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THE ZEUGMA PROJECT 1997 - 2001

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Project history

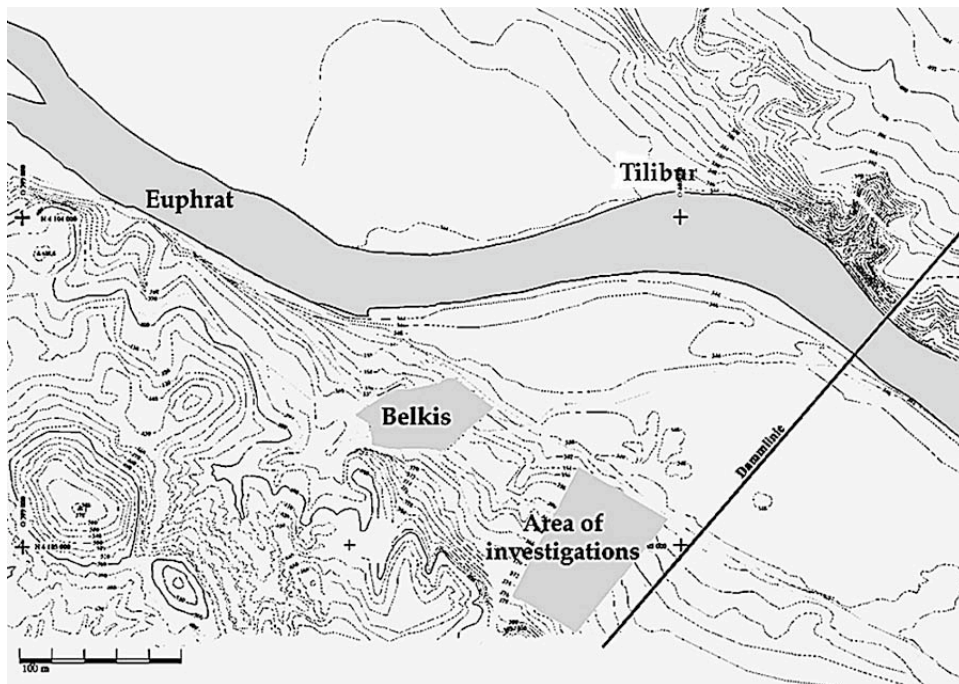
By their own initiative, the members of the project group have formed an independent and privately financed team in 1996, in order to contribute to the salvage efforts in those areas of Zeugma that were endangered by the imminent flooding of the Euphrates valley. The project is a joint undertaking together with the Archaeological Museum Gaziantep, and is under the patronage of the Universities of Bern (Department of Ancient History and Epigraphy) and Lausanne (Institute of Archaeology and Ancient History). It has received financial support by Swiss and International institutes and associations. Field-work at Zeugma has continuously been carried out by the members of the project group since 1997, and is ongoing. In 2002 the project group joined the Mavors-Institute.

Methods and results 1996- 2001

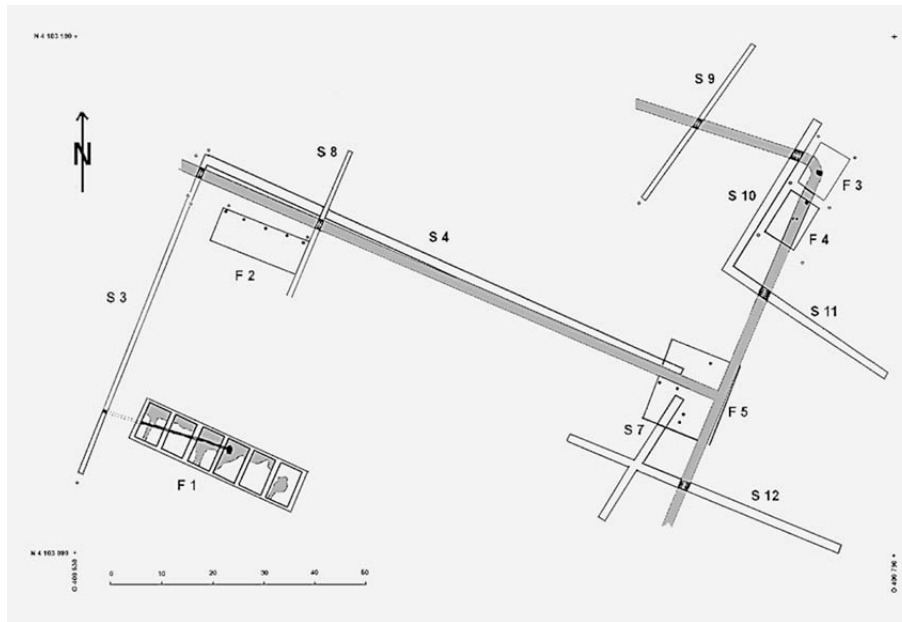
Research in the field was preceded by a detailed study of all hitherto known sources concerning ancient Zeugma. Furthermore, two intensive surveys were undertaken in 1996, in order to localise possible Roman garrison places in those areas of ancient

Zeugma which were due to be flooded after the completion of the Birecik dam. A detailed analysis of Russian satellite photographs which were acquired for this purpose clearly appeared to confirm first results, for they showed the typical outlines of two large, overlapping Roman military camps at the very spot identified by our team during the 1996 survey.

Soundings in early 1997 further reinforced these results. In spring 1998 and 1999 final proof was achieved by uncovering several large areas. Both camps could be dated to the first century AD, and information on the internal building structures and the length of occupation was gained. The modern archaeological methods thereby used proved to be of great advantage, as there were no remaining stone structures.



Area of investigation 1997-1999 (C.B. Rüger and W. Rutishauser)



Trenches, areas and the outlines of the early Roman camps (C.B. Rüger and W. Rutishauser)

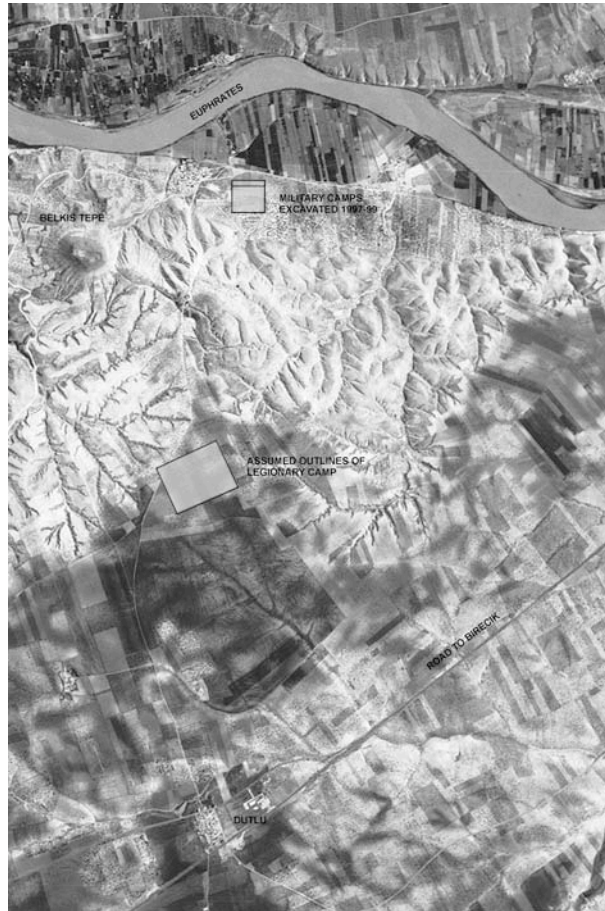
These results are of far-reaching consequences for modern archaeology and history. For the discovered military structures are not only the first early Roman military camps on the Euphrates ever to be thoroughly investigated, but they are also the earliest structures of this kind known in the area. Hence, important information was gained both on the archaeology of such early camps in the East, as well as on the history of Roman foreign relations and frontier policy on the eastern border of the Empire in the first century AD. The archaeological observations suggest that the walls were constructed in part from dried mud bricks and partly from tamped mud. The investigated internal structures, however, appear to have been constructed from dried mud bricks only. The excavated findings, though far from numerous, date both military camps to the first half of the first century AD. Both camps were occupied for a very limited period of time only.

Thus, the two superimposed Roman military forts on the upper terrace of the plain East of Belkis village were temporary camps only. Josephus (*Ant.* 18,4,5. cf. *Tac., Ann.* 6,31ff.) and Tacitus (*Ann.* 12,11ff.) report Roman attempts under Tiberius in AD 35 and Claudius in AD 49 to establish friendly Parthian princes on the Parthian throne, as well

as, in connection with these attempts the construction of military camps *apud Zeugma*. It is not impossible to identify the investigated military installations as the camps mentioned by Josephus and Tacitus. It is, however, equally possible, that other reasons led to the construction of either of these forts (cf. e.g. Tac., Ann. 15,3 and 9).

Another insight gained by the 1997-1999 investigations is that – contrary to the generally held opinion – the large fortress of *legio IV Scythica* was not situated within Zeugma itself nor immediately by the city on the banks of the Euphrates. The large and famous legionary fortress of the 2nd and 3rd centuries is most probably be found somewhere in the hinterland of the ancient city and still awaits discovery.

In March 2000 a survey of the area between the Belkis water-tower and Dutlu village, east of the new road to the Birecik dam was carried out. It revealed a hitherto unreported vast area of c. 20ha with large amounts of fragments of Roman ceramic, tiles, basalt hand mills and building stones from other areas. The interpretation of satellite photographs, the remains of important infrastructures (roads, aqueducts), strategic considerations, as well as an analysis of the topography all allowed for the conclusion that this area could well have been the site of the great fortress of *legio IV Scythica*. Soundings carried out in 2001, however, revealed no archaeological evidence of habitation apart from a small and apparently private Roman aqueduct.



Russian satellite photograph (KWR-1000, 22.05.1992) with the outlines of the early Roman military camps (investigations 1997-1999) and the assumed legionary fortress (investigations in 2000 and 2001).

This result now clearly excludes the possibility that the area investigated in 2001 was the location of *legio IV Scythica's* fortress. We are thus a step further towards the location of the fourth legion's permanent garrison place.