

Domuztepe Excavations

Domuztepe, a mound about 12m high, was first discovered in 1993, and became the subject of a joint study by the University of Manchester and University of California at Los Angeles in 1995. The British Museum also collaborated as a sponsor of the second stage of the excavations. The mound appeared to have been occupied as early as the sixth millennium BC, and the project focused on the later prehistoric levels. The first year was concerned with an intensive survey, and between 1996 and 1998 full excavations were undertaken.

In 1998 excavations occurred in five different locations. Soundings were taken on and off site. A section had been cut into the edge of the site during field levelling, which made a strategic point to undertake a stratigraphic sounding; here the earliest levels appeared to date back to approximately 4500BC. Eight levels were excavated. Operations were not undertaken in the north and west due to the presence of unharvested crops. On top of the south mound over 700m² had been excavated, revealing buildings with narrow rooms; here a settlement sequence became clear. An operation in 1997 in another area of the site had uncovered a very interesting funerary deposit; work on this was continued in 1998 and about 25 skulls and a substantial quantity of human bone material was recovered. The site's function remained unclear, though it appeared to be the site of a ceremony. Faunal remains on the site were well represented, and it appeared as though the local environment was exploited for materials to make tools, bowls, and other objects.

The fifth season took place in 1999, and attempted to finish excavation at some of the sites they had opened in previous seasons. They again focused on prehistoric deposits and were surprised to find a Christian cemetery cutting into one of the older ones. Work was continued on the series of archaeological levels dating from the third to fifth millennia BC. The 'funerary deposit' was also investigated further and found to have contained cattle and dog bones. Some of the human bones had been deliberately broken, and belonged to as many as 30 people. It also appeared as though the site was not built upon for some time after having been filled; only at the end of the Post-Halaf phase did construction in the area begin again. Small finds were abundant, including fragments of obsidian bowls and decorated pottery.

During July and September 2000, a major study season took place. Specialists studied and discussed the finds and also took time to prepare a display on the site for the Kahramanmaraş Museum. Flotation was undertaken for some items that had not been sorted previously, so new artefacts continued to flow in. Two of the specific studies undertaken were on stone artefacts and their origin and usage, and architectural features.

Though originally only five years of excavation had been planned, it became clear that there was a need for further excavation, and in 2002 a new four-year phase of fieldwork was initiated. Work commenced with two separate approaches: excavation in the main area, and a surface survey that focused on systematically collecting artefacts across a large area. The latter project was accomplished using magnetometric and electromagnetic technology, and proved to be very helpful in revealing information about the structures underlying the surface; test trenches in selected areas largely confirmed the geophysical survey results. The complexity of the site's stratigraphy became clear as work commenced on three different areas. Work was also continued in the 'death pit', where some plastered baskets of an unknown function were found.

In 2003, the summer season was shorter than the previous ones and focused on the prehistoric remains dating between 5800BC and 5600BC. The entirety of the 'death pit' was successfully excavated and the excavation at the main area of the site was expanded, providing more

information on the final architectural phase. The ancient slope of the site was also found towards the southeast of the main area. Christian graves were uncovered on the western side. A sounding at the very top of the site provided stratigraphic information on the site's occupational history.

In 2004, work on the main area continued, even as some sub-projects were carried out: on- and off-site coring took place, as did work on Roman and post-Roman remains, ceramics analysis, and a geophysical study of the site. By this point, over 1400m² had been cleared in the main area, and work was dedicated primarily to clarifying excavations, rather than extending them. They discovered more about the red soil terrace and made some interesting small finds. A series of ditch ovens was also discovered. Sections of buildings of the Roman and Medieval periods were uncovered.

2005 was the tenth year of fieldwork at Domuztepe. Though they had intended to focus primarily on outstanding questions encountered during past excavations, researchers were led in new directions by new discoveries. Work on the site's main area produced a rich assortment of small finds, and burnt structures in the southwest corner. The most exciting discovery was a collection of 300 late Constantinian coins. A large-scale environmental project aimed at better understanding the sedimentary sequences of the Narli plain; coring around the site helped provide information on environmental changes that the region had undergone, and allowed some hypotheses to be made about the site's connections to the surrounding landscape.

In 2006, a study season was conducted in order to deal with the backlog that had built up over years of excavation. 25 team members participated in the studies, and prepared material for publication. Though the primary focus was on the prehistoric Halaf material, work was also done on the Late and Post-Roman deposits. Pottery sherds and animal bones, ground stone, human remains, beads, bowls and other items were recorded, conserved, and drawn.

In 2007 no work was conducted, so 2008 became the first season of renewed excavation since 2005, and the first of a new five-year fieldwork programme. Domuztepe artefacts were reorganised in new containers, and a selection was prepared for display in Kahramanmaraş Museum. The primary goal of the third phase of fieldwork was to understand how the site had changed across time, and the way it had functioned as a settlement. In the main excavation area, excavation concentrated on the 'red terrace', and clarified its construction phases. A new research area was opened on the spur of the mound to the west of the summit where two 10x10m trenches were opened. A magnetometer survey was carried over a wider area and indicated further large buildings. Well-stratified prehistoric material, including pottery from several occupation phases, was discovered in the eastern part of the site.

There were both archaeological and non-archaeological developments in the 2009 season. The red terrace was found to be about 75m long, and it was found to be associated with a variety of non-domestic activities across the ages. A probable well was also found; at least, a cylindrical shaft. The material culture discovered over the course of the years helped to create one of the best documented chronological sequences in Turkey, one that ranged from the Neolithic to the Late Halaf. Outside of excavations, a new building was constructed at the site, and a garden was planted. Plans for the Kahramanmaraş Museum display continued to be developed.

Because of financial restrictions, no fieldwork occurred in 2010, though during August and September studies at the museum were undertaken. The hiatus also provided an opportunity to catalogue and reorganise material found in previous seasons into better storage containers, as well as to digitise all the records. Drawings, photographs, and studies on the various small finds were

made. Finally, the last steps, mainly design and conservation work, were put into place for the Kahramanmaraş Museum exhibit, which was due to open at the end of 2010.

Fieldwork was resumed between mid-July and mid-September 2011. It was found that the total depth of the deposits dating to the seventh millennium BC were much deeper than any excavated previously. Three sections within the main operation site were focused on in this season, and much pottery was found. The well was fully excavated until the water table was reached; it had been back-filled nearly immediately after it had been dug. Items found in the fill were found to be from the early Ceramic Neolithic, which meant that those who dug the well in the Halaf period had likely known something about the site's past history. The well also created an ideal opportunity to make a very narrow, deep sounding. The red terrace was also opened further, exposing some burials. Some environmental samples were taken from surrounding areas, and some deep trenches were dug in order to continue the core taken from the well; all of which assisted in reconstructing a picture of the environment as it would have been at the time of the Domuztepe settlement.