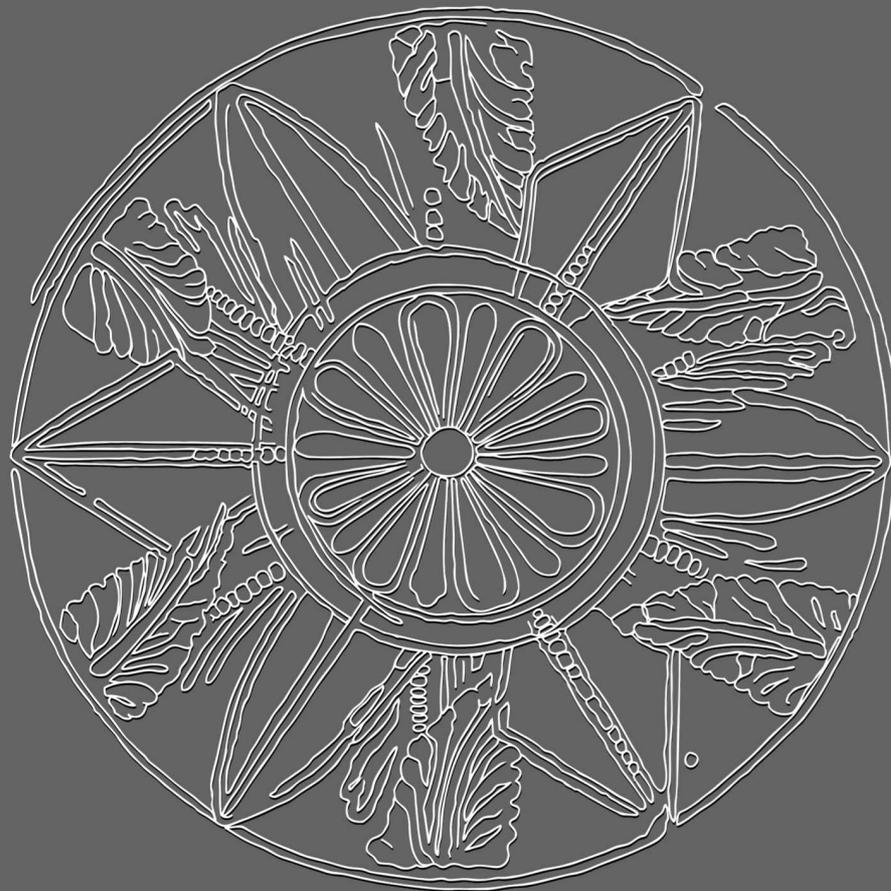


IARPotHP

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR RESEARCH
ON POTTERY OF THE HELLENISTIC PERIOD E. V.



Exploring the Neighborhood

The Role of Ceramics in Understanding Place in the
Hellenistic World

Edited by Ivanka Kamenjarin and Marina Ugarković

Wien 2020

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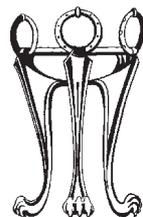
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A Tale of Two Places: Hellenistic Sardis and its Rural Surroundings

Andrea M. Berlin

Abstract

Sardis was the largest city in ancient Lydia for about 1500 years. Over that long time, the city's relationship to its fertile rural surroundings changed, as best seen by comparing the amount and type of local and imported pottery from Sardis itself with that found around the Gygean Lake by the Central Lydian Archaeological Survey (CLAS). From the fifth through third centuries BCE, when Sardis was first the Achaemenid satrapal capital and then the capital of Seleucid Cis-Tauric Asia, the pottery reflects dense settlement south and west of the Gygean Lake. In the second century BCE, after the Peace of Apamea cost Sardis its administrative centrality, the pattern switched. Though political glory was a thing of the past, the city became a showplace, with a new theater and festival, a new sanctuary, and other urban amenities. For the next four hundred years, from the second century BCE through the second century CE, CLAS surveyors found very little pottery and almost no cooking vessels, suggesting that in these years the countryside north of Sardis was largely deserted. The relationship of Sardis and its countryside reminds us that it is not political authority that makes a city attractive, but rather its ability to bring people together, to allow them to feel they are somewhere special and to experience time in tandem with one another. The CLAS survey pottery affirms something that is easy to lose sight of: Hellenistic and Roman culture was urban, a city-centered world of display, filled with dazzling places where people went to see and be seen.

Sardis became a city sometime in the early first millennium BCE, and it remained the largest urban center in Lydia for about 1500 years. Its fortunes and character changed over that long stretch of time, and so did its relationship with its rural surroundings. In this study, I focus on the relationship of the city and its hinterland from the seventh century BCE through the seventh century CE (fig. 1). I use two bodies of evidence: pottery from excavations at Sardis itself and that found by the Central Lydian Archaeological Survey (CLAS), an intensive field project covering about 350 km² around the Gygean Lake¹. The evidence reveals two quite different patterns and offers food for thought about the not-necessarily lockstep relationship between city, countryside, and politics.

Sardis: a quick overview of the pattern of settlement in the city

First, Sardis, the largest city in the region of Lydia. Excavations over the past half century have revealed that over the course of about 1500 years there were three patterns of settlement. From the early seventh through the mid-sixth centuries BCE, the city was huge and bustling. A monumental mud-brick wall encircled a palatial core and houses were built throughout the area. Hugging the wall's outskirts and also strung along the Pactolus were busy neighborhoods and craft workshops, with an equally crowded suburban district a little distance away².

¹ LUKE – ROOSEVELT 2009; ROOSEVELT – LUKE 2010, 121; LUKE ET AL. 2015. Information on Sardinian ceramics and their associated contexts and site-wide distribution is based on intensive personal study from 2012 to 2017, as a member of the joint Harvard-Cornell Archaeological Exploration of Sardis. I thank Professor Nicholas Cahill and Dr. Bahadır Yıldırım, director and assistant director, for their unfailing support and assistance. A detailed pre-

sentation of the evidence upon which the conclusions reported in this brief study are based appear in BERLIN 2019; BRUCE 2019; and CAHILL 2019. Information on the ceramics from the CLAS survey is based on personal study in 2011 and 2016. I thank Professors Christina Luke and Chris Roosevelt, directors of the survey, for the invitation to study this material and their support during my stay.

² CAHILL 2000; CAHILL 2010.



Fig. 1: Photo looking north from the acropolis of Sardis. In the foreground is the area inside the monumental Lydian-era mud-brick wall – a zone that was densely settled in the Lydian era (7th–mid-6th century BCE), largely de-populated in Achaemenid and earliest Hellenistic times (mid-6th–early 3rd century BCE), and then again heavily settled from mid-Hellenistic into Byzantine times (mid-3rd century BCE–6th century CE). In the middle left is the Roman-era bath-gymnasium complex. Rising on the horizon are the tumuli of Bin Tepe, which form the southern extent of the CLAS survey area (Courtesy of the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis).

All of this changed dramatically shortly after the mid-sixth century BCE. From that time, and for another 200+ years, Sardis proper – the area inside the walls – was almost completely deserted, as was the somewhat distant suburban district. People did continue to live and work in the neighborhoods and workshops just outside the wall, which created a strange doughnut-shaped pattern of occupation³.

This hollowed-out arrangement continued into the early third century BCE. Then, quite suddenly in the second quarter of the third century, the evidence reveals two developments. First, the long-lived neighborhoods and craft operations ringing the city – the outside of the doughnut – were abandoned and not re-occupied. Second, the city itself, meaning the enormous area inside the walls, was re-settled. People built houses on the high terraces of what had been the Lydian palatial core as well as on the slopes and flats inside the walls to the west and south. These new city neighborhoods, once established, continued to expand. Sardians built ever larger, increasingly wealthy homes and more public buildings into the sixth century CE – a 900-year long stretch of urban development and prosperity that must have come to seem almost eternal.

The Sardis pattern – brief urban consolidation, abrupt interruption, and long-lived metropolis – correlates neatly with the city’s changing political situation. The initial seventh to mid-sixth century stretch is the era of the Mermnad kings, a local dynasty that grew to control large swaths of western Anatolia. The mid-sixth century interruption conforms precisely to the Achaemenid conquest of 546 BCE. Its sudden onset suggests that the new rulers were responsible for the change, with the likeliest explanation being that they moved people out of the city, deliberately emptying it out – perhaps to create space for soldiers and animals, for a *paradeisos*, or as a security measure for local officials. This interruption continued into the early third century. The re-urbanization in the second quarter of the third century BCE coincides with the takeover by Antiochus I, who in the year 282 made Sardis the capital of the new Seleucid province of cis-Tauric Asia. From that point on, we see a familiar tale: an old city made new by Hellenistic kings, then re-made again and again throughout the long Roman peace, retaining a metropolitan

³ CAHILL 2008; CAHILL 2019; BRUCE 2019.

character through the Byzantine era – an emblem of the urban-centered world of classical antiquity.

Sardis: the ceramic evidence for the city's settlement patterns

Before moving to the countryside, I present an overview of the ceramic evidence for these three patterns, both to offer a sense of its character and to allow easier comparison with the CLAS survey pottery.

Lydian pottery of the early seventh through the mid-sixth centuries BCE is abundantly represented at Sardis⁴. In the kitchen, people prepared meals in sack-like wide-mouthed cooking pots; they set their tables with high stemmed bichrome dishes, *skyphoi* with streaky glaze, and column kraters with painted wave-line decoration. They also acquired a certain amount of imported Greek pottery – some Corinthian and Attic black-figure and a certain number of Attic black glaze vessels⁵.

In the later sixth and fifth centuries BCE, potters continued to produce many of these shapes and wares, such as the cooking pots and kraters, but also began making new forms. Most notable were so-called Achaemenid bowls, which people begin using in the later sixth century BCE, and, as I have shown in an earlier study⁶, were still using in the late fourth/early third century BCE (fig. 2). Also, increasingly abundant in these centuries were red and black glaze vessels, some made in Athens but most coming from producers along the Ionian coast.

In the mid-third century BCE, people turned to new types of table and cooking vessels. They exchanged their Achaemenid cups for hemispherical and ovoid cups with simple painted and incised decoration. At the table, each person now dined off a plate with a ledge rim and stamped design on the floor. In the kitchen, Sardians began to use casseroles, the first new type of kitchen vessel to appear in two hundred years (fig. 3)⁷.

Once renewed, settlement at Sardis continued. But, of course, peoples' tastes changed. In the second and first centuries BCE they drank from moldmade bowls (fig. 4), as well as Pergamene-inspired two-handled black-glaze *kantharoi* and broad, shallow cups with internal decoration, including some decorated in white-ground. They set the table with wide carinated bowls with interior rouletting and Ionian platters (fig. 5)⁸; they lit their homes with moldmade lamps. For cooking they had stew pots deep and shallow with thickened and ledge rims (fig. 6). An interesting point about these late Hellenistic stew pots is that no two are exactly alike, in contrast to the third century BCE, when there was only one form of casserole. This might mean that by late Hellenistic times most households had bronze stew pots and kettles, with ceramic versions made only as *ad hoc* or specialty products.

Towards the end of the first century BCE, Sardians replaced their moldmade and black-glaze cups and dishes with ESB versions⁹. As Susan Rotroff has shown via elemental analyses, some of ESB vessels found at the site arrived from the big producers near Ephesus, and others were manufactured in workshops right at Sardis itself.

For the purposes of this discussion, the important conclusion to be drawn from this rapid overview of Sardian Hellenistic and early Roman pottery is that all of it would be easy to spot while field walking, and also easy to date. Before I studied the CLAS survey pottery, I presumed that I would find all of these forms and wares – but it turned out that, in contrast to the Sardian pattern of a 900-year long stretch of Hellenistic and Roman settlement, the countryside was a different story.

4 CAHILL 2000; GREENEWALT JR 2010.

5 RAMAGE 1997.

6 BERLIN 2016.

7 BERLIN 2018.

8 ROTROFF – OLIVER 2003, 41f. 8788, 89–150.

9 ROTROFF 2018.



Fig. 2: Table vessels from a late fourth/early third century BCE deposit found on a floor in Sector PN, west of the city along the Pactolus River. Note that although the date is a full generation after the conquest of Alexander, these residents continued to use Achaemenid cups for drinking (Courtesy of the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis).



Fig. 3: Pottery of the mid-late 3rd century BCE from a house in Sector MD2, in a new neighborhood along the southern edge of the city. Shapes include (clockwise from left) incurved rim bowls, hanging rim saucers, an unguentarium, several casseroles, and hemispherical cups (Courtesy of the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis).



Fig. 4: Moldmade bowls from Sardis, typical of mid-2nd–1st-century BCE household deposits (Courtesy of the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis).



Fig. 5: Pottery and figurines of the 1st century BCE from a house in Sector MMS/S at Sardis (Courtesy of the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis).



Fig. 6: Fragments of cooking vessels of the later 2nd–1st centuries BCE from Sector F49 at Sardis (Courtesy of the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis).

The CLAS Survey: pottery and settlement patterns

First a word on the CLAS survey area and method of approach¹⁰. The area surrounds the Gygean Lake and includes the rolling hills of Bin Tepe – Turkish for “thousand hills,” which denotes, a bit exaggeratedly, the 100+ burial tumuli that royal and elite families used during Lydian and Achaemenid times (fig. 1). Surveyors walked fields, flood plains, and ridges, counting all cultural artifacts and collecting all diagnostic sherds. For the years between the seventh century BCE and medieval times, they found evidence reflecting three discrete phases of settlement.

The first phase lasted about 500 years, from the seventh through the third centuries BCE (fig. 7, upper left). Pottery of these years appeared all around the Gygean Lake, in both upland and lowland areas. The distribution was even; there were no disproportionately intense clusters. The vessels represent all household functions, including cooking, utility and table uses. Such a full domestic array is indicative of settled homes and lifestyles. The pattern suggests multiple farmsteads and small hamlets scattered evenly throughout the countryside.

The second discernable phase lasts from the later third century BCE to the second century CE (fig. 7, upper right and lower left). From these approximately 400 years, CLAS surveyors found *almost no pottery*. The few fragments they did find were random singletons; there were no clusters anywhere. Missing were almost all of the forms and wares that were common at Sardis during these centuries, including hemispherical and moldmade bowls, utility and serving vessels, cooking vessels, and ESB. In other words, on the strength of the material collected in the CLAS survey, it appears that for about four hundred years, the countryside around the Gygean Lake was essentially deserted.

Phase three begins in the third century CE and lasts into medieval and early modern times (fig. 7, lower right). During this millennium-plus stretch, the countryside seems again to have bustled with activity. As in the first phase, surveyors found clusters with table, cooking, and sto-

¹⁰ ROOSEVELT – LUKE 2008; LUKE – ROOSEVELT 2009.

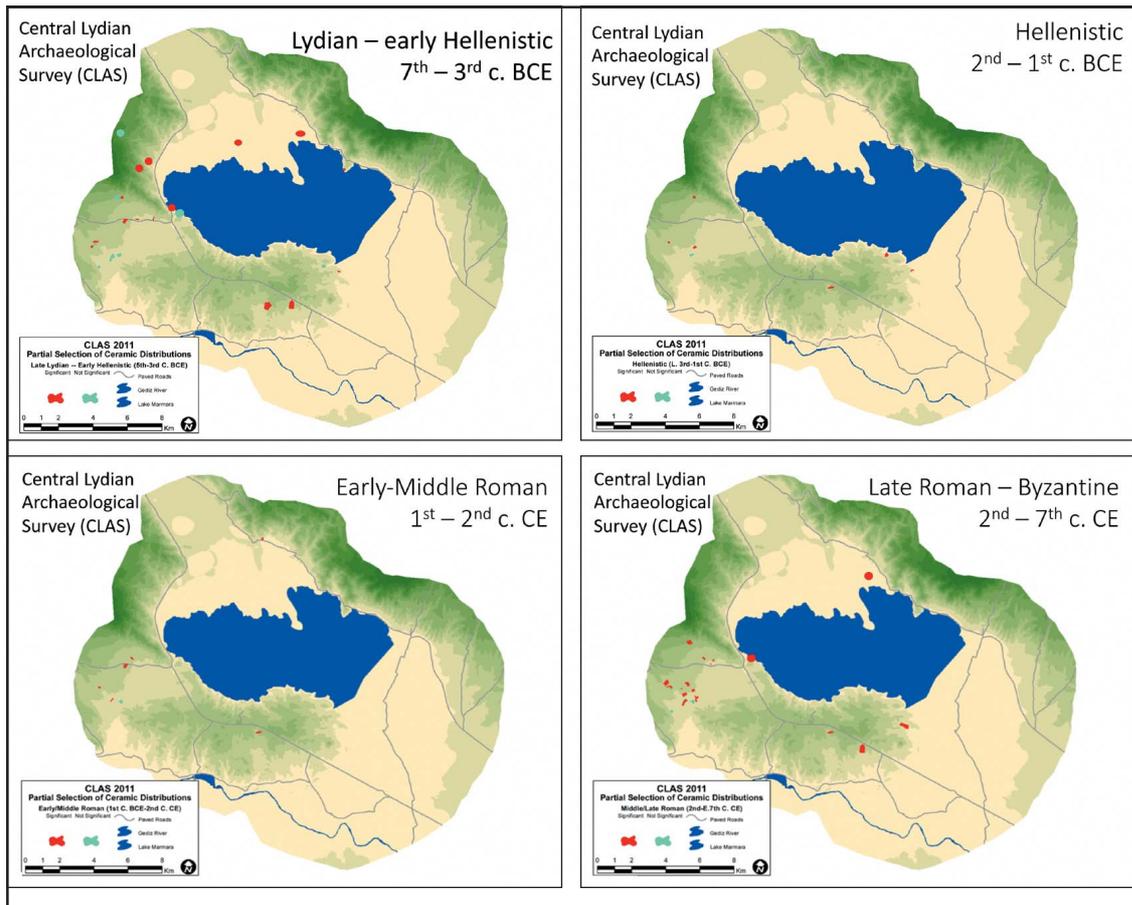


Fig. 7: Maps showing distribution of pottery by period found in the CLAS survey area (Courtesy of Christina Luke and Chris Roosevelt).

rage vessels – a pattern that suggests real settlement. In contrast to the first phase, however, this later one showed fewer but more densely occupied areas. This pattern suggests larger villages, where people lived in relatively close quarters and went out daily to their fields, just as in rural Lydia today.

At Sardis, settlement correlated neatly with political developments. That's not the case in the countryside. There, the gap began part way into the Hellenistic period and continued through the second century CE, which were for the most part years of relative calm here. Why? I believe the gap years in the countryside may be explained by reference to contemporary happenings in the city.

Back to Sardis

At Sardis, excavation and ceramic study now allow us to identify a major new project here between 175–150 BCE: construction of the city's first stone theater¹¹. The occasion for this initiative seems to have been a new festival, a joint *Panathenaia* and *Eumenaia* honoring Athena and Eumenes II of Pergamon. The festival was established in 166 BCE: we know the date from an inscription at Delphi that records the reception there of an embassy from Sardis announcing the

¹¹ The ceramic evidence, cited in BERLIN 2019, 66f., includes six small fragments of local, Sardian-produced moldmade bowls, two pieces of Pergamene sigillata, and several fragments of *lagynos* ware, all unlikely to be earlier than the second quarter of the second century BCE (ROTTORFF – OLIVER 2003, 72. 93–95). None of this evidence

was available to Christopher Ratté when he published his discussion of the city's urban development in 2008. In that study Ratté dated the construction of the theater c. 225–200 BCE, which was reasonable considering the evidence available at that time but is now clearly erroneous (RATTÉ 2008, 132).

establishment of these games and requesting recognition. The inscription provides details: “the games were to be quinquennial, their prizes wreaths, their rules the same as those of the Pythia at Delphi ...”¹².

The theater was the first step of a 400-year long boom in public buildings and new amenities. Near the theater were a gymnasium and a stadium. Next to these, in the first century CE, Sardians built an enormous temple, named by the excavators the Wadi B Temple, and likely dedicated to the Roman imperial cult¹³. In the second century CE, a huge new bath-gymnasium complex went up on the city’s northwestern side, to serve residents of the growing, wealthy neighborhoods in this part of town¹⁴. Around the same time, the Temple of Artemis received an impressive new forecourt, when worship of the imperial family was added to the sanctuary’s cult¹⁵.

In other words, beginning in the second century BCE, Sardis became a glamorous place, a lure akin to today’s modern cities, which themselves act as magnets, attracting new residents from small towns and rural areas that lack urban excitements and opportunities. The CLAS survey pottery reminds us of something so familiar that we can lose sight of it: Hellenistic and Roman culture was *urban*, a city-centered world of display, filled with dazzling places where people went to see and be seen.

Among the lessons that archaeology teaches us are two that we learn over and over.

First: we are a city-building species, in almost every time and place¹⁶. We want to come together, feel that we’re somewhere special, experience time in tandem with one another. Second: sooner or later, everything ends. In the third century CE, though Sardis remained a vibrant city, people started moving back into the countryside. They left, and they left, until eventually the city hollowed out and disappeared from sight – waiting for archaeologists to begin their work and bring it back into view.

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¹² BUCKLER – ROBINSON 1913, 43; HANSEN 1971, 123. 458.

¹³ RATTÉ ET AL. 1986; STINSON 2019.

¹⁴ YEGÜL 1986.

¹⁵ CAHILL – GREENEWALT JR 2016, 500–504 fig. 24.

¹⁶ JACOBS 1969; BROOK 2013.

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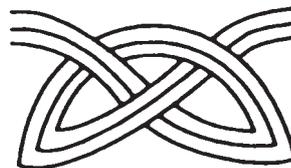
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