



ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF SARDIS

NEWSLETTER FROM SARDIS, 2020 SEASON

November 2020



Dear Friends and Supporters,

Although it comes late in the year, this letter was mostly written from the excavation compound at Sardis, where we spent a short field season of about four weeks in July and August. Would that we had been able to carry out a proper excavation season this summer! Those plans went out the window many months ago, of course, and during the spring, it seemed almost impossible that we could travel to Turkey in the midst of this pandemic. But the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and Harvard's Vice Provost for International Affairs Mark Elliott and the other members of the Faculty Oversight Committee for the Sardis Expedition (FOCSE) were all supportive of our efforts to have a field season this summer, even if a greatly curtailed one. I'm happy to write that our work was safe and very productive,

although of course not the same without the full team; and we are fortunate to have traveled in this restricted era.

A select team consisting of Expedition Agent Teoman Yalçinkaya (retired), archaeologists Ümit Güngör and Gencay Öztürk (both Ege University), and Ministry Representative Sedrettin Ögünç

began work on July 20, focusing on maintaining the site, particularly finishing the cleaning of the Marble Court, using the same technique employed with such success on the Temple of Artemis. We had cleaned the south half of the Marble Court last year; this summer, the team of a dozen or so trained men

Fig. 2. The team finishes cleaning and maintaining the Marble Court. The view from the top of the building is always spectacular, and in the early morning with the sun just rising through the mist it is a delight to be up above the world.



Fig. 3. Evening dinner on the terrace, with Baha, Celal, Güzin, Sedrettin, Ümit, Gül, Jivan, and Teoman.

and women are finishing up the Marble Court, and also cutting back the jungles in the Temple and elsewhere around the site, cleaning the Synagogue, carrying out needed repairs in the compound and elsewhere, and making the site gleam. The month's work also brings support and stability to the families around Sart who have relied on the Expedition for well-paying jobs for many decades. The Ministry Representative this year, Sedrettin Bey, from the Izmir Museum, is extremely helpful and interested in the work, although frustrated that he can't see the excavation in action, which he says he was particularly looking forward to.

Bahadır Yıldırım (Harvard University), photographer Jivan Güner (private practice), archaeologist Güzin Eren (Boston University), and I arrived in early August, and opened the depots for study. Right now we are nine: Baha, Güzin, Gül Gürtekin-Demir (Ege University), Ümit, Teoman, accountant Celal Şentürk (retired), Jivan, Gencay, and myself. Master chef Ferat Serin cooks the delicious meals that are such a privilege at Sardis, and long-time house staff Muammer Akça and Mahmut Okter take care of the excavation compound, the Lydian Garden, and the Hanfmann fountain and garden, all of which need



upkeep whether or not the excavation team is there. We follow the rules that have become such a normal part of all our lives now: wearing masks (mandatory in Turkey), practicing social distancing, staying home in the compound rather than zipping in to the market in Salihli, and spending as much time outside as possible — a joy in Turkey in the summer. And once Baha and I were sure we hadn't picked up the virus in our travels, the team at Sardis became our home pod, our family as always, and we could relax a bit. Our small crew enjoys eating meals outside on the veranda overlooking the Tmolus mountains and the Temple of Artemis, by the light of kerosene lamps in the evening. There are no reported cases of Covid-19 in the village so far, just a few in lower Sart, and some in Salihli; and although as things

open up the region is experiencing the same rise in cases as the rest of the world, in general Turkey seems to have the disease under much better control than does the USA. So despite the masks and elbow-bumps instead of handshakes, life seems remarkably normal to me, and we completed the season without illness among any of our staff or work crew.

As always, publications are a major focus of our work. Earlier in the summer, editor Kerri Sullivan (Harvard University) and Brianna Bricker (University of Wisconsin-Madison) sent to press Fikret Yegül's (University of California-Santa Barbara) two-volume monograph on the Temple of Artemis. We were delighted to arrive in camp to find copies there. Fikret and Diane Favro, his wife, visited from their lovely cabin in Gölcük, high in the Tmolus mountains, and so received some



Fig. 4. Fikret Yegül with one of the first copies of his book, in the temple itself.



Fig. 5. As we went out to look at the temple, an official delegation from Ankara including two former provincial governors arrived unexpectedly to tour the site. To their good fortune, Fikret, the expert on the temple, was there to explain the building to them, and illustrated his tour with his new book. (Here, Fikret shows them a smaller-scale plan; his full-scale stone-by-stone plans of the temple cover six sheets, each two feet by three, so some 9 feet long; this is not a book designed to be studied outdoors on a windy day).



Fig. 6. Gül studying Lydian pottery in the compound. A scrupulous observer might notice that the lovely Orientalizing fragment she holds, showing a fierce winged griffin, is carefully pointed toward the camera, away from Gül. This artfully posed photo was taken by Jivan as part of a video documentary, "Legacies of the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis in Turkey," made for Harvard's annual Worldwide Week. Jivan interviewed three generations of Sardians, from Prof. Hanfmann's team including Teoman and long-time workman Ramazan Erişti, to Gül who came as a student in 1990 while Greenie was director and now is sending her own students to the site, to Gül's student Gencay, the next generation of professional archaeologists. The video was broadcast live on Oct. 8, but is available on Harvard's web site: <https://worldwide.harvard.edu/24hh-24-hours-harvard>; we're in the middle of the second reel, at 4:32:22.

of his author's complimentary copies hot off the press. Fikret's monograph is a huge accomplishment, the product of more than 30 years' work, and is a gorgeous publication, the publication series now redesigned by Kerri and Brianna with a new, elegant layout, stunning color photographs including historic watercolors and other romantic (and informative) views, many hundreds of documentary photos and drawings, and a separate box of fold-out plans and drawings that demand not just a desk but floor space to be laid out properly. I regret that we cannot celebrate its publication properly this year in person at Sardis, with champagne and festivities in the temple; next year, inşallah.

In camp, Gül is proof-reading her and Andrew and Nancy Ramage's report on the Lydian levels at sectors HoB and

PC one last time. This too is a complex two-volume monograph, with a catalog of more than 900 artifacts documenting Lydian buildings, stratigraphy, and daily life over half a millennium of Sardis' history. Gül is checking the text and illustrations, and working with photographer Jivan on last-minute photographs or re-takes of a few objects in the depots, as well as her own research on Lydian pottery.

Our next publication priority, now that the Temple and HoB/PC are done, is Andy Seager's long-heralded publication of the Synagogue. One major objective of this summer's work is to get new or better photographs and records of a few artifacts from the Synagogue, studied by Andy years ago. So Baha and Ümit have been combing through the depots, ferreting out bits of architecture,

ornament, stone furniture, and lamps from the incredibly rich excavations of David Mitten and others, and then helping Jivan take new photographs in her studio or in the courtyard — often a two- or three-person job. The synagogue also featured in one of this summer's pandemic-postponed plans: to construct a protective shelter roof over this largest synagogue in the ancient world to preserve the mosaics and other parts of this building, a project you have heard about frequently over the years. Funding for the roof was generously donated last year by Patrick Healy so we were ready to roll; because of the pandemic this project had to be put on hold until next year.

Güzin is here to study context pottery and other material for her dissertation on Lydian terracing at Sardis. As described all too often in previous newsletters, the



Figs. 7&8. Baha and Jivan studying stone table legs, some of the rich marble furnishings from the Synagogue. These fragments had been recorded individually by Andy Seager, but no photograph of them as an ensemble was taken. So Baha, Jivan, and Representative Sedrettin Ögünç photographed the fragments as a group in their original configuration, the original height carefully calculated by Baha from the taper in the finely-worked legs. The camera is controlled by a laptop to make it easier to take the pictures without using a ladder.



Fig. 9. One of Baha's many Depot Discoveries is a fragment of a small Corinthian capital, hiding in a "1963 Miscellaneous Stone" box, but belonging to the cylindrical monument discovered that year in the Synagogue. This fascinating model of a round building, already an antique when it was set up in the Synagogue in the late Roman period, was conserved by Jessica Pace in 2011. Frustratingly, Jessica's work fits so perfectly that Baha can't squeeze in the new fragment. We'll have to disassemble part of it next year to fit the new capital in.



early chronology of these terraces, which transformed the natural landscape of the city, remains frustratingly elusive. One of this year's many disappointments is that she could not excavate the key spot along the north brow of the hill which will produce, she hopes, stratigraphy that will allow her to date her boulder wall conclusively. But her painstaking excavation and recording since 2012 pays off in spades, as she is able to rethink her stratigraphy with 20-20 hindsight. Gül is helping her study the pottery

she excavated over the last 8 years, and also that dug back in 1981–1982 when this hill was first explored. We anxiously await the results of the OSL dating of the samples taken last summer, which are still being analyzed by Joel Spencer in his lab at Kansas State University, after the disruptions to spring schedules temporarily put that work too on hold.

Gencay splits his time between overseeing the workmen cleaning the Marble Court, and working on his dissertation about gems, seals, and related

artifacts from Sardis. Gencay, you remember, discovered the largest Roman arch in the world a few years back, but has now turned his attention to these minuscule objects. It seems to me typical of Sardis that a young student can (and must!) work at such diverse scales, from monumental to microscopic, and make important new discoveries in both areas.

In addition to working on the Synagogue, Baha has been searching boxes of bits and pieces of marble from the excavations of the Wadi B temple and



Fig. 10. Güzin Eren and Gül Gürtekin-Demir study the context pottery from excavations on Field 49. Güzin is also examining the pottery from Chris Simon's excavations of 1981 and 1982, and found his field notes incredibly perceptive. Even where her own excavations show that his interpretation was plausible but incorrect, his fundamental observations are always spot on – which is the goal of the careful note-taking archaeologists aspire to.



Fig. 11. Gencay Öztürk recording the gems from 60+ years of excavation at Sardis. Many of these have never been photographed in color or at high magnification, so the conservators' new computer-controlled microscope/camera he uses in this picture is a godsend.



Fig. 12. Piecing together the sadly shattered fragments of this richly ornamented capital is a group effort. From left to right, Mahmut, Güzin, Baha, Sedrettin, and workmen Nuri Kılıç and İsmet Çıtak, with Jivan photographing the crowd. Each hold fragments in their original locations. These pieces were discovered over more than 30 years and almost a football field's length apart, but Baha's joins show that they all belong to the temple dug in the 1980s.

its terrace over the last decades; and as always, making new discoveries and joins. Each year he has painstakingly found more fragments of one of the figural Corinthian capitals of the temple, which bore muscular male figures on each side, their arms outstretched to animals — a bull and a lion — leaping from the corners of the capital. A physical restoration is not possible without doing more radical drilling and pinning than we are ready to do, but with the help of colleagues, workmen, house staff, and the

Ministry Representative, he and Jivan arranged a sort of group photo. And this morning he identified a small fragment of a human or divine figure, found by Chris Ratté during his excavations in 1982, as belonging to a second figural capital from the temple. This second capital is otherwise known only from its rather conventional bottom part, found in 2013 built into a late antique wall together with the better-preserved one; the figural upper section is so far lost. The small new fragment of sculpture

thus helps us begin to understand the iconography of this extraordinarily richly ornamented temple.

Skipping back a couple millennia in Sardis' history, Fulya Dedeoğlu Konakçı (Ege University) played hooky from her own excavations at Ekşi Höyük to come to Sardis for a day, to study the Early and Late Bronze Age pottery from Will Bruce's (University of Kansas) deep excavations of the past few years. This discovery, one of the most unexpected in recent seasons, will be published



Fig. 13. Baha holds a small fragment of a draped human figure, which he has identified as belonging to the second Corinthian capital. It astounds me that he is able to pinpoint the original locations of these tiny fragments from the scale, workmanship, marble, and his keen sixth sense; and he's often proven right by tight, perfect joins.



Fig. 14. Doctoral student Bora Temür and Fulya studying Early Bronze Age pottery from the earliest levels so far discovered at Sardis. In the background, Gül shows Çiler Çilingiroğlu and Recep Cesur, two other colleagues from Ege University and Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, around the compound.

Fig. 15. Jivan photographing a huge early Lydian jar, one of a dozen or more found in a subterranean cellar on ByzFort together with more than a hundred (!) plates and other vessels—a magnificent dinner service fit for a palace. This was mended in 2017 but the press of other business did not allow us to do a full photographic documentation. I think Jivan is pleased not only at the beautiful pot, but also her new photographic stand which has made her work significantly easier.

soon, we hope, in a co-authored article by Will, Fulya, and Peter Pavúk in the archaeological journal of Ege University, *Arkeoloji Dergisi*.

I've had a chance to continue working on the important deposit of early Lydian pottery excavated by Chris Ratté and others at sector ByzFort. This was found in a structure very similar to the 9th-century BC mudbrick building identified by Güzin last summer, and much of it was never completely mended or photographed; so this truncated season has been a rare opportunity to catch up on a closer study.

It's very quiet, though, without the hustle and bustle of the eighty archaeologists, conservators, architects, students, and others we had expected to participate in the summer season. Our birthday celebrations, so much a part of Sardis summers, had to be carried out through Zoom, but therefore could include Sardians from all over the world. Two families of kittens lurk in the pile of empty pottery boxes in the courtyard, but without the many animal-lovers on the team, they haven't become acclimatized to people, and even Ferat, the whisperer of every type of beast, can't get near them. A variety of dogs roam the area, from the usual largish brown-and-black Turkish "sokak köpekleri" (Street Dogs) to a couple smaller dogs and even a rather overbred (IMO) long-haired white stray; some were hanging around the camp a week or so ago, keeping us awake at night, but now they've thankfully lost all interest and left us alone. Gümüş, our huge guard dog, is as friendly and lively and overpowering as ever, but is bored from the relative lack of tourists this summer.

Fig. 16. Ferat Serin, chef extraordinaire and also Master of Animals, attempts, in vain, to woo the affections of our standoffish kittens.



Update: September

Kerri, Brianna, and Ahmet Boratov of Ege Yayınları, Istanbul, have been busy. The main shipment of Fikret's publication of the Temple just arrived in the USA, and should be available soon from Harvard University Press, although the pandemic restricts distribution of books. Andrew and Nancy, Gül and Kerri and Brianna have solved the final outstanding questions about the HoB text, and that volume is now officially finished, transmitted to Ahmet, and in process; you should soon see this final publication of these first-discovered Lydian occupation sectors at Sardis.

It was a great disappointment for everybody that the regular season had to be cancelled, leaving students and

scholars stranded in their apartments. As a consolation prize, in June and July we were able to offer the Harvard students who had planned to spend the summer in Turkey the opportunity to work on Sardis material, in a sort of virtual research season. Paul Tamburro, Sarah Eisen, and Rebecca Deitsch, together with long-time Sardians Tony Shannon and Frances Gallart Marqués, began a new program to bring our results to a wider audience through our forthcoming channel on Google Arts and Culture, beginning with a series on "Sardis in 20 Artifacts." These choice finds from the past 60 years of excavation, from the Cybele Monument found in the Synagogue to the colossal head of Commodus to a lovely bronze bridle ornament in the shape of a boar,





Fig. 17. The "Summerville" season on Zoom, with Sarah, myself, Rebecca, Baha, Robin, Frances, Tony, and Paul.

give highlights of the diversity and richness of the history and culture of Sardis. The students brought wonderful fresh points of view and a sense of humor to the material. The site is not yet live, but we will let you know when it is.

The student team also converted Fikret's monograph on the Temple of Artemis from the press files to a digital e-book, a skill increasingly useful for students in today's world, and this is now available on the web site, with, for instance, larger color versions of photographs that had to be printed smaller and in black-and-white. They also began to reorganize our database of architectural drawings. This was our very first database, created way back in 1994 by Derya Beyer-Honca, now part

of a networked system of more than 50 databases and many hundreds of thousands of records and images. By bringing in scans and the version history of each drawing, they have made the spartan database much more usable and friendly. Although our group never met in person, it was an enormous pleasure working with these talented young scholars, and we all hope and intend to work together in real space next summer.

Facilitating these activities (and participating in the virtual research season) is Expedition Coordinator Robin Woodman. Robin has made the office and the project run smoothly for more than ten years, helping with finances and travel arrangements, ensuring that needed supplies and equipment

are purchased and actually make it to the site, and carrying out the myriad unsung tasks critical to the operation of a complex international endeavor. Robin has announced that she will retire at the end of this year. She leaves behind a legacy of careful work and thought which have contributed in countless ways to a decade of campaigns, and we will miss her and are grateful for all the ways she has made the expedition better.

As we are grateful to you. As always, your interest keeps us going through these uncertain times, and your support maintains the momentum that will enable us to fulfill our commitments and to pursue new goals. We are indeed fortunate to have such an involved and generous group of friends.

Nick Cahill
Director, Sardis Expedition



Fig. 18. The 2020 field team at Sardis: Bahadır Yıldırım, Celalettin Şentürk, Sedrettin Ögünç, Jivan Güner, Nick Cahill, Gül Gürtekin-Demir, Güzin Eren, Bora Temür, Teoman Yalçınkaya, Ümit Güngör, Fulya Dedeoğlu Konakçı, Gencay Öztürk.



Fig. 19. A happy Expedition Coordinator, Robin Woodman, back in the days when we could still work in our offices.

If you would like to be added to our list of recipients of future newsletters, or for more information about our activities and how to support our work, please send an email to am_sardis@harvard.edu.

Past newsletters are available on our web site, <http://sardisexpedition.org>, which recently underwent a big update including on-line publications, databases of sculpture, pottery, coins, and inscriptions, and other work; see <https://sardisexpedition.org/en/events/19>

We will hold our usual Sardis Biennial Lecture in Spring 2021, but this year's lecture will be on line rather than in person. The date has not been determined, and we will notify all Supporters by email of the date and on-line venue as soon as we know.



Fig. 20. The Sardis family stretches across the world. Cathy Alexander's birthday has been a great event at the excavation for (dare I say it) more than 30 years now. This year's celebration, like so many such events of 2020, was virtual, but well-attended by Sardians across many time zones, including Vanessa Rousseau in Minnesota, Jen Kim in California, Elizabeth Gombosi in Massachusetts, the birthday girl herself in Canada, Kerri Sullivan in New Hampshire, Brianna Bricker in Cyprus, Frances Gallart Marqués in Massachusetts, Teoman and Gencay at Sardis, Nancy and Andrew Ramage in New York, Brian Castriota in Scotland, John Sigmier in Pennsylvania, Michael Morris in New York, Marcus Rautman in Missouri, and Jivan and Baha at Sardis. In the future, I imagine some of our most vivid memories from 2020 will be these incessant Zoom calls, the familiar grid of faces, each separate background emphasizing to me the distance between all of us, yet the magical way we are joined. It was a joyful occasion, and we hope to celebrate it together next summer at Sardis, as we have for so many years.