

SARDIS: ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION PROJECTS IN 2006

Crawford H. GREENEWALT*

At Sardis in 2006, fieldwork was conducted for two months in June and July, by the project called Archaeological Exploration of Sardis, or Sardis Expedition; which is co-sponsored by the Harvard University Art Museums and Cornell University; the season program included excavation, conservation, restoration, and site maintenance, touristic enhancement, study projects, and ceramic sampling. For support, assistance, and trust, as well as for fundamental permissions, the Sardis Expedition is deeply grateful to the General Directorate of Monuments and Museums, particularly to Director General Orhan Düzgün, Deputy Director General İlhan Kaymaz, Excavations Division Director Melik Ayaz, and to Excavations Division Officer Serap Kocaman; and to the Manisa Museum, Director Müyesser Tosunbaş and Assistants Sadrettin Atukeren, Sevgi Soyaker, and Emin Torunlar. The Ministry of Culture Representative was Hüdaverdi Benzer (in the Birinci Kurul, İzmir); her supportive attitude towards research and scholarship greatly improved all aspects of the 2006 season programs.

Excavation in 2006 was conducted at two locations in the city site: the Sanctuary of Artemis (Fig. 1, no. 17) and the Theater and Stadium complex (Fig. 1, nos. 25, 26).

In the Sanctuary of Artemis, excavation was conducted in the Temple and Altar. In the Temple, limited excavation aimed to determine whether a construction of mortared fieldstone located at the back of the cella and between interior column foundations, represented foundations for a cult statue (as is thought to be true for stone masonry construction in the east cella; or whether it served a different purpose, perhaps related to mortared rubble construction elsewhere in the west cella (e.g., at the northeast corner) and at the back of the east cella. That question was not resolved.

* Crawford H. GREENEWALT, JR. Professor of Classical Archaeology, Department of Classics, UCB, Dwinelle Hall 7303, University of California Berkeley, California 94720/U.S.A. (A.B.D.)

The altar of Artemis, located at the west end of the Temple, initially was older than the Temple; and eventually appears to have become incorporated (in a way that remains to be determined) into the Temple fabric. The Altar (Figs. 2, 3) is understood to have had two major phases: an earlier squareish stepped building of limestone masonry (Fig. 2, "LA I") and a later rectangular construction, which expanded the original building to the north and south (Fig. 2, "LA II"). Results of excavation and study in 2006, which aimed to clarify altar chronology and design, reaffirmed for the first phase a date of about 500 B.C. (from pottery recovered underneath LA I; including fragments of 'late' column craters and Achaemenid bowls) and suggested that LA I always had been partly submerged below ground level: its lowest three courses having served as a massive subsurface foundation; which never had had marble revetment, as proposed in a Sardis Expedition publication of 1975. Excavation in 2006 also exposed in the fill of LA II, at its north end, previously unknown construction features: a primitive-looking building and what may be the tread of a staircase (Figs. 2, 3); at least one of the two possibly older than LA II. Those features are scheduled for further excavation in 2007.

The Theater and Stadium of Sardis are located on lower north slopes of the Acropolis (Fig. 1, nos. 25, 26; Fig. 4); their visible remains are datable to Roman and Late Roman eras. Conspicuous in the modern landscape, their ruins have attracted antiquarians visiting the site since the 18th century; graphic records include a colored drawing of the Theater made in 1750 (by G. Borra) and sketch plans of Theater and Stadium made in 1882 and in 1904 (respectively by F. H. Bacon and G. Mendel). During construction of the railroad track from Kassaba/Turgutlu to Alaşehir between 1872-1875, which passes just north of Sardis, the Theater was quarried for stone to support the track. (A picture labeled "Quarrymen at work, Sardis," appears in an album of photographs taken at the time of railroad construction, under the direction of Civil Engineer Samuel Bayliss. The album is now in the Suna ve İnan Kıraç Research Institute on Mediterranean Civilizations, in Antalya; was kindly made available and its images kindly reproduced for the Sardis Expedition by the Institute Director, Kayhan Dortluk; the existence of the album was kindly communicated by Peter Kuniholm.) Before 2006, the Theater and Stadium had never been excavated.

A few years ago, fields adjacent to their ruins were purchased by an individual who planted both the fields and Theater auditorium with olives and figs. To protect and preserve the ruins from further damage by tree roots and irrigation pipes, the Sardis Expedition purchased the adjacent land, for the Turkish Treasury. At

that time, the Expedition had no intention of excavating the ruins. After Minister of Culture and Tourism, Mr. Attila Koç, defined ancient theaters of Turkey as top priority for excavation, conservation, and reconstruction (in his letter of February 21, 2006, sent to all archaeological expeditions in Turkey), however, the Sardis Expedition made the Theater of Sardis its major excavation focus for 2006. To be sure, the Theater poses stimulating “intellectual” questions: - did it have a pre-Roman (Hellenistic) phase, precisely when in Roman times was it built, how was it physically coordinated with the Stadium, and how does it compare in size and design with other Roman theaters? (If a seating capacity 12-15,000, estimated by P. H. Stinson, is correct, it was appreciably smaller than the theater of Ephesus, with its estimated seating capacity of ca. 25,000; and somewhat larger than the theater at Pergamon, with its estimated capacity of ca. 10,000, and dramatically steep *cavea*.)

Both Theater and Stadium are substantially buried in earthy debris (most of it colluvial); which conceals aspects of design, such as access routes to the Theater *cavea* (apart from the *parodoi*). If *vomitoria* exist in the *parascenia* walls, as in many theaters (e.g., at *Miletus*), they are now entirely submerged under fill.

Five excavation trenches opened in the Theater in 2006 together represent less than 2 % of the total Theater area, and two of those trenches failed to reach ancient surface levels; nevertheless, results of excavation provided information about theater design and construction, and about occupation history of the site.

At their east ends, Theater and Stadium were separated by a narrow *parodos*, between Theater *parascenium* and Stadium *sphendone*. *Sphendone* design and construction were clarified, and a few of its marble seats, seat beddings, and staircase steps were located. The Stadium appears to antedate the latest phase of the Theater stage building.

A monumental stage façade (*scaenae frons*) survives as a tumble of fallen fragments (exposed in two trenches at its east end; Fig. 4; nos. 06.3 and 06.4; Fig. 5), which belonged to an aediculate two- or three-story construction; those façade remains show that the Theater *cavea* could never have been used for viewing activity in the Stadium when the façade existed. Component parts, mostly of white marble, included columns (smooth shafts of white and red brecciated stone and granite; Asiatic Ionic bases and composite capitals), entablatures with standard ornament (e.g., dentils, modillions, pulvinated frieze, simas with palmette chain; Figs. 6-7)); doorway jambs or lintels, niche frames (to which one fragment

with the torded shaft of an engaged column may belong), and a few *opus sectile* fragments in white and colored stone. Some entablatures carried inscriptions, in Greek; but inscribed fragments were non-joining, each carried only a few letters, and only two words could be identified: *philopatri[s]* ("lover of his country") and *[an]etheken* ("dedicated"). Sculptural ornament is attested by entablature carving (like the head or mask in Phrygian cap, which occurs with garlands and a draped, winged figure, presumably Nike; Fig. 7) and by limb and drapery fragments. An engaged composite capital (Fig. 8) from a salient corner and the small fragment of an openwork balustrade might belong to the inner end of the (east) *parodos*, where it joined the *scaenae frons*.

At least some and perhaps most of those architectural parts rest where they fell; as is most clearly indicated by the form and location of the entablature fragment inscribed *[an]etheken*, ("dedicated"). That verb typically terminates a dedicatory text, the entablature fragment belongs to a *ressaut*, which typically appears at one end of an aediculate façade, and the entablature fragment rested at one end (i.e., the east end) of the *scaenae frons*.

Many of the architectural and sculptural fragments are very small; and there also were very large quantities of crushed marble chips and powder: showing that after the façade fell, much of it had been deliberately smashed and pulverized; perhaps in Late Antiquity, to make lime; or in the 19th century, when the Theater was quarried for railroad construction. The intelligible fragments that survive clearly represent only part of the original façade, much of which has been destroyed.

Dismantling of seat construction in the *cavea* is attested by marble seat blocks resting in earthy debris above the lower *cavea* and *orchestra* (Fig. 4, trench 06.1), and by remnants of seat foundations (made of mortared fieldstones) in the east side of the upper *cavea* (Figs. 4, trench 06.2; 11, 12). Even those seat foundations survived in only part of the excavation trench in which they were exposed (06.2); in the rest of that trench, the uppermost exposed part of the Theater consisted of earth fill that had supported seat foundation - and that helped to create one artificial "arm" of the semi-circular *cavea*, (i.e., where it extended beyond the natural Acropolis slope).

The uncontaminated core of that fill contained ceramic material of the Hellenistic era, including terracotta figurines (several representing the Mother Goddess; Fig. 9), and pottery (Fig. 10). According to Susan Rotroff, the pottery formed "a 3rd century (B.C.) group, possibly with a couple of later intrusions; whether before or

after 213 (B.C. –when Sardis was captured by Antiochus III, and a theater is cited in connection with the capture by Greek Historian Polybius, 7.18) is uncertain; but certainly not after 200 (B.C.).” Thus, the earth fill of the *cavea* and its Hellenistic content are evidence for the existence of a Hellenistic predecessor of the Roman theater; although their evidence is inconclusive, since the fill could have been brought to the Theater site in Roman times from a Hellenistic deposit located elsewhere).

From the first morning of excavation, this trench (06.2) produced fragments of Archaic (Lydian) pottery, of the 6th century B.C.; at first dismissed as fortuitous ‘flotsam and jetsam,’ they soon proved to belong to a 6th century deposit (Figs. 11-13) that rested on an Archaic occupation surface. The surface belonged to an Archaic house, built on a terraced slope of the Acropolis, before the slope had been amplified with fill to create the Theater *cavea*. The part of the house excavated in 2006 evidently belonged to something like a kitchen or pantry, to judge from the artifacts; which included several grinding stones, five or six pyramidal loom weights, “bread trays,” cooking pots of the *chytra* type, storage and table amphorae, column craters, an oinochoe, skyphoi, stemmed dishes, one-handled cup, juglets and flasks - all in all perhaps about fifty items; of which only a few of the ceramic items could be reconstructed in the time available (Fig. 14). Intense burning everywhere indicates that this part of the house had been destroyed by fire; the presence in the debris of weapons – two arrowheads and spear head; dagger (also a knife; Fig. 15) is evidence for conflict; and all the material appears to be compatible with a date in the first half of the 6th century B.C. (no Achaemenid Bowls or “late” column craters are present). Burning and weapons, therefore, might attest destruction by the Persians, in the 540s B.C., as is evidently attested at the western limits of the city core (at sectors MMS/N, MMS, MMS/S). On the other hand, the burning could have been accidental (a consequence of uncontrolled cooking fire); weapons might belong to hunting equipment; and the date of destruction is far from clear (no chronologically diagnostic imported materials were recognized).

The removal in antiquity or later of Roman construction in this part of the Theater has the positive consequence of making accessible evidence for earlier use of the Theater site; which is unusual. Such evidence typically made inaccessible by seats and their foundations, which few archaeologists would care – or dare - to dismantle. (Ironically, whereas at the Roman sanctuary site excavated in previous seasons [sector F55] excavation was begun in the expectation that Roman overburden would be slight and occupation strata of earlier eras would

be readily accessible, i.e., close below modern ground surface, and the opposite proved true (with Roman overburden ten meters thick); at the Theater, where no traces of occupation earlier than the Hellenistic age were expected, a well-preserved Archaic habitation stratum conjoins the *cavea* slope, and was one of the first diagnostic features to be exposed in Theater excavation!)

For contemporary reuse of the Theater in connection with performance (musical and dramatic events, etc.), poor preservation of ancient remains may be considered an asset; fewer remains meaning fewer obligations for historic preservation. Apart from the considerable time necessary to excavate both the Theater and the archaeologically complex adjacent spaces that would be required for visitor access and parking, the steady noise of modern traffic on the nearby Ankara-Izmir highway make the Sardis Theater an unsuitable ambience for cultural events involving large gatherings of people.

Conservation, maintenance, and site enhancement in 2006 consisted mostly of routine and continued efforts to protect, stabilize, and (where appropriate) reconstruct monuments in the field and objects in storage depots. Major monuments in the field that were sheltered and treated included the Altar of Artemis, parts of the Roman Bath-Gymnasium complex (Building B) and Synagogue, an exposed segment of the Lydian fortification wall façade and Roman wall painting located south of the Synagogue (sector MMS), and excavated fragments the Theater *scaenae frons*.

Backing of (80-odd square m. of) mosaics that had been lifted from a Late Roman sidewalk (in order to expose earlier features beneath) had been completed in 2005; the assemblage of backed parts was displayed for recording purposes in 2006; lacunae, amounting to an estimated 15-20 % of the total mosaic surface that had been lifted, represent mosaic losses that occurred when an accidental fire destroyed one of the field depots in which the mosaics had been stored. The large quantity of mosaic parts – unbacked and fragile - that were salvaged from the burnt depot ruins, however, is a tribute to the skill, resolve, and resourcefulness of conservators involved in the project (Julie Wolfe, Amy Jones, Tracy Richardson, Molly McNamara, Carolyn Riccardelli, and Diane Fullick).

A major effort of the 2006 season involved transfer of objects and study material from one of two storage depots that had been built in early seasons of the Expedition (1959-1962) to a new depot, built of non-flammable materials in 2005. The transfer program involved monitoring inventory and excavation data and artifact condition, cleaning, and repackaging in new containers.

Study projects focused on Iron Age pottery (from sector HoB; by A. Ramage); Lydian household artifact assemblages (from sectors MMS and MMS/S; by N. D. Cahill); Hellenistic pottery (by S. I. Rotroff); Temple of Artemis architecture (by F. K. Yegül); Late Roman Synagogue architecture, mosaics, and contents (by A. R. Seager and M. L. Rautman); lewises and other lifting devices used in ancient stone construction (by W. Aylward); sampling of Iron Age ceramics (by L. K. Kealhofer, and P. R. Grave); survey and sampling of local clay beds (by D. P. Marsh).

For the Temple of Artemis recording project, Yegül made (in addition to his drawings at 1:20) a series of hypothetical reconstruction drawings (at a scale of 1:100) to show how the Temple would have looked after its original construction, in the 3rd century B.C.; and after changes and alterations in the second century AD.

In the Synagogue, ancient repairs and replacements of the mosaic floor paving, which had been broadly identified thirty years ago, by L. J. Majewski, were more precisely defined by Seager. Repairs cover “substantial parts of the center panels of bays 5, 6, and 7” and “are quite finely executed” (Seager, field report).

Consistencies in results of pottery analysis undertaken by Kealhofer and Grave (for pottery sampled in 2004 and 2005; for their “Anatolian Iron Age (AIA) Ceramics Project”) and by M. Kerschner (for pottery sampled in 2005 and analyzed in Bonn) indicate production at Sardis or elsewhere in Lydia (probably the Hermus valley) for pottery of Lydian shapes and decorative styles; and results of analysis organized by Kerschner also indicate that the beautiful orientalizing pottery called “Ephesian Ware,” recovered at Sardis and Ephesus, may have been produced in Lydia, but perhaps not at Sardis and certainly not at Ephesus.

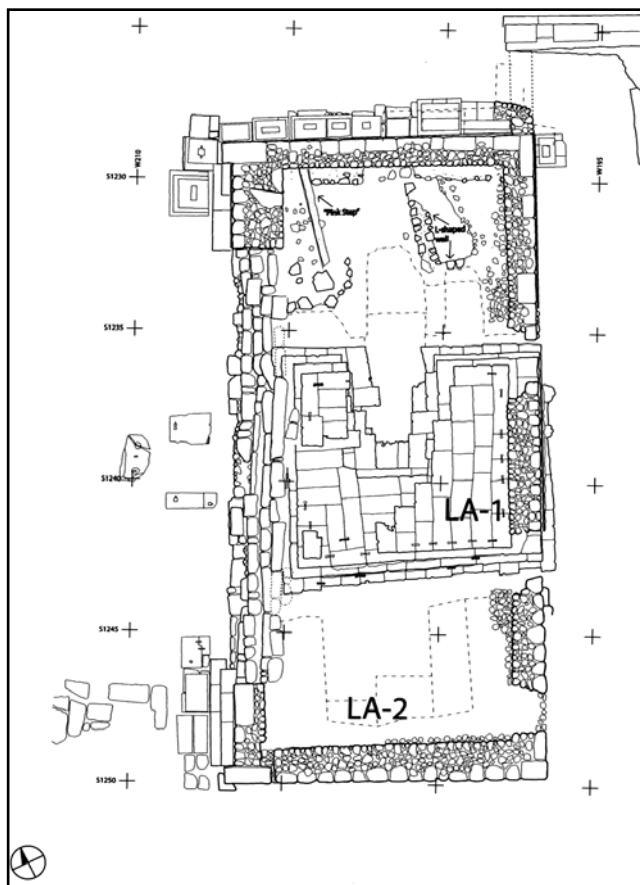


Fig. 2: Sardis, Altar of Artemis, plan

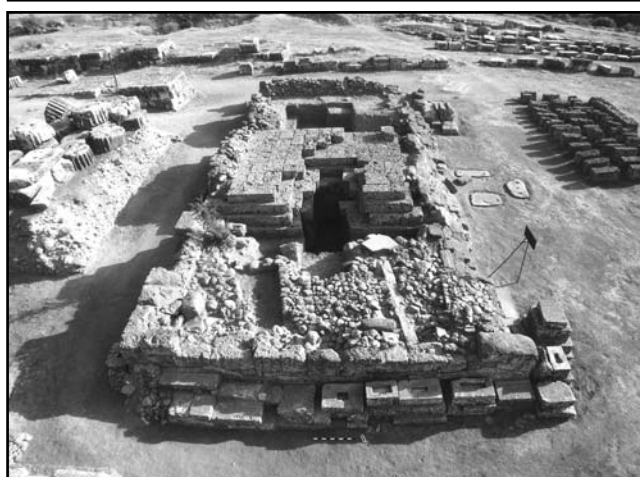


Fig. 3: Sardis, Altar of Artemis, view looking south. The L-shaped building and "step" within LA II appear in the foreground, i.e., north of LA I (middle distance)

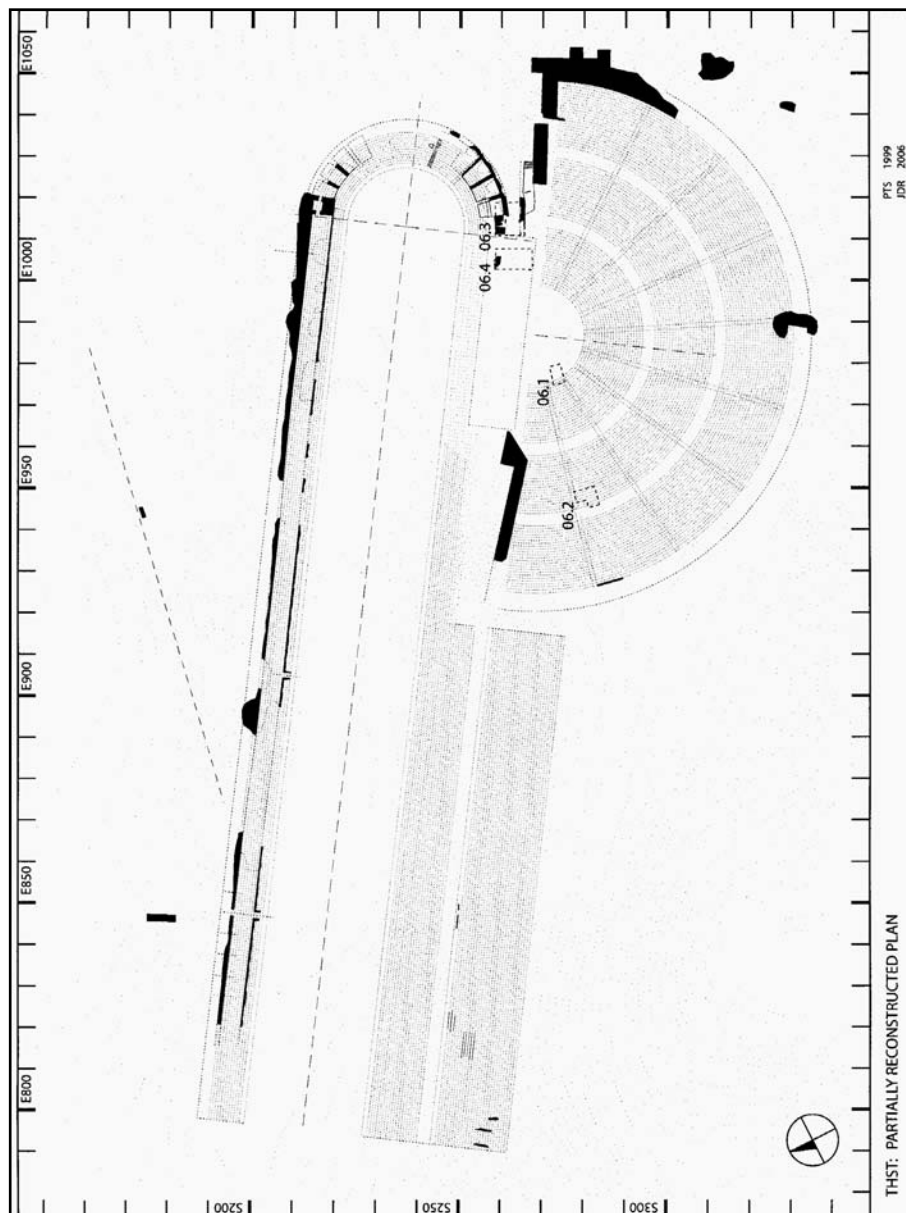


Fig. 4: Sardis, Theater and Stadium complex, sector ThSt: plan, showing somewhat adventurously restored seats in the cavea and 2006 trenches 06.1-06.4



Fig. 5: Sardis, Theater, *scaenae frons* fragments (as exposed in trench 06.4); view looking north

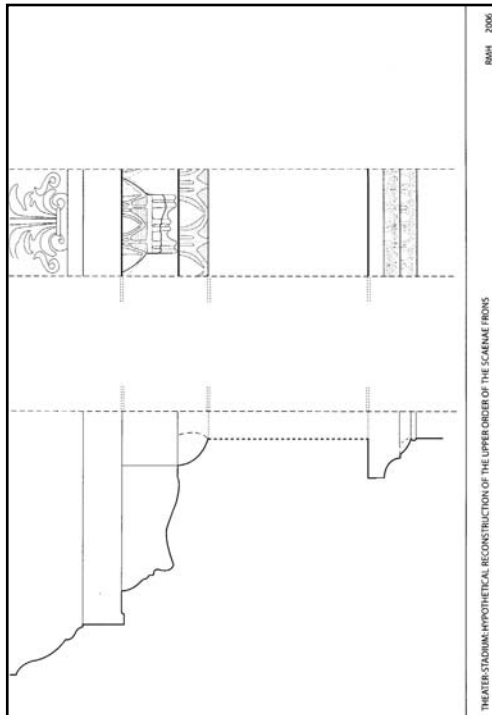


Fig. 6: Sardis, Theater *scaenae frons* entablature with modillions: profile and elevation

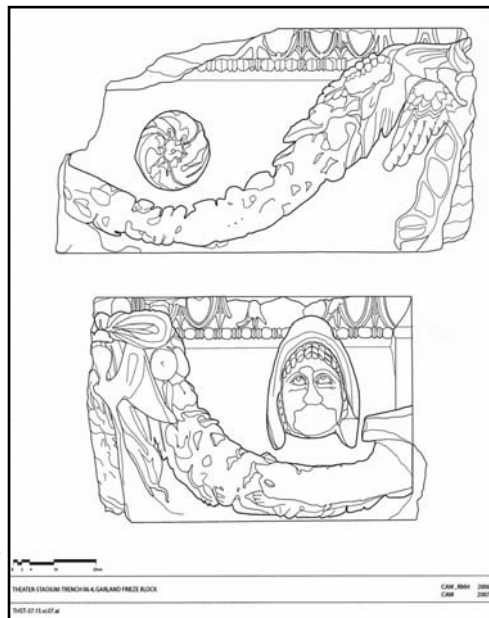


Fig. 7: Sardis, Theater *scaenae frons* entablature with garlands: elevations

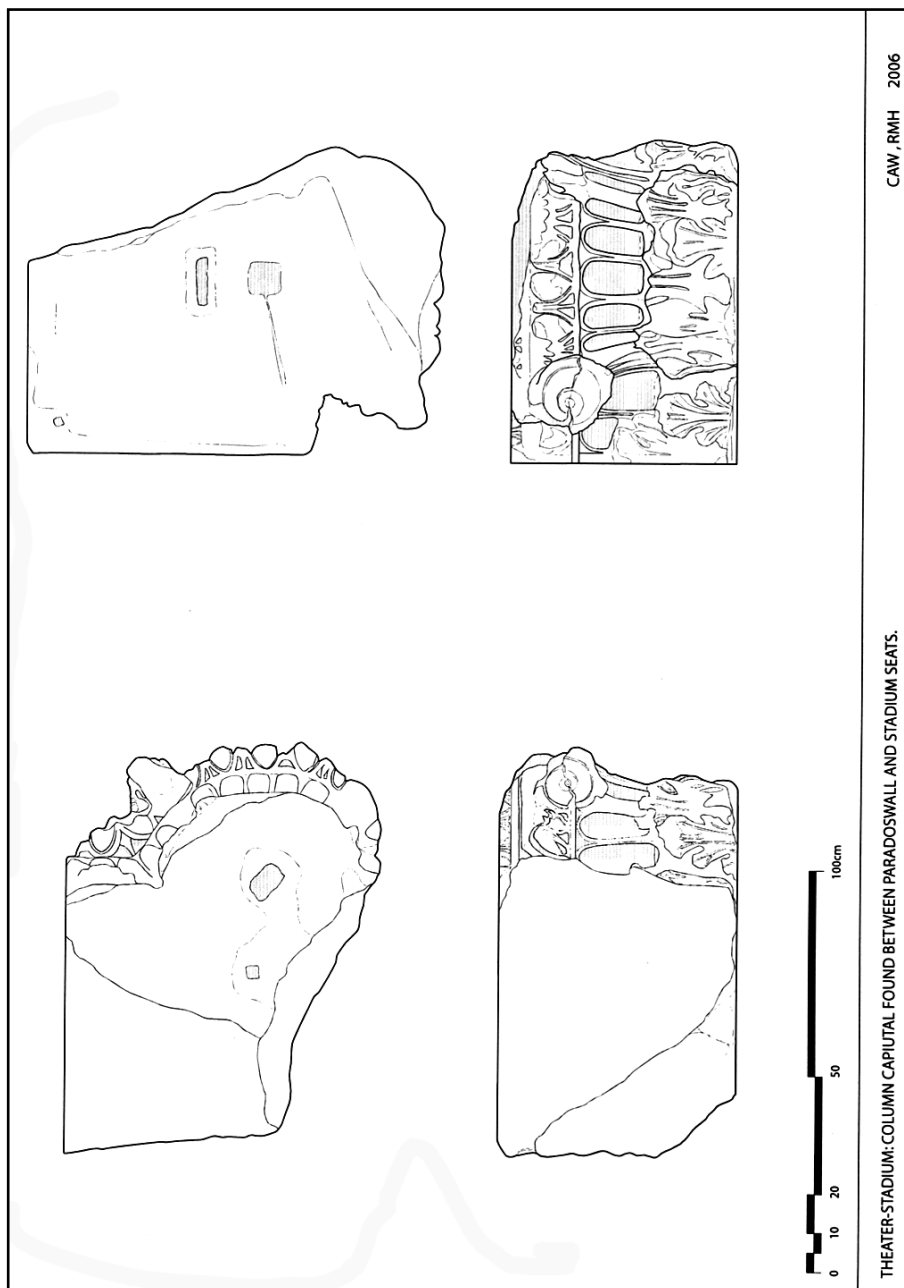


Fig. 8: Sardis, Theater: composite capital of an engaged column, from the *scaenae frons* or east *parodos*



Fig. 9: Sardis, Theater. Hellenistic terracottas from fill of the upper cavea (trench 06.2)

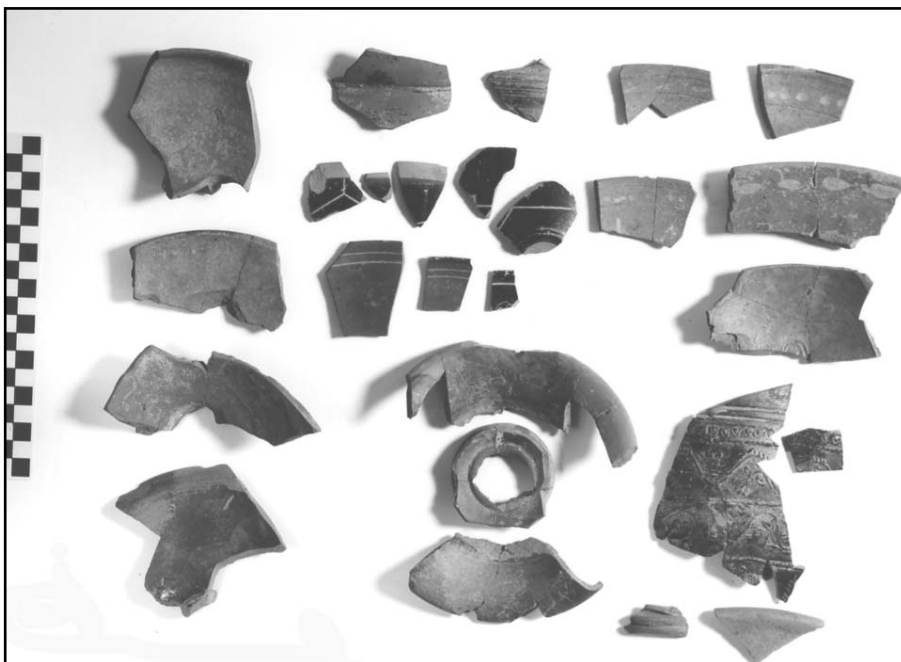


Fig. 10: Sardis, Theater. Hellenistic pottery from fill of the upper cavea (trench 06.2)



Fig. 11: Sardis, Theater: upper cavea, east "arm" (trench 06.2). Theater seat foundations (above) and Archaic house remains (below); view looking north

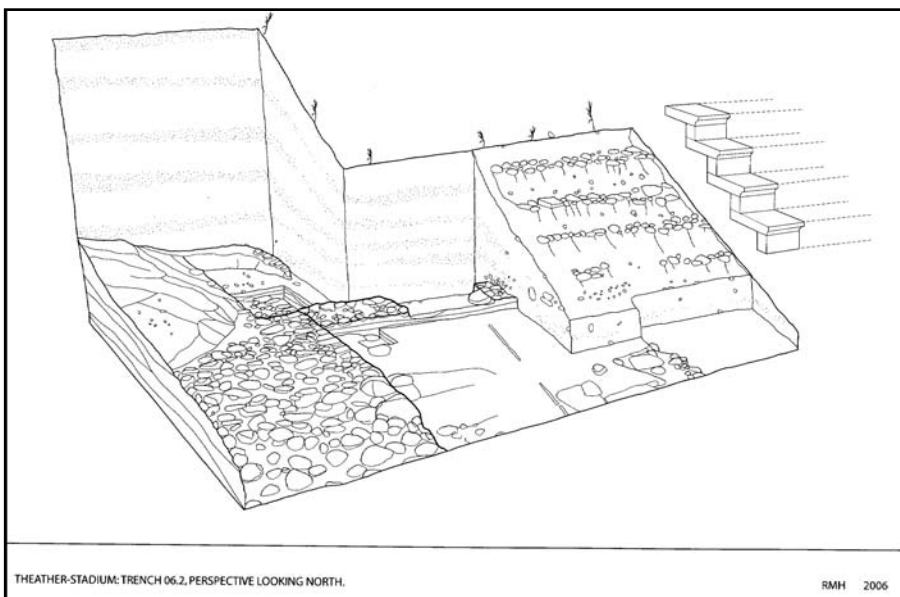


Fig. 12: Sardis, Theater: upper cavea, east "arm" (trench 06.2). Theater seat foundations (and restored seats) and Archaic house remains; perspective view looking north/northwest



Fig. 13: Sardis, Theater: upper cavea, east "arm" (trench 06.2). Archaic house remains, ceramic items *in situ*



Fig. 14: Sardis. Pottery from Archaic house below east "arm" of Theater upper cavea (trench 06.2)

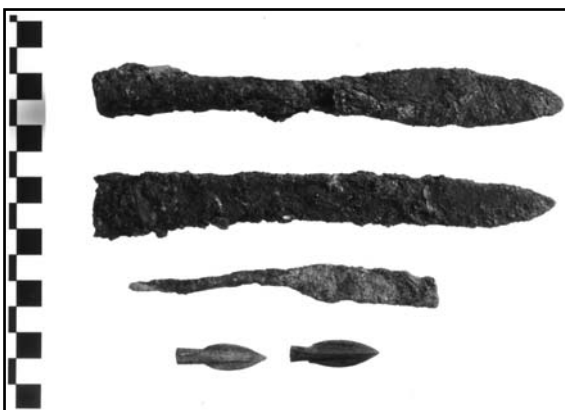


Fig. 15: Sardis. Weapons and cutlery from Archaic house below east "arm" of Theater upper cavea (trench 06.2)