

## National Report

The New York Times

King Midas's Funeral:  
Happy Hour at a Tomb

U.S. Team Finds Clues to Ancient Feasts

By JOHN NOBLE WILFORD

Chemical analysis of dirty dishes and drinking cups found in a tomb in Turkey 42 years ago have given archaeologists revealing clues to what ancients considered a feast fit for a king, perhaps the King Midas of the legendary golden touch.

Everyone dined on barbecued lamb or goat in a spicy stew with lentils. They washed this down with a potent mixed drink of grape wine, barley beer and mead. Judging by the size of three huge bronze cauldrons — the reservoirs of drink — a good and not very sober time was had by all.

The occasion was a royal funeral 2,700 years ago at Gordion, capital of the powerful Phrygian kingdom, where Midas ruled around 700 B.C. After eating and drinking, the mourners lowered the log coffin of their king into the tomb, along with wooden dining tables and hundreds of bronze serving vessels, drinking cups and pottery jars.

Out of either tipsy slovenliness or some custom, they did not bother to wash the dishes.

Archaeologists at the University of Pennsylvania, using advanced techniques of chemical analysis, have now made the most of the dregs and leftovers. They describe the menu of the royal funerary feast in a report being published today in the journal *Nature*.

"Our findings have an important bearing on the cultural antecedents of Midas's Phrygian kingdom and on the wider application of molecular archaeological techniques to other ancient foods and beverages," Dr. Patrick E. McGovern and colleagues wrote.

The chemical examination of congealed clumps of leftovers in pottery jars and other vessels produced traces of fatty acids, cholesterol and triglycerides, identifying sheep or goat as the entree. Carbon remains suggested that the meat had been barbecued.

Other compounds showed that leg-

A Dinner  
in Memory  
of the King

## ENTREE

Barbecued Goat or Lamb  
Lentils in olive oil, honey and  
wine with fennel and anise

## BEVERAGE

Kykeon, vintage 700 B.C.  
(a wine-beer-mead punch)

ume seeds, probably lentils, had been added to the stew, along with olive oil, honey and wine. For spice, the Phrygian chefs tossed in a dash of Mediterranean herbs, either anise or fennel.

Scrapings from the bronze cauldrons and the drinking cups revealed the presence of tartaric acid, calcium oxalate and beeswax, evidence of a wine-beer-mead punch known to the Greeks as kykeon. And there seemed to be plenty to go around.

Because about 100 drinking cups were found in the tomb and each of the three cauldrons had a 33-gallon capacity, Dr. McGovern said in an interview, each of the feasting mourners could have consumed a gallon of joy.

Scientists and other scholars at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology said the new findings provided, in the words of one, "dramatic, direct evidence of ancient Mediterranean cuisine and custom."

Previous evidence of funerary feasts in antiquity came from a few texts. The Hittites, whose empire flourished before the eighth century B.C. in what is now southern Turkey



This skeleton, found in a Turkish tomb 42 years ago, may well be that of the King Midas of legend. Residue analysis on the pottery also discovered in the tomb has now allowed scientists to describe the funeral feast.

and northern Syria, left cuneiform tablets describing food being offered to mourners at royal burials. In Homer's *Iliad*, the Trojans feasted and drank a mixed fermented beverage at the burial of Hector.

Now scholars can almost smell and taste the banquets they once could only read about. Indeed, the Pennsylvania museum has announced that it is planning to recreate a King Midas feast next fall.

Because the practice of mixing fermented drinks was common in the Greek world of the time, archaeologists say, finding the residues of a similar drink at the Gordion tomb is compelling new evidence that the Phrygians arrived in that region from Europe, probably northern Greece or Bulgaria.

The site of Gordion is in what is now central Turkey, near Ankara.

The tomb supposedly holding Midas was discovered in 1957 by a University of Pennsylvania team of archaeologists led by Dr. Rodney S. Young. Within a mound more than 150 feet high and 1,000 feet wide, the archaeologists found the well-preserved wooden tomb and a log coffin containing the skeleton of a king, age



60 to 65. Around the coffin stood elaborately inlaid wooden furniture, some of the earliest and best-preserved furniture in the world. The three bronze cauldrons were resting on iron tripods. Inside the cauldrons were many of the smaller pottery vessels and the drinking cups.

The rancid smell of spoiled meat overwhelmed the archaeologists when they opened the tomb. At first, they suspected that the furnishings and the residues of food and drink might have been placed there solely for the king's use in the hereafter.

But Dr. Elizabeth Simpson, who has spent years studying the tomb furnishings, said she was reminded more of the remains of a grand feast in the manner of those associated with burials throughout the ancient world. The feast, Dr. Simpson said, was presumably held outdoors near the tomb, there being no room inside for the many mourners.

Soon after the discovery, Dr. Simpson, a research associate at the university museum and also at the Bard Graduate Center for Studies of Decorative Arts in New York City, became the first to propose the chemical study of the feast's leftovers. The results then were inconclusive.

"We didn't have the kind of analytical instruments then that we have now," Dr. McGovern said. "We've really come a long way in 40 years. Most archaeology focuses on the examination of inorganic materials. But it's the organic that can tell us what people ate and drank, among other important things."

The samples extracted from the jars and bowls were analyzed by such techniques as infrared spectrometry, high-performance liquid chromatography-mass spectrometry and gas chromatography-mass spectrometry. Collaborating with Dr. McGovern's group in the testing were scientists from the United States Department of Agriculture, SmithKline Beecham Pharmaceuti-

als, Vassar College and Scientific Instrument Services. The research was supported by a grant from the J. M. Kaplan Fund, a frequent underwriter of archaeological innovation.

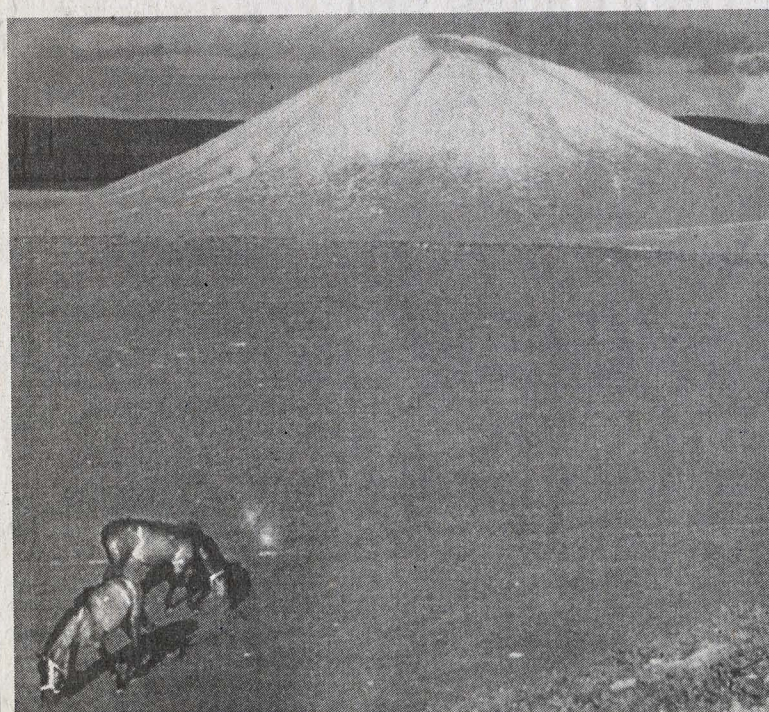
For Dr. McGovern, an archaeochemist, the Midas menu was the pièce de résistance to his years of research on the food and drink of antiquity. He had previously examined residues of clay pots to determine the earliest known wine, from 5400 B.C., and the earliest known barley beer, from 3400 B.C. Both were found at ruins in the Zagros Mountains of Iran.

Although the Gordion tomb has never been positively identified as

At the rites for a fallen ruler, a hearty stew and all you could drink.

that of King Midas, Dr. McGovern's group said in the journal report, the association "is strongly supported by the monumental size of the earthen mound built over the tomb, the richness of the burial goods and the contemporaneous Assyrian inscriptions."

If the mourners were in fact feasting to the memory of the Midas who later became a figure of mythology, the irony is inescapable. He was a real king of the Phrygians (one of several of their kings of that name) but is famously remembered through a legend of avarice. It was said of Midas that everything he touched, even his food and drink, turned to gold. And so, rich as he was, he nearly starved to death.



The mound, more than 150 feet high, that contains the tomb.

Retired Agent  
Is Accused  
Of Conspiring  
With Mobsters

By CAREY GOLDBERG

BOSTON, Dec. 22 — A federal grand jury here indicted a retired F.B.I. agent today on charges that he conspired in crimes with two reputed mob leaders who had been longtime F.B.I. informers.

The agent, John J. Connolly Jr., who has denied all wrongdoing, has been a central figure in a long-playing federal case here against the reputed mobsters, James Bulger and Stephen J. Flemmi, that has raised questions about just how much F.B.I. agents protected their criminal activities. The case has been an embarrassment to the F.B.I. and could have broad implications for the often-murky relationships between law-enforcement officials and criminal informers.

Mr. Flemmi has testified that one of his F.B.I. handlers (not Mr. Connolly) told him, "You can do whatever you want, just don't clip anybody."

Mr. Connolly's lawyer, R. Robert Popeo, said tonight that his client was being prosecuted for doing his duty.

"I characterize this indictment as outrageous," Mr. Popeo said, adding that Mr. Connolly "did his job, he did it well."

The Justice Department has been embarrassed by the Bulger case, he said, and "that's fine but don't change the rules of the road retroactively."

Mr. Connolly pleaded not guilty tonight to charges of racketeering, obstruction of justice and conspiring to commit racketeering and obstruction of justice. He was released on \$200,000 bail, Mr. Stern said.

The racketeering charge accuses Mr. Connolly of taking a series of gifts and cash from Mr. Bulger and Mr. Flemmi for his superior, John Morris, between 1981 and 1987. Mr. Morris, who has been granted immunity, has admitted in court that he took the gifts.

The racketeering charge also involves the F.B.I.'s failure to investigate accusations that Mr. Bulger and Mr. Flemmi had illegally taken over a liquor store.

The obstruction of justice charge concerns an accusation that Mr. Connolly, who retired in 1990, tipped off Mr. Flemmi in 1988 about an F.B.I. wiretap and in 1995 about a grand jury indictment that was about to come down against Mr. Flemmi, Mr. Bulger and others.

Mr. Flemmi is in prison awaiting trial on other racketeering charges, but Mr. Bulger fled and remains on the run, one of the F.B.I.'s 10 most wanted fugitives.

Mr. Connolly has maintained that he knew that Mr. Bulger and Mr. Flemmi were not angels, but that he was following accepted procedure and kept his superiors informed of the criminals' doings.

The relationship with the mobsters began during a period in the 1960's and 70's when the F.B.I. was intent upon crushing La Cosa Nostra, he has said, and was willing to strike deals with criminals perceived as lesser threats.

Donald K. Stern, the United States attorney here, said tonight that "these charges are serious and reflect a corrupt and long-term relationship between persons in the business of extortion, bribery and loan-sharking, and an F.B.I. agent who protected them from prosecution."

The indictments stem from months of investigation by a special Justice Department task force composed of prosecutors and F.B.I. agents with no Boston ties.

The practices used in the handling of Mr. Bulger and Mr. Flemmi, as they have emerged in federal court here, have been so disturbing that they spurred a months-long policy review by the Justice Department that, officials said this spring, would surely lead to new rules requiring agents to share more about the relationships with informers.

Such relationships tend to be so delicate that they are often agents' most closely guarded secrets — and can often lead to their greatest coups. Much has been made of the fact that Mr. Connolly and Mr. Bulger came from the same South Boston neighborhood, and that their personal rapport powerfully bolstered their professional relationship.

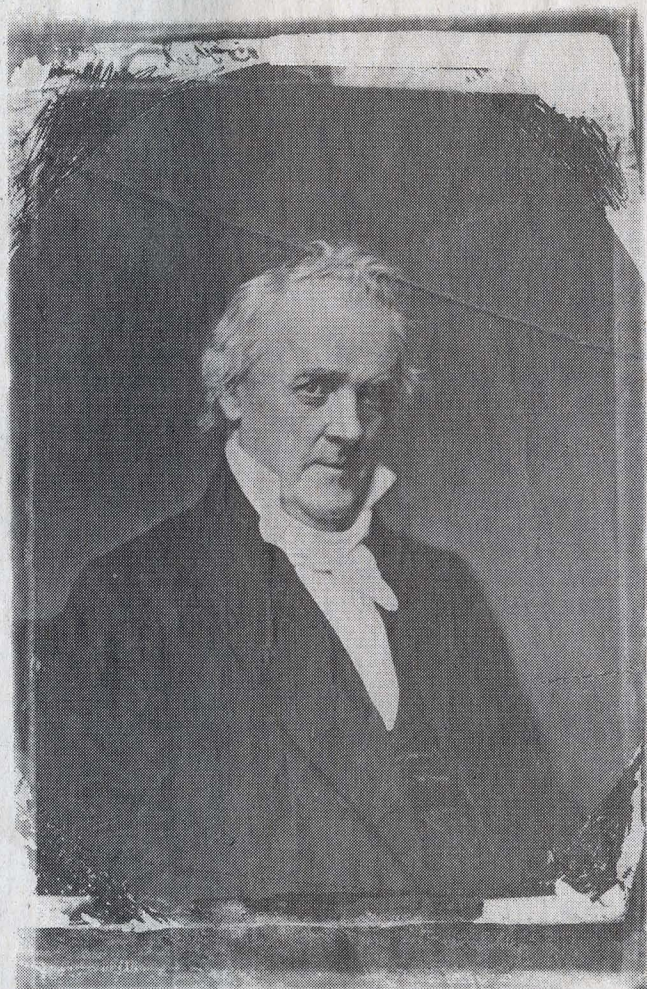
Mr. Connolly has refused to testify in the federal court case, but he said in an interview earlier this year that he believed Mr. Flemmi and Mr. Bulger should receive immunity for crimes, like loansharking, that they committed with the government's knowledge.

It was understood, he said, that they could commit crimes, so long as they were not violent. There was a very basic calculation at work, he said: "We were going to use a gang of 2 to get rid of a gang of 42."

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