

# SARDIS: ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION PROJECTS IN 2007

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At Sardis in 2007, fieldwork was conducted for two and a half months in June, July, and early August by the project called Archaeological Exploration of Sardis, or Sardis Expedition; which is co-sponsored by Harvard University Art Museums (now Harvard Art Museum) and Cornell University; the season program included excavation, conservation, restoration, and site maintenance, touristic enhancement, and study projects. 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, Division Director Melik Ayaz, Excavations Branch Director Gökhan Bozkurtlar, and to Excavations Branch Officer Serap Kocaman; and to the Manisa Museum, Director Müyesser Tosunbaş and Assistants Sadrettin Atukeren, Emin Torunlar, Aylin Duysak, Ahmet Ergün, and Halil Kocaman. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism Representative was Akan Atila, from the Archaeological Museum, Antalya; his considerable experience and knowledge of regulations, innovative ideas, energetic efforts, and supportive, encouraging attitude towards research and scholarship improved all aspects of the 2007 field-season programs.

Excavation and field recording in 2007 were conducted in four locations in the city site: the Sanctuary of Artemis, two ancient cemetery zones south and southwest of the Roman Bath-Gymnasium complex, and the Theater (Fig. 1).

In the Artemis Sanctuary limited excavation within the altar failed to clarify the meaning and chronology of two puzzling features discovered in 2006, within the north side of the expanded altar that is called “LA II”; namely wall remains that are L-shaped in plan and a mortared “step” or “shelf” (see the

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2006 Sardis season report for XVII. *Uluslararası Kazı, Araştırma ve Arkeometri Sempozyumu*). The orientation of those two features is the same; and differs from that of the altar (in both its LA I and LA II phases) and of the Temple. The simple stone construction of the L-shaped wall suggests that it is older than the LA II-phase altar, perhaps older also than its LA I phase; on the other hand, the mortar of the step/shelf suggests for it a Roman date, which would be later than the LA II altar, if that phase was built in Hellenistic time (as has been supposed, but on slim evidence).

A question related to Altar chronology, concerning the ancient level of the nearby Pactolus Stream, prompted excavation of a monumental one-face wall of marble, located in the stream bed ca. 40 m. distant from the Altar (Figs 1, nos. 17 and 43). That wall, partly exposed by scouring action of stream flooding in 1970 and buried under stream-deposited debris since 1971, stands to a maximum preserved height of four courses and was traced for a distance of nearly 21 m. in 2007 (at either end it continues, beyond excavation limits; Fig. 2). The function and date of that wall are unclear. Presumably it either protected the Artemis Sanctuary from stream erosion, by channeling the stream, or retained a monumental Sanctuary terrace that rose above the stream. Construction features (large blocks of marble; dowel, clamp, and pry holes; the absence of brick and mortar) would be consistent with a date in the Hellenistic era; and two coins of Lysimachus (reigned 306-281 B.C.), which were recovered in adjacent mixed debris, could be relevant.

Nearly a kilometer north of the Artemis Altar, just outside the Late Roman city wall, two Late Roman subterranean tomb chambers of *hypogaeum* type (Tombs 07.2, 07.3; Fig. 3), which had recently had been discovered, entered, and partly vandalized, were recorded, cleaned, and given basic conservation treatment. In size, shape, and decoration, these tombs closely resemble seven others at Sardis and more elsewhere (e.g., Alaçehir): they are rectangular, barrel-vaulted chambers, built of brick, fieldstone, and mortar, with an entrance in the ceiling at one end and two or three steps secured in the wall below the entrance hole; their plastered walls and vaults are painted with free-field flowers, baskets of fruit or flowers, garlands, and birds of decorative, unthreatening kinds (e.g., partridge, peacock; Fig. 4). Damages by illicit diggers include a hole through contiguous walls, which enabled entry from one tomb to the other, and attempts, essentially unsuccessful, to remove painted motifs. A decorative feature unattested in other painted hypogaea

at Sardis is a beardless face, painted in the center of the vaulted ceiling of one tomb (Tomb 07.3; Fig. 5); it recalls - *si parva licet componere magnis* - the vaulted ceiling mosaic of Christ as Sun-god in Tomb M under St. Peter's in the Vatican. Hypogaea of this kind are generally dated to the 4th and 5th centuries A.D.

Some 200 m. further to the north, on lower terrain that must have been near a major east-west avenue of Sardis, and in a location where tombs of Imperial and Late Roman eras have been uncovered, illicit digging reportedly of more than thirty years ago had uncovered a sculptured marble sarcophagus of Asiatic type. At that time, evidently, sculptured sides of the sarcophagus chest were broken and removed. Discovery and vandalism were kept secret; and sarcophagus remains were sealed below the floor of a modern house. In 2007, attempts to remove those remains were frustrated by local gendarmes, and the Sardis Expedition was invited to excavate and remove sarcophagus remains.

Excavation in 2007 was limited to the immediate location of the sarcophagus remains, in order not to involve demolition of the modern house above. Earthy fill above and around those remains had been thoroughly disturbed in modern times; in addition to modern debris it included, a fragment of gold foil, two beads of stone and glass, a bone hairpin, nearly 170 bronze coins ranging in date from the 3rd century B.C. to the 7th century A.D., one silver coin of Hadrian (reigned A.D. 117-138), and seven gold earrings as follows: one earring with a pearl (Fig. 6), one with a green stone (emerald?), two each with a "bell and clapper," and two featuring wire that had been made by drawing; which according to Dyfry Williams and Jack Ogden, publishing in 1994 (*Greek Gold Jewelry of the Classical World*, p. 23) "does not predate the seventh or eighth century A.D."

Sarcophagus remains were located inside a square space, 2.97 m. on a side, with truncated walls standing ca. 90 cm. high (Tomb 07.1; Fig. 7). The space is defined by construction in coursed brick and mortar, one brick thick, which has a plastered surface, and abuts mortared fieldstone construction. The space has an earth floor. The sarcophagus chest rested upright, with its sides parallel to the space walls, and close to one (south) wall, i.e., as if *in situ*; but on earth fill ca. 30 cm. above the floor. The lid rested at a slightly tilted angle over exposed earth floor, with one long-side (north) edge slightly submerged into the floor; as if it had been pulled off the chest before the space had filled with earth, and had fallen heavily on that edge.

The chest (Fig. 8) lacks most of its sides, once richly ornamented with architectural forms (aediculated façade with torded columns and ornate entablatures) and figures in high relief (the latter might be identifiable in art dealers' catalogues of the 1970s and 1980s). The bottom border carries an inscribed text in Greek, "of Kl(audios) Ant(onios) Hermon and of Aur(elia) Thaleia" (otherwise unknown; his cognomen is derived from the River Hermos, according to G. Petzl). The lid (Fig. 9) represents a *kline* top (with mattress, *plutei*, *fulcra*) supporting reclining figures of a man and woman (presumably Hermon and Thaleia), he holding a scroll, bent back (Fig. 10). At head and foot of the front side were small figures, including an erote at the head end. Missing are the heads of the main figures, the woman's right forearm, the upper torso of the erote, and other small figures.

In the Theater (located on the lower north slopes of the Acropolis), excavation concentrated on the west side of the *cavea*, and aimed partly to clarify the condition of auditorium, or *cavea*, construction, partly to uncover more of the Lydian house of the 6th century B.C., which rests underneath *cavea* fill, and which had been located and partly excavated in 2006 (Fig. 11). *Cavea* construction consisted of mortared fieldstone seat foundations, which give little indication of individual seat positions and dimensions; and part of the main diazoma, with its revetment and paving blocks of travertine (some of them re-used).

The Lydian house had been built on sloping terrain of the lower Acropolis; it was destroyed by fire, and its undisturbed burnt remains subsequently became buried under earth fills that created the Theater *cavea*. Two or three adjoining spaces of the house are attested to date. One of them was the focus of excavation in 2006 and 2007. In 2007 its limits were clarified (with exposure of an east wall) and contents that were partly buried under fallen wall and ceiling debris (and that hadn't been excavated in 2006), were uncovered and removed. One part of the space has an earth floor; another part, only partly excavated, is paved with schist and other stones laid in a symmetrical arrangement. The part with the earth floor, which has an area of ca. 8.5 square m., yielded (in both seasons) more than fifty artifacts including five grindstones, 60-70 ceramic vessels, mostly associated with food and drink, a few with cosmetics (Fig. 12), a clay die (Fig. 13), nine loom weights and two spindle whorls of clay; iron hardware (bracket, nails); metal weapons (iron spearhead, three bronze arrowheads) and cutlery, and five rounded stones,

some or all of which might be sling stones (Fig. 14). The pottery, all or mostly of local manufacture, is relatively plain; except for fragments of an amphora decorated in a late orientalizzing animal style. With the possible exception of a small flask, recovered in 2006, no imported pottery as yet has been recovered from this house.

The date and occasion for destruction by burning remains to be determined. None of the artifacts can be closely dated; but, as N. D. Cahill has observed, the material resembles assemblages recovered elsewhere at Sardis that are datable to the first half of the 6th century B.C. ; and nothing in the “Theater house” material is obviously later (e.g., there are no “Achaemenid bowls”). The weapons need only be for hunting; but their presence also could reflect hostilities, and the destruction be due to Persian capture of Sardis in the 540s. Relevant to that connection, and again observed by Cahill, is the resemblance in size and shape of the five small, rounded stones to a stone that survives clenched between finger bones of a casualty of violent destruction of city defenses at Sardis, datable to the mid 6th century B.C. and very likely associated with the Persian capture (Fig. 14).

On upper slopes of the Acropolis, specifically on a “knoll,” located near and just below Late Roman/Byzantine tower-like ruins (“Hanging Towers”; Fig. 1, no. 22), clandestine digging between the 2006 and 2007 seasons exposed a deposit, or deposits, of ancient pottery, open lamps, architectural terracottas, and roof tiles of Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic date. Pottery shapes included cooking pots, Lydian skyphoi, ring-foot and stemmed dishes, column craters, lekythoi, Achaemenid bowls, fish plates, and at least one echinus bowl and one lid; pottery decorative conventions included bichrome, streaky-glaze, marbling, and local black-figure. One of the architectural terracottas features a gorgoneion, of relatively complex design, and of a general type otherwise unattested at Sardis (Fig. 15). To clarify the nature of the deposit, or deposits, the Expedition plans to excavate at this location in 2008.

Conservation efforts focused on ceramics, especially from the Lydian House in the Theater; on treatment of wall and vault painting in the Late Roman Hypogaea, and in the apse of one room in a Late Roman house (sector MMS I, room VI), and on a protective shelter to cover an assemblage of Late Roman graffiti, outside the Synagogue. Site enhancement efforts focused on a 100 m.-long drainage channel, designed to prevent Spring and Winter flooding of the modern road through Sardis; and on designs for partial

recreation of wall revetment in the so-called “Marble Court” of the Roman Bath-Gymnasium Complex. In Marble Court reconstruction thirty years ago, wall revetment was omitted; and visitors now see an historically misleading façade that combines both marble aedicular forms and wall construction in *opus mixtum* (i.e., alternating layers of mortared brick and fieldstone). The Expedition plans to create revetment of appropriate design in one part of the Marble Court, in order to show that *opus mixtum* surfaces had been covered, and to suggest the appearance of their covering.

Monitoring, basic conservation treatment, reorganization, and recording of archival materials continued with the transfer of study materials from the former Expedition laboratory and “large” depot (“depot 1”) to the depot built in 2005.

Study projects focused on Iron Age pottery (from sector HoB; by A. Ramage); Late Bronze Age and Iron Age pottery (by C. Luke and C. H. Roosevelt); Lydian household artifact assemblages (from sectors MMS, MMS/S, and ThSt; by N. D. Cahill); production locations of Lydian pottery (by G. Gürtekin-Demir and M. Kerschner); decoration of marble klinai from a tomb near Ahmetli (by N. D. Cahill and C. S. Alexander); Temple of Artemis architecture (by F. K. Yegül); figural terracottas (by F. Gallart-Marqués); Roman marble monopod table supports (by S. Feuser); coins, lamps, pottery, and other dating evidence for the Late Roman Synagogue (by M. L. Rautman); geomorphology of the Acropolis (by D. P. Marsh); recording of ancient monuments inside and outside limits of the present *sit alanı* (by N. D. Cahill).

For nearly thirty seasons, many major discoveries at Sardis have been made and superbly documented, innovative and highly effective recording systems have been introduced, and important Expedition goals have been proposed by Nicholas Dunlap Cahill. Professor Cahill has been appointed by the Harvard Art Museum and (in June 2008) by the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Turkey, upon the recommendation of the General Directorate of Cultural Resources and Museums of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, as field director of the Harvard-Cornell Sardis Expedition. With a director eminently worthy of the great site, its formidable complexities, and its vast potential, the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis is in the best possible hands.

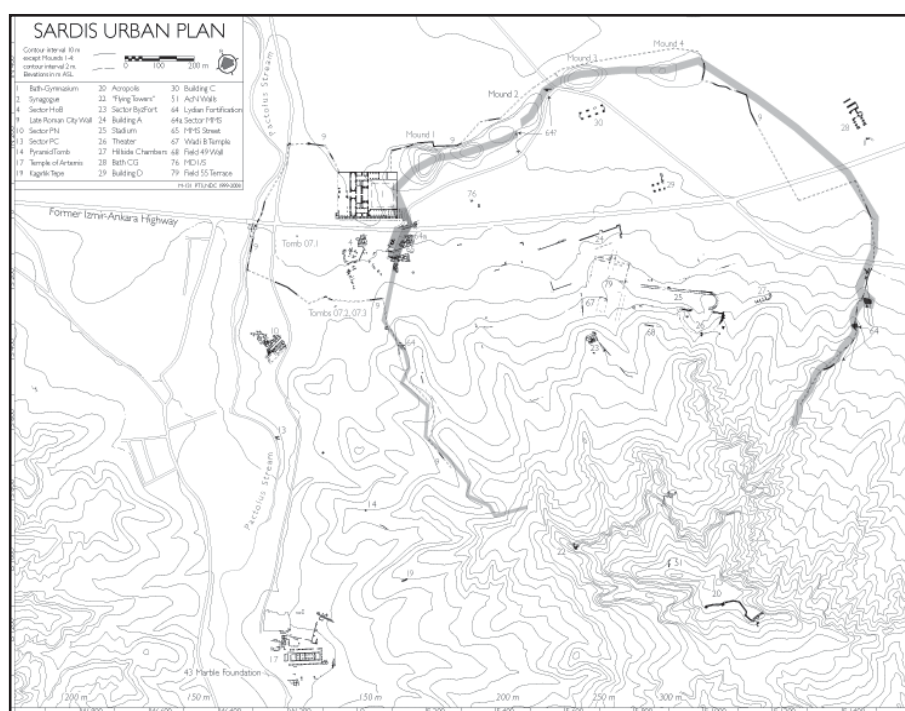


Fig. 1: Sardis, site plan. The Altar and Temple of Artemis are no. 17 (bottom; somewhat left of center); the marble wall in the Pactolus stream bed is no. 43; Late Roman hypogaea (Tombs 07.2 and 07.3) are located east of Sector PN, no. 10; the tomb with the Asiatic Sarcophagus remains, Tomb 07.1, is located near the modern village crossroads; Roman Bath Gymnasium complex is no. 1; the Theater is no. 26; the site of clandestine digging on the Acropolis is located near the "Hanging Towers," no. 22.



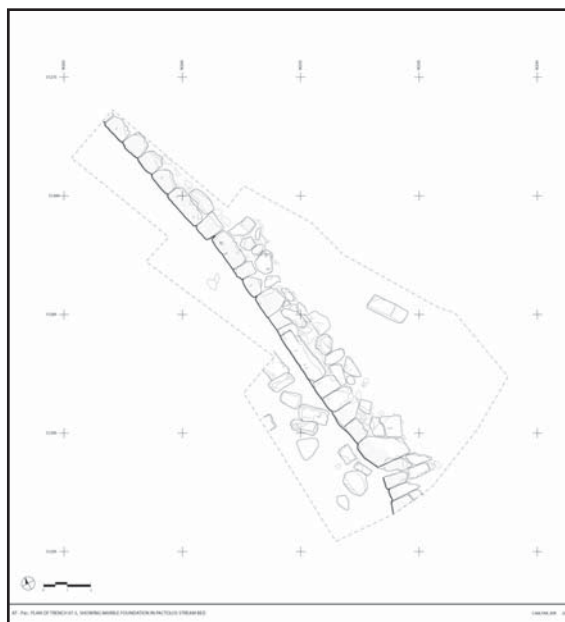


Fig. 2: Sardis, wall remains in Pactolus stream bed, ca. 40 m. distant from the Altar of Artemis (Fig. 1, no. 43), plan

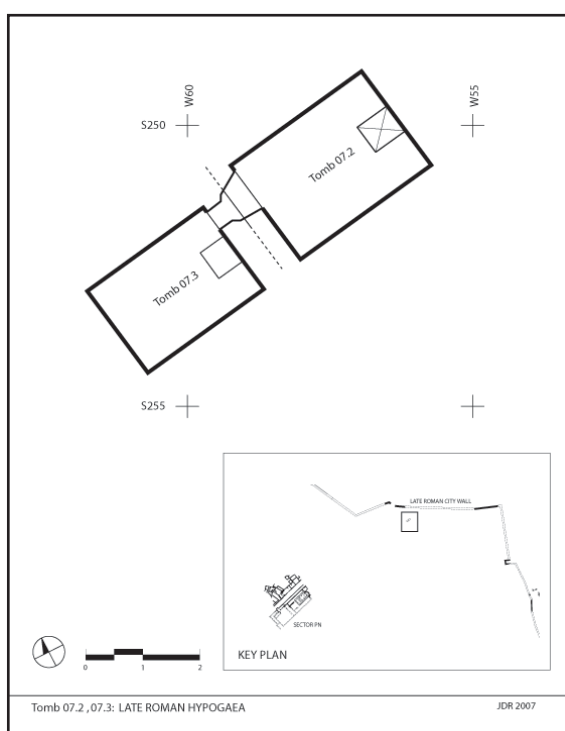


Fig. 3: Sardis, Late Roman Tombs (*hypogaea*) nos. 07.2 and 07.3, plan. The tombs are located northeast of excavation Sector PN and just outside and south of the Late Roman City wall, as indicated in the inset plan





Fig. 4: Sardis, Late Roman Tomb, (*hypogaeum*) no. 07.3: view of two adjoining walls. Cuts in the plaster around the birds show where clandestine diggers attempted to remove wall painting



Fig. 5: Sardis, Late Roman Tomb (*hypogaeum*) no. 07.3: painted face in the center of the vaulted ceiling

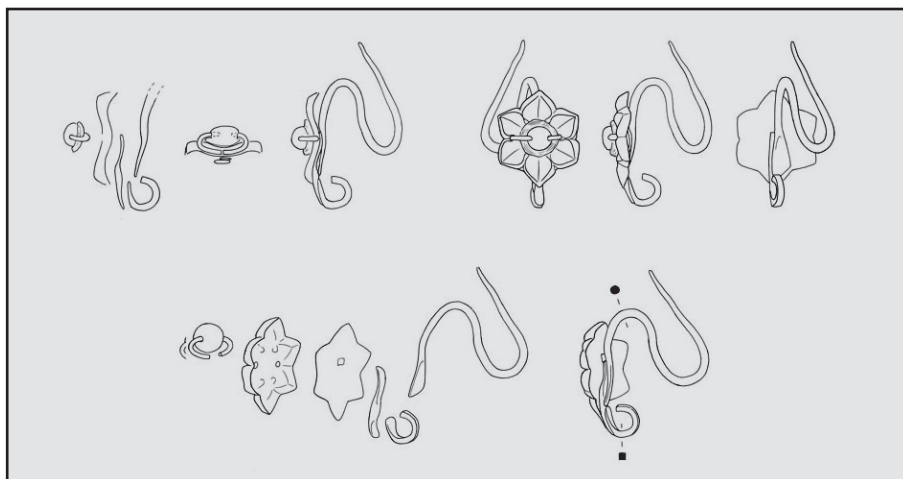


Fig. 6: Sardis, gold earring (J07.1: 12166): one of seven that were recovered from earthy debris above Asiatic Sarcophagus remains in Tomb 07.1



Fig. 7: Sardis, Roman Tomb no. 07.1, view looking north, showing Asiatic sarcophagus chest and lid remains as found. Construction in the upper part and lower right of the picture belongs to the modern village house that was built over the tomb in the 1970s



Fig. 8: Sardis, Asiatic sarcophagus from Tomb 07.1: remains of the chest



Fig. 9: Sardis, Asiatic sarcophagus from Tomb 07.1: remains of the lid





Fig. 10: Sardis, Asiatic sarcophagus from Tomb 07.1, detail of the lid

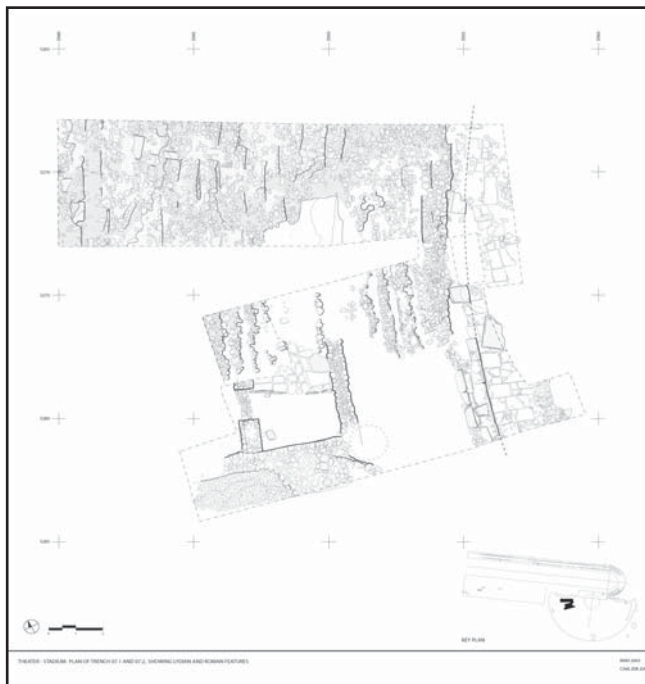


Fig. 11: Sardis, Theater, excavated remains in the west side of the *cavea*, plan. The upper part of the plan shows foundations for seats appear in the upper part of the plan; remains of the diazoma at right; parts of a Lydian house of the 6th century B.C. in the middle of the plan



Fig. 12: Sardis, selected pottery from the Lydian house (which was destroyed by fire; centuries later covered by fills for the *cavea*) in the Theater, recovered and restored in 2006 and 2007

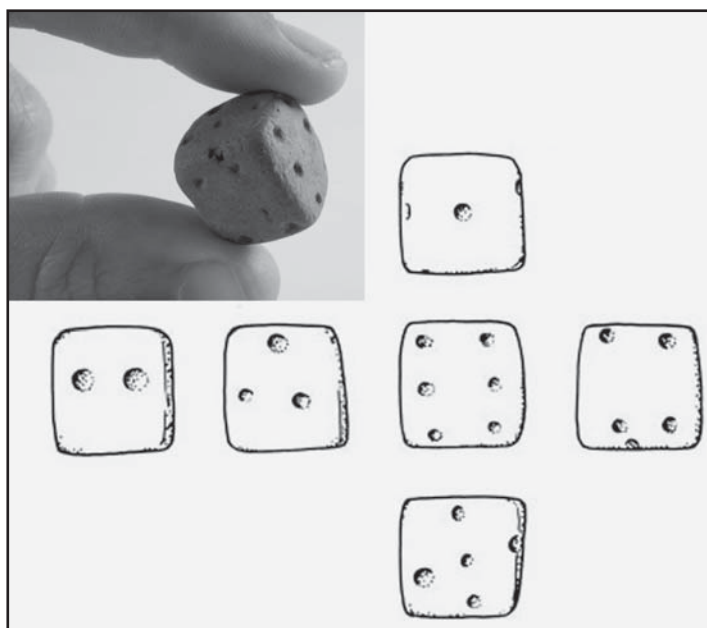


Fig. 13: Sardis, clay die from Lydian house in the Theater



Fig. 14: Sardis, five rounded stones (sling stones ?) from Lydian house in the Theater; shown together with a similar stone enclosed by hand bones of a casualty recovered (in 1988) from debris associated with destruction of Sardis city defenses in the mid sixth century B.C.



Fig. 15: Sardis, Archaic architectural terracotta fragment (NoEx07.002) preserving part of a gorgoneion; recovered from debris left by clandestine digging (2006-2007) on upper slopes of the Acropolis (located just below Late Roman/Byzantine "Hanging Towers," and marked by a dot in Fig. 1)