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NEWSLETTER FROM SARDIS, 2008

CONFIDENTIAL — NOT FOR PUBLICATION

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Dear Friends and Supporters,

A season at Sardis begins with reunions. The staff comes from all over the U.S., Turkey, and Europe, and most of us see each other only here, far from our usual homes. As another old friend walks up the road into the compound at the beginning of the summer, we hear cries of greeting, and people rush out to welcome the new arrival, unhand luggage, offer a cold drink of water. With each arrival the welcoming committee grows, and soon each newcomer is surrounded by old friends. The sense of community among the staff is one of the great joys of Sardis, and the interplay between change and continuity, as new members arrive and old friends go on to bigger and better things, while some of us just keep coming back year after year, keeps things lively and yet never-changing.

You will wonder why this newsletter is coming not from Greenie, but from me. Greenie is here, of course—no Sardis season would be complete without him—but I will be handling the field directorship, allowing Greenie to work on his many interests at Sardis. These are some very great shoes to fill, Greenie's and Professor Hanfmann's; but traditions at Sardis are well established, and I do not anticipate many fundamental changes. The change of directorship involved a good bit of bureaucracy in Ankara, though, leading to a week's delay at the start of the season. But with the arrival of the government representative, archaeologist Enver Akgün from the Konya Museum, we got off to a quick start, and never looked back.

Excavation is again scattered over the landscape of Sardis, from the theater to the Lydian fortification to the acropolis. Lillian Stoner (New York University) and Meriç Öztürk (Bilkent University, Ankara) are dividing the theater between them, Meriç concentrating on the Roman phases, Lily on the Hellenistic and Lydian. What a joy in the morning to see Lily piloting the 1957 pink Land Rover, still going strong at age 51 (a year older than the Sardis Expedition!), up the rough track into the theater, with Meriç in his ponytail looking like a Turkish samurai, sallying forth to take on this enormous building.

At most other sites in Turkey and elsewhere, the theater would be one of the gems of the site, with rows of marble seating, an elaborate stage building, inscriptions and sculptures. But, as Greenie explained in his newsletter, those are largely missing here, robbed out in antiquity and during the construction of the railroad in the 1860s. All that is left of the seating is rather sad-looking bits of mortared rubble, which only an imaginative eye can make into rows of seat foundations (figs. 1–2).

Meriç has been clearing the diazoma of the theater, the corridor that gave access to the seats (fig.

3). He has exposed what remains of the pavement, and a single fallen block from a staircase that once led up into the seats. This corridor must have been entered from a staircase at the front of the theater, and such a stair was uncovered in 2006 on the other side of the theater. Meriç's cleaning of the corresponding area here, however, has shown that the stairs have been entirely robbed out (fig. 4). But he has greatly clarified how the Roman theater was built, in a typically Sardian composite technique reflecting the long history and the mixed traditions of the city. The builders used clamped cut stone blocks, like in a Hellenistic building, to build a grid with squares about 6–8 feet on a side. Then like good Roman citizens, they filled these boxes with mortared rubble. This construction—20 feet thick or more—retained a great fill of mudbrick in the ancient Lydian fashion. Old habits die hard, and it is fascinating to see the Hellenistic and Roman Sardians still using Lydian building techniques in addition to the more modern techniques of cut stone and mortared rubble.

Although interesting, this Roman theater is so poorly preserved that it would be hardly worth spending years excavating, were it not for other, earlier features. We know that Sardis had a theater in the Hellenistic period, because in 215 BC Antiochus III used the theater as a base of operations to capture the city from his uncle Achaeus. But is this the Hellenistic theater, or was that somewhere else? Lily is excavating where the Roman seat foundations have been eroded away, and encountering more of the deep earth fill beneath, first found in 2006. The Hellenistic pottery from this fill seems to confirm that this was the site of the Hellenistic theater; but some seems later than the late 3rd century, as Susan Rotroff initially thought. Did Antiochus expand an earlier theater as part of his urban renewal of Sardis?

As Greenie described in his newsletter, in the very first week of digging the theater in 2006, we began to uncover a Lydian house, predating the use of this spot as the theater by some three and a half centuries. The house was destroyed by fire, leaving masses of burned pottery, loomweights, and other artifacts on the floor. And this pottery seems to date to the middle of the sixth century BC—probably to the Persian destruction of Sardis about 547 BC. This is a very exciting development: in past years we have followed a fiery destruction level around the city's fortifications, and now we may have the same destruction level in the city's center, with a large group of mendable artifacts, dated precisely to the very end of the Lydian empire. One reason for continuing excavation of the Hellenistic theater fill is to allow wider exposure of these Lydian levels, which we hope to pursue in future years.

This year, Lily completed the excavation of the first room of this Lydian house (fig. 5). What a view the inhabitants had, high above the lower town overlooking the Hermos plain, with the mountains of northern Lydia in the background! Lily's room has a slate-paved floor, and a bit of white stone peeking out from the scarp at the end of last season turned out to be a cylindrical column base. The architecture is not much compared to, for instance, the Roman townhouses studied by Marcus Rautman (University of Missouri), with their painted walls and marble floors. But it is very different from the usual Lydian domestic architecture with simple earth floors and mudbrick walls. Are we beginning to see distinctions between a more elite quarter here in the center of Sardis, and the more plebeian settlement at the outskirts of the city, excavated in previous years?

As Lily produces more sherds from the ground, conservator Jennifer Kim (Fairbanks Center for Motion Picture Study), with the help of Sharon Norquest (Winterthur), Briana Feston (Institute of Fine Arts, NYU), and Tiffin Thompson (College of William and Mary), has been weaving acres of fragments into wonderful whole pots (fig. 6). Most are plain; there are fragments, though, of large vessels decorated in Lydian interpretations of East Greek Orientalizing styles. Jen's discovery last season of animals painted on sherds of a huge amphora, completely invisible under an impenetrably thick layer of encrustation, has

led to careful cleaning of more sherds of at least two such Myrina amphoras; unfortunately, neither seems to be complete (fig. 7).

It has been a few years since we last excavated the Lydian fortification at MMS, which was the focus of work for nearly 30 years. This season we return to the site of the very first trench here. In 797, the summer after he discovered the wall, Andrew Ramage dug a small sondage on the shoulder of the Izmir-Ankara highway, where the road had already removed most of the wall. He excavated down to its stone foundations, and then cut a small probe through the foundation. With his typical intuition and great good luck he uncovered, underneath the huge mudbrick wall, an earlier structure made of massive stone blocks.

This year, Saam Noonsuk, of Cornell University, and one of Andrew's students, has inherited his trench, and is expanding it to learn more about this earlier feature (figs. o8–1). Our current thinking is that the great 65-foot-thick fortification dates to the reign of Alyattes, somewhere around 600 BC, at the height of the Lydian empire. But Sardis was an old city even then, and should have been fortified in the reigns of Sadyattes, Ardys, and perhaps Gyges. Andrew's and Saam's trench may be one of the few spots where we can excavate under the later wall to learn about earlier features. By carefully digging through part of the fortification, Saam has uncovered more of the top of this early wall, which proves to be more than six feet thick (we have not found the other side yet, and it may be much thicker). A wall this large, and almost perfectly aligned with the later fortification, is probably an earlier Lydian city wall. But Saam has also found a corner in the wall. Is this one side of a gate, as it looks at first glance, or is it one of those enigmatic recesses found in the later fortification, whose purpose still remains mysterious?

One of the reasons for doing this excavation now is that we are working to conserve and display the Lydian fortification, and the Lydian and Roman houses that surround it. This is the Touristic Enhancement Project, or TEP, and it might involve reconstruction here by the road, preventing further excavation. Michael Morris (Metropolitan Museum, New York) is addressing some of the difficult and contradictory problems the TEP presents. How can we preserve this 65-foot thick adobe and stone wall, still standing 25 or 30 feet tall? It is enormous, but surprisingly fragile, and must be protected from rain, wind, ground water, changes in temperature and humidity, bees and birds, and other enemies. How can we make it accessible to the public, without hastening its demise? And finally, how can we indicate to visitors that this is only a very small section of a wall that once stretched more than two miles around the city? Michael Morris, architect Phil Stinson (University of Kansas), and others have been wrestling with these problems, and coming up with some new and interesting ideas.

Another of Michael's projects involves the Marble Court. You may remember that Prof. Hanfmann originally planned to restore some of the marble revetment that originally sheathed the building. However, this was never done, and visitors now see a misleading contrast between the gleaming marble columns and entablature and the rough stone and brick walls. Last season Greenie asked Michael to consider whether it was possible to install new marble revetment in one corner of the Marble Court. It is a tough call, both aesthetically and practically. We don't want the marble to be too white and sterile, and end up looking like a brand-new bathroom, but neither do we want to make too strong a statement about what the ancient revetment looked like, because we have precious little evidence for its colors or pattern. Michael thought the idea was promising, though, and this season, he and expedition agent Teoman Yalçınkaya (retired, Çimentaş, Izmir) worked out how to hang the slabs, and purchased three panels and set them temporarily on the podium to see the effect (fig.)II. And with advice from Fikret Yegül (University of California - Santa Barbara), Teoman has worked out a pattern of slabs which is aesthetically consistent with Roman practice. We hope that soon you will see the one corner of the Marble Court properly Marbled.

In a field just outside the Roman city wall, looters last year broke into two late Roman vaulted chamber tombs with painted walls. They tried to cut the wall paintings off the walls, but succeeded only in causing them terrible damage. Last season we stabilized the paintings; this year we needed to finish the job. Tiziana D'Angelo (Harvard) came as recorder, but we quickly shanghaied her into excavating the tombs. Both contained human bones scattered by the looters, but almost no other finds (fig. 12). The paintings, though, are quite interesting. One is decorated with standard motifs of flowers and stylized wreaths ("fat worms," says Cathy Alexander [independent artist]), but the other is decorated with birds (a peacock, a duck, a dove), baskets (cornucopias and baskets of flowers?), worm-like wreaths and flowers, and, in the vault, a wreathed head. The excavation of the tombs comes at a particularly opportune moment, just as Vanessa Rousseau (University of Wisconsin-Madison) is beginning a dissertation on Roman wall painting at Sardis; and these and the other seven or so such painted tombs excavated over the years form one core of her study (fig. 13). Many of these painted tombs are now inaccessible, or their wall paintings have deteriorated over the years, and we must rely on photographs and drawings for publication and study. Cathy Alexander, who has been the mainstay of not only drafting, but all kinds of study and organization at Sardis for 20 years now, is drawing exquisite watercolors of the tombs.

Finally, Pinar Özgüner (Boston University) is working on the Acropolis of Sardis (fig. 14). Last year, looters dug a number of pits just below the citadel, and the churned-up earth was full of interesting, early sherds and architectural terracottas. These intriguing traces prompted short cleanup and excavation here to evaluate the situation, once we had finished the more pressing crises of looted Roman tombs.

Pinar's excavation was one of the highlights of the latter part of the season. The view is spectacular, overlooking the temple, the Pactolus valley, the Necropolis hill, and the Hermos plain. The trench, however, was not much to look at, with no architecture, just earth, which Pinar carefully excavated stratigraphically, distinguishing disturbed backdirt left by the looters from Byzantine pits from an earlier fill (fig. 15). Most of this early fill seems to date to the 5th century BC, the period of Persian control of Sardis, when the Acropolis was the stronghold of Persian satraps such as Artaphrenes and Mardonius. The finds from these layers were quite remarkable. Every box had some treasure in it: sherds of colorful yellow, green and blue Byzantine sgraffito wares, scraps of Attic black-figure, fragments of Achaemenid bowls, Lydian architectural terracottas, including a fragment showing the hind part of a Pegasus, with a unique, painted dancer whirling beneath (fig. 16). But the most outstanding find was a Lydian electrum coin, a third-stater with a lion's head with a "hairy nose wart" on the front and a plain punch on the back (fig. 17). This type of coin is generally attributed to Alyattes and Croesus in the later 7th and early 6th centuries BC, predating the use of separate silver and gold currency, and is among the earliest coins in the world. Although these were probably made here in Sardis, this is the first found in excavations by the Harvard-Cornell expedition.

If you live in an old house, you have to expect to do a lot of maintenance on it; and if you work at an archaeological site, you find it needs even more work. And at fifty, the excavations themselves are reaching a point—like so many of us—where we need a little more upkeep than we did a few decades ago. One particular trouble spot is the wall of the Roman street in MMS/S—one of the first major features excavated in this sector. Still standing 20 feet high, with an arched door leading to a staircase, it is seemingly worthy of the 60-foot-wide colonnaded avenue it framed. And like the rest of the avenue, it doesn't stand up to close inspection. The floor of the street was just earth, and that's mostly what was holding the wall together, too. As we began to repair it, we found that the Roman builders had used about as much dirt as they had mortar in the construction, and the situation was more dire than we'd imagined. The arch had split, probably in an earthquake, and was in danger of collapsing; and the whole wall needed extensive work. A team of experienced masons, with conservators Kent Severson (private practice), Michael Morris,

and Tiffin Thompson advising for conservation, Teoman Yalçınkaya and Colin Wright (Sir Alexander Gibb and Partners, retired) for engineering, and directed by foreman Ibrahim Akyar and assistant foreman Necmi Erdoğan, worked on this full-time for most of the summer. As you can tell by the number of people involved, this turned from a minor capping job to a rather large operation (fig. 18). But there is a satisfaction in returning even a somewhat ill-made wall to its former state.

Back in the compound, the new depot built a couple years ago by Teoman is a hive of activity. Spearheaded by Elizabeth Gombosi and Sheila Nightingale (both of the Sardis Office at Harvard), a group continues to clean, reorganize, and check the contents of the old depot, and move the objects to the new depot. Evren Işınak (alumna of Istanbul University) and Alexandra Helprin (alumna of Harvard), who worked on this project last year, and newcomer Will Bruce (University of Wisconsin-Madison) are wading through decades of accumulated dust and mouse droppings, disintegrated plastic bags and chewed-up tags, and reorganizing and repacking the objects. And last winter, Will helped develop a new database of all the inventoried objects, coins, photographs, drawings, stratigraphy, publications, and other bits of our finds from the last 50 years. It is all now one unified system, and is on the internet (carefully password controlled), so researchers working around the camp, or around the world, can access those records.

The new depot itself, I should add, is a wonderful addition to the camp. Some of you will fondly remember working in the old depots, with their familiar, comforting, rather musty smell, somewhat unreliable lights, idiosyncratic organization, a palimpsest of years of artifacts shelved wherever there was some spare space. The new building is completely different: high-ceilinged, light and spacious, clean as a whistle, it is the envy of all the museum personnel who visit. And attached to it, the new conservation laboratory, photographer's studio, draftsman's room, study room, and the courtyard and shaded porticoes for work create a new focus and a new dynamic for the compound.

And we have been treated to a whole series of specialists taking advantage of the new facility. Annetta Alexandridis (Cornell University) is studying Roman sarcophagi, particularly the one discovered last season (fig. 19). In July, we were treated to a week of pottery specialists: Pierre Dupont (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Lyons) and Vasilica Lungu (Institute of South East European Studies, Bucharest) came for a week to study Lydian grayware and its relationship to pottery of the Black Sea, and Michael Kerschner and Ireen Kowalleck (Austrian Archaeological Institute and University of Vienna) arrived from Ephesus to look at Lydian, Attic, and Atticizing pottery. Jane DeRose Evans (Temple University) is working through the coins from the last thirty-odd years, some seven or eight thousand of them, confirming or changing identifications made by generations of student numismatists. Richard Posamentir (German Archaeological Institute, Istanbul) took high-tech photographs of the painted funerary couches from the tumulus at Lale Tepe, and was able to distinguish a few new features; for the most part, however, he found Cathy Alexander's drawings gratifyingly accurate and complete. Pınar Kaymakçı and Nuretdin Kaymakçı (Middle East Technical University) are beginning a new study of archaeomagnetic dating throughout Turkey, and took samples from a burned portion of the Lydian fortification, to establish the magnetic orientation of the stones in a fire that can be precisely dated. Meanwhile, Frances Gallart-Marques (Cornell) is working through the figural terracottas of the last fifty years for her doctoral dissertation, and Marcus Rautman (University of Missouri) is sorting out the chronology of the Synagogue—both its construction date and its very late phases, after the building went out of use as a synagogue. Fikret Yegül has put the final touches on his monumental documentation of the Temple of Artemis, while Felipe Rojas (UC Berkeley) is finishing his drawing of the Lydian Altar, matching Fikret's delicate and evocative hand with his own sensitive and insightful drawings.

And publications editor Kathy Kiefer (Sardis Office, Harvard) spent a very productive month here. Here is where the rubber meets the road: people who want to learn about our results will look to the publications she oversees, not these newsletters. Kathy has a great many balls in the air at the moment, including volumes on Lydian Masonry, Churches, the Artemis Temple, the region around the Gygaean Lake, and the Synagogue, and she juggles them with terrific dexterity.

The volume that has occupied much of our time, however, is a newcomer: a book of essays in honor of Greenie's 70th birthday (hard to believe!). These papers, by colleagues and former students of Greenie, focus mostly on Sardis topics and material discovered during Greenie's directorship. Among them are three essays on the beautiful painted tomb, Lale Tepe, recorded by the expedition in 1999; on Roman wall paintings, late Roman coin hoards, Hellenistic Sardis, the reuse and recycling of ceramics in Lydian Sardis, on spolia from the Synagogue, conservation at Sardis, and mapping the city and its territory. This has been an opportunity to reflect on the course of the Sardis Expedition over the past fifty years, and to appreciate the magnificent results of Greenie's years as director, and just how much his ideas and insights have changed our understanding of this city. When we started this project, a few years ago, we were overwhelmed by the response—everybody wanted to contribute, to show their gratitude and affection for Greenie, who has been such an important part of all our lives, and an inspiration to so many students and colleagues. This is another important legacy of Sardis: it is not only an important archaeological site and research project, but also a meeting point and training ground for generations of scholars. And Greenie has led us for more than 30 years now, as teacher and mentor, an example not only in his scholarship and learning, but in his humanity, understanding, generosity, and kindness. We all hope that now that he will now enjoy focusing on his own research at Sardis, and will remain a central part of the Sardis Expedition for many, many years to come.

Nick Cahill

Update: The festschrift for Greenie, *Love for Lydia* (Sardis Report 4) is now available from Harvard University Press (http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog/CAHLOV.html).

The Yapı Kredi Vedat Nedim Tör Museum in Istanbul is preparing, with the help of the Expedition, an exhibition of Lydian and Persian-period artifacts from Sardis and western Turkey. We hope that it will include some of the most interesting finds from the last 50 years of the Expedition, as well as objects from the excavations of 1910–1922, and Lydian material from sites such as Daskyleion, Gordion, Ephesus, and the tumuli near Güre. The museum is located at İstiklal Cad. No: 285 Kat: 1 34433 Beyoğlu, Istanbul, and the exhibition is planned to open on September 29, 2009. A catalog with 15–20 essays is in preparation.



Fig. 1. The theater of Sardis, now in its third season of excavation, as we start work this year. At the bottom, Meriç Öztürk stands in the diazoma and records. Above him, Lily Stoner works in the Lydian house, with conservator Jennifer Kim helping to expose the artifacts from the burned floor. Above them (beyond the wooden barriers, to keep earth and stones from rolling down onto people working below) Lily starts a new expansion. This will give us a great section through the construction of the theater, showing its different stages, and open more of the Lydian house in future seasons. At the right, the retaining or parodos wall.



Fig. 2. Plan of the theater and stadium, by architects Robert Horner, Chelsea Wait, Jeremy Richmond and Nathan Schlundt. Dotted lines show the reconstruction of seating and stairs for access.



Fig. 3. The diazoma—a paved passageway around the seating of the theater, with excavator Meriç Öztürk. Seats would have ranged both above and below the passageway, but are now entirely eroded away; to Meriç's right, only a foot or so below the modern surface, is bedrock. Behind Meriç is the block from the staircase.



Fig. 4. Meriç's excavations on the parodos wall failed to expose the staircase he expected, but did reveal its interesting mixture of construction techniques, including clamped, squared stone blocks in Hellenistic tradition, to mortared rubble of Roman practice, to good old Lydian mudbrick (not visible in the photo). Meriç is in shorts; assistant photographer and assistant recorder Brianna Bricker (UC Berkeley) to his right; Lily is just appearing from the cavea of the theater.

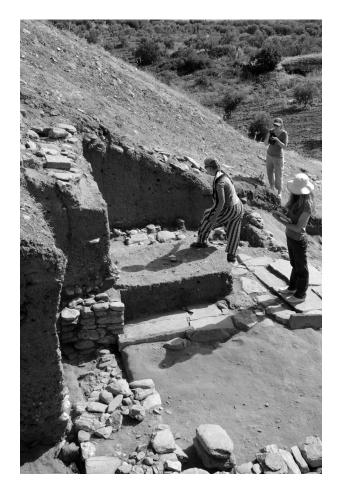


Fig. 5. Lily in the Lydian house, about to remove the last bit of destruction debris from the Persian sack of Sardis (under her foot) Photographer Helen Human is caught for once on the other side of the camera; Brianna Bricker takes notes. In the background, the stadium and the Hermus plain. At the lower left is a door in the Lydian house wall, leading into another, unexcavated room of the house; pottery in the scarp of this room makes us hopeful that this space will be as productive as the room excavated this year.



Fig. 6. Jennifer Kim in the new conservation laboratory putting final touches on a large storage pot from the Lydian kitchen.



Fig. 7. Jennifer uses dilute nitric acid to remove the heavy layer of encrustation that covered these Lydian sherds from the theater to reveal the painted animals lurking beneath—here the hind quarters of a deer. As she daubs on the acid and removes the concretion, figures emerge dramatically from the blank grayness, like a photographic print in developer.



Fig. 8. Another kind of excavation at the Lydian fortification. Since the upper fill here had been dug before—by us, or by the highway construction crew in the 1950's, we took out the backfill mechanically. Saam Noonsuk and government representative Enver Akgün watch contentedly as the backhoe driver excavates with the delicacy of a cat picking up its kittens. Expedition agent Teoman Yalçınkaya found that the backhoe driver in the nearby village of Yılmaz was the most skilled in Lydia; an afternoon with the backhoe saved a week's work with picks and shovels.



Fig. 9. Change of pace. After the quick removal of 10 feet of dirt in an afternoon with a backhoe, Saam cleaned the top of the foundation of the Lydian fortification with trowels and paintbrushes. Here, architect Jeremy Richmond measures and draws every stone of the foundation. The ladder rests on mudbrick which Saam has dug away elsewhere. The strings mark the lines of narrow channels in the stone foundation, where wooden branches or beams once stabilized the stone structure, like rebar in reinforced concrete. In the lower left, Andrew Ramage's 1977 sondage.



Fig. 10. Saam Noonsuk explains the early Lydian fortification during one of the weekly trench tours. The layer of stones on which the staff sits, continuing around in the scarp, is the stone foundation of the later Lydian fortification wall. After Jeremy had drawn this, Saam cut a probe through it to reveal a smaller, but still massive structure beneath. He stands in an enigmatic break in the wall—a gate or a recess? (The staff, from left to right: Sheila Nightingale (barely visible), Sharon Norquest, Cathy Alexander, Will Bruce, Tiffen Thompson, Briana Feston, Tiziana D'Angelo, Lily Stoner, Pınar Özgüner)

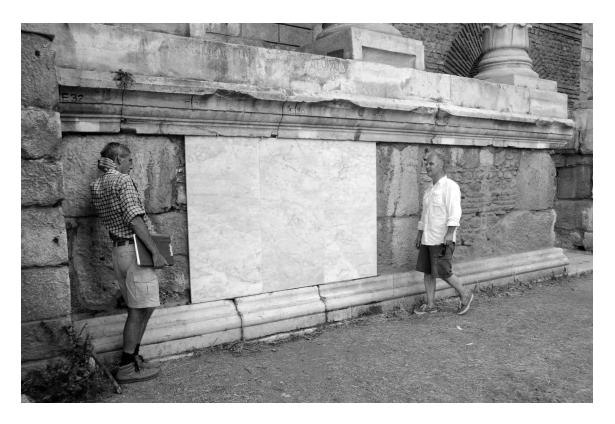


Fig. 11. Marbling the Marble Court. Michael Morris (right) temporarily installed three panels of marble revetment on the podium this summer; here he and Greenie study the color, texture, fit, and effect.

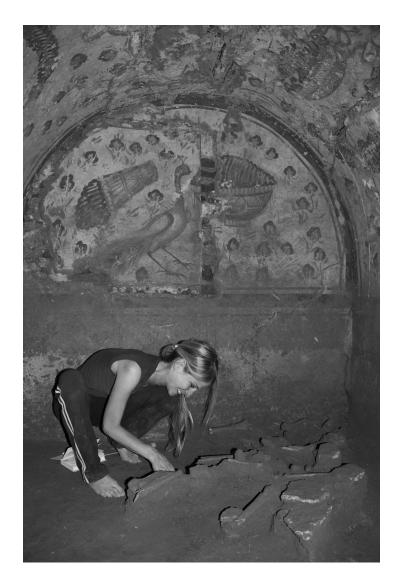


Fig. 12. Tiziana D'Angelo carefully excavating the bones from a late Roman hypogaeum tomb. The wall in back is painted with a peacock, baskets of fruit and a cornucopia. The straight cuts around the peacock were caused by looters, who also left the bones of the tomb owner in disarray.

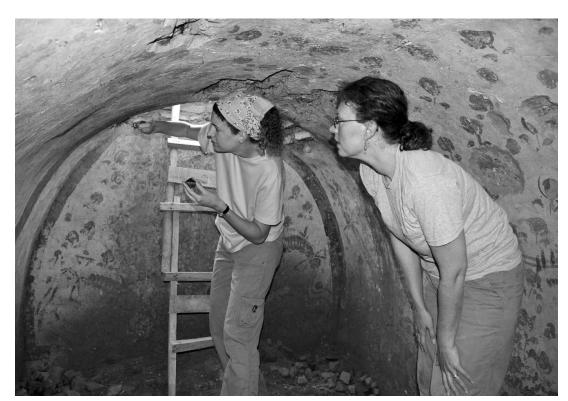


Fig. 13. Conservator Sharon Norquest consolidating the wall paintings of the other painted tomb, while Vanessa Rousseau studies them. Vanessa is just beginning a dissertation on Late Roman wall painting at Sardis, and the discovery of these two painted tombs was a fortunate coincidence for her.



Fig. 14. Archaeologist Pınar Özgüner and Government Representative Enver Akgün admire the view from the top of the acropolis, just before excavation began.

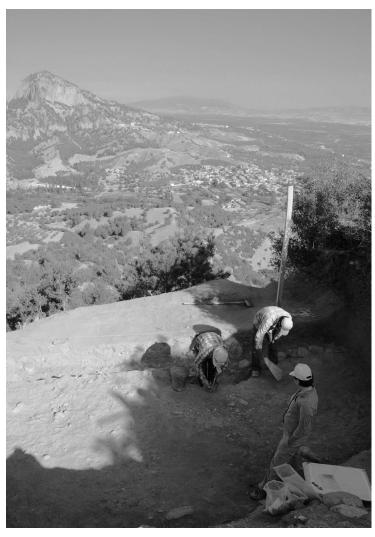


Fig. 15. Pinar and workmen excavating on the acropolis. The trench had a beautiful view, but was almost featureless. The layer of earth being cleaned here, however, produced all kinds of interesting artifacts, including those in figs. 16 and 17.



Fig. 16. Pinar holds an ancient gutter and spout (sima) tile from the Acropolis, next to the modern Lydian Building reconstruction built by Michael Morris and others in the 1970's and 1980's. The painted dancer beneath the horse is an unusual—perhaps unique—feature.



Fig. 17. The first Lydian electrum coin found in excavations at Sardis, showing its typical device, a lion's head with a "hairy nose wart."

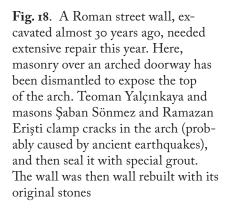






Fig. 19. Annetta Alexandridis giving a seminar on Roman sarcophagi at Sardis, with fragments of the sarcophagus found last year



Fig. 20. Greenie at the Pyramid Tomb (which he himself re-discovered in 1960) (Photograph by Catherine Draycott, University of Oxford)