

Resurrecting Gordion: Conservation as Interpretation and Display of a Phrygian Capital

Frank Matero

"Whatever withdraws us from the power of our senses; whatever makes the past, the distant, or the future predominate over the present, advances us in the dignity of human beings."—Samuel Johnson, *A Journey to the Western Isles of Scotland* (1775)

Archaeological Heritage and Conservation

Archaeological heritage and its conservation have become important issues in contemporary discourse on the use, management, and display of the past. Archaeological sites have long been a part of heritage, well before the use of the term "heritage." Current concerns can be attributed to the perception among the public and professionals alike that archaeological sites, like the natural environment, are nonrenewable resources that are disappearing at an alarming rate. This situation is attributable to a wide array of causes ranging from neglect and poor management to increased visitation and vandalism, from inappropriate past treatments to over-development for tourism (Matero et al 1998). Despite the global increase in the scale of these problems, counter-efforts of recovery, documentation, stabilization, interpretation, and display have been at the heart of archaeological preservation since the late 19th century (Demas 2000).

Like all disciplines, archaeology and conservation have been shaped by historical habit and contemporary concerns. Both disciplines address the past and its value to inform the present. Both have

also begun to expand the notion of "site" to include a more comprehensive understanding and vision of the cultural landscape. This in turn has demanded a more open, values-based approach that attempts to place artifacts and sites into a larger regional scale and contemporary social context, which recognizes the input of all stakeholders and especially culturally and locally affiliated groups.

The practices of traditional archaeology and conservation are by their very nature oppositional. Excavation, as the primary physical method by which archaeologists study a site, is an invasive process that is both destructive and irreversible. In the revealing of a site, structure, or object, excavation is not a benign reversal of site formational processes but rather a traumatic invasion of a site's physico-chemical equilibrium, resulting in immediate or gradual deterioration if preventive measures are not taken.

Conservation, on the other hand, seeks to safeguard cultural resources from loss and damage, based on the belief that material culture possesses important scientific and aesthetic evidence as well as the power to evoke memory and emotional responses. The informational value embodied in the materiality of objects and sites can be expressed as *integrity*, which is a common requirement for heritage designation in many conservation charters and codes of ethics. Integrity can manifest itself in various states as purity or completeness of form, physico-chemical composition, or context. Its definition will be a function of the values and significance to the viewer, and will vary for the archaeologist, art

historian, conservator, and cultural affiliate. Integrity has come to be seen as an expression of authenticity, a quality that conveys some truthfulness of the original in time and space.

But archaeological sites are also places. If we are to identify and understand the nature and implications of certain physical relationships with locales established through past human thought and experience, we must do it through the study of *place*. Places are contexts for human experience, constructed in movement, memory, encounter, and association (Tilley 1994:15). They are more than the physical realities of a site. While the act of remembering is acutely human, the associations and meaning specific places can have at any given time will change. In this respect, conservation itself can become a way of reifying cultural identities and historical narratives over time.

Archaeological sites are what they are by virtue of the disciplines that study them. They are made, not found, constructed through time, often by neglect or destruction, amnesia, and then re-discovery. As heritage they are a mode of cultural production constructed in the present but having recourse to the past (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:7). Display as an interface mediates sites and transforms what is shown into heritage. The popular notion of archaeological sites as ruins is based on a long-standing tradition of cultivating a taste for the Picturesque (Thompson 1981). But contemporary modes of interpretation as well as an interest in displaying non-traditional sites such as Neolithic mounds or rusting industrial landscapes have begun to challenge such accepted definitions and approaches.

With advances in the scientific investigation of sites and artifacts beginning in the early 20th century, many sites were exploited for their finds and then often left unprotected and uninterpreted for public viewing. Today there is a new appreciation for a site's potential for interpretation and display, perhaps even an overzealous interest in the potential of many sites to be places for experience, education, and recreation.

Beginning with the Fourth International Congress of Architects in Madrid in 1904 and later with the Charter of Athens following the International Congress of Restoration of Monuments in 1931, architects, engineers, conservators, and archaeologists have been concerned with the identification and

codification of a set of universal principles to guide the intervention of structures and sites of historic and cultural significance.

For archaeological sites, display and interpretation encompass a variety of options: reconstruction or anastylosis, building a protective enclosure or shelter, reburial, or the selected removal of components to the safety of a museum. Each choice has a significant impact on the context and the component. As we are now becoming acutely aware, interventions addressing only the material condition of objects, structures, and places of cultural significance without considering associated cultural beliefs and practices (i.e., intangible values) can sometimes compromise a site. Thus, establishing cultural and community context and engaging in dialogue with professionals and affiliates are critical.

The complexity of and professional responsibility for the archaeological investigation of sites now requires provisions for conservation whether it is a plan for visitation and display or closure and reburial. This is certainly the case in Turkey where most excavations now require a conservation plan for the treatment of its finds and the development of the site and its vicinity. Such is the philosophical and pragmatic context that the current Gordion project must address in its efforts to respond to a 60-year history of excavation, weathering, and limited conservation.

Gordion the Site

What are we to make of the site of Gordion? What narratives should be told utilizing the remains of the Phrygian's ancient citadel and its landscape? As a place in history, Gordion is known more for its real and fanciful associations with King Midas and Alexander the Great than its visited realities. What is Gordion's place in the larger perception of Turkey's past and the display of its archaeological legacy?

Archaeological research at Gordion has revealed a complex settlement history extending over 3,800 years from ca. 2500 BC to the 14th century AD (Fig. 2.1). A major conflagration around 800 BC destroyed much of the complex, already under renovation, thereby necessitating a complete rebuilding of the citadel that encapsulated the earlier buildings and fortifications under a carefully laid clay

and rubble fill up to 5 m thick. This destruction and the Phrygians' response to fill and rebuild has had the fortunate effect of preserving much of the Early Phrygian citadel plan, including buildings and pavements, fortification walls, and associated finds. The rapid destruction and subsequent filling also preserved the more subtle processes of building alterations in progress just before the fire (see Voigt, this volume).

Continuous occupation of the site and reuse (robbing) of building materials from each succeeding period, combined with Rodney Young's excavation strategy, essentially left a largely Early Phrygian plan exposed, albeit partially. Like Thera and Pompeii, Gordion now displays a moment in time preserved by catastrophe and by the ancient Phrygians' rebuilding program, revealed and edited through modern excavation. This aspect of the site is a significant factor in determining how Gordion's citadel should be conserved and, more importantly, presented and displayed. Given the fact that excavation has ceased for the moment, a conservation plan for both the citadel and the surrounding landscape has now taken priority, its phasing a result of past efforts and new concerns.

Site Conservation 1950–1974

During Young's long tenure at Gordion (1950–1974), little site preservation occurred other than some remedial cement capping of the gate complex in 1956 and partial reburial of the rear wall of Megaron 2 in 1961, prompted by the removal of selected stones covered by incised "doodles" (see Roller, this volume). Young did make efforts to preserve the extraordinary burial in Tumulus MM by engaging the Turkish Archaeological Service to structurally reinforce the inner chamber.

Only the gate appears to have been subjected to minor reconstruction when, during its excavation in 1955, the northwest ramp wall of the North Court and the top of the southwest ramp wall of the South Court were rebuilt with stone blocks that had been recycled during the Middle Phrygian period in the construction of the later "dam wall" (see Voigt, this volume). In 1961 an important pebble mosaic—the earliest of its type—from Megaron 2 was cut and lifted in panels and transported to the Gordion

Museum, where it was later re-installed under an outdoor shelter. Despite the popularity of lifting ancient mosaics at that time, the result is usually damaging, and in this case, the piecemeal transfer of a clay-based pebble mosaic seriously compromised the overall integrity of this remarkable pavement (Figs. 16.1 and 16.2).

Site Conservation 1978–1987

After Rodney Young's death in 1974, excavation at Gordion ceased until 1988. During that period, several site conservation initiatives were begun to limit the cumulative damage resulting from exposed walls, abandoned trenches, and unsupported baulks, and to monitor perceived structural problems at the gate complex and Tumulus MM.

Site Conservation 1988–Present

Soon after excavations resumed, Director G. Kenneth Sams began a new conservation program. In 1989 Tumulus MM and the gate became the initial focus of attention, and in 1993, consideration was given as to how best to stabilize and display the Terrace Building.

In 1999 conservator Mark Goodman introduced a well-developed set of formal guidelines for site conservation and a priority program based on condition and significance. Plumblin measurement monitoring began at the gate, a French drain was installed, and a temporary scaffolding system was built. In 2002 low-pressure gravity grouting was begun on the dry-laid masonry gate on the recommendation of Sir Bernard Feilden (Fig. 16.3). For the Terrace Building, TB4 masonry was rebuilt and an elaborate system of temporary protection employing sandbag buttressing and soil capping of the splayed walls was begun at TB1, 2, and 8, and later extended to the entire building and other masonry features (Fig. 16.4).

The tragic death of Goodman in 2004 brought the Architectural Conservation Laboratory of the University of Pennsylvania (ACL-UPenn) to the site, and, together with Middle East Technical University (METU), a comprehensive conservation and management program was developed for the citadel and its vicinity.

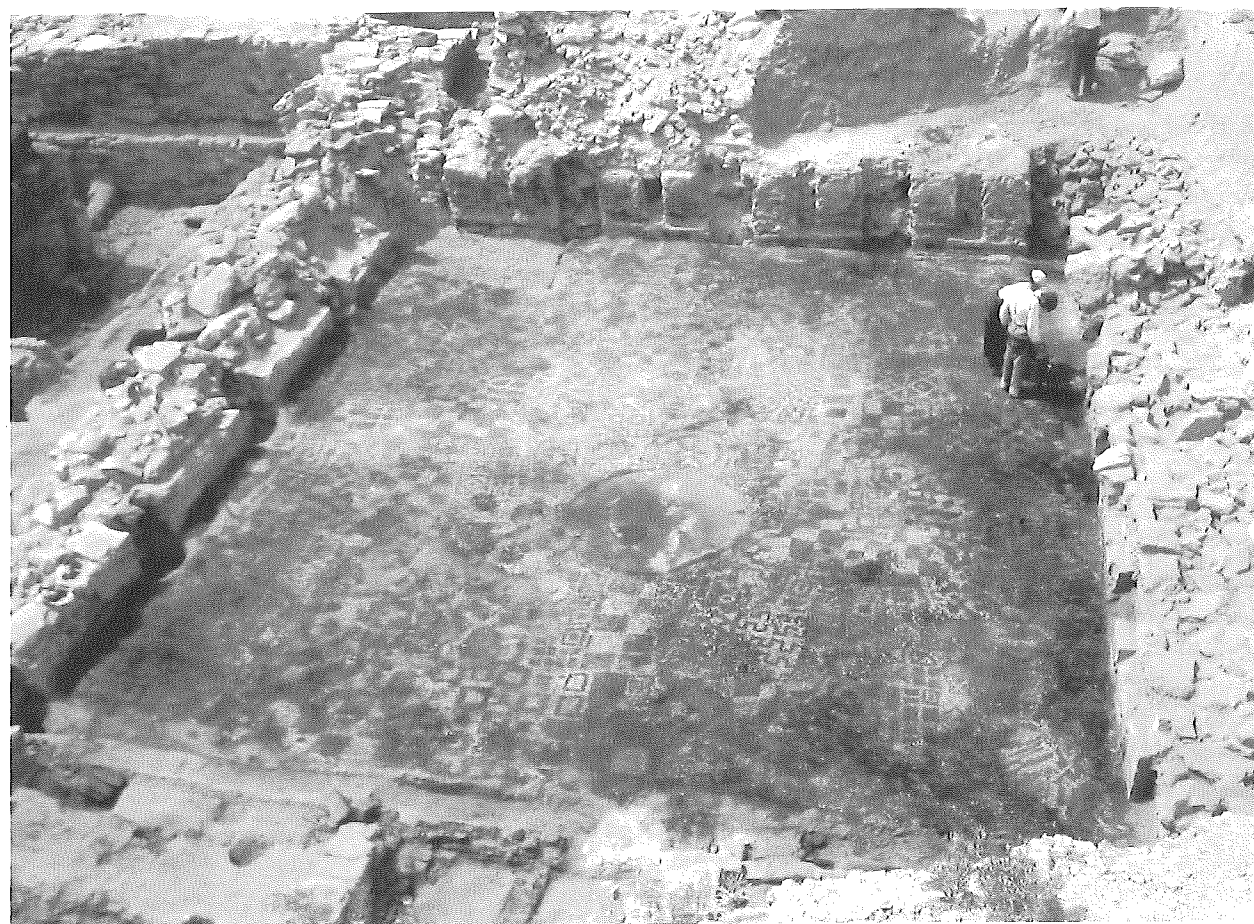


Fig. 16.1. Megaron 2 during excavation and discovery of pebble mosaic pavement, 1956. Source: Gordion Archive, Penn Museum.

Site Conservation Program

In recent years, heritage professionals have become more aware of values-based planning, especially for archaeological sites (Lipe 1974, Demas 2000). It is the goal of the current conservation program to develop a detailed site and regional management plan by 2012 after gaining greater familiarity with the physical and social dimensions of Gordion, the nearby town of Yassihöyük, and the surrounding vicinity.

As a physical place, Gordion is conspicuously defined by the citadel's constructed earthen mound, which rises above a flat plain surrounded by satellite constructions (e.g., fortifications, lower town, and roads) and an extensive royal cemetery of tumuli and natural features (Fig. 2.1). The excavation or subtractive revealing of the early citadel, once situated upon and now within the excavated mound, con-

tributes to today's inherited physical reality, as do the subsequent spoil heaps and the now partially exposed Phrygian, Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine structures.

The Mound and Its Excavation

From the earliest years of archaeological research at Gordion, the site has been understood as a complex landscape. New appreciation of the site as part of a regional cultural landscape is now underway by the Graduate Program in Restoration at Middle East Technical University. Until that study is complete, a focus on the citadel and its immediate built features will continue to dominate the conservation discussions. Critical to this dialogue and subsequent ac-



Fig. 16.2. Current display of lifted Megaron 2 mosaic at the Gordion Museum, 2005. Photo: author.

tions is the consideration of both the constructed (and deconstructed) mound itself and, by extension, the scarps that define the current extent of the excavation and the exposed citadel core (Fig. 16.5).

The first-order priority of the conservation plan is the ancient constructed form of the mound in terms of its mass and contour, as well as its dynamic reshaping by subsequent occupation and its disfigurement by excavation and weathering. Large-scale interventions, already underway, include the selective removal of excavation spoil dumps that have significantly altered the external form of the ancient mound, and the infill of dangerously eroded scarps that now rim the excavation and undermine the visitor circuit above. Also critical to the stabilization of the mound, the scarps, and the surrounding tumuli is the development of a re-vegetation plan to curtail erosion, already begun by the site's archaeobotanist, Naomi Miller (see Miller, this volume).

Internally, the extent of the citadel, and especially the Early Phrygian period revealed by excavation deep within the mound, has created a unique situation for viewing. From the flat top of the mound, visitors have an extraordinary 360-degree view into the extensively excavated citadel. Unlike many such stratified sites, the citadel's diachronic urban plan can be understood relatively easily if the legibility of the building fabric is maintained and reinforced. This remains one of the site's most significant aspects and is currently threatened by the instability of both the eroding scarps and baulks and the poorly presented and eroded architectural fabric (Fig. 16.4). A new visitors' circuit utilizing the different vantage points above has been designed with 12 canopied wayside pavilions, each addressing a different set of themes depending on the views inward and outward toward the surrounding ancient and modern landscape (Fig. 16.6). Here the expansive views allow a



Fig. 16.3. Grouting the Early Phrygian Gate, 2003. Photo: Mark Goodman.



Fig. 16.4. General view of the Terrace Building with its temporary stabilization, 2001. Photo: Mark Goodman.



Fig. 16.5. Site plan of phased conservation activities over the next five years. Source: Penn Architectural Conservation Laboratory.

simultaneous narrative that can easily shift in theme or time, such as the military landscapes of ancient and modern (Battle of Sakarya) Anatolia.

Architecture

The perception of any urban plan depends on the relationship of its parts. Gordion's surviving architectural features allow us to discern and understand the citadel's plan (albeit partial) with its buildings,

fortification walls, entrance gate, paved areas, and enclosed and open spaces. The overall relationship of this plan is currently illegible due to structural deterioration and a variety of earlier conflicting preservation/presentation techniques. In order to re-establish the architectural form and structural stability of the buildings, a range of techniques including selective reburial, stabilization, restoration, and partial reconstruction have been implemented simultaneously. Architectural form and building fabric are currently being interpreted according to a set of guidelines

that carefully mediate between the re-establishment of overall plan and the preservation of architectural fabric. Authenticity here is a relative term that must find its balance in protecting future archaeological value while exposing and displaying ancient structures for viewing.

The excavation photographs from the 1950s and 60s reveal a site very different from the current landscape. At the time of excavation many buildings and enclosure walls were readily discernible, constructed of stone and mud brick with evidence of heavy timber framing (wall slots), and standing in some cases over 1 m in height. Pavements of stone, cobble, mosaic, and plaster clearly differentiated interior and exterior spaces. Although years of prolonged exposure degraded these materials (mud brick) and construction techniques (splayed rubble core masonry walls), some features such as the stone pavements and megaron walls were subsequently

reburied for protection. Currently, various presentation techniques are under development to reveal and display walls and pavements by excavation, capping, encapsulation, replication, and reburial.

Differentiation of buildings dating to the various phases of occupation (such as Early and Middle Phrygian) is difficult, especially where buildings and features continued in use but were modified. Fortunately or not, Young excavated down to the Destruction or Early Phrygian level, leaving very few of the later Middle Phrygian buildings in place. Where excavation has revealed these, or even earlier Bronze Age structures, a method of physical differentiation is being explored to build a sense of time into the urban plan. This is possible, as many of the earlier buildings are barely discernible by walls or pavements and can be imprinted on the ground as shallow perimeter plans. Final decisions will depend on the details and legibility of such theoretical schemes



Fig. 16.6. Visitor circuit with new stone steps, railings, and wayside pavilion design. Source: Penn Architectural Conservation Laboratory.

on site when viewed from the visitor circuit above. In this regard, recent examples of interpretation at similar sites in Turkey offer comparable solutions for consideration, such as at Hattusa (Seeher 2007).

Any physical intervention at Gordion must be preceded by the obligation to continue to study, document, and analyze the construction of Early and Middle Phrygian architecture. The intentional burial of the early citadel after the fire has provided a unique opportunity to record in detail the preserved materials and methods of Phrygian builders. Stones of many varieties, clay mortars and plasters, mud brick, painted terracotta tiles, pebble and cobble pavements, and (indirectly) wooden timber framing are all preserved for material and architectural analyses that could contribute much to an understanding of Phrygian building technology.

At the Terrace Building—a large linear building of successive rooms where goods were produced, processed, and stored—the architectural evidence (as well as associated finds) is well preserved, thus demanding an intervention approach that preserves the construction integrity as well as the visual legibility of this building's unique plan and the individual associated interior features (walls, floors, openings, hearths, and storage bins). Here recent conservation methods have included a range of techniques including selective stone block replacement, mechanical repair of original stones (grouting, adhesive repair, and pinning), and *in situ* wall stabilization (cable stitching) (Fig. 16.7). The end result is the preservation of the ancient walls as found without disassembly or reconstruction (as attempted earlier), thus preserving their structural integrity as well as overall form.

The entrance to the Citadel Mound affords a slightly different example of how one might reconcile the conservation, stabilization, and interpretation of built form at the urban scale. From all evidence Gordion was a raised fortified settlement with a series of ashlar walls and one or more gate structures. Today, as in antiquity, one approaches the citadel up a ramp through the massive gate (Fig. 16.8). The current Early Phrygian Gate survives nearly complete due to intentional burial during the Middle Phrygian period for a superimposed gate above it. Although the later gate was largely destroyed by subsequent reoccupation and stone reuse, Young's excavations removed much of the Middle Phrygian fill, which formed an

imposing stepped polychrome platform Glacis from which the later gate rose. While the stepped Glacis is still partially visible, Young's spoil heaps have significantly changed the immediate topography around the gate entrance and the overall outer contour of the Phrygian mound. The result is a confusing and less impressive entrance compromised by the looming spoil mounds, and it is dangerously unstable due to the exposed unsupported Middle Phrygian fill.

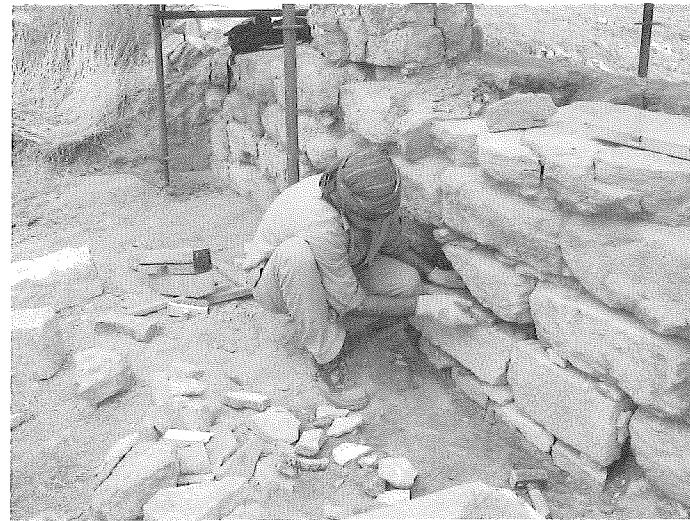
Current solutions to this complex problem address the three-fold requirements of (1) restoring the experiential sense of arrival and entry clearly intended by the Phrygians in their architecture and setting, (2) the display of time revealed and understood through the physical superimposition of building and stratigraphy, including the later rubble fill for the construction of the Middle Phrygian Gate, and (3) the necessity for stabilization and public safety. This will be achieved by re-establishing public entry to the citadel through the existing Early Phrygian Gate while at the same time exhibiting and interpreting the later Middle Phrygian Glacis and rubble fill. Such a plan will require the removal of the current excavation ramp and Young's spoil heaps, which disfigure the entrance and the distinctive mound profile. The cut rubble fill will be stabilized with limestone-filled gabions, which provide essential buttressing of this critical feature while visually referencing its rubble stone construction.

Although the actual Middle Phrygian Gate is long gone, the presence and height of the rubble fill and the few remaining ashlar blocks of the later gate attest to the massive rebuilding project the Phrygians undertook after the Destruction. Here, within a compressed space surrounded by the later fill, one can experience time as stratified space (Fig. 16.8). Entry into the early citadel through the gate on the cobble ramp brings the visitor into full view of the citadel and provides a unique opportunity to comprehend Phrygian architecture and its spatial intent. Few buildings from this period in Turkey exist to this degree. In this context, the goal of site conservation is to *resurrect* ancient Gordion, not in a literal physical sense, but rather in an experiential way that would re-establish both its impressive monuments and its *longue durée* for the viewer.

Despite the completeness of its form, the Early Phrygian Gate is not without structural problems.



a



b



c

Fig. 16.7a-f. Terrace Building (TB2), demonstration of various wall masonry conservation techniques: (a) before treatment; (b) stone replacement; (c) drilling for adhesive repair; (d) structural retrofitting; (e) wall capping; (f) after treatment. Source: Penn Architectural Conservation Laboratory.



d



e

Fig. 16.7 cont'd.



f



Fig. 16.8a (top), b. Gate entrance showing Early and Middle Phrygian masonry and trenched later Phrygian fill, view looking northwest (a) and east (b). Source: Penn Architectural Conservation Laboratory.

The use of dry-laid rubble stone fill behind the battered ashlar walls of the gate has rendered the structure potentially unstable, especially in a seismically active region. This became evident in the 1990s when a bulge and cracking were observed on the northwest corner of the South Court, which only worsened after the 1999 earthquake. Because of the incredible rarity

and integrity of the gate, any further remedial effort to stabilize the masonry must be minimal (i.e., not disassembly). Therefore, in advance of any structural solutions, mid-range laser imaging (scanning) and a stone-by-stone conditions survey of the gate have been recently completed, and structural and environmental monitoring is currently underway (Fig. 16.9).

In addition, an innovative program of protecting the gate and wall tops using “soft” vegetative capping holds great promise in ultimately providing a maintainable, sustainable solution that is both aesthetically acceptable and cost effective for so large a site (Fig. 16.10) (see Miller, this volume). These are some of the larger projects currently underway at the citadel that respond to the need for immediate stabilization, and interpret the site to the public during on-going conservation and excavation. While the process is open-ended and will benefit from professional and public input during this phase, its goals and objectives are based on a long-term plan that recognizes the site’s potential as an important visitor destination.

Like all places of human activity—including heritage—archaeological sites are constructed. Despite their fragmentation, they are complex cre-

ations that depend on the legibility and authenticity of their components for meaning and appreciation. How legibility and authenticity of such structures and places are realized and ensured must be thoughtfully considered and understood for effective site conservation. From the broadest perspective, archaeology and conservation should be seen as a conjoined enterprise; for both, physical evidence has to be studied and interpreted. Such interpretations are based on a profound and exact knowledge of the various histories of the thing or place and its context, on the materiality of its physical fabric, and on its cultural meanings and values to the public over time. This requires the application of a variety of specialized technical knowledge, but ideally the process must be brought back into a cultural context so that the archaeology and conservation projects become synonymous.

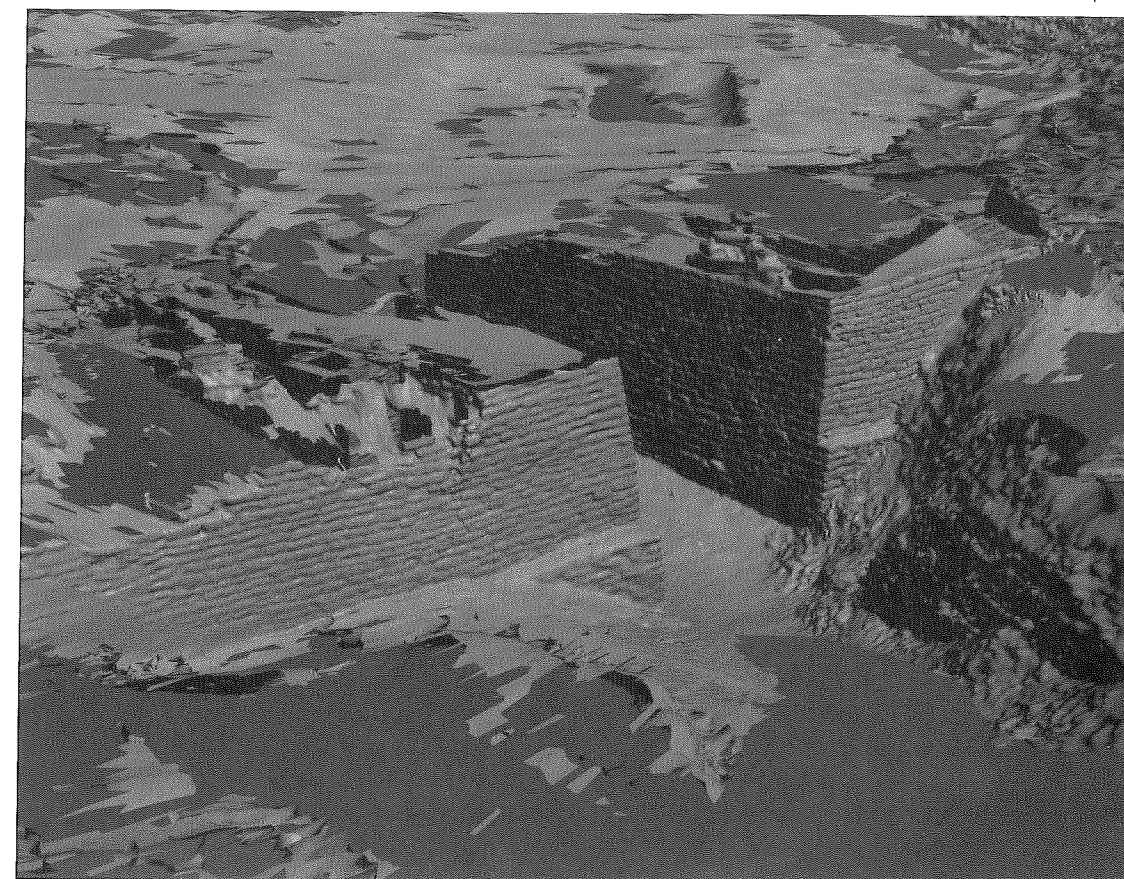
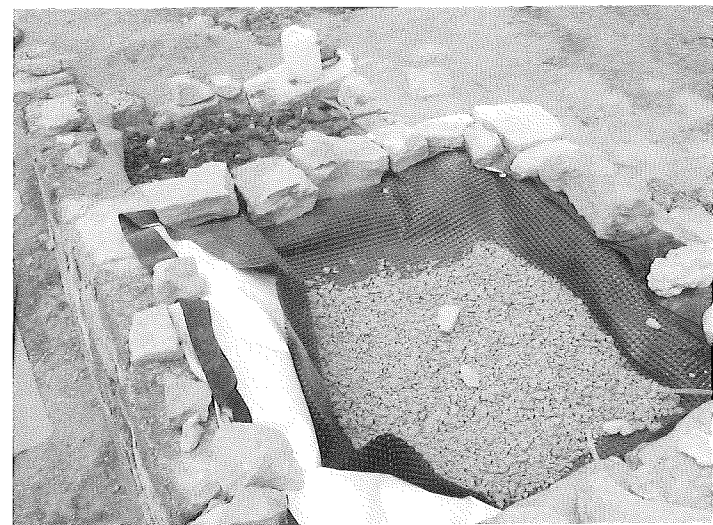


Fig. 16.9. Laser-image of the gate and surrounding area. Source: Penn Architectural Conservation Laboratory.



a



b



c



d



e

Fig. 16.10a–e. Installation of vegetative “soft” caps on north gate complex: (a) existing concrete cap prior to intervention; (b) capillary break layer; (c) filter layer; (d) completed “soft” caps; (e) view looking east of completed north gate “soft” wall caps. Source: Penn Architectural Conservation Laboratory.