

# SARDIS, 2008

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Archaeological research at Sardis was carried out for two and a half months in 2008. We wish to thank Minister of Culture Ertuğrul Günay; Director General for Cultural Heritage and Museums Orhan Düzgün; Deputy Director Abdullah Kocapınar; Excavations Division Director Melik Ayaz and Excavations Division Officer Serap Kocaman, for their support and good will throughout the season. The director of the Manisa Museum, Müyesser Tosunbaş was again a great help in studying objects in the Museum, and with many other aspects of the season. Enver Akgün, archaeologist at the Konya Museum, was Bakanlık Temsilcisi during the 2008 season. His experience, advice, good will, and friendly support made the season a great pleasure, and we are very grateful for his help and encouragement throughout the summer. Crawford H. Greenewalt, who has directed work at Sardis since 1976 and has presented reports at every symposium since the very first in 1979, retired as field director; he will, of course, continue his work at Sardis for the foreseeable future.

Excavation in 2008 took place in four locations in the city: the theater, at the Lydian fortification, in a pair of Late Roman underground tombs, and on the Acropolis (Fig. 1). Our goals in the excavations of the theater were to understand better the building's two major phases, Hellenistic and Roman, and to expose earlier, Lydian buildings. Previous excavation had shown that the Roman cavea has been largely robbed out, leaving only traces of mortared rubble and small sections of pavement of the diazoma. A new trench in the

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cavea of the theater exposed mortared rubble foundations of the seats, and a slightly more substantial line of mortared rubble which may be part of an upper diazoma (Fig. 2). Further excavation in the lower diazoma uncovered more of its travertine pavement, one stair block and traces of wear in the floor of the passageway, which help locate one of the radial staircases, shown tentatively in dotted lines in figure 2.

Excavation of the west parodos wall attempted to identify and uncover a staircase leading into this diazoma, similar to the one uncovered in 2006 on the east. This had been entirely robbed out, however, perhaps during the construction of the railroad in the 19th century. The parodos walls are built with a grid of clamped limestone blocks, the empty spaces of which were filled with mortared rubble. This wall retains a fill of mudbrick, visible where the wall has been robbed out. The mixture of construction systems is an interesting aspect of this theater, combining Roman, Hellenistic, and Lydian building technologies.

This Roman theater seems to be a rebuilding and expansion of an earlier, Hellenistic theater. A deep artificial earth fill, excavated to a depth of more than 5 meters, must be the embankment of the Hellenistic theater. The Hellenistic fill extends all the way to the top of the excavation, showing that the Hellenistic theater was as large, or almost as large, as the later Roman phase, at ca. 108 meters in diameter. The latest material from this fill dates to the late third century B.C. or, perhaps, to the first half of the second century B.C. This Hellenistic phase therefore might postdate the sack of Sardis in 214/13 B.C., when Antiochus III used a theater as a base of operations. We have not identified traces of an earlier Hellenistic building, although we suspect it was on this spot as well.

Another important goal of excavation in this area was to continue the excavation of one room of a Lydian house, built on this hill before it was converted into a theater (Fig. 3). Excavations in 2006 and 2007 uncovered part of a room whose floor was covered with broken Lydian pottery and other artifacts. Although securely datable imported pottery from this destruction

stratum is still lacking, we associate the destruction of this building with the capture of Sardis by Cyrus the Great in the 540's B.C. This destruction level offers a unique opportunity to expose more of the Lydian city with well-preserved and closely dated assemblages of artifacts. Last year's excavations completed the excavation of this room of the house, including a cylindrical limestone column support and more of the schist floor of the room. Artifacts recovered include ten spindle whorls, fragments of a Myrina amphora with Orientalizing decoration, Further excavation is planned for 2009.

The Lydian fortification on the west side of the city has been a focus of excavation for more than 30 years now (Fig. 1, no. 2). Excavations over the years have revealed tantalizing hints of earlier monumental buildings here, which were almost completely covered by the 20-meter-wide fortification of about 600 B.C. The goal in 2008 was to explore the early levels predating the colossal fortification.

One such early feature was exposed in the very first year of excavation of the fortification, in 1977. A sondage was, where the modern highway had already destroyed much of the wall's superstructure. This sondage revealed, beneath the later wall, a few stones of another massive building.

In 2008, we reopened and widened a sondage near the highway dug in 1977, which had excavated through the stone socle of the Lydian fortification to expose an earlier wall beneath (Figs. 4-5). We were only able to expose one face of the structure, which is made of large roughly worked boulders, at least two meters thick, and is almost exactly aligned with the later fortification. Its size, alignment, construction, and location make it very probable that this is indeed an part of an earlier circuit wall of the Lydian city. As with the later wall, there are already aspects we do not understand, such as the corner in the superstructure. The foundations beneath continue to the south, suggesting that this is not a gate or a true corner of the building, but might be similar to the recesses which are found on the later fortification. Two pebble surfaces run up to the early wall, but neither of these produced many very closely

datable artifacts. The wall must date to the seventh century B.C., but perhaps not very early in the seventh century.

In 2007 looters had broken into two Late Roman tombs just outside the Roman city wall, and tried to remove the wall paintings with a circular saw (Fig. 1, no. 3). At that time there was time to do only emergency conservation. In 2008, we reopened the tombs and completed excavation and conservation (Fig. 6). No finds belonging with the burials were preserved other than human bones. The tombs belong to a rather standard type of late Roman hypogaeum, of which at least 10 other examples are known from Sardis, and many others at sites from Rome to Syria to south Russia. Above the white baseboard, the walls are painted with a free field design of flowers, garlands, baskets of fruit, and cornucopiae. The more elaborate tomb has birds including a peacock and perhaps a dove and a duck, and in the apex, a youthful male head, perhaps a personification of the Seasons (Fig. 7). The style of the painting and the similarity to other tombs may date these to the fourth or fifth century A.D.

The final area of excavation was on the acropolis (Fig. 1, no. 4). Looters in 2007-8 had excavated a number of robber's pits along the northwest slopes of the citadel, and the disturbed fill of one of these pits contained Lydian and Persian-period sherds and architectural terracottas. We therefore cleaned this pit and explored undisturbed layers in 2008. The small trench produced no architecture, but two almost vertical cuts in the bedrock, at right angles to one another, might be traces of a building which has been robbed out. The earth that filled this cut contained local pottery of the Lydian and "Late Lydian" or Persian periods, Achaemenid bowls, Attic and other fine imported pottery, and other material dating between the 7th century B.C. and the first half of the 5th. The latest material dates to about 475-450 B.C. The fill also contained architectural terracottas including roof tiles, sima fragments, an antefix, and fragments perhaps of a disk acroterion in the shape of a gorgoneion. Two or three local sherds bear graffiti which may be read as ART, for Art[emis]. Finally, a Lydian electrum coin was found in this stratum. The coin is a third-stater, weighing 4.7 grams, with a lion head with "hairy nose wart" on the

front and two incuse punches on the back (Fig. 8). Although this is one of the most common types of Lydian electrum coins and was presumably minted at Sardis, it is the first such coin discovered in scientific excavations at the site.

Laboratory conservation included the treatment of hundreds of objects of metal, pottery, glass, and other materials, as well as pottery and coins from previous seasons. Field conservation projects included consolidating paintings of the Roman tombs and other monuments of excavation. One special project was the restoration of a Late Roman wall belonging to a colonnaded street in sector MMS/S. In the late summer, a section of the Roman city wall collapsed unexpectedly, in part because stone robbing had left the wall seriously undercut and destabilized. The team filled in the missing areas to prevent further collapse.

The project begun in 2007 to construct modern marble revetment in one corner of the Marble Court was continued. Conservators evaluated the mosaics of the Synagogue, which had deteriorated after an unusually wet and cold winter; loose and unstable tesserae were reattached and consolidated, and a larger-scale program developed for future seasons.

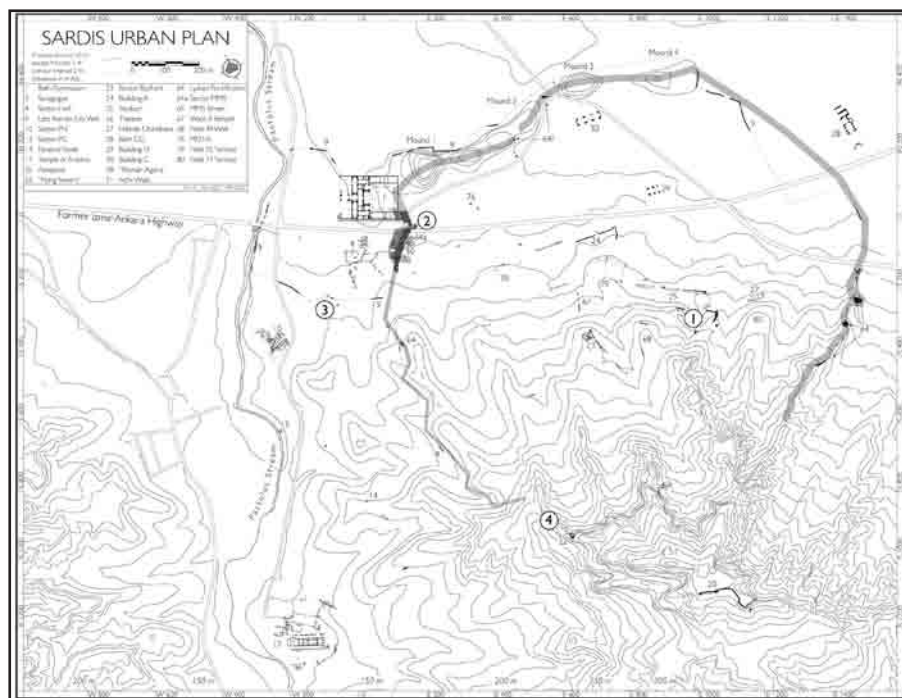


Fig. 1: Plan of Sardis showing areas of excavation in 2008



Fig. 2: Composite Plan of Roman, Hellenistic, and Lydian Features in the theater cavea.



Fig. 3: View of Lydian house under the theater cavea







Fig. 5: View of 2008 Sondage, Sector MMS, showing Lydian fortification (in scarp), and corner of earlier Lydian fortification below

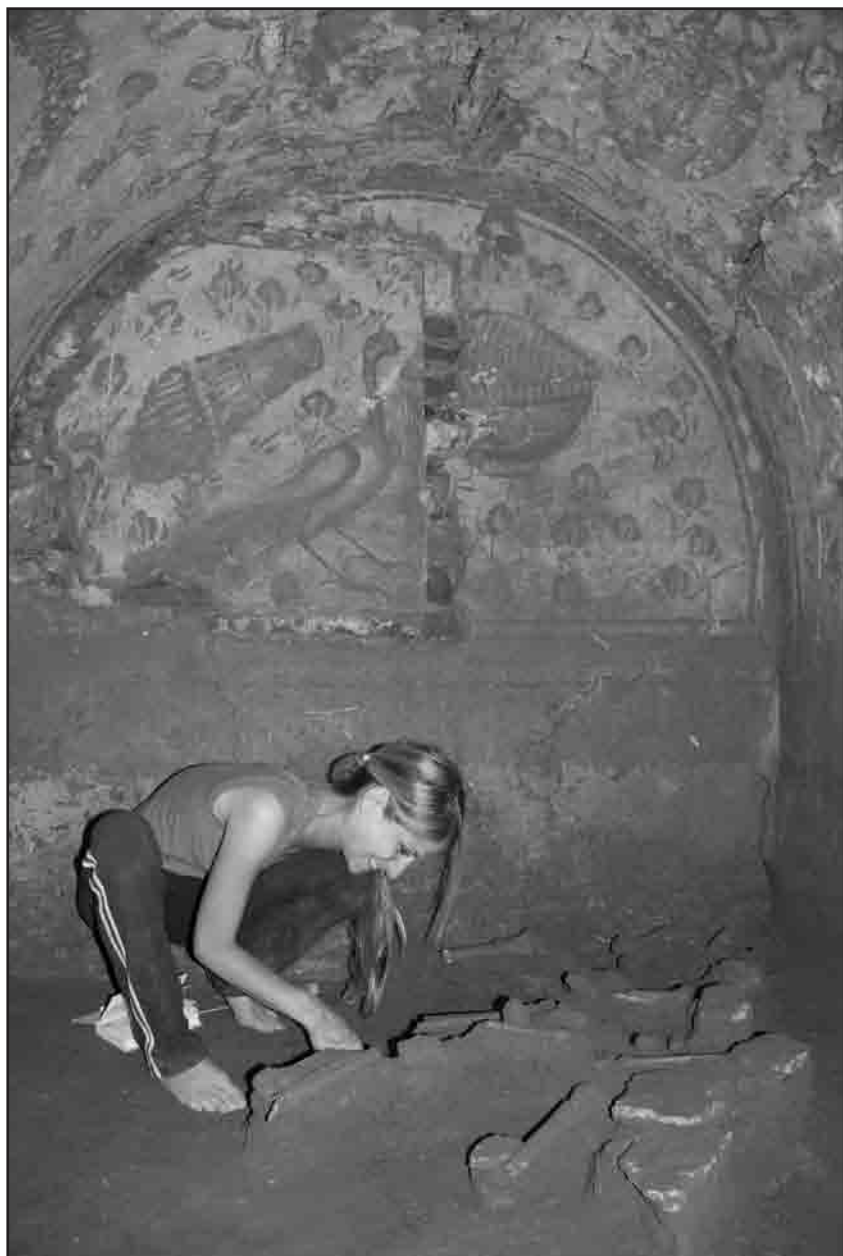


Fig. 6: Tomb 07.3, wall painting and human bones in situ.

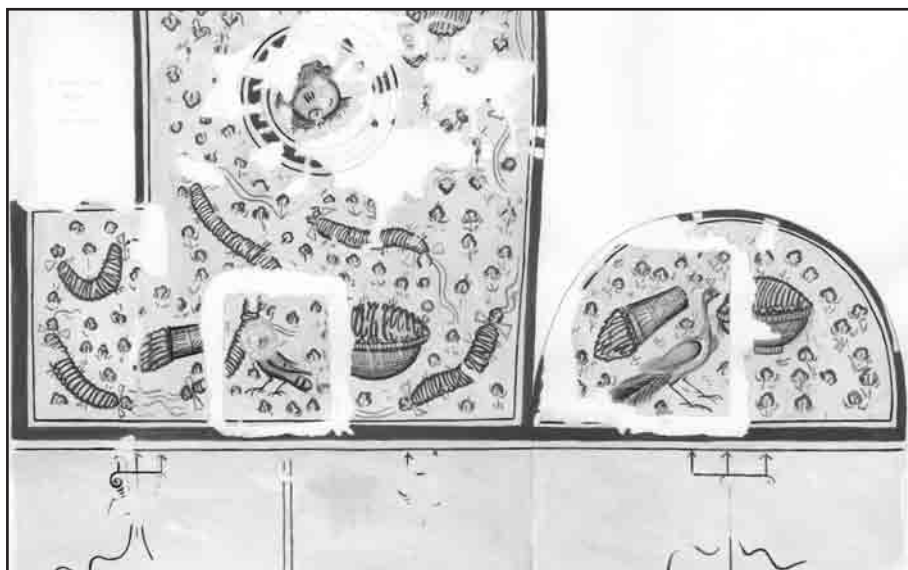


Fig. 7: Tomb 07.3, wall painting (watercolor by C.S. Alexander)



8. Lydian electrum trite from Acropolis, trench Ac-FT 08.1