

The Legacy of PHRYGIAN CULTURE

The impact of Midas' reign on the political configuration of Asia Minor is well known; less obvious is the impact of Phrygian culture on subsequent developments in textile production, music, problem-solving slogans, and even the representations of liberty. What is the relationship between flamenco and the Phrygian mode in music, and why were Phrygian caps worn in the French Revolution? In this article, four authors demonstrate how influential Phrygia has been in the evolution of European and American culture.



WOMEN AND WEAVING IN THE CITY OF MIDAS

BY KATHRYN R. MORGAN



Scenes in Homer's *Odyssey* describe women weaving with their “fingers flickering quick as aspen leaves in the wind, and the densely woven woolens dripping oil droplets.” This vivid description of women’s work might also apply to the efforts of women in Iron Age Gordion. In Midas’ world, women worked hard at spinning, weaving, and sewing garments both to clothe their families and to participate in the wider world of commercial exchange, as they had been doing for many centuries. The

Author Kate Morgan examines spindle whorls and other artifacts associated with spinning, weaving, and sewing that have been excavated at Gordion.



excitement surrounding the discovery of the 800 BCE Destruction Level on the Gordion Citadel Mound in the 1950s had little to do with the thousands of textile production tools that eventually turned up in the excavated Terrace and Clay-Cut Building units. Rather, unaware of their function, excavator Rodney Young referred to the burnt clay loom weights as “doughnuts” and dubbed the room in which they were first found as “the Kitchen.” We now know, however, that as many as 300 women may have labored together in the Terrace precinct. In the summer of 2014, excavations underneath the Terrace further confirmed that, far from being a traditional activity that naturally grew up in the city over time, the enormous Terrace Complex was built by one of Midas’ predecessors to house this very industry. Much more than a kitchen, only an enterprise of significant symbolic and economic importance could justify placing the Terrace Building workspace at the very heart of the ancient city.

The extraordinary preservation conditions on the Citadel Mound and in the surrounding tumuli conserved many hundreds of tiny textile fragments in situ. They reveal that the highly varied and minutely detailed dark-and-light geometric patterns we see painted on Phrygian ceramics probably came from textile designs. Indeed, a rock relief at modern-day İvriz, Turkey—on the fringes of ancient Phrygia—shows a local king proudly wearing such patterned robes, along with a Phrygian-style belt and fibula. We can surmise that these were gifts from the city of Midas. Even hundreds of years later, Phrygian textiles remained a prized commodity: Ovid refers to them as clothing fit for a queen in his

ABOVE: This reconstruction of a woven fabric is based on actual pieces of cloth recovered at Gordion. *Illustration by Sam Holzman.* RIGHT: A rock relief of King Warpalawas, who ruled Tabal in south central Anatolia in the 8th century BCE, shows the king with patterned textiles like those manufactured at Gordion. *Photograph by Kathryn R. Morgan.*



Metamorphoses, and Romans called professional embroiderers *phrygiones*, after the Latin word for “Phrygian.”

Textiles clearly played a fundamental role in Phrygia’s cultural identity; as trade goods, they may have been a major vector of cultural expansion for Phrygia under Midas. However, we still know very little about the lives of the women whose labor contributed so much to the rise of Phrygia, its widespread fame, and its cultural legacy. Hopefully, continued scientific and contextual analyses of these finds from Gordion will help us to move ancient women out of the kitchen and into the wider world.

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THE PHRYGIAN CAP

BY C. BRIAN ROSE



One of the ways in which Phrygians were identified in antiquity was through a soft conical cap with the top pulled forward. This headgear, generally called the Phrygian cap, gradually became an identifying feature of any group of people from the Near East or Central Asia in antiquity. As a result, it was worn by characters as diverse as the Trojans, Persians, Scythians, and Amazons, among others, as well as gods such as Mithras, a favorite of Roman soldiers, and Attis, the consort of the Anatolian mother goddess Cybele.

During the Roman period, the Phrygian cap had a dual significance in that it could signal a high or low status based on its context. When it was worn by the Trojans, who had been recognized as the ancestors of the Romans, it was viewed in a positive light; when it appeared on the heads of the Parthians, who lived in ancient Iran and fiercely fought the Romans in the east, the cap's significance was negative. As a result, the Romans never placed images of Parthians and Trojans in the same area, since their common headgear meant that the Trojan founders of the Romans could be mistaken for their strongest opponents.

Another frequently used cap in ancient Rome was called the *pileus*; this cap was also conical and served as a symbol of both freed slaves and liberty in general. The assassins of Julius Caesar, for example, struck coins showing the *pileus* cap between their swords, as an indication of Rome's freedom from dictatorship.

Both caps gradually disappeared from public view during the Middle Ages and, by the 18th century, the



ABOVE: Compared to the Phrygian cap, the *pileus* cap, shown here on Odysseus, is conical. Red figure vase, ca. 360 BCE, from Naples National Archaeological Museum. LEFT: A marble head from Gordion (Inv. #7131-S-74) depicts a Persian wearing a Phrygian cap.



The Panama-Pacific International Exposition (1915) silver half-dollar included a figure of Columbia wearing a Phrygian-style cap.

pileus had become confused with the Phrygian cap. Thus, the latter cap acquired a connotation of liberty, which it had never before possessed. When female personifications of revolutionary France and the United States were created in the late 18th century, the Phrygian cap was chosen for their headgear. Even as late as the 20th century, the cap continued to be used for representations of both Columbia and Liberty on U.S. coins and war posters.

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THE PHRYGIAN MODE AND ARCHAEMUSICOLOGY AT GORDION

BY SAM HOLZMAN



The Phrygians were famous among the Greeks and Romans for their loud, energetic music and native instrument, the *aulos* (double pipes). Although a few Classical naysayers like Plato and Aristotle wanted the *aulos* and Phrygian music banned, the striking sequence of quartertones of the Phrygian mode was one of the most popular scales used by ancient Greek and Roman musicians. The name “Phrygian mode” survives in modern music theory as a minor scale with a flat second note that gives Flamenco music its distinctive sound.

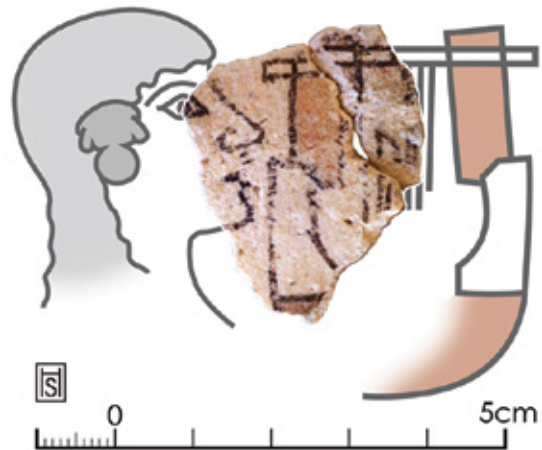
The stereotype of the Phrygians’ love for pipe music is immortalized in the myth of Midas’ donkey ears. According to Ovid’s version of the story, Midas stumbled upon Apollo’s music contest with Pan. When Midas gauchely announced that he preferred Pan’s pipes to Apollo’s lyre, the snubbed god of music cursed Midas with donkey’s ears as a visible sign that he had poor taste in music.

The Penn Museum’s excavation at Gordion has uncovered evidence that Phrygian music played at home was calmer. Surprisingly, stringed instruments, including tortoise shell lyres, were played in houses at Gordion at least as early as the Middle Phrygian Period. The quieter melodies of the lyre, it appears, had a place in household music in Phrygia. The historical King Midas may have lived in a soundscape in which the lyre and the *aulos* coexisted harmoniously.

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ABOVE: A dinos from Gordion Tumulus J depicts a lyre-player. Penn Museum Gordion Archive image #1997-P-636. RIGHT: On this fresco fragment from the Painted House at Gordion, a woman plays the kithara, a type of lyre favored by professional musicians. Reconstruction by Sam Holzman.



For more information about the musical instruments discovered at Gordion, see Holzman, S., forthcoming. “Tortoise Shell Lyres from Phrygian Gordion.” *American Journal of Archaeology* 120.4, 2016.

ALEXANDER THE GREAT AND THE GORDIAN KNOT

BY PATRICIA KIM



When Alexander arrived at Gordion in 333 BCE during his campaign against the Persians, he learned of a local Phrygian legend declaring that the individual who could untie a knot that connected the yoke to the pole of an ancient wagon would become the ruler of Asia. Alexander attempted in vain to untie the knot, but subsequently cut the rope with his sword, thereby fulfilling the prophecy and serving as a model for anyone who quickly cuts to the heart of a thorny problem.

The intricate knot in question was fashioned of cornel (*Cornus mas*) bark, and the wagon to which it was attached was reportedly located in Gordion's Temple of Zeus. In most versions of the story, the wagon originally belonged to Gordios, Midas' father, who rode it into Gordion when the city was experiencing civil strife. Following the prophecy of an oracle, who maintained that a wagon would end their strife, Gordios was subsequently proclaimed as ruler. As a result, the wagon was connected to the concept of kingship. By the time of Alexander's arrival, the wagon may have been housed in Gordion's "Mosaic Building," an elaborate multi-room complex paved in pebble mosaics with geometric designs.

While specific details of the story vary depending on the source, the conclusion is always the same: Alexander

was predestined to be king of Asia, which reached as far as the borders of India. The story of the Gordian Knot allowed historians to present Alexander's adventures and conquests as a divinely sanctioned event. An anecdote similar to that of the Gordian Knot occurred in Egypt in 331 BCE: Alexander trekked across the perilous desert to visit the oracle of Zeus-Ammon at Siwa, who prophesied that the Macedonian would conquer the entire world.



A detail from the Alexander mosaic, recovered from the House of the Faun at Pompeii, depicts Alexander and his horse, Bucephalus. From the Naples Archaeological Museum.

The story of Alexander the Great and the Gordian Knot remained well-known in every subsequent historical period. Renaissance and Neo-Classical paintings and engravings depicted Alexander cutting the Gordian Knot with his sword. Even Shakespeare, in *Henry V*, employed the phrase "the Gordian Knot of it he will unloose" as an idiom for "thinking outside the box." ●

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