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INSIDE THE "THOUSAND MOUNDS"—A corridor piled with skulls and bones of early Christians was uncovered near Sardis.

ARCHAEOLOGY

Dig Confirms Herodotus' Tales

HERODOTUS wrote that sons of Heracles, wandering east from Greece after the Trojan War, seized the city of Sardis. Herodotus was right.

Traces of buildings and pottery with decorative patterns originating in Greece at the time of the Mycenaean civilization have been found by archaeologists of the Harvard-Cornell Expedition at Sardis in western Turkey.

The finds confirm the legend known to Herodotus that when the Bronze Age Greek civilization fell to the invading Dorians in the twelfth century B.C., bands of warriors driven from Greece roamed the territory of the eastern Mediterranean.

The new archaeological clues to history also show, for the first time, that the Greek heroes pushed some 60 miles into Asia Minor.

Sardis, capital of Lydia when Croesus was king in the sixth century B.C., was the site of a settlement as early as the third millennium B.C., as evidenced by prehistoric pot shards or fragments from that period discovered in the area.

On a sandy beach not far from the limestone cliffs where the shards were found, the archaeologists, in a single day's digging, uncovered Lydian houses of the sixth century B.C., probably ruins of a harbor hamlet where goods for the burials of kings were brought ashore.

Having once located a likely spot for a dig, scientists usually spend days, weeks or even months just patiently scratching away at the surface of things before coming upon very much of interest, Prof. George M. A. Hanfmann of Harvard told SCIENCE SERVICE. It was highly unusual and very exciting to uncover in one day plentiful evidence of a city that flourished about 2,500 years ago, he said.

The Lydian settlement lay just a layer beneath the surface, he reported. Nothing was ever constructed above the ruins because, to this day, the area is covered with water about two-thirds of the year.

At the royal cemetery of Bin Tepe ("thousand mounds"), members of the dig excavated Lydian chamber tombs opened last year by grave robbers. The cemetery contains an imposing apartment piled to the ceiling with bones of 150 men, women and children.

The sepulchre was built by the Lydians in the sixth century B.C. but lamps and jewelry found among the bones suggest that the mass burial was made by early Christians who reopened the grave and used it about 400 A.D. Further research will probably reveal whether the dead were buried at once or represent several generations from one community.

The magnificent synagogue of Sardis, one of the seven churches of Asia associated with St. John of the Revelation, shed light on the Jewish community in Sardis. A colorful, 10,000-square-foot mosaic in the synagogue's main hall bore inscriptions showing that it was divided into seven bays running from east to west, each the gift of a different donor.

The synagogue was originally part of a Roman gymnasium that was entered through two large rooms uncovered behind the apse. Prof. A. Henry Detweiler of Cornell suggested that the entire complex once served as a Roman basilica or court of justice and was turned over to the Jewish people as a place of worship, probably in the third century A.D. Decorative evidence from the interior walls



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THE GOAT AND THE PEBBLE—A goat incised on a pebble is among the fragments confirming the legend known to Herodotus about the wanderings of Greek heroes after the Trojan War.

indicates the synagogue basilica is the architectural forerunner by some 100 years of the first of the great churches built by Constantine.

In a grand gymnasium complex, of which the synagogue is a part, excavators discovered a long swimming pool—a standard feature of Roman baths. The hall was renovated about 400 A.D. in the Early Byzantine period according to an inscription by Severus Simplicius, "Count of the First Order and Prefect of Lydia."