the pieces as "the archaeological discovery of the decade for Anatolia." "So far," he says, "we have never been able to find such beautiful pieces as the ivory and silver statuettes. They are masterpieces." Dietrich von Bothmer, the chairman of the department of Greek and Roman art at New York's Metropolitan Museum, agrees: "This is a fabulous discovery. I have never seen anything like it. Each and every piece is of purely Phrygian type."

Not everybody is convinced that these pieces are Phrygian. "Some of the pieces look Phrygian; some of them look East Greek, like pieces found at Ephesus," says Professor Sevim Buluc, an archaeologist at the Middle East Technical University, in Ankara. "If these pieces are late eighth or early seventh century, we will have to change the dates of East Greek art." (Most of the artifacts of the East Greeks, who spread the civilization of the motherland to the islands along the Turkish coast and well into Asia Minor, have been dated at least three-quarters of a century later than that time.)

While the scholars pondered, the jawbone and pelvis of the skeleton in tomb D were analyzed. A woman of age twenty to twenty-five had been buried. She had not yet

given birth. Her skull was deformed, perhaps deliberately. Berna Alpagut, paleontologist at Ankara University, was quick to note that long, distorted heads were attractive to Phrygian royalty, who banded them to a board to achieve this effect. The skull of the "king" buried in the Midas Mound, for example, had been similarly elongated.

In due course, the other three tombs were excavated. There had been cremations in all three, and the discoveries were of lesser importance. (Surprisingly, tumulus A contained the remnants of the foundation of a Byzantine church, built perhaps fifteen hundred years after the Phrygian period.) Meantime, the cremation in tomb C was determined to have been most likely that of a high-ranking officer.

Many questions remain to be answered. Who was the woman buried in tomb D? The lavish burial would surely suggest royalty, because in the first millennium B.C. only an imperial lady would have been buried with the mementos of her horses (their bits and breastplates). Could she have been a daughter of King Midas? Outlandish as this theory may seem, the dates of the tomb lend it some weight.

Conceivably, the answers to the questions that have surfaced with the artifacts will come from further research in the many tombs of the area. Until then, the discovery has at least underlined the importance of archaeologists' arriving at a discovery before plunderers—hardly the common occurrence in Turkey today. Usually, ancient tombs are looted solely for personal profit. But if an orderly, scientific investigation is conducted, true knowledge can be gained. Whether the Phrygian territory will be expanded or not, the find will certainly help to illuminate an age that has been lost to us. Some illumination should come next year, when Kayhan Dörtlük publishes the complete report of his excavation at the tombs at Bayındır.

"One thing is certain," says Dörtlük, who has no doubts that the tombs are Phrygian. "We shall have to redraw the map of ancient Asia Minor." □

Özgen Acar was coauthor of "The Hoard of the Century," in the July 1988 Connoisseur. Suzan Mazur writes on art and archaeology.

"East Greek"—the opinion of another expert who looked at this silver duck pin and other finds from the tombs.



Who Was King Midas?

Virtually the only Phrygian to survive through history is King Midas, and most of what is known about him is enveloped either in myth or in mistiness. The most famous tale appears in the Dionysiac cycle of legends and concerns the king's wish that everything he touched be turned to gold. Soon enough, he found that he could not eat gold for food or bathe in gold as water. Wishing again, this time for a return to normalcy, he became a wiser, if poorer, man.

Actually, a King Midas did unify the Phrygian people in what is now central Turkey. His "golden touch" might thus refer to the confederation. After they were united, probably in the eighth century B.C., the Phrygians became one of the most important civilizations in western Asia, one renowned for the quality and workmanship of its objects of art. The Phrygians were said to have invented the art of embroidery, among their other accomplishments.

Long after the fall of Phrygia, the Roman poet Ovid wrote in his *Metamorphoses* of King Midas's being asked to judge a music contest between Apollo and the satyr Marsyas. Midas picked the latter and was promptly awarded a pair of donkey ears by Apollo. He was so ashamed that he hid his ears under a Phrygian turban, thinking that only his hairdresser would know. But the barber whispered the truth into a hole in the ground and plugged it up. Unfortunately for Midas, though, reeds grew from this spot, and when the wind blew through them, they sang the secret—and soon everybody found out.

Historically, it seems there were several Phrygian kings called Midas, including one who is said to have ruled from 738 B.C. to 696 B.C. The shame of this Midas had nothing to do with his ears. He presided over Phrygia as it was assaulted and overrun by the Kimmerian hordes. In despair over what was happening, unable to turn back the barbarians, Midas committed suicide by drinking a potion of oxblood. The kingdom fell into decline, leaving behind little more than a number of highly prized artifacts, many as yet unsolved mysteries, and the Midas myths to confuse matters.

