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Gregory McMahon Associate Professor of History, COLA, travels to Turkey

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Turkey



Gregory McMahon

Associate Professor of History - College of Liberal Arts

Every summer since 1993, Professor McMahon has travelled to central Turkey to conduct a research project at the Çadır Höyük Excavation site. He takes UNH students with him to integrate teaching and research.



Ali Gennaro '12 with Professor McMahon

As the director of the Çadır Höyük Excavation, which has been conducting an ongoing research project since 1993, I spend six to eight weeks in central Anatolia (Turkey) every summer. Because of permit complications, our project decided to do a study season this year, in which we work on materials from previous seasons of excavation rather than digging on the site. This is an essential part of every archaeological project, since during excavation seasons everyone on the team is too busy digging and doing initial processing of finds to be able to do the kind of in-depth analysis of evidence necessary for understanding and publication. This summer's season was therefore a much-needed respite from our normal regime of daily excavation, as we begin to make sense of what we have discovered over the last several summers.

As an associate professor of history, directing this excavation provides me with a unique opportunity to integrate teaching and research, since I take UNH students with me every year to work on the excavation. This year Ali Gennaro, a Classics major, joined me in Turkey for the season. Ali's intrepid approach to her education, can be seen in her travels: she spent the spring semester in Rome at the Intercollegiate Center for Classical Studies, the first part of the summer volunteering at an excavation in Portugal, and then came on to join us in Turkey for the later part of the summer. As part of her time in Turkey, Ali spent several days with the team in Ankara, the capital of Turkey, before going out to the site. That allowed her to get a grounding in the archaeology and history of Anatolia at the Anadolu Medeniyetleri Müzesi (Museum of Anatolian Civilizations), where the entire spectrum of ancient Anatolia's rich cultural heritage is on display.

My work this summer was a balance between research at the dig house and meeting with a variety of government officials as we prepare for a major excavation season next year. As director, I am responsible for our relations with the provincial, district, municipality, and village authorities, so I spent time with the Director of Culture for the province of Yozgat, the Kaymakam (district governor), the mayor of our market town of Sorgun, and, crucially, the Muhtar (mayor) of our village. At the dig house we worked primarily on preparing reports of previous seasons of work. Our lithics specialist continued his work with the available local stone, doing some experimental archaeology by actually shaping stone tools using traditional knapping techniques. We were also fortunate to have an artist in residence this season, who completed a variety of drawings that require more artistic ability than most archaeologists can bring to this part of our work. We also spent time at the site itself, not excavating, but examining off-season damage to the trenches and discussing where to continue digging and where to open up new trenches next summer.



Archaeologists at the Cadir Hoyuk Excavation site in Turkey

My travel grant from the Center for International Education was an integral part of my funding for this study season and conference presentation, and I am deeply grateful to the Center for continuing to fund international travel which in my case allows me to blend teaching, research, and presentation of our work.



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