

The Bone and Ivory Objects from Gordion

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DESCRIPTION:

Gordion is a paramount site for understanding the culture of central Anatolia over more than 3,000 years, from the Bronze Age to the Medieval period, but is most renowned for its Iron Age horizon, when it was royal capital of the mighty Phrygian kingdom. The hundreds of bone and ivory artifacts excavated at Gordion constitute a highly diverse body of material, and this publication presents one of the largest and most important assemblages of its kind in the Near East. The artifacts give remarkable insight into the tools used in crafts and manufacturing processes, a variety of decorative items, the artistic developments among local craftspeople, as well as indications of trading connections with other regions to the east and west.

Ivory was a highly valued material used for decorative pieces in many areas around the eastern Mediterranean. The objects from Gordion are a significant addition to this corpus and illustrate both widely dispersed features common in other contemporary ivory-working centers, as well as the singular motifs and styles that developed in the Phrygian milieu. A unique assemblage of ivory horse trappings from the Early Phrygian Citadel are an important illustration of this cultural confluence.

While bone was primarily used for strictly utilitarian objects, there are numerous pieces that show this lowly material could be used for high quality items such as inlays set into the wooden furniture exceptionally attested at Gordion. Even the sheep knuckle bone (astragal), decorated with incised designs and letters, gives a glimpse into the daily life in the community.

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