

Sinop Archaeological Survey: notes from the field, summer 2010

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We are coming to the last week of the 2010 field season in Sinop now and have many interesting results to report. We began the season with a geomorphological coring survey in the beautiful natural preserve of Sarikum on the west coast of the promontory. Prof. Mark Besonen (Texas A&M Univ. Corpus Christi) led this phase of our program, which involved solving many new logistical problems, like building a platform (“the Ark”) from which to work.



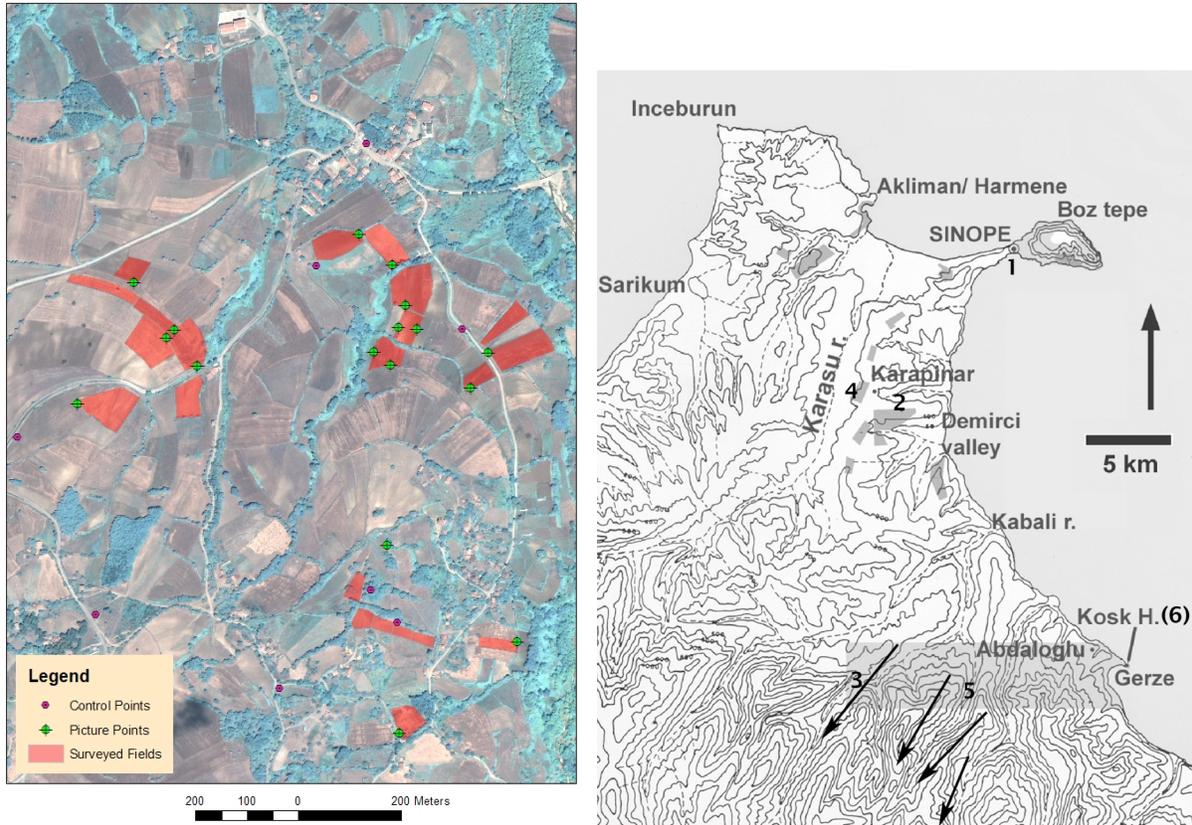
(L) Getting the platform into position in Sarikum lake; (R) Wrapping a sediment core for geomorphological and environmental analysis in the United States.



Sample map showing the locations of sediment cores taken at Sarikum lake during 2010

We obtained 40 meters of sediment cores from Sarikum that will enable us to study changing proportions of pollen and erosion of soils associated with the spread of farming in the region. We are conducting similar environmental studies in several areas of the promontory in order to understand the diverse patterns of land use including agriculture and forest clearance across the promontory over the past 5,000 years.

We began our program of field walking at the start of July using a much improved GIS system developed by CSUN graduate Matthew Conrad (B.A. Anthropology 2007, M.A. Geography 2009) for planning and recording purposes. This new system more than doubled our productivity and enabled us to investigate systematically the demographic patterns surrounding potential ancient mountain road systems. Our team walked more than 100 fields in the Karli village area and tested the main tributary systems of the Sarimsakli river, possibly one of the corridors used by pre-modern travelers to get through the difficult mountains behind Sinop. The GIS enabled us to develop a sampling design that tested for occupation on ridges and middle elevations overlooking flood plains, in foothills and along mountain terraces. We identified 10 sites in this area previously thought to have been unoccupied in antiquity.



(L) GIS generated map of survey tracts in the immediate area of Karli village; (R) Alternative paths for ancient mountain crossings in the hinterland of Gerze (anc. Carusa). Karli is near #5.

Our field walking team continued the systematic approach that our project has used since the 1990's. Spread out in ten-meter intervals each team member collected pottery in a one-meter transect area. Finds were counted, weighed and analyzed for ware types.



(L) Team members walk a transect near Karli village (Sinop) while Matthew Conrad maps the tract on a satellite image using a netbook computer. (R) Team members led by Dr. Susan Sherratt (Sheffield University) analyze and arrange ceramic finds at the end of a tract while project leader Owen Doonan (CSUN) takes notes.



(L) Owen Doonan records a Roman wall. (R) Sue Sherratt and Owen Doonan discuss the interpretation of a late Roman hillside site.

One of the most exciting new initiatives we are working on is the luminescence dating and physical analyses of hand made pottery and local building materials from sites in the region. This process is enabling us to construct a solid chronology for prehistoric ceramics, to clarify local handmade pottery technologies from historical times, and to analyze the production and distribution of simple building materials (bricks, roof tiles, large storage vessels) in the region. We carefully sampled the previously recorded sites of Kocagoz and Maltepe-Hacioglu for samples using a gridded pick-up system that provides control over the spatial distribution of ceramics and other evidence. At Maltepe it was necessary to strip off the vegetation in 1 m² sample areas in order to get a reliable sample of material. At Kocagoz a washed-out road-cut offered a rare opportunity to observe the stratigraphy of the site. An Early Bronze Age pit contained bones, burnt floor daub and a small globular pot that contained carbonized materials for radiocarbon dating.



(L) Aksel Casson (McGill University) strips off topsoil revealing pottery and lithics at Chalcolithic Maltepe. (R) Owen Doonan investigates a road cut at Kocagoz that exposed an Early Bronze Age 5000 pit containing bones, carbonized materials, ceramics and burnt architectural daub.

The last week of the season involves detailed studies of ceramics by Dr. Krzysztof Domzalski (Polish Academy of Sciences) and a Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) study of the early Greek colony in the area of the later city wall. Our work has raised a lot of local interest, from the village tea house up to the national television network TRT. We are looking forward to share more results as our post-field analyses progress.



(L) Krzysztof Domzalski (Institute of Archaeology, Warsaw) analyzes pottery found by the Sinop Regional Survey and (R) Emre Evren (Istanbul Technical University) conducts a Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) survey of the possible early colony site.



Initial raw GPR data overlaid on Google Earth image of the Sinop kale – some initial observations suggest a possible burial area 5-6 m below the present surface and remains of small huts beneath that. Stay tuned!