**GORDION CONFERENCE**

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Gordion is frequently remembered as the location of an intricate knot ultimately cut by Alexander, but in antiquity it served as the center of the Phrygian kingdom that ruled much of Asia Minor during the early first millennium BCE. The site lies approximately 70 km. southeast of Ankara in central Turkey, at the intersection of the great empires at the east (Assyrians, Babylonians, Hittites) and the west (Greeks, Romans); consequently, it occupied a strategic position on nearly all trade routes that linked the Mediterranean with the Near East.

The University of Pennsylvania has been excavating at Gordion since 1950, revealing a wide range of discoveries that span nearly four millennia. The vast majority of this material attests to the city’s interaction with the other great kingdoms and city states of the Near East during the Iron Age and Archaic periods (ca. 950-540 BCE), especially Assyria, Urartu, the Neo-Hittite city-states of North Syria, Persia, Lydia, and Greece, among others. Gordion is thus the ideal centerpiece for an exhibition dealing with Anatolia and its neighbors during the first millennium BCE.

Through a special agreement signed between the Republic of Turkey and the University of Pennsylvania in August of 2012, Turkey will lend the Penn Museum over 100 Phrygian and Lydian artifacts from four museums in Turkey (Ankara, Gordion, Istanbul, Antalya). This includes the majority of the material unearthed in Tumulus MM (the “Midas Mound”, ca. 740 BCE), a large number of objects from a series of Lydian tombs dating to the late 6th/early 5th centuries BCE, and several silver artifacts from a monumental tumulus in Lycia (the “Bayındır Tumulus”, ca. 700 BCE). There will also be loans from the Delphi Archaeological Museum (the ivory remains of the “Throne of Midas”) and the Oriental Institute.

No exhibition focused on Gordion has been held in the U.S. since the late 1950s (which occurred at the Penn Museum); the Turkish loan, however, makes possible an unusually large and elaborate exhibition, which will also bring together a disparate group of rarely seen objects from the Penn Museum’s own collection, particularly from Ukraine, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Greece. With the historic King Midas (ca. 740-700 BCE) as its major theme, the exhibition will encompass the relationships between Phrygia and Lydia, Persia, Assyria, and Greece.

Opening in February 2016 and running for ten months, this will be a signature exhibition in the U.S. northeast corridor, and one of the largest exhibitions ever mounted of the Penn Museum’s own excavations.

The exhibit will be accompanied by a scholarly conference scheduled for April 1 and 2, 2016. The conference will feature speakers who are specialists in each of the areas with which Gordion interacted, thereby allowing the political and cultural history of Gordion
to be placed in a broader scholarly context. In other words, the conference will present the latest research on Anatolia during the Iron Age and Archaic periods.