IMPORTS AT GORDION
Lybian and Persian Periods

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Sometime during the first quarter of the 7th century, invading marauders known to
history as the Kimmers brought to an end the wealthy and influential kingdom
of Midas, having left stark testimony of their activities at Gordion, the Phrygian
capital. For central Anatolia the event created a political vacuum of uncertain
duration, while for Phrygia itself it put an end to foreign contact with the East,
hitherto her principal direction of foreign outlook. Although history is silent on the
subject, it may have been Cyges, the 7th century founder of the Mermnad
dynasty of Lydia, who first took steps to fill the void left by the Kimmers. At any
rate, by the early 6th century the issue of Lydian political influence on the plateau is
on somewhat firmer ground, as may be implied by the activities of Alyattes, a later
Lydian king, and his seemingly unrestricted passage through Phrygia to confront
the Persians on their western frontier. In the time of his successor, Croesus, it is
known on the authority of Herodotus
(1. 26) that Phrygia was firmly within the
Mermnad sway. Physical corroboration of this state of affairs is provided by the arti
cial hill to the southeast of the main city mound at Gordion, known as the Kiyük
Hüyük or Little Mound. It marks the site of a Lydian fortress, no doubt constructed
under Alyattes or Croesus. This outpost of Mermnad interests met its end with the
coming of Cyrus and his Persian armies soon after 550 B.C., the very threat which
the fortress was probably intended to counter. Phrygia's second period of foreign
rule, thus initiated, was to last until its liberation by Alexander the Great in
333 B.C.

The city of Gordion seems to have prospered under both her foreign masters,
although how well the Phrygians themselves fared, and what degree of autonomy
they maintained, cannot easily be deter
mined. In any event, the physical aspects

of local Phrygian culture, looking back to traditions firmly established in the 8th
century and earlier, continued to be strongly manifest in various areas of
material production. Together with this persistent local strain, and often affecting
it, can be seen much that is exotic, for the Lydian and Persian periods saw quantities
of foreign goods coming into the city from a variety of sources.

For Gordion, or any other site, such imported items are of potentially great
value, not only for their revelation of chronology, but also for the history of
ancient trade in general and for the various implications of political, economic, and
social concerns which they bear. Yet the evidence is delicate by nature, and leaves
unsaid much that is to be implied. For all that can really be known about an im-
ported object is that somehow, by some means of transport and under conditions
that were in some way favorable, it traveled from its source of manufacture to the
place where it was finally deposited as part of the archaeological record. The
way need not always have been direct, nor can one assume categorically that all which
did arrive at a given site came as a result of pure commercialism. Other modes of
travel were undoubtedly in effect, as many, it would seem, as are the modes of human
interrelationship.

These and other issues which beset the study of imports may be illustrated in the
context of Gordion's own. Since the corpus excavatum is great, selectivity is essential,
sometimes to the point of being ruthless.
Furthermore, it seems advisable for present purposes to concentrate upon goods whose sources are relatively well assured, since an import loses something of its impact if its origin is unknown. Excluding also what one might call "occasional," the principal areas which emerge are three: Greece, Persia and Anatolia.

Greece

In both the Lydian and the Persian periods, the principal index of material contact was through the Greek West. It is, too, the safest index, for although the question of specific origin may arise, especially with East Greek wares, there is seldom any doubt about the essential "Greekeness" of a particular piece. However, in dealing with Greek or other imported ceramics, there arises the general issue, usually unanswerable, of whether an amphora, flask, or other closed vessel which later became used as the soil in which the plant was sown was the original form of exchange or rather its contents. Cups, plates, bowls and the like obviously do not provide this uncertainty.

It is not until the first half of the 6th century, the time of Alcides and Croesus, that the volume of the Greek wares becomes of considerable proportions. This is, at any rate, the general period which saw the consolidation of the potter's art in Asia. East Greek pottery, which had been known in limited quantity in the 7th century, is now sold through standardized types which include cups, amphorae and plastic vases, some of which may have been produced in Rhodes. From across the Aegean come the products of Corinth, Sparta and Athens, together testifying to a broadening of ceramic horizons in relation to what is known from the preceding century.

From the first of these Mainland centers come vessels of primarily Middle and Late Corinthian style. Aryballoi and alabastra appear to have been most popular, and perhaps brought perfume, but skyphoi and kraters, neither likely types for the transport of any commodity, are not uncommon. Gustav and Alfred Körte, who excavated at Gordium in 1890, found six East Greek vessels, aryballoi and an alabastron, in their Tumulus I; these in fact outnumbered the local wares. Lakonian is the least frequent of the Mainland wares. What is known consists largely if not wholly of cups and belongs primarily to the second quarter of the century. Attic Black Figure pottery is of a similar range. Here too, cups of varying types seem to overlie other shapes in frequency. Known since 590 are the two "Gordion Cups" from the Körte Tumulus V; one by the renowned pair of Krithis (the painter) and Eriolinos (the potter), the other very close in style and perhaps also by Krithis. The University Museum excavations have added much to the Attic corpus of this period, including several specimens which are of value for chronological purposes. One may cite here an amphora reported by G. Roger Edwards in the American Journal of Archaeology 63 (1959) 294-95: coming from beneath the floor of a building belonging to 6th century Gordium, the vessel provides important datable evidence for the rebuilding of the city, an enterprise which one suspects is somewhat to be associated with the Lydian presence there. Alternatively, Attic pottery from the debris of the Kükük Hüyük fortress may be shown to benefit the Athenian chronology from its association with a closely datable historical event.

Straightforward as this Greek material actually came to Gordium during the Lydian period, that is to say before about 547 and the coming of the Persians, is a vital issue if one seeks to correlate patterns of foreign contact with the historical dimension. The question is particularly cogent in the case of several vessels whose production dates hover around the mid-century, for it could be argued that they came to Gordium in the years immediately after the Persian conquest rather than shortly before; in other words, that their importation occurred within a totally different political context. Although the physical evidence itself is largely equivocal, there are certain factors which tend to favor a pre-Persian date of entry for at least many of the Greek wares in question, especially those of the Mainland. The imports from the Kükük Hüyük mentioned above clearly indicate that at least some of the Attic vessels arrived during the Lydian period, perhaps only months or a few years before the conquest. Moreover, it is perhaps too much by way of coincidence that the sources of the Mainland pottery compare very favorably with what is known of Lydian foreign connections of the time, as though the vessels are a remote reflection of Mermnad politics and diplomacy. Thus Herodotus' account of the Lydian boys sent by Periander to Alyattes definitely indicates some kind of Corinthian link, even if the youngsters never made it to Sardis (Herodotus 3.48); while Croesus' treaty with Sparta is a firm statement of Lakonian relations in the years immediately preceding the fall of Lydia (Herodotus 2.70). Straightforward as various Lydian connections are less easy to come by, but may perhaps be implied by stories involving Croesus with Alcmeon (Herodotus 6.123) and Solon (Idem 1.29). Furthermore, it might be remembered that this was a time when a painter called Lydian the Pottery worked in Athens and when Athenian boys were being named Croesus. The conquest of Lydia would have disrupted these Lydian connections with the Mainland; to what extent it affected as well the flow of goods which crossed the Aegean to Asia Minor and the hinterland remains to be ascertained from the ceramic records of Sardis, Gordium and other Anatolian centers.

In no case are the quantities of Greek pottery overwhelming for this period. Even without a thorough statistical study it is obvious that the overall proportion is very low in relation to local wares or to Lydian. This in itself vitiates any attempt to draw any conclusions from the masses and points instead to a luxury traffic which was probably enjoyed primarily by resident Lydians and perhaps some Phrygians as well. This impression is to some extent supported by the fact that a fair number of the Greek vessels come either from the Lydian Kükük Hüyük or from costly tumuli, whereas the simple graves of the rank-and-file had no excavated contain no Greek pottery. Under what circumstances the goods came to Gordium is ambiguous—commercial enterprise promoted perhaps by Lydian merchants? Gift exchange between officials at Sardis and Gordium? Personal property being brought by a Lydian who took up a new post? At any rate, one suspects that most of the Greek wares at Gordium which arrived came by way of Lydia, that their very importation is ultimately a consequence of the Lydian presence in Phrygia, and that what Gordian received was essentially no more than what the Lydians of Sardis had access to, especially from the Mainland. The testing of these various impressions must await the publication of Sardis' own Greek pottery.

The Persian conquest, as intimated...
above, may have brought about a temporary decline in Greek imports, although the matter awaits fuller analysis of the material. East Greek pottery of the last quarter of the 8th century indicates that if there was a lapse from the west coast it was of no great duration, while by the end of the century, Attic imports are once more in evidence. They remain pre-eminent well into the 6th century, probably less because of any political considerations than for the Persians’ well-attested fondness for the products of Athenian potters. Since the publication of the Greek pottery from Gordion by Keith De Vries will include a full account of the Attic of this period, only a few remarks germane to the issue of trade need to be made here. The incidence of late Black Figure and Red Figure in relation to local wares indicates a new category. Furthermore, there seems little doubt that the traffic was a purely commercial one, although a pot may well have passed through many hands before it reached its final owner at Gordion. The mechanics of the trade are all but unknown: Ionia seems the most direct route, but the Prosymna and Byzantium may have played roles as well. At Gordion, the commercial aspect is reflected by such shapes as lekythoi and rhyta; these found particular favor within the Persian Empire as a whole, and it seems likely that many were produced by enterprising Athenian potters with the Persian market in mind. One rhyton, thought by Ellen Kohler to be in the Manner of the Sostratus Painter, is particularly interesting in this regard, for the artist and those close to him are known to have made conscientious efforts to appeal to the Persian demand in both shapes and subject matter. Whether Phrygians enjoyed any share of this trade is uncertain. If possession was not theirs, they were at least prone to occasional imitation. A local black polished bowl with a tondo of pattern-burnished decoration seems a clever attempt to emulate fine Attic black glazed wares with its stumped and rouletted designs.

After Alexander, what had been a luxury trade in Greek pottery became a commercial enterprise of vaster proportions. Imitation likewise increased, to the extent that the ceramic contents of a 3rd century house may closely resemble those of a Greek kitchen. The essential difference between the two periods is one of Greek influence from afar as opposed to Greek presence.

While pottery remains the principal gauge of material contact between Gordion and the Greek world, there are other kinds of artifacts—for instance, a tripod found in a cache of bronze vessels from a 5th century tumulus. Although fragmentary, there is enough to show that it was of Greek type and no doubt Greek manufacture. The legs, terminating in solid cast, claw-shaped feet, are each of two interlocking pieces, the outer hammered together with a rectangular plate which was in turn affixed by rivets to the shallow body. Additional plates must have been for the attachment of the high rings characteristic of Greek tripods: a piece of one such
In the same category of non-ceramic goods may be placed a red scaraboid gem depicting a grazing stag. Following in the tradition of the master lapidary Dexamenos, the seal portrays the type of subject that a Greek gem cutter of the later 6th century would perhaps have produced with Persian tastes in mind.

PERSEIA
Aside from a few cylinder seals of Achaemenid type, discussed by Rodney Young in “Progress at Gordium, 1961-1962” in vol. 17, no. 4 of the University Museum Bulletin and in “The 1961 Campaign at Gordium” in the American Journal of Archaeology vol. 68, relatively few items of purely Persian origin are known at Gordium. A noteworthy exception, unless its style is deceptive, is a handsome gold bracelet with lion heads from a wealthy tomb of the latter half of the 6th century. This is discussed by K. R. Maxwell-Hyslop in Western Asiatic Jewellery. Discovered as part of an impressive array of gold jewelry, of which certain other items may also be Persian, the piece suggests that at least some Achaemenid luxury goods were traveling west during the first generation or so of Persian rule. The circumstances which brought the bracelet to Gordium are again ambiguous, as is the nationality of its final owner, the cremated occupant of the tomb. It may be noted that a pair of very similar bracelets is worn by the dignitary shown in a roughly contemporary painted tomb near Elmalı in Lydia; see Machteld Mellink, “Mural Paintings in Lycian Tombs,” The Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of Classical Archaeology (Ankara 1976) pl. 252.

As a rule, one is forced to infer the presence of Achaemenid imports from local ceramic imitations. Various sorts of copies are known or suspected, no small number of which are connected with drinking. Such is true of a series of ceramic rhyta which imitate a famous Achaemenid design known primarily in gold and silver. For the rhyton type, one should compare No. 155 in Oscar White Muscarella [Ed] Ancient Art: The Norbert Schimmel Collection; No. 162 is a later ceramic version of the type from Anatolia. Another instance of local imitation of an Achaemenid type is provided by Rodney Young in “The 1961 Campaign at Gordium,” in American Journal of Archaeology, vol. 66, pl. 41, figs. 1a and 1b. Produced rather widely in Anatolia in Persian times and later, these copies imply local acceptance not only of a shape but also of a particular aspect of Persian table etiquette wherein wine, allowed to flow from the short spout at the base into a phiale or other such drinking vessel, was aerated. The procedure involved, adopted by Greeks as well, is illustrated by Noble in The Techniques of Painted Attic Pottery, page 152, Fig. 139.

ANATOLIA
For Anatolian connections pottery is once again of vital significance; but since so little is known about regional production during the 6th and 5th centuries, the matter of provenience becomes a major issue. For the time being, one has to rely to a great extent upon the somewhat questionable procedure of isolating that which does not appear to be local, and, at the same time, that which is not decidedly Greek or of a similarly well defined group. Aside from Lydia (discussed below), there are only a very few categories of Anatolian wares which are not totally enigmatic. One of these is generally referred to as Southwest Anatolian Black-on-Red Ware, a name which seems to be faithful to origins since the greatest concentrations are to be seen in and around Pindos. It seems, except for Lydia, to have been the most widely traveled of Anatolian wares, known as far afield as Ephesus on the west coast. The several varieties attested probably reflect both geographical and chronological factors, but just as it is a class that is often cited in reports, it is also insufficiently studied as a group.

At Gordium the most frequently occurring type is also the simplest, consisting primarily of small jars and “feeders” embellished with a monotonous series of bars, curvilinear meanders, and groups of thin lines, sometimes enclosed by heavier lines. An interesting archaeological note is that many come from simple graves, the same context in which the excavated examples of the Southwest are found. The chronology, especially that of the simple small pots, is a problem. Stratigraphic evidence from Ephesus indicates that at least some varieties were current in the first half of the 6th century. Certain types at Cordium occur in late 5th century contexts, but these same loci are notorious for their residual material.

Lydian pottery provides by far the firmest ground for assessing intra-Anatolian connections, thanks to the Harvard-Cornell excavations at Sardis and to the obliging idiosyncrasies of Lydian potters. In the 6th century, Lydian is second only to Phrygian in frequency at Gordium, this due less to its popularity among locals than to the Lydian presence up until the time of the Persian conquest.
The debris of the Küçük Höyük fortress produced great quantities, as did an adjacent settlement, so much so in fact as to suggest that the whole area was a Lydian quarter whose residents in many cases preferred their own country's wares and products to those of the locals. The shape most characteristic of Lydian production is the "lydion," of which the fortress produced numerous examples. Thought to be the container for a type of olive or thick unguent, the lydion is also a common item in graves, both humble and elegant, and in the city proper.

Of Lydian techniques, that which is most distinctive and diagnostic is marbling, whereby the surface takes on a richly textured and polychromatic appearance. Essentially a technological development of the 6th century, marbled wares appear to occur at Gordium with considerably less frequency than other Lydian types, perhaps the mark of an expensive product. Other technological features commonly associated with Lydian, but which may prove to be of wider usage, include the use of extremely micaceous clays, as are still to be seen in abundance in the pottery of modern Lydia, and an iridescent, often streakily applied glaze of the same basic type that was employed for marbling. Many skyphoi and lekythoi found at Gordium, from the Küçük Höyük and elsewhere, employ these techniques, as do a few larger vessels which imitate East Greek types.

Several other categories of ceramic imports are suspected to be of Lydian origin, although they are without the telltale signs just discussed. Crawford Greenewalt, Jr.'s research has been particularly instrumental in expanding the horizons of Lydian pottery. For example, a couple of Gordian sherds may now be identified as "Early Fikellura," which he thinks to be a Lydian imitation of the later Wild Goat Style of East Greece and to date between 635 and 575; see California Studies in Classical Antiquity 4 (1971) 153-180.

These several varieties alone represent an enormous quantity of vessels, and at the same time what must have been a substantial outlet for both Lydian potters and the manufacturers whose goods probably traveled in the lydions and certain other closed shapes. It seems reasonable to assume that many Phrygians helped to bolster the market. They at any rate imitated certain Lydian forms in their local wares. The Persian conquest seems not to have dampened the trade, for the same tumult that produced the Achaeoemiud gold bracelet with lion heads contained no fewer than ten Lydian vessels, mostly lydions, in its total fourteen. The chronology of Lydian wares at Gordium, and their relative abundance in given periods, await careful study of the stratified contexts. Short of this, the immediate impression is one of a trade of considerable duration, certainly spanning the 6th century and...
perhaps sustaining itself into the 5th as well.

Aside from a hoard of Lydian electrum coins, minted no doubt in Sardis sometime before the Persian conquest, the attempt to establish non-ceramic categories of Lydian materials encounters varying degrees of success. Certain seal stones of the Persian period, particularly those of a pyramidal type, may well prove to be the products of Lydian lapidaries; the pyramidal beads at least belong to a family which includes several examples bearing Lydian inscriptions (see John Boardman, "Pyramidal Stamps in the Persian Empire." JRA 1968: 49-62.). Few firm grounds is provided by other kinds of goods, for by the 6th century distinctions among Greek, Lydian and certain other brands of Anatolian become blurred, owing to the fact that Greek influence had progressed beyond the stages of merely quaint barbarisms to a very debt emulation of Greek style. This seems especially the case with minor arts employing primarily floral and floral-related motifs in the Greek vein. The architectural remains of Sardis, for example, clearly illustrate that such designs as lotus-palmette chains and egg-and-dart, although

connecting stems would be very much at home in an East Greek setting. On the other hand, the peculiar fan-shaped flowers might lead one to favor a Lydian, or general West Anatolian, source if one prefers to see in them the kind of substitution for a more normal Greek palmette which only a barbarian could conceive. Other articles do not yield such possibly intrusive elements but instead adhere closely to Greek concepts of form and design. Whether one is willing to concede that an ambiguity of origin exists depends largely upon one’s relative degree of faith in the artistic abilities of non-Greek peoples.

The ultimate factors which have allowed Gordion to display so much in the way of exotic materials are at once geographical and political. Since the city was well positioned on principal Anatolian highways, the means of communication were always there; yet the avenues which were to be emphasized and most heavily traveled were determined primarily by historical and political conditions. Most of the goods which found their way to Gordion from the 6th through the 4th centuries came as a consequence of political networks established by Lydians and Persians, over which the Phrygians themselves doubtless had little or no control. The result was that the ancient capital found itself in cultural agreements with prevailing empires. Both Lydian and Persian have placed indelible stamps upon the city, impressions which reflect not only their own respective civilisations but also their various interests in the world of Greece.