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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The region of Lydia in central western Anatolia (modern Turkey) has always been known for richly embroidered tales about its kings and its capital, Sardis (Figure 1.1). Some of these tales are contemporary historical accounts, providing the details of both personal and state activities and events, whereas others can be called only mytho-historical or pseudo-historical – they probably contain grains of historical truth but were exaggerated, embellished, or distorted in certain details already in antiquity. So, although we cannot yet be certain of their precise origin and emergence to power, we know that Lydian kings established Sardis as the capital of a powerful, independent kingdom by the late eighth or early seventh century BCE,[1] if not much earlier, and that they were able to do so, at least in part, because Sardis was fabulously rich, with mineral, agricultural, and other resources. Control of such resources allowed the kings of Sardis to lead sumptuously opulent lives and to commandeer supportive forces, attracting both covetous and reverent notice from foreign individuals and states alike. The power of these kings, and especially that of its last five kings, who comprised the Mermnad Dynasty, was such that they were able to maintain diplomatic ties with Assyrian, Median, and Egyptian kings and Greek tyrants, and to wage repeated military campaigns against the archaic Greek city-states of the east Aegean coast. By the early sixth century, the Mermnad kings were even able to transform their kingdom into a vast territorial empire, demanding tribute from almost all peoples dwelling within western Anatolia, thereby further increasing their wealth and power.

The wealth and power of the Lydian kings have been illustrated evocatively by the archaeological excavations at Sardis, for which Lydia is also well known. Archaeological work at the site has been conducted by two separate expeditions over a combined total of more than fifty-five years

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and continues to this day. The early twentieth-century expedition directed by H. C. Butler of Princeton University and the ongoing Archaeological Exploration of Sardis sponsored by Harvard and Cornell Universities have not only verified the rise of Sardis and the power of its kings, but also provided otherwise unknowable details about life and death at the Lydian capital. The archaeology of Sardis has confirmed historical accounts not only of the rise of Sardis, but also of the eclipse of Lydian power in the mid-sixth century when the last of the Mermnad kings, the famously rich Croesus, fell to Persian forces under Cyrus the Great – when the city was taken by force its monumental fortification wall was burned and partially destroyed. In addition, the subsequent reconstruction of the same wall corroborates historical testimony that Sardis remained an important cosmopolitan center in later times as the capital of the Achaemenid Persian imperial province, or *satrapy*, of Sparda, as it was called in Old Persian. Sardis continued to be an important regional center throughout the long period of Achaemenid hegemony until the arrival of Alexander the Great in the late fourth century and also into the Hellenistic and Roman eras thereafter.

Lydia is best known, then, for Sardis and the ancient accounts and modern excavations of that one site. Indeed, given the long-term focus on Sardis, some might be tempted to think that the site contained all there was to know about the archaeology and history of Lydia. To be sure, just as Sardis is the focus of modern research, it was the focus of ancient activities in the region; for this reason alone, it deserves the attention it has been and continues to be given. But what of the people and places of greater Lydia that supported and interacted with Sardis? The territory of the historical Lydia of the Mermnad Kingdom comprises diverse landscapes spread over more than 22,000 square kilometers in the interior areas of modern western Turkey, which is more than half of the size of Switzerland and roughly six times the size of Attica, the territory of ancient Athens. It was populated by people of different origins, standings, and means of life, including high-status landowners with connections to Sardis, of course, but also farmers, herders, and various craftspeople, some of whom probably rarely, if ever, even visited Sardis. Exploration of greater Lydia, its people and their activities, adds to our understanding of the region of Lydia as a whole and of the interactions between Sardis and its hinterland – interactions necessary for the functioning of the city and imperial development and administration.

Lydia is much broader than Sardis, and the importance of Sardis and Lydia extends beyond the periods of Mermnad and Achaemenid

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Figure 1.1. The Acropolis of Sardis, to ESE (C. H. Roosevelt).

hegemony. Sardis was likely an important center already in the Early Iron Age, if not earlier in the Bronze Age, and its importance in Hellenistic, Roman, and Late Roman times is chronicled in both ancient texts and in archaeological field reports.[2] This study, however, will focus only on evidence from the Lydian period and from the subsequent time of Achaemenid rule, roughly between the early seventh and the late fourth centuries. In these eras, Lydian kings came to power and ruled during times of vast cultural change in neighboring eastern Mediterranean spheres, including the rise of city-state systems in nearby Greece to the west, and the effervescence and then collapse of the Assyrian Empire to the east. Lydian kings frequently entered into these spheres for military, diplomatic, and other reasons, and Lydian material culture bears identifiable and eclectic Eastern and Western features resulting from such interactions.

Following its conquest, Lydia became the Achaemenid Persian frontier with Greece, and its buffer status contributed to its importance as a seat of high-ranking Persian *satraps*, or governors, and as a repeated target of Greek military activities. These periods, then, are of great interest because they represent times of continuous cultural contact and change associated

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with the growth of an independent kingdom and with later imperial conquest and control, and territorial traditions – both regional boundaries and capital – appear to have remained constant throughout.

This book presents current understandings of the archaeology of Sardis and Lydia in these times, with complementary and interrelated approaches, or foci of interest, informing interpretation. One approach is regional archaeology: the investigation of Lydia as a whole (not just of the capital city), aimed at understanding the configuration, constraints, and enabling resources of its diverse landscapes, the constellation of activities practiced across those landscapes, and evidence for regional interaction between the seventh and the fourth centuries (Figure 1.2). As we will see, this regional approach allows for the identification of regional interactions and activities that bespeak long-enduring cultural traditions, only some of which changed over our approximately 350-year-long period of investigation. Another focus of interest is the evaluation of cultural change from material evidence, especially that resulting from the abrupt shift from Lydian to Achaemenid political hegemony in the mid-sixth century. How the Lydian inhabitants of both Sardis and greater Lydia – administrative and religious officials, craft producers, rural farmers, and landowners alike – may or may not have been affected by Achaemenid rule is explored here. By combining these approaches, the study aims to investigate evidence for personal and political changes in regional interaction over time and to examine specific historical and cultural phenomena to which such changes might be attributable.

REGIONAL ARCHAEOLOGY

Recent trends in Mediterranean archaeology have resulted in the proliferation of regional studies throughout the Mediterranean basin.[3] These trends are related to broad transformations in the field that have occurred over the last few generations and stress the value of systematic methods in the recovery of data on ancient cultures. For regional archaeology, these methods invariably include surveys that attempt to understand archaeological patterns in whole regions by traversing areas as thoroughly as is appropriate to the research question(s) at hand and by systematically documenting the location and nature of material evidence encountered along the way. Regional surveys of this type are able to contextualize data recovered from the excavations of urban centers, long the focus of archaeological traditions in the Classical world, shedding light on urban–countryside interactions as well as entirely rural interactions. At the same

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Figure 1.2. The middle Hermus River valley in central Lydia, stretching beyond the Acropolis of Sardis, to WNW (C. H. Roosevelt).

time, they avoid privileging the fine arts at the exclusion of everyday products by documenting all types of material evidence, from the mundane to the monumental. In this way, surveys have become the method of choice in regional archaeology for providing data that enable holistic and regionally representative sociopolitical, economic, religious, and other interpretations of ancient cultural phenomena.[4]

With its focus on whole countrysides as well as the major sites within them, survey archaeology has engendered a view of landscapes as culturally reifying entities, stressing their importance as physical constraints, sources of subsistence, and manipulable media. The exploitation and modification of landscapes over time, especially, is now generally seen as formative and confirmative of cultural traditions, so that one can speak not only of natural landscapes, but also of political, economic, religious, mortuary, and many other landscapes in which populations lived, labored, prayed, and died.[5] Although the term "landscape" is often overused and frustratingly nebulous in recent archaeological literature, in this book, it will refer to the distribution across a region of various features or phenomena that

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were experienced by people. "Landscape," when used alone, then, denotes the distribution across a region of natural features and phenomena, and, likewise, "cultural landscape" and "political landscape" refer, respectively, to the distribution across a region of cultural and political features and phenomena.[6]

Within Lydia, these relatively recent trends in regional archaeology were first manifested in surveys of prehistoric landscapes searching for signs of activity contemporary with developments in better-known areas of Anatolia.[7] More recent regional surveys have cast wider chronological nets and have recovered abundant evidence of sites ranging in date from early prehistory through Byzantine times, but with little focus on the periods of Lydian and Achaemenid rule.[8]

A separate but parallel tradition of regional archaeology in Lydia predates recent trends and continues to this day. Classical scholars have conducted epigraphic surveys in search of inscriptions nearly continuously over the last one hundred years. These surveys have recovered numerous Greek and Latin inscriptions from Hellenistic through Byzantine times and have helped to establish the classical topography of the area through studies of city names and other toponyms; they have also recovered Lydian and Aramaic inscriptions in smaller numbers that are of even more direct relevance to the periods of interest here.[9] Such classically oriented regional work has origins in even earlier studies that often blended epigraphical interests, historical topography, and environmental commentary into grand syntheses that are still valuable resources for the history, topography, and environment of the region.[10]

The evidence presented in this book draws from the long history of work at Sardis, from all such previous regional studies, and from ongoing archaeological fieldwork that follows in the footsteps of the earlier regional studies, while taking advantage of recent methodological advances. In order to answer questions about how people lived in greater Lydia, regional interaction between hinterland and capital, and how representative Sardis was of all Lydia on multiple levels, a multiscalar and multipronged approach was adopted to identify the location, date, and nature of seventh through fourth-century sites and materials spread throughout Lydia and to place such data in the context of their natural landscapes. The approach includes analysis and synthesis of data pertaining to ancient Lydian geography and environment, survey work with multiple strategies on macroregional and micro-subregional scales, and research of provenienced museum collections and archives. The specific methods and results of this varied approach are presented in the chapters below, especially Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

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MATERIAL CULTURE AND CULTURAL CHANGE

A primary concern of this study, given the period of investigation, is the degree to which we can identify broad cultural transformations associated with hegemonic change – especially from Lydian to Achaemenid – through the evidence of material culture. An additional interest is the possibility of identifying the presence of specific ethnicities in Lydia – Lydian, Persian, Greek, and so forth – through their material record. This record in periods both predating and postdating Persian conquest, however, is marked not by monolithic and unchanging assemblages that can be compared and contrasted with ease, but, rather, by a pronounced eclecticism of Eastern and Western features and traditions that are sometimes imported intact, yet sometimes amalgamated locally into wholly indigenous compilations.

This material eclecticism was recognized already in the nineteenth century and has been commented on extensively in more recent analyses.[11] Today it might be considered best in the light of recent scholarship relating to culture contact that highlights a level of "untidiness," "messiness," or even "murkiness" in the cultural intermixing that takes place in geographical or cultural borderlands and that precludes simple equations between cultural symbols and ethnic identities.[12] Although Lydia was a discrete territory with its own history of cultural developments, it was always situated between prominent Eastern and Western cultures: the Hittites and the Minoans and Mycenaeans in earlier times; and the Archaic and Classical Greeks and the Assyrians, Phrygians, Medes, and other Near Easterners in the Iron Age. Eventually, Lydia fell within the territorial control of the Achaemenid Empire and thereby became the satrapy of Sparda. Even as it was part of the Empire, however, it was its westernmost frontier, serving as intermediary between Achaemenid-controlled areas and Greek territories. Given the extensive, and at times intensive, relationships Lydians shared with others, it is only natural that cultural traditions and materials from abroad found their way into Lydia, and there is good evidence of this both at Sardis and in its hinterland throughout the period of investigation. With its high degree of "cultural entanglement" – another term now common in culture contact studies[13] – Lydian material culture can be interpreted to reveal only general conceptions of identity, especially high-status identity, rather than specific ethnic identity.[14] Yet, it does show a long-term pattern of combining local innovations with traditions from neighboring cultures that must have been selected with purpose.[15]

Intertwined with the issue of material eclecticism and attempts to identify cultural change are the issues of comparing material culture at Sardis

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with that in its hinterland and of seeing the interaction of people, materials, and ideas between Sardis and its hinterland as a unidirectional flow from Sardis. As the only urban center in Lydia, as we will see, Sardis had an undoubtedly more cosmopolitan character than communities in the rural countryside. Thus, even if the archaeology of Sardis appears to reveal predominantly Western, or Greek, rather than Eastern influence in the time of the Lydian kings,[16] and increased Persian influence in the time of Achaemenid hegemony,[17] it does not necessarily follow that these trends penetrated into the countryside simultaneously, with the same manifestations, or to the same extent throughout Lydia. Yet, the regional trend does speak to some degree of uniformity across Lydia, even if this uniformity is marked most conspicuously by the monuments of rural landowners of such high status that they must also have been members of the community at Sardis.

The difficulty of these assessments is exacerbated by issues of material continuity and the extent and nature of archaeological exposures. First, a general continuity in the production and consumption of material culture in Lydia, especially in the sixth to fifth centuries, confounds most attempts to identify to which side of Cyrus' sack of Sardis many contexts of the mid-sixth century belong.[18] Domestic and defensive architecture, the production and use of ceramics and architectural terracottas, regional settlement concerns, and other material traditions continue relatively unbroken across the mid-sixth century. Lydian material culture, in general, may have changed very little, if at all, before the early fifth century, and even then many Lydian traditions endured later. For these reasons, I adopt the term "Late Lydian" for the period of Achaemenid hegemony in Lydia,[19] even if current conclusions should be tempered with understanding of the limitations of the evidence.

For the Lydian period, several excavation areas at Sardis have exposed habitation levels, whereas only one excavation outside Sardis has revealed similar contexts for interpreting the activities of the living. For the period of Achaemenid hegemony, the excavations at Sardis have provided relatively little evidence from living contexts; the vast majority of evidence from Sardis and greater Lydia is funerary in nature, and most of it has been disturbed by later reuse and/or looting. Furthermore, most evidence from greater Lydia comes from high-status contexts, and these contexts may not accurately represent the larger rural Lydian population. We must grapple with these limitations in the available evidence for now, however, as they can be overcome fully only with the acquisition of new data from Sardis and new archaeological research in greater Lydia.

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OVERVIEW OF THIS STUDY

Regionally dispersed excavations like those urged by Hanfmann, as quoted in the preface to this book, have yet to be undertaken outside Sardis, and so evidence from surface survey – usually compared and contrasted with that from Sardis – remains the primary source for regional understandings of Lydian archaeology. An abbreviated catalogue of this evidence is included in this book.

This book begins by providing a cultural and historical framework for such understandings (Chapter 2), derived primarily from ancient records relating to Sardis, and then continues with a review of the geographical, environmental, and resource conditions of the area under investigation (Chapter 3). To situate the history and the landscape in the context of its people, an examination of Sardis explores evidence for the development of the city, discussing contexts that range from domestic to royal (Chapter 4). The richness of the archaeological, historical, and epigraphical records at Sardis is unparalleled elsewhere in Lydia. The features of this one major excavated site thus serve as comparative debarkation points for investigations of archaeological remains located elsewhere in Lydia.

Reaching beyond Sardis, both central Lydia – the immediate environs of Sardis and the core of the region – and the further hinterland of greater Lydia complement our knowledge of the capital and are explored fully for the first time in this book (Chapter 5). This division of landscape, necessitated by the different scales and intensities of archaeological research in Lydia discussed above, proves useful to highlight differences between Sardis, its immediate hinterland, and its distant hinterland. The inhabitants of central Lydia, by their mere proximity to Sardis, had close ties to the capital, and interaction with more distant regions most likely involved broader linkages from the core to the boundary zones of the region.

The monumental scale of burial remains spread throughout Lydia, especially in the form of *tumuli*, or burial mounds, makes them among the most identifiable indicators of regional settlement, and thus burial remains are significant for understanding Lydian society in the periods of investigation (Chapter 6). Data from occupational contexts complements burial evidence, and, when juxtaposed with historical, environmental, and resource data, archaeological evidence of all types reflects aspects of Lydian society at Sardis and beyond, in times of both Lydian and Achaemenid hegemony.

Conclusions about regional interactions, especially between hinterland and capital, and the extent and pace of cultural change in Lydia can be inferred from the eclecticism, continuity, discontinuity, and geographic

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distribution of the material record in Lydia. Although much of the archaeological evidence dating to the period of Achaemenid hegemony can be read as reflective of Lydian society and cultural traditions, with roots stretching back before the conquest of Cyrus, discontinuities in Lydian traditions are equally clear and can be explained by evidence provided in historical sources.

Most significantly, a regional network of estates in place already in Lydian times continued to flourish in the first few generations of Achaemenid hegemony, when the satraps at Sardis took advantage of and expanded the previously existing mode of regional organization. The landowning families of such estates marked their high status especially in funerary contexts comprised of monumental burial mounds, or tumuli, ornamented and filled with eclectic imagery and artifacts drawing from the cultural traditions and features of neighboring lands in addition to those of Lydia. This material eclecticism is characteristic of Lydian material culture both before and after the Persian conquest, and reflects the cosmopolitanism of high-status Lydians who participated in the community of Sardis.

In the mid-fifth century and later, when the satrapy of Sardis fell prey to the intrigues of overly ambitious rulers and the Lydian countryside was more frequently overrun by Greek armies, significant changes appear in the regional evidence. The earlier Lydian organization involving high-status landowning families must have been deemed insufficient to the task of protecting and managing rural agricultural production and the collection of tribute. From this time on, such tasks became the responsibility of garrisons spread throughout an otherwise unsecure countryside. These garrisons were manned in part by Persians, and their presence explains the contemporary appearance throughout Lydia of Aramaic grave epitaphs and cults of Persian deities.

Alongside these clear effects of Achaemenid hegemony in the later fifth and fourth centuries, the Lydian language and Lydian cults remained popular as well, as did many forms of material culture. The long-term continuity of Lydian material culture throughout the period of Achaemenid rule, in fact, reflects a certain endurance of Lydian cultural traditions, which never quite disappeared under Achaemenid hegemony, and, despite other significant cultural changes, lived on into even later periods.

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