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## New Digs: Zeugma

On July 5<sup>th</sup> 2005 Turkey issued a set of stamps depicting mosaics found at Zeugma. Since I was coming across a plethora of information about Roman mosaics at the time, I went online to research the topic. I also found some photos of the mosaics these images may have been taken from, which follow at the end of this short article.



**KING OF EUPHRATES ACHELOOS**



**AKHILLEUS MOSAIC**



**OCEANOS and TETHYS MOSAIC**



**THE GYPSY GIRL MOSAIC**

Four stamps were issued in 3 different values in the new currency, each depicting a different area of the mosaic.

Turkey's southeast province of Gaziantep (15 miles from present day Syria), is known today for its industrial areas and pistachio nuts. The nuts are their sole source of income. However, the village's main asset is the ruins of the ancient city of Zeugma, which has stayed buried beneath the pistachio groves for nearly two thousand years.

Carchemish was an important state following the fall of the Hittite Empire to the "Peoples of the Sea" in the twelfth century BC. The ancient city of Zeugma - or rather two cities - on each side of the river, Seleuceia and Apamea - was founded in 300 BC by Seleucus I Nicator, one of Alexander's generals who had been made satrap of Babylon. In AD 198 the Treaty of Apamea was signed whereby the Seleucids gave control to Rome.

Zeugma played a dominant role in the area until it fell to the Assyrians, probably in the ninth century BC. The city was originally named for the general and called "Selevkaya Euphrates." In 64BC Zeugma was conquered and ruled by Roman Empire. With this shift in governance the name of the city was changed to Zeugma to mean "bridge-passage."

During Roman rule, the city became one of the attractions in the region. Zeugma was on the Silk Road connecting Antioch to China with a quay on the river Euphrates.

In AD256 Zeugma was invaded and fully destroyed by the Sassanian King, Sapur I. The invasion was so dramatic that Zeugma city was never able to recover. Additionally, a violent earthquake hit the city and buried it beneath rubble. Zeugma never regained the prosperity it had during Roman rule.

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## New Digs: Zeugma (continued from page 1)



At left is a mosaic depicting Ariadne. Regrettably a large section of this mosaic was stolen in June 1998.

In September/October 1996 excavations were made in the valley, below the road and near the 400 meter contour. A villa - previously excavated in part by David Kennedy - was uncovered and some mosaics were found.

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The excavation in Zeugma took place in the region that went under the waters once the Birecik Dam has been completed as of Oct.4. 2000. The first excavations started in 1987 and in 1992 systematic excavations started.

Starting in May 1999 excavations were carried on nonstop until Oct.4.2000 After the are completion of in regions A & B plans were to start the excavations in section C which is believed to consist of official buildings. This region will be dug to form an open air museum. It is still not clear who will do the excavations and how and by whom it will be supported financially. Packard Humanities Institute is still waiting for a reply from the Turkish Ministry Of Culture after making a suggestion of 50 million dollars for the excavation in region C and forming the open air museum. They have already provided a 5 million dollars contribution. Some of the mosaics have been moved to the garden of the Gaziantep Museum.

regained the prosperity it had during Roman rule. During the 5th and 6th Centuries the city fell under Early Byzantine domination, but as a result of ongoing Arab raids the city was abandoned. Later, in the 10th and 12th centuries a small Abbassid population settled in Zeugma.

The water to put out the fires lit by the Parthians in Zeugma has finally arrived, albeit delayed by some 1750 years. It has, however, brought a further disaster in its wake. *(By Ozgen ACAR - Turkish journalist*



Site of main excavations at Zeugma