The International Review of Ancient Art & Archaeology

# MINERVA

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1994 PUBLISHED IN GREAT BRITAIN £2.95/$5.00 USA VOLUME 5 NUMBER 1

CHILDREN OF HUMANITY: THE GEORGE ORTIZ COLLECTION

BOOTY FROM A ROMAN VILLA FOUND IN THE RHINE

NEW EGYPTIAN GALLERIES IN LONDON & NEW YORK

THE MAKING OF GREEK POTTERY

BETWEEN CAESAR AND MOHAMMED: UNCOVERING CHRISTIAN CARTHAGE

UNEARTHING A BYZANTINE CITY IN TURKEY

*Egyptian copper-alloy kneeling figure of Amenemhat III (1843-1798 BC), XIIth Dynasty. From the George Ortiz collection on display at the Royal Academy, London.*

01
9 770957 771018

MINERVA

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1994 VOLUME 5 NUMBER 1

*page 6*

*page 17*

*page 22*

*page 28*

**6 Children of Humanity**
*The George Ortiz Collection* George Ortiz

**9 With Holes in their Heads**
*Ancient Peruvian skull surgery*
Rose A. Tyson

**12 Notes and News from Egypt**
Robert S. Bianchi

**14 Unearthing a Byzantine City**
*Excavations at Amorium, Turkey*
Chris Lightfoot

**17 The Sackler Gallery of Early Egypt**
*A new gallery at the British Museum*
Peter Clayton

**22 Booty from a Roman Villa**
*The contents of a Roman villa sacked by Germanic raiders are found in the Rhine*
Kenneth Painter

**28 The Making of Greek Pottery**
*A new exhibition in Tampa highlights ancient ceramic techniques* Pamela J. Russell

**31 Between Caesar & Mohammed**
*Uncovering Christian Carthage*
Susan T. Stevens and Jim Richerson

**40 The Reinstallation of the Brooklyn Museum's Egyptian Collection** Richard A. Fazzini

2 News
34 Book Reviews
36 Numismatic News
45 Calendar

**NEXT ISSUE**
- Conservation and the Antiquities Trade
- Discovering Orpheus on a Lost Mosaic

**Editor-in-Chief**
Jerome M Eisenberg, Ph.D
**Managing Editor**
Anna Lethbridge
**Consulting Editor**
Peter Clayton
**Contributing Editors**
Robert S. Bianchi
Jerry Theodorou
**Publisher**
David Kidd
**Design**
Anna Lethbridge

Published in England by the proprietor Aurora Publications Ltd., 14 Old Bond Street, London, W1X 4JL.
Tel: (071) 495 2590
Fax: (071) 491 1595

**Advertisement Sales**
*(except US)*
Helen Beastall
14 Old Bond Street, London, W1X 4JL.
Tel: (071) 495 2590
Fax: (071) 491 1595
*(US)*
Suzanne Verdugo, Suite 2D, 153 East 57th St., New York, NY 10022.
Tel: (212) 355 2033
Fax: (212) 688 0412

**Trade Distribution**
*United Kingdom:*
SM Magazine Distribution Ltd, 6 Leigham Court Rd, Streatham, London SW16 2PG.
Tel: 081 677 8111
Fax: 081 677 0136
*US & Canada:*
Disticor, Toronto

Printed in England by Simpson Drewett, Richmond, Surrey.

**Annual subscription**
UK £14.00
Europe £15.50
Rest of world
(Air) £22/ US$40
(Surface) £15.50/US$28

Published bi-monthly.

All rights reserved; no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without either the prior written permission of the Publisher/or a licence permitting restricted copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency Ltd, 33-34 Alfred Place, London, WC1E 7DP
ISSN 0957 7718

©1994 Aurora Publications Ltd.

Second class postage paid South Hackensack. US Postmaster, please send change of address to Royal Mail International c/o Yellowstone International, 87 Burlews Court, Hackensack, NJ 07601.

# AMORIUM

## *Unearthing a Byzantine City*

*Excavations at the unique site of Amorium in Central Anatolia, Turkey, are slowly revealing the nature of a Byzantine city during the Dark Ages.* ***Chris Lightfoot,*** *Director of the Amorium Excavation Project, reports.*

Amorium is probably not the name that first springs to mind when one thinks of major archaeological sites in Turkey. Yet the city was in its heyday just as important as Çatal Höyük, Hattusas, Gordion or Sardis were in theirs. The reason for its prominence between the seventh and eleventh centuries AD lies principally in its geographical position astride the main southern route across Anatolia between Constantinople (Istanbul) and the Cilician Gates. As soon as the Arabs commenced their almost annual raids into Anatolia, Amorium became both a major centre for Byzantine resistance and a primary target for Arab attacks. So, in 644, only twelve years after the death of the Prophet Mohammed, came the first in a long series of assaults on the city.

In addition to its convenient location, Amorium had other qualities to recommend it to friend and foe alike. It was ideally suited for withstanding a siege, since it had been endowed, probably in Late Antiquity, with a splendid circuit of fortification walls. It also had an ample supply of ground water; the site is still dotted with wells, both old and new, which provide water not only for the modern village but also for the irrigation of the neighbouring sugar beet fields.

Although Amorium had a strategic importance, the site is not a prominent feature in the rolling landscape of the Anatolian plateau and easily loses itself in its immediate surroundings. In other words, the city is well camouflaged against attackers or modern-day visitors who are not quite sure where they are going.

Another advantage enjoyed by Amorium was that one of its sons rose to the imperial purple and became the emperor Michael II (AD 820-829), thereby founding the Amorian House, which ruled in Constantinople until AD 869. Its enhanced status, however, was also the cause of a major catastrophe – one that the present excavations can trace in the archaeological record. This is the well-documented siege of AD 838. In reprisal for the Byzantine capture and sack of an Arab fortress during the previous year the Caliph Mu'tasim (AD 833-842), the youngest son of Harun al-Rashid, set out from his capital of Samarra (in modern Iraq) at the head of a large army, determined to teach the young emperor Theophilus, who had succeeded his father Michael on the throne in AD 829, a bitter lesson. The Caliph's troops carried banners proclaiming Amorium as their principal target. According to the Arab historian al-Tabari, Mu'tasim 'planned the descent upon Anqira [Ankara] carefully so that if God conquered it for him he would go on to 'Ammuriyya [Amorium], as there was nothing in the land of the Byzantines greater than these two cities, nor anything more worthy to be his goal.' Having duly taken Ankara, the Caliph's forces arrived before Amorium on 1 August, AD 838. The siege, although it lasted only twelve days, is famous and has received considerable attention from both medieval and modern historians.

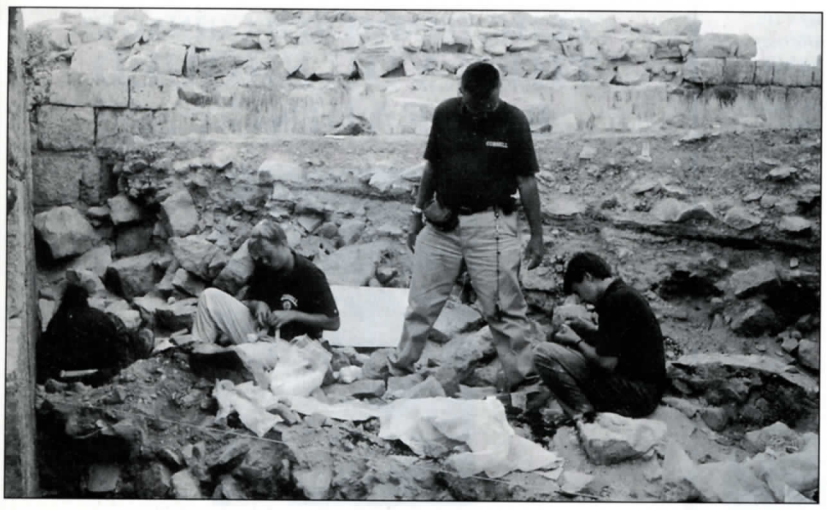
When excavations at Amorium started in 1988, a major aim was to find evidence for this siege. Attention was, therefore, directed towards the defences that encircled the city. A trench was opened on the southern side of the lower town, revealing a gateway, an impressive stretch of curtain wall and a large projecting triangular tower. The lower part of the walls comprises massive, finely-cut ashlar blocks, while above there are neat rows of smaller, roughly-dressed blockwork. These fortifications were clearly erected during peace-time when time, care and new materials could be utilised in the work. Their construction should be regarded as a major imperial enterprise. According to the eleventh-century Byzantine chronicler George Cedrenus, the city defences were rebuilt under the emperor Zeno towards the end of the fifth century. The walls surrounding the Lower City may well represent Zeno's work, although no archaeological evidence has yet come to light to prove this assertion.

*Textile fragment recovered from the destruction layer within the triangular tower in Trench AB*

It is apparent, however, that these fortifications were abandoned in the mid-Byzantine period and that the city's population thereafter took refuge behind the walls of the much smaller Upper City. Excavations within the triangular tower during the past two years (1992-3) have provided good evidence for exactly when and why this contraction of the settlement took place. Within the tower a

*(left) fragment of a terracotta portrait head (late Hellenistic?) found amongst the mixed deposits in the Step Trench.*

*(right) Bronze coin showing Michael II with his son, the Caesar, Theophilus; found during the excavations in 1989, identified after cleaning and conservation in 1993.*



*Dendrochronologists from Cornell University at work collecting samples from the triangular tower.*

massive destruction layer has been excavated. It comprises a large amount of rubble collapse, which shows obvious signs of a violent end to the tower's existence. Within this collapse have been found broken and scattered pottery vessels, iron arrowheads, and a number of coins, including one that dates from Theophilus' reign. Traces indicating that the collapse was accompanied by a massive conflagration are to be seen everywhere. The interior faces of the surviving walls are blackened in places; some of the pottery fragments and much of the stone and brick rubble are scorched; and within the debris some well-preserved pieces of carbonised string and textile were found. But, most importantly, a large number of burnt timbers were uncovered within the tower. These had fallen in such a confused way that it is now difficult to reconstruct their original positions, but it is likely that they constitute the beams supporting an upper floor or storey rather than a roof.

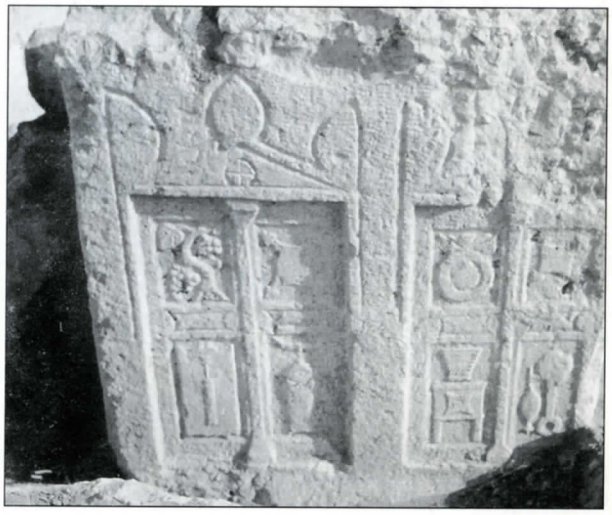
Initial examination of the carbonised wood suggests that three different species were used in the construction – oak, pine and poplar. One beam was found to have the bark still intact, and this should provide a precise date for the felling of the timber and, hopefully, for the construction of the tower. This material is of great significance not only for the dating of events at Amorium but also for the gap that it should fill in the absolute chronology. The samples are presently being studied at the Malcolm and Carolyn Wiener Laboratory for Aegean and Middle Eastern Dendrochronology, Cornell University, and the results are eagerly awaited.

After the destruction of the tower the Lower City walls appear to have lain neglected for a considerable time. There was no attempt to rebuild them, and all future efforts to fortify and protect the city were concentrated on the Upper City. Excavations there in the past two seasons have revealed the latest phases of the Byzantine settlement and associated with them is a final rebuilding of the fortifications that encircle the top of the large, man-made mound. The trench that has been opened on the south side of the Upper City has also produced some unexpected results. It had previously thought that the site had been completely abandoned from the end of the Byzantine era at Amorium until a community of Balkan refugees was settled there in 1892. The excavations have revealed evidence not only of a gradual transition in the character of the Upper City's occupation between the Byzantine and Seljuk periods but also for sporadic, temporary habitation thereafter right through to late Ottoman times. The latter probably reflects the presence of wandering bands of Turkoman tribesmen in this part of Central Anatolia for many centuries.

In 1993 it was decided to open a new trench in the area of the Upper City. The intention was to try to gain a clearer idea of the chronology and stratigraphy of the mound or höyük on which the Upper City stands. For this reason a spot was selected on the north side of the Upper City where the mound reaches its highest point and where the slope is at its steepest. Another reason for choosing this area was that it provided an opportunity to investigate the Upper City fortifications where they stood as the main line of defence for Amorium and to compare this section of wall with that revealed on the southern side, where the walls face into the Lower City. Time allowed only for three steps to be dug this year, taking the trench down a total of 7.5 metres into the side of the mound. Although the step trench produced a wealth of material, including some very fine pieces of Hellenistic black-glazed ware and Roman Eastern Sigillata A, the contexts clearly contained mixed assemblages, presumably deposits laid down in the Byzantine period. It has, therefore, so far failed to provide good stratigraphic evidence for the pre-Byzantine occupation of the mound. Nevertheless, it does underline the comprehensive nature of the medieval occupation of the site. The Byzantines so thoroughly rebuilt and reorganised the city that little is recognisable as belonging to Roman or earlier times. The massive changes in the physical appearance of the city, involving the demolition of its Roman public buildings and their replacement (often re-using the same material) with defensive walls, churches, administrative buildings and, presumably, palaces, bear ample witness to the investment in resources and effort that was put into this strategic site. The excavations are slowly revealing this transformation, providing us with a unique opportunity to study a Byzantine city in its entirety.

Unlike most cities in Asia Minor, which rapidly declined and shrank as a result of the Persian and Arab invasions in the seventh century AD, Amorium grew and prospered, becoming during the Dark Ages a major military, administrative and ecclesiastical centre and reaching its apogee under its imperial sons, Michael II and Theophilus. Further work, particularly in the domestic areas of the city, holds out the exciting prospect of shedding new light on a poorly-

*(below left) One of a pair of large Byzantine storage jars found intact and complete with their lids during 1993. The presence of such storage jars in the Upper City attests to the important role it must have played as the main centre of refuge and safety during the numerous sieges of the city.*



*(below) An example of a Roman tombstone (of the 'Phrygian doorstone' type), re-used in the Byzantine period for buildings in the Upper City.*

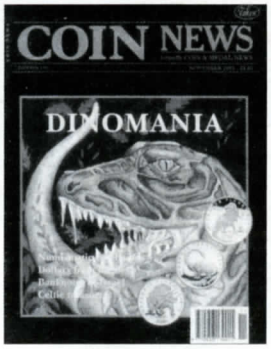
known and little-research period. Amorium may seem remote in both time and place, but its brave inhabitants represent some of the most important defenders of Christendom against the Arab onslaught. Their spirit, despite such calamities as the siege and sack of the city in AD 838, was not broken until the arrival of the Seljuk Turks in the second half of the eleventh century AD, by which time the states of Western Europe were able and ready to take up the challenge against their Islamic rivals.

*Work in progress (Upper City, Trench L), showing buildings constructed during the last phases of the Byzantine city (10th-11th century) and which continued in used after Amorium was occupied by the Seljuk Turks.*

***Dr Chris Lightfoot*** *of Bilkent University, Ankara, is Director of the Amorium Excavations.*

**INTERESTED IN ANCIENT, GREEK, ROMAN, CELTIC, HAMMERED COINAGE?**

**THEN YOU SHOULD BE READING . . .**

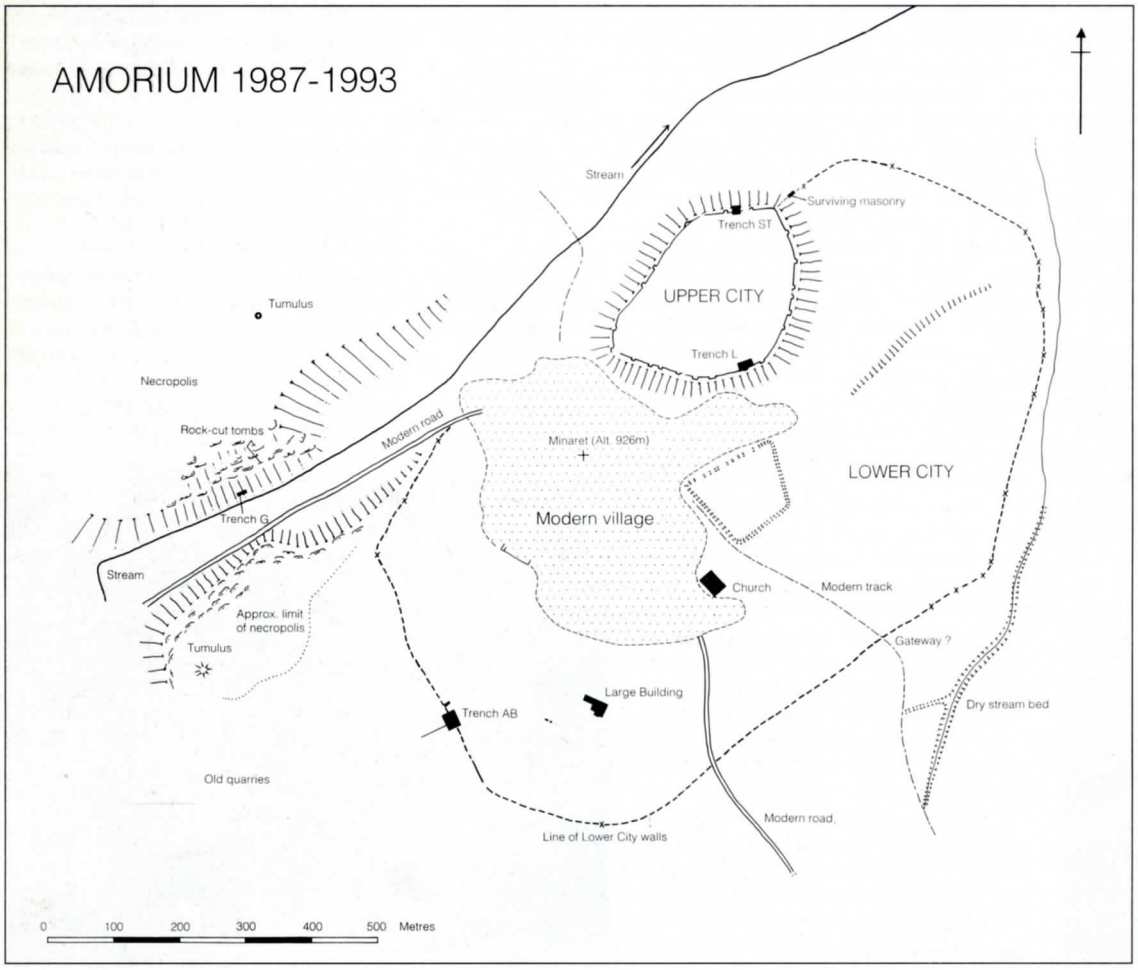



*Be sure of your issue, order from your local newsagent - or subscribe today*

ANCIENT * MEDIEVAL * MODERN
NEWS * VIEWS * AUCTION REPORTS
(plus new ANCIENTS supplement)

***If you are unfamiliar with COIN NEWS send for a FREE sample copy***

**TOKEN PUBLISHING LTD.**
**105 High Street, Honiton, Devon EX14 8PE**
**Tel: 0404 45414 Fax: 0404 45313**




*Plan of the site, indicating the main features and trenches.*