

Foreword

David W. Packard

Zeugma first caught my attention in the spring of 2000 in an article by Stephen Kinzer in the *New York Times*, which described Zeugma as a Turkish Pompeii about to be buried by a dam rather than a volcano. Only a few months remained, but the challenge seemed intriguing.

I contacted Prof. David Kennedy of the University of Western Australia, who had published a recent book on Zeugma and had campaigned to bring to the world's attention the threat posed by the dam. Kennedy was very willing to go back that summer with some of his colleagues from previous seasons; but I soon realized that the very short time made it necessary for us to think of something on a much larger scale, which would require major coordination and logistics. Prof. Richard Hodges suggested that Oxford Archaeology, a leading firm providing archaeological services under contract, might be able to organize and manage a significant campaign on short notice.

This suggestion proved to be a good one. Under the very able leadership of Rob Early, Oxford Archaeology fielded a remarkable team. Dr. Olcay Ünver, head of the Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP), arranged to set up a large camp at Birecik, where our team lived and worked during the hot summer months as the dam was slowly filling.

The actual digging is only the first step, and numerous experts in special fields must help conserve, study, interpret, and publish the finds. Oxford Archaeology began this work, but the later stages were coordinated by Prof. William Aylward, who is the editor of these volumes. The text printed in these three volumes is also available on our web site in a searchable format. We have therefore not thought it necessary to provide a printed index. The web address is zeugma.packhum.org.

Some might ask whether it was really necessary to disturb the sleeping ancient town. It can plausibly be argued that once the dam has been filled and stabilized, the ancient remains will be safe for possible exploration in the distant future when the accumulation of silt eventually makes the dam useless, and when archaeology may have better tools.

The proper balance seemed to me that we should try to learn something now to support the gradual growth of our knowledge of the past, but that we should try to minimize damage to evidence that can be studied in the future. Our work covers only a small part of the entire city, and much remains for the future. The potential current damage to archaeology is greatest at the edge of the water, where wind and waves create constant stress. We paid special attention to such areas.

Regardless of whether additional excavation was strictly necessary, the conservation of items already excavated was

an urgent priority. In June of 2000, a team of experts made an assessment of the conservation requirements arising out of excavations at Zeugma. This team included Prof. Richard Hodges and Dr. Roberto Nardi, who is one of the leading experts in the world on mosaic conservation and was vice-president of ICCM, the International Committee on the Conservation of Mosaics.

In the two previous years, many mosaics had already been excavated by the Gaziantep Museum and by others. Many of these mosaics were stacked in piles in the garden of the Museum exposed to the weather and in the basement of an adjacent building. They were subject to damage from humidity, temperature, and micro-organisms. Photographs from June of 2000 document the storage conditions of the Zeugma mosaics at the Gaziantep Museum.

Dr. Nardi proposed a comprehensive plan for the professional conservation of all Zeugma mosaics. The work would be done by professional conservators, specialized in mosaic conservation, according to the international standards of their profession.

The Packard Humanities Institute (PHI) agreed to provide full financial support for this important project, which was conducted by the Centro di Conservazione Archeologica di Roma (CCA), under the immediate direction of Dr. Nardi. This very expensive program involved teams of up to twenty people working more than three years. Nardi trained many Turkish collaborators to work with his team on the project.

The Gaziantep Museum did not have suitable space for this conservation work, or even for proper storage of the mosaics. PHI therefore paid for the construction by GAP of two new buildings, located behind the museum. These buildings provided a fully equipped laboratory for mosaic conservation and were left behind for the future use of the Gaziantep Museum.

In 2004, after Nardi's team had completed the restoration of the Zeugma mosaics, we made a major effort to organize a temporary exhibition of Zeugma mosaics at the Topkapı Palace in Istanbul. Prof. Nurhan Atasoy was especially helpful in planning this proposed exhibit, which was to have been presented by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, with funding from the Packard Humanities Institute.

We had already made very substantial progress towards organizing what would have been a truly sensational exhibit, when a group calling itself "The Gaziantep Zeugma Platform (GZP)" initiated a hostile public campaign against us. The GZP claimed that the Zeugma mosaics could not be shipped safely to Istanbul, and that "there is no other

attempt to transport any mosaics anywhere in the world.” This was totally false. Mosaics are often transported safely for exhibits, even in different continents. A threatening group of persons accompanied by TV cameras was allowed to enter the CCA conservation work area on March 11. This group shouted insults at the Italian conservation team, accusing them of damaging the mosaics and harming Turkey. Members of the Italian team were later placed in police cars for interrogation. The Topkapı exhibit was cancelled.

This cancellation was the direct result of public hostility generated by misleading and irresponsible statements of people (including local archaeologists) who knew, or who should have taken the trouble to learn, the true facts. They asserted that we were conspiring to transfer the mosaics from Zeugma to Istanbul and never return them. This also was totally false. In fact, we had recommended exhibiting them permanently at Zeugma, while the GZP wanted them in Gaziantep. In a letter to the Minister of Culture, M. İstemihan Talay, dated May 25, 2001, I had presented PHI’s proposal for a Zeugma Museum and Study Center. At a press conference in Istanbul on June 21, 2001, we again proposed creating (and helping to fund) a new Zeugma Foundation. Here is part of my statement:

This foundation would design and build a new Zeugma Museum and Study Center at the site. All objects excavated at Zeugma (past, present, and future) would be stored here. Storerooms with adequate space and appropriate environment would be provided, along with workshops for study and conservation.

The Museum would have a large area for public exhibition of objects found at Zeugma, including the famous mosaics, but also other finds of all types. The Zeugma Museum would aim to provide the highest quality visitor experience, and it would expect to become a major tourist destination in its own right.

There would be a firm commitment to professional conservation of all objects, as well as the excavated site itself. The conservation program would have the dual goal of conserving the finds and also providing opportunities (as a training center) for the continued development of Turkish expertise that can be applied also at other sites in the region and elsewhere in Turkey.

The Museum and the archaeological site would be integrated fully into the regional planning, as a kind of “archaeological park.” Other historic sites in the region might be coordinated into a master plan, both for scientific study and for touristic development.

The Museum and Study Center would provide employment opportunities for the local population. The increased tourism generated by Zeugma could have a major economic benefit for the region. It is especially appealing for me to imagine that, in addition to its scientific rewards, a properly designed project at Zeugma could help support a better life for the local residents of the region.

The authorities did not welcome this initiative, and Turkish funding was instead obtained for a large mosaic museum at Gaziantep. Few visitors will realize the contribution of Nardi’s team to the conservation of these spectacular mosaics. A press release by the *Anatolian News Service* stated that their conservation was entirely a Turkish effort.

We hope at least that these three volumes will make a contribution towards the gradual increase in our knowledge of the ancient world.

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