

This is an extract from:

*The Economic History of Byzantium:
From the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century*

Angeliki E. Laiou, Editor-in-Chief

Scholarly Committee

Charalambos Bouras

Cécile Morrisson

Nicolas Oikonomides[†]

Constantine Pitsakis

Published by

*Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection
Washington, D. C.*

in three volumes as number 39 in the series

Dumbarton Oaks Studies

© 2002 Dumbarton Oaks

Trustees for Harvard University

Washington, D.C.

Printed in the United States of America

www.doaks.org/etexts.html

Sardis

Clive Foss and Jane Ayer Scott

The history of Sardis is marked by a profound break. Before 616, it was the capital of a rich province, a large metropolis of a typical Roman and late antique type, adorned with imposing public buildings, providing extensive services for its large population, and a center of varied economic activities. Its destruction in the early seventh century is characterized by violent burning, extensively attested in the archaeological record, and a cessation of coin finds after 616, the result of a Persian attack.¹ The city was never rebuilt, and it declined to consist of a powerful hilltop fortification, with small settlements scattered over the ancient site, all built of or upon the ruins of the earlier city. Its economic role in the Byzantine period is poorly attested but was fundamentally different from what it had been before the seventh century.

In the time of Justinian, Sardis was the capital of the highly developed province of Lydia, which contained more than twenty cities and extensive agricultural and mineral resources.² The city was the center of a network of Roman roads that connected it with the Aegean and all parts of Asia Minor. Sardis was entered via a marble-paved east-west road lined with colonnades and shops, the “Byzantine Shops,”³ along the south wall of a grand bath and gymnasium complex, within which functioned the largest known synagogue in the diaspora.⁴ The road, the shops, and the major public buildings that have been excavated were maintained and in use in the early seventh century.⁵

¹ For the destruction, see C. Foss, *Byzantine and Turkish Sardis* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976), 53f; idem, “The Fall of Sardis in 616 and the Value of Evidence,” *JÖB* 24 (1975): 11–22; cf. N. Oikonomides and F. Drosoyianni, “A Hoard of Gold Byzantine Coins from Samos,” *RN* 31 (1989): 145–82.

² For an overview, see Foss, *Byzantine and Turkish Sardis*, 19–52; G. M. A. Hanfmann, *Sardis from Prehistoric to Roman Times* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), 1–16, 139–214; J. A. Scott, “Sardis in the Byzantine and Turkish Eras,” in *Sardis: Twenty-Seven Years of Discovery*, ed. E. Guralnick (Chicago, 1987), passim.

³ The shops on the north side are published in detail in J. S. Crawford, *The Byzantine Shops at Sardis* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990).

⁴ For the synagogue, see A. Seager and A. T. Kraabel in Hanfmann, *Prehistoric to Roman*, 168–90. For the economic and social status of the Jewish community, see J. H. Kroll, *The Greek Inscriptions of the Sardis Synagogue = Harvard Theological Review* 94.1 (Cambridge, Mass., 2000), passim.

⁵ Foss, *Byzantine and Turkish Sardis*, 51–52; “Sectors MMS/N, MMS, and MMS/S,” in C. H. Greenewalt, Jr., and M. L. Rautman, “The Sardis Campaigns of 1996, 1997, and 1998,” *AJA* 104 (2000): 645–56.

To the south a residential area with colonnaded streets and rich townhouses was developed in the fifth century. Before abandonment in the early seventh century, several spaces were converted to industrial activity, including dyeing or fulling and oil production.⁶

The city extended outside the city walls, along the banks of the Pactolus River where a three-aisled Christian basilica, "Church EA," was built in the fourth century and repaired and expanded through the seventh century.⁷ A large, unexcavated Justinianic basilica, "Church D," stands in the center of the city.⁸ The governor and metropolitan archbishop, who had their seats in the city, played a major role in the local economy, the former attested in inscriptions that show his activity in building or reconstructing public works.⁹

Sardis was a center of production and trade. Production operated at widely differing levels. On the large scale was the imperial factory for the manufacture of shields and armor for the entire diocese of Asia, part of a system established by Diocletian, organized on military lines and employing a large staff.¹⁰ Most production, though, was on the small scale of artisans who sold the goods they made themselves. Excavation of the Byzantine shops has revealed a variety of products including iron and bronze tools and vessels, as well as extensive evidence for dyeing cloth and for production and trade in the dyes themselves.¹¹ Crucibles and frit lying *in situ* when the shops were destroyed show that jewelry made of gilded copper alloy and glass inlay was still being made there.¹² Semiprecious stones including amethyst, jasper, and sard were worked by Sardinian craftsmen and were available for trade.¹³ Some metal items, chiefly buckles, were imported from Constantinople, eastern Europe, and south Russia.¹⁴

Pottery and terra-cottas dating into the seventh century were made from the local clay.¹⁵ Large numbers of amphoras, basins, and pithoi bespeak transport and storage of grains, oil, and wine. Imported pottery continued to reach Sardis into the seventh

⁶ M. L. Rautman, "A Late Roman Townhouse at Sardis," in *Forschungen in Lydien*, ed. E. Schwertheim (Münster, 1995), 49–66. For a residential area to the southeast, see now Greenwalt and Rautman, "Sardis 1996, 1997, 1998," 669–72, and the plan, fig. 1 on p. 644.

⁷ H. Buchwald in Hanfmann, *Prehistoric to Roman*, 196–210.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 196.

⁹ Foss, *Byzantine and Turkish Sardis*, 113, source 15, = F. Yegül, *The Bath-Gymnasium Complex at Sardis* (Cambridge, Mass., 1986), 171, no. 6.

¹⁰ Foss, *Byzantine and Turkish Sardis*, 14. A painted inscription identifies the tomb of a *dukenarios* of the imperial arms factory: Hanfmann, *Prehistoric to Roman*, 208. For evidence of primary iron making, see C. H. Greenwalt, Jr., et al., "The Sardis Campaigns of 1979 and 1980," *BASOR* 249 (1983): 28.

¹¹ Foss, *Byzantine and Turkish Sardis*, 14; Crawford, *Shops*, 15–17.

¹² M. Goodway and P. Vandiver in Crawford, *Shops*, 129–34.

¹³ Greenwalt et al., "Sardis 1979 and 1980," 28–29.

¹⁴ J. C. Waldbaum, *Metalwork from Sardis: The Finds through 1974* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), 11, 117–20, nos. 689–702.

¹⁵ On clay deposits and minerals used for colorants, see H. Crane, "Traditional Pottery Making in the Sardis Region of Western Turkey," *Muqarnas* 5 (1988): 9–18; E. Hostetter, *Lydian Architectural Terracottas* (Atlanta, Ga., 1994), 35–40, 47–48.

century: African red slip, Late Roman C ware from Phokaia or other Aegean sites, lamps of iron-free clay, possibly from Syria, and transport amphoras from the eastern Mediterranean.¹⁶

Sardis was a center for glass production with two factories in operation when the city was destroyed. Cullet, wasters, and crucibles leave no doubt that windowpanes, lamps, dishes, and vessels were manufactured locally for use at Sardis and possibly for export.¹⁷ The quantity of glass and terra-cotta lamps shows that lighting was important to the residents and was widely available. Oil must have been plentiful.

Coin finds increase with issues of Phokas (208). Folles and half folles comprise 90% of the finds; very few fractional bronzes occur. The issues of Herakleios are even more numerous (621).¹⁸ Of the coins in the Byzantine Shops, 17% are early seventh-century issues dated no later than 616. Mints represented are Constantinople (60%), Nikomedeia (19%), Kyzikos (8%), and Antioch (2%); (9% are uncertain).

On the eve of the seventh-century destruction, the public buildings represented a central aspect of the ancient city, the availability of these monumental public works to the citizens. Three major baths were functioning, fed by aqueducts that reached into the neighboring Mount Tmolos. They provided a real service but were also a great drain on local resources.

The size of the population that enjoyed these buildings cannot be determined, but the extent of the city within the 4-km circuit of the city wall and beyond and the number of seats in the theater (about 20,000) indicate that it was substantial.¹⁹

The entire nature of Sardis changed after 616. The remains attest extensive destruction, followed by a total lack of evidence for almost a half century. In addition, some time in the seventh century an earthquake loosed a landslide from the acropolis which covered part of the temple of Artemis and caused the collapse of the gymnasium and other public buildings (Fig. 1). When evidence is again available, the city was fundamentally different: the ancient metropolis had become a field for ruins, while the new city focused on a castle on the ancient acropolis.

The first evidence for the medieval city dates from the mid-seventh century, when the main east-west road was rebuilt: a new pavement of cobblestones was laid over the

¹⁶ Crawford, *Shops*, 13–14; M. L. Rautman, “Two Late Roman Wells at Sardis,” *AASOR* 53 (1995): 37–84.

¹⁷ A. von Saldern, *Ancient and Byzantine Glass from Sardis* (Cambridge, Mass., 1980), 35–37.

¹⁸ T. V. Buttrey provides a conspectus of all the Byzantine coins found at Sardis through August 1972: “Byzantine Medieval and Modern Coins and Tokens,” in T. V. Buttrey et al., *Greek, Roman, and Islamic Coins from Sardis* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981), chap. 3. He excludes a hoard (H. W. Bell, *Sardis*, vol. 11, *Coins*, pt. 1, 1910–1914 [Leiden, 1916], viii–ix) as atypical of the bronze coinage in general circulation and suggests that it represents a military payment. See also M. F. Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy c. 300–1450* (Cambridge, 1985), 342. Excavation records suggest that finds from 1972 to 1995 do not alter the general picture.

¹⁹ Hanfmann, *Prehistoric to Roman*, 146, suggests between 60,000 and 100,000. S. Mitchell, *Anatolia* (Oxford, 1993), 1:244, finds this generous. Few cities had more than 25,000 *urban* inhabitants, which were outnumbered 10:1 by rural dwellers.

ruins of the shops and the colonnade. Finds of coins of Constans II in the former gymnasium date the work and suggest that it was carried out by a detachment of imperial troops, perhaps from the army of Thrace.²⁰

The same period, and perhaps personnel, was responsible for the massive fortification walls that surround the acropolis (Fig. 2). These are entirely faced with the marble taken from ancient buildings: column drums, architraves, inscriptions, and reused pieces of all kinds attest to the ruin of the ancient city.²¹ This large fortress (whose exact extent cannot be determined because of subsequent erosion of the hill) became and remained the center of medieval Sardis. Its walls sheltered a substantial settlement, much of it obliterated by later construction. Rebuilding of the road shows that the place was not isolated but still stood on a major route of communication between the coast and the interior of Asia Minor.

Construction of such a fortress (by far the largest of the region) illustrates the dominance of the military that marks the period and was notably manifested in the new administrative system, in which Sardis was no longer a capital but one of the bastions of the Thrakesion theme. It remained, however, the seat of the metropolitan archbishop, who retained his precedence in the church. Neither his headquarters nor the size of his establishment has been discovered. The fate of the Justinianic cathedral is unknown. It is possible that the bishop used Church EA in the western part of the city, which shows evidence of continuity through the whole period.²²

Evidence for the two centuries after 616 is extremely sparse. The city was captured by the Arabs in 716, when the remains of the fortress indicate destruction followed by a period of abandonment. Further depopulation would have followed the plague that ravaged the empire in the mid-eighth century. Economic and ecclesiastical activity, however, continued. A *dioiketes*, a financial official of the theme, is attested in the eighth and ninth centuries, and one bishop, Euthymios, a victim of the Iconoclasts, was active in the city before 787, when he converted many Iconoclasts back to orthodoxy. This perhaps reflects the role of the church as a center of education.²³

Sardis began a period of recovery in the ninth century and flourished without major change until the late eleventh.²⁴ Although the written sources are virtually silent, the remains of this period enable an image of the city to be reconstructed and with it an idea of the local economy. The fortress on the hilltop remained the dominant feature. Although it was heavily defended by walls and a covered gallery, it also contained a

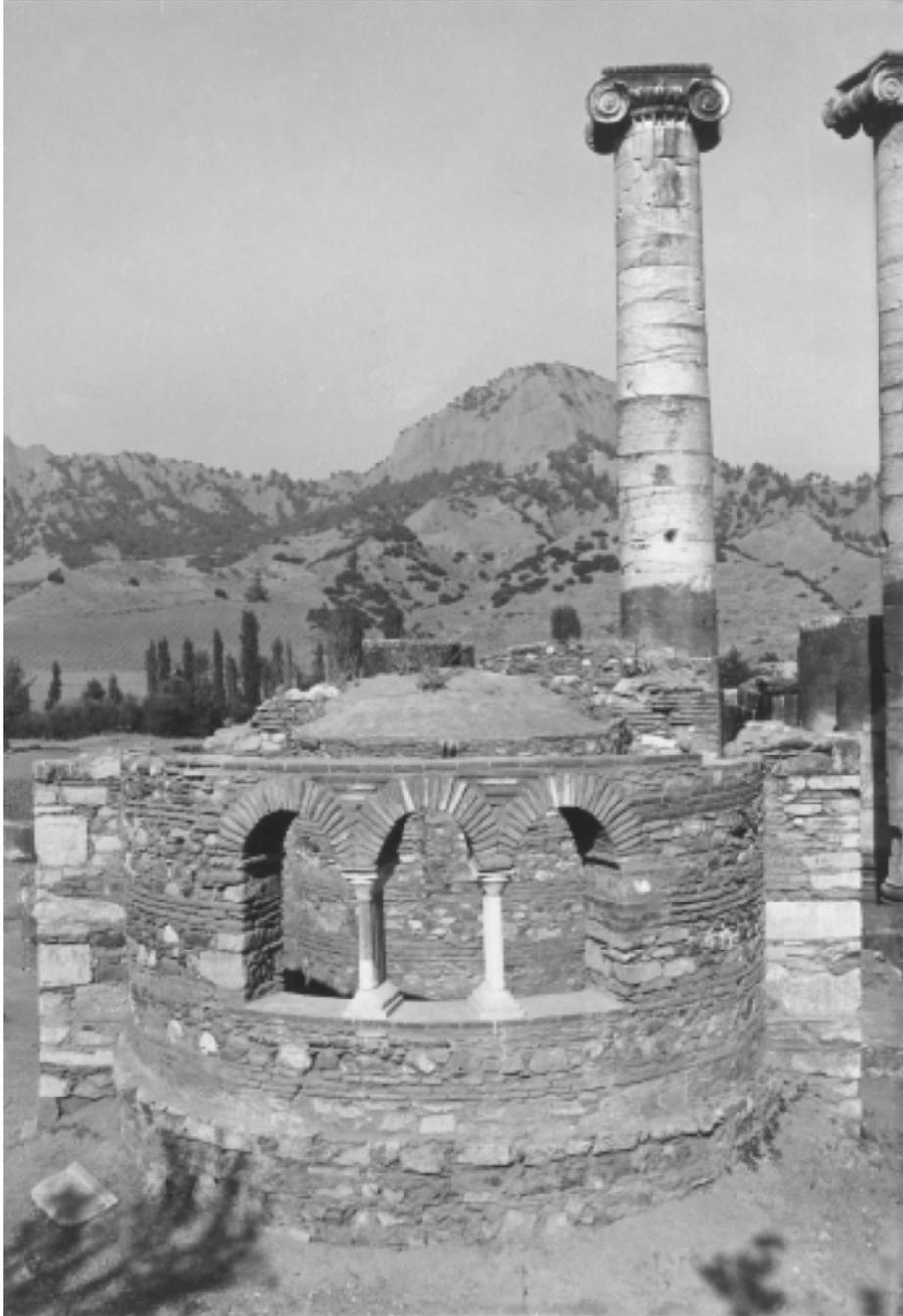
²⁰ Foss, *Byzantine and Turkish Sardis*, 57; Henty, *Studies*, 641f; Buttrey in *Greek, Roman, and Islamic Coins*, 209. Twenty-eight examples associate the operation of a limekiln in the gymnasium with road work: Yegül, *Bath-Gymnasium Complex*, 90–91. R. L. Vann, *The Unexcavated Buildings of Sardis* (Oxford, 1989), 21, suggests that “Building A” was strengthened at the same time to provide a fortified barracks near the strategic east-west road.

²¹ Foss, *Byzantine and Turkish Sardis*, 57–59.

²² For this period, see *ibid.*, 61–66. For the trickle of coinage that resumes, see Buttrey in *Greek, Roman, and Islamic Coins*, 209.

²³ Foss, *Byzantine and Turkish Sardis*, 70f.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 70f.



1. Sardis. Church M (as restored in 1973) built into the southeast corner of the temple of Artemis, the necropolis in the background. Courtesy of the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis/Harvard University (73.128:10)



2. Sardis. Entrance into the Byzantine fortifications on the acropolis, showing masonry taken from earlier buildings. Courtesy of the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis/Harvard University (70.211:36a)



3. Sardis. Apse of the basilica, Church EA, with the Laskarid Church E built within it. Courtesy of the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis/Harvard University (73.112:33)



4. Sardis. Medallion showing the Anastasis, first half of the eleventh century, from the Byzantine settlement on the acropolis. Courtesy of the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis/Harvard University (M61.9:403)

sizable residential district, with small houses closely packed together on no regular plan. These were usually about 5 m square, with one or more rooms and brick hearths. The settlement had its own graveyard, chapel, and water supply in the form of cisterns and essentially resembled a village, as did the others that lay scattered over the ancient site.

The largest of these lay around the former temple of Artemis, whose cella was converted into a large cistern from which terra-cotta water pipes led to the adjacent buildings. Here, as on the acropolis, supply of water was central, for the ancient aqueducts had long since ceased to function. Houses stood around the cistern, built of undressed stones laid in mud mortar. Some of them followed regular streets. This settlement also contained limekilns, showing that the late antique activity of burning the marble of the temple for lime was still practiced.

The only substantial church that provides evidence for this period is Church EA (Fig. 3). It was rebuilt with solid walls and piers over the fallen colonnade in the nave and decorated with fresco in the ninth century, an indication that the church had some resources. By the eleventh century, however, its atrium and parts of the nave had become a cemetery, while the narthex was inhabited. Except for a partially occupied late antique villa adjacent to it, the church seems to have stood in an area that was largely deserted.²⁵

After a hiatus of five hundred years, pottery datable to the twelfth century is plentiful. Finds of glazed pottery of the twelfth through fourteenth centuries include types associated with both the Aegean and Syrian traditions. Direct evidence of manufacture at Sardis is lacking, although the clay is certainly from nearby.²⁶ The widely disseminated Zeuxippos ware occurs with imports whose origin is not defined.²⁷ Blue glazed frit sherds imported from Rayy in the second half of the twelfth century are an exception and not part of a pattern of imports, although local types do emulate Syrian sgraffito wares.²⁸ Local earthenware imitations of Chinese celadons demonstrate the awareness and influence of fine imports.²⁹ Amphoras continued in use into the thirteenth

²⁵ H. Buchwald in Hanfmann, *Prehistoric to Roman*, 201.

²⁶ J. A. Scott and D. Kamilli, "Late Byzantine Glazed Pottery from Sardis," in *Actes du XV^e Congrès international d'études byzantines, Athènes, 1976*, vol. 2, *Art et archéologie* (Athens, 1981), 679–96. For continuity into the Turkish period, see H. Crane, "Some Archaeological Notes on Turkish Sardis," *Muqarnas* 4 (1987): 50, 54–56.

²⁷ J.-M. Spieser, "La céramique byzantine médiévale," in *Hommes et richesses dans l'Empire byzantin*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1989–91), 2:259, pl. 12c. Analysis is beginning to define sources: see S. Y. Waksman and J.-M. Spieser, "Byzantine Ceramics Excavated at Pergamon: Archaeological Classification and Characterization of the Local and Imported Productions by PIXE and INAA Elemental Analysis, Mineralogy, and Petrography," in *Materials Analysis of Byzantine Pottery*, ed. H. Maguire (Washington, D.C., 1997), 105–34; for the implication that similar wares were imported into Pergamon and Sardis from an unidentified source: pp. 107, 114, 117; for a possible connection between the two sites: p. 112, fig. D.

²⁸ Scott and Kamilli, "Glazed Pottery," 687; the Rayy fragments are identical to A. Lane, *Early Islamic Pottery* (London, 1947), pl. 43b.

²⁹ Scott and Kamilli, "Glazed Pottery," 687.

century.³⁰ One interesting group of vessels made of very heavy, rough fabric, with a large, inverted spout is not known to be paralleled elsewhere and may have been used in some sort of distilling process.

Industrial activity took place at the eastern edge of the ancient city, in an abandoned Roman bath ("CG"). Brick walls and furnaces, and debris found in the remains, indicate the production of glazed pottery, iron goods, and glass.³¹ Remains of a settlement have not been identified here, nor is the central part of the city, between this bath and the gymnasium, known. This could be an extremely important area for the present subject, since it contained the cathedral whose fate is unknown.

Although the physical record is necessarily incomplete, it suggests that medieval Sardis consisted of a powerful, densely inhabited hilltop fortification towering above a series of settlements scattered over the ruins of the ancient city. To some extent, the settlements seem to have been self-sufficient, with their own water supply and production of necessary goods on a small scale. With the possible exception of the ironworking at the Roman bath, there is no evidence that goods useful for trade were produced.

The connection between the different settlements cannot be determined, but they probably together constituted Sardis and centered on the acropolis for defense and probably administration, and on the cathedral for their spiritual needs. Several bishops of Sardis are known, but they almost invariably passed their careers in the greater comfort of the capital.³² The finds demonstrate that Sardis was not completely isolated. A network of roads through the Hermos valley, over the Tmolos Mountains, and from Thyateira through Sardis to Philadelphia still functioned.³³

The Laskarid period (1204–61) was the most prosperous. Sardis was a major city of a small kingdom, on the main highway between the emperors' favored residence (Nymphaion), treasury (Magnesia), and the frontier. At this time the old basilica (Church EA) was deliberately razed, and a new five-domed church (Church E) was built within its perimeter. Although it measures only 20 × 11 m, this was the first major construction in the city since the walls of the seventh century. It was built of brick and marble and was decorated with frescoes, gold and glass mosaics, and colored glass windows, perhaps made locally.³⁴ Kilns for the production of brick, tiles, and pipe in the gymnasium could be associated with this construction. They operated on a large scale and demonstrate the availability of quantities of fuel.³⁵

The church had a graveyard adjacent and was apparently the center of a settlement

³⁰ See Spieser, "C eramique," 253; G. M. A. Hanfmann, "Excavations at Sardis, 1959," *BASOR* 157 (1960): 36.

³¹ G. M. A. Hanfmann and J. C. Waldbaum, *A Survey of Sardis and the Monuments outside the City Walls* (Cambridge, Mass., 1975), 140–41, 186 n. 48; Waldbaum, *Metalwork*, 9; and probably glass, Von Saldern, *Glass*, 101–2.

³² For the history and remains of this period, see Foss, *Byzantine and Turkish Sardis*, 66–76.

³³ C. Foss in Hanfmann, *Prehistoric to Roman*, 15 and n. 18. For the routes in relation to Lydian fortifications, see C. Foss, "Late Byzantine Fortifications in Lydia," *J OB* 28 (1979): 267–320.

³⁴ H. Buchwald, "Sardis Church E: A Preliminary Report," *J OB* 26 (1977): 265–99; idem, in Hanfmann, *Prehistoric to Roman*, 201–4; von Saldern, *Glass*, 98.

³⁵ Yeg ul, *Bath-Gymnasium Complex*, 44, figs. 75–79.

of which little has survived. Whether this church was the cathedral of the city has not been determined, but one well-known bishop of this period, Nikephoros Chrysoberges, evidently spent time in the city, which, as a learned man, he may have made into a local center of education.³⁶ The metropolitan see was dissolved in 1369.

Coin finds increase dramatically during the Laskarid period, all from the mints of Nymphaion and Magnesia. Finds of Byzantine coins stop with Michael VIII (1261–82) and silver Crusader deniers appear to have filled in at a time when bronze coinage was missing. The last Byzantine coin discovered at Sardis was minted under John V (1341–91). Otherwise, no Byzantine issues mingle with the Islamic, which begin in the late fourteenth century.³⁷

By the fourteenth century the church had been desecrated and converted to industrial and living space where we find evidence for the survival of crafts into the fifteenth century. Glass bracelets and cakes of glass from which they were made belong to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Imported glass vessels are from regions under Islamic rule.³⁸ The types and styles of locally made pottery remain the same in respect to decoration, material, and method of manufacture through the fourteenth century, but in the fifteenth century locally made imitations of cobalt glazed wares produced in the imperial kilns of Iznik occur.³⁹ Metal items were in use from the twelfth into the fifteenth century: iron tools, lead used in construction, copper alloy vessels, fittings, medallions (one showing the Anastasis) and jewelry, some gilded, and even examples of gold and silver (Fig. 4).⁴⁰

Other parts of the site did not change their nature: the fortress was always occupied, and the lime burning at the temple continued unabated. The acropolis furnished the last piece of evidence for the Byzantine period in the narrative of a Turkish attack of 1304. The Turkomans, threatened by the Mongols allied with Byzantium, proposed to the Sardians that they allow them to share the fortress. The locals refused and resisted a siege, but were finally forced to agree when they ran short of water and suffered from not being able to till their fields.⁴¹ In this account, the nature of the acropolis settlement becomes clear. Although some of its inhabitants may have been soldiers only, many were farmers, who worked land in the plain below, leaving the fortress every day to attend to agriculture, attested in the entire Byzantine record only here.

³⁶ Foss, *Byzantine and Turkish Sardis*, 84–86.

³⁷ Buttrey in *Greek, Roman, and Islamic Coins*, 224–26. M. L. Bates, in *ibid.*, 227, sees the deniers as testimony to the close economic ties between the emirate of Sarukhan and the Frankish merchants and trading colonies.

³⁸ Von Saldern, *Glass*, 98–102.

³⁹ Crane, “Turkish Sardis,” 50.

⁴⁰ Waldbaum, *Metalwork*, 53, 58, 62, 67, 78, 90, 92, 124–26, 129, 130–32, 136–37.

⁴¹ Foss, *Byzantine and Turkish Sardis*, 82f, 121–24.

Bibliography

- Bates, G. E. *Byzantine Coins*. Cambridge, Mass., 1971.
- Bell, H. W. *Sardis*. Vol. 11, *Coins*. Pt. 1, 1910–1914. Leiden, 1916.
- Buttrey, T. V. “Byzantine, Medieval and Modern Coins and Tokens.” In T. V. Buttrey et al., *Greek, Roman, and Islamic Coins from Sardis*. Cambridge, Mass., 1981.
- Crawford, J. S. *The Byzantine Shops at Sardis*. Cambridge, Mass., 1990.
- Foss, C. *Byzantine and Turkish Sardis*. Cambridge, Mass., 1976.
- Greenewalt, C. H., Jr., and M. L. Rautman, “The Sardis Campaigns of 1996, 1997, and 1998,” *AJA* 104 (2000): 643–81; idem, “The Sardis Campaigns of 1994 and 1995,” *AJA* 102 (1998): 469–505.
- Hanfmann, G. M. A. *Sardis from Prehistoric to Roman Times*. Cambridge, Mass., 1983.
- Rautman, M. L. “A Late Roman Townhouse at Sardis.” In *Forschungen in Lydien*, ed. E. Schwertheim. Münster, 1995.
- Scott, J. A. “Sardis in the Byzantine and Turkish Eras.” In *Sardis: Twenty-Seven Years of Discovery*, ed. E. Guralnick. Chicago, 1987.
- Scott, J. A., and D. Kamilli. “Late Byzantine Glazed Pottery from Sardis.” In *Actes du XV^e Congrès international d’études byzantines, Athènes, 1976*. Vol. 2, *Art et archéologie*. Athens, 1981.
- Von Saldern, A. *Ancient and Byzantine Glass from Sardis*. Cambridge, Mass., 1980.
- Waldbaum, J. C. *Metalwork from Sardis: The Finds through 1974*. Cambridge, Mass., 1983.
- Yegül, F. *The Bath-Gymnasium Complex at Sardis*. Cambridge, Mass., 1986.