



## THE ANKARA FRIENDS OF ARIT

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### ARIT LECTURE

## Gordion after King Midas: Roman Soldiers, Eastern Wars and a Gothic Invasion

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**Wednesday, February 19, 2025, 7:00 pm**  
**(Turkish time)**

**in ARIT and online**



Cities of the ancient world are often occupied for thousands of years, and the passing of the millennia can bring dramatic changes to their character and function. Ancient Gordion, located in central Turkey, is one such settlement. It is best known as the Iron Age capital of the Phrygian kingdom, where King Midas ruled in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE, and Alexander the Great stopped by to cut the Gordion Knot in 333 BCE. In Roman imperial times, we are told by our surviving literary source (Strabo *Geography* 12.5.3) that Gordion had been reduced to a mere village alongside the Sakarya River. Yet recent excavation campaigns atop the Citadel Mound (1950-73, 1993-2005) and subsequent analysis of the finds have revealed a story that is much more complicated and deeply interesting. It is now recognized that Gordion served as a minor auxiliary base between ca. 50 – 125 CE, with two subsequent, final reoccupation phases between the late 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries.

This talk will explore and try to solve three major mysteries, which have arisen in the investigation of Roman Gordion. First, there is the arrival of Roman soldiers in the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century CE, ostensibly at a time of peace in central Turkey. Who were these auxiliaries, where did they come from, and what were they doing at this deserted, isolated site? Second, the base at Gordion was dramatically expanded in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, with new troops pouring in. What led to these changes, and could they be linked to the Parthian War (113-117 CE) of Emperor Trajan, the largest expedition in Rome's history? And finally, new evidence has arisen of a late Roman (4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century CE) occupation on the mound, with new houses and ceramic styles coming to the site. Who were these latecomers, and might they be linked to the invasions of the Goths in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century CE? By using our excavated evidence to address and attempt to answer these questions, this lecture will demonstrate how Gordion played a previously unknown yet quite significant role in the events of Roman times, long after the days of Midas and Alexander.

This lecture is hybrid. Please register for online participation:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/joining/register/FxcEt6UGSOmDPfhWFH7uMg>