



## A FINANCIAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN ARTEMIS AND MNESIMACHOS: THE MAN WHO BAMBOOZLED THE GODDESS

An inscription carved on the interior corner of the north-west anta of the Temple of Artemis at Sardis records the obligations of a certain Mnesimachos in return for a loan of money he received from the temple funds. Unable or unwilling to pay his loan, Mnesimachos declared his decision to convey his estate to Artemis and accept the conditions of the contract. This estate, including villages, dwellings, and peasant-serfs, had been given to him by King Antigonos Monophthalmos around 300 BCE. The present work attempts to focus on the sequence of events in Mnesimachos' life and their relation to the history and architecture of this important temple. The new reading of these events as a result of the last two decades or excavations at Sardis offers us a synthetic understanding of the Hellenistic history of the city and an insight into Mnesimachos' willingness to forgo his estate in a financial deal that ultimately tricks the goddess.

**Keywords:** Mnesimachos, Sardis, Temple of Artemis, temple banking, mortgage inscription, Hellenistic taxation, Seleucos I, Antigonos Monophthalmos, Stratonike, royal land grants, Achaemenid Anatolia, Achaemenid Sardis

Sometime around 310–305 BCE, a man named Mnesimachos borrowed 1,325 gold staters, a considerable sum, from the Sanctuary of Artemis at Sardis, the leading religious establishment in Asia Minor next to the Artemision of Ephesus (Figure 1). In ancient Greece, and to a lesser extent in Rome, most banking activities were centred in temples that undertook making loans, holding deposits, renting property, and changing money – dealing with the bewildering variety of currencies and gold in circulation. Temples and sanctuaries, mainly due to their serious and sacred nature, under divine protection, were the trustworthy institutions of finance. Furthermore, temples were supervised by relatively



Figure 1. Sardis, Temple of Artemis, west *pronaos* with the position of the Mnesimachos inscription marked, acropolis in background, looking east (author's photo).

well-educated priests (*hieronomoi*), or 'temple-wardens' (*neokoroi*), who could perform the complicated financial activities and keep records necessary in line of economic business.<sup>1</sup> Some transactions were verbal, based on an old-fashioned trust, but some, mostly larger deals, required written records and witnesses. Normally, they were kept in civic or sanctuary archives; some were literally carved in stone as legal documents on the wall of an important building and displayed publicly, like the Mnesimachos inscription from Sardis.

Our information about to the relationship between Artemis' sanctuary at Sardis and Mnesimachos, probably a prominent citizen

<sup>1</sup> E. Cohen, *Athenian Economy and Society. A Banking Perspective* (Princeton, 1997), 41–60; P. Débord, *Aspects sociaux et économiques de la vie religieuse dans l'Anatolie gréco-romaine. Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain 88* (Leiden, 1982), 225–6; J. Andraeu, *Banking and Business in the Roman World* (Cambridge, 1999), 128–88; B. Dignas, *Economy of the Sacred in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor* (Oxford, 2002), 21–5, 146–9; A. Bresson, *The Making of the Ancient Greek Economy* (Princeton, 2016), 285–305; M. Rostovtzeff, *Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World*, 3 vols (Oxford, 1941), I, 406, 440–71, 495–6; II, 648, 672, 127–82.

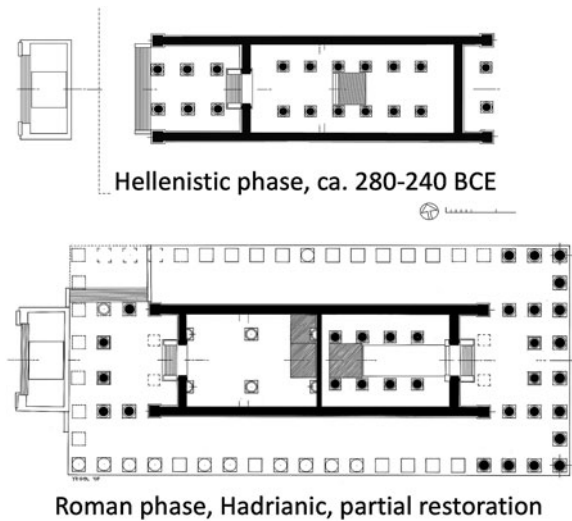


Figure 2. Sardis, Temple of Artemis, plans of the Hellenistic phase *cella* (above); and Roman, Hadrianic phase as a partially restored pseudo-*dipteros* (below) (author).

and business person of Sardis, is revealed by a long and elaborate inscription carved on the inner wall of the north-west anta of the Hellenistic period temple (Figures 2 and 3). The inscription is placed at roughly eye-level; it is composed in two columns, each preserved with eighteen or nineteen lines but missing from the top a strip of about 29 cm high, or about four to six lines, or one-third of the text (Figure 4). We believe that when the inner chamber (*cella*) of the west-facing, original Hellenistic temple was extended westward during the Roman era (when the *cella* was divided into two to accommodate the imperial cult; see below) the lower floor of the *pronaos* (the porch in front of the *cella*) had to be partially filled and raised. Thus, the new higher floor covered up the lower two-thirds of the inscription, otherwise leaving it unharmed, while the top one-third, which was visible above the new floor level and judged to have no civic significance anymore, was chiselled out to achieve a smooth marble wall surface.

The Mnesimachos inscription was uncovered by Howard C. Butler (the first director of Sardis Excavations, a professor of architecture at Princeton University, 1910–14) in 1911, during the second year of excavations at the Temple of Artemis. It was officially published by W. H. Buckler and D. M. Robinson, the excavation epigraphists, in

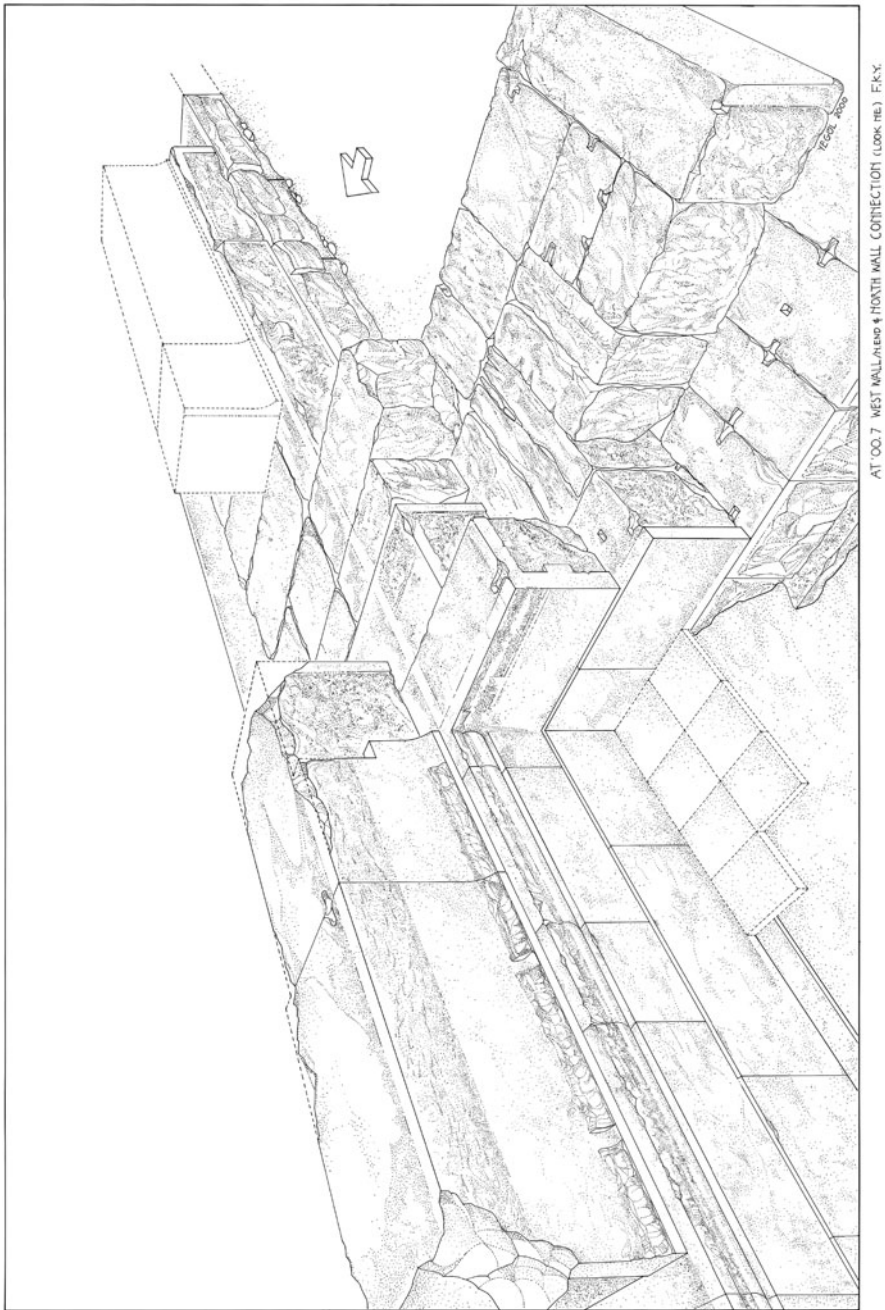


Figure 3. Sardis, Temple of Artemis, west *pronaos*, north-east corner, with Mnesimachos inscription, perspective view (author).

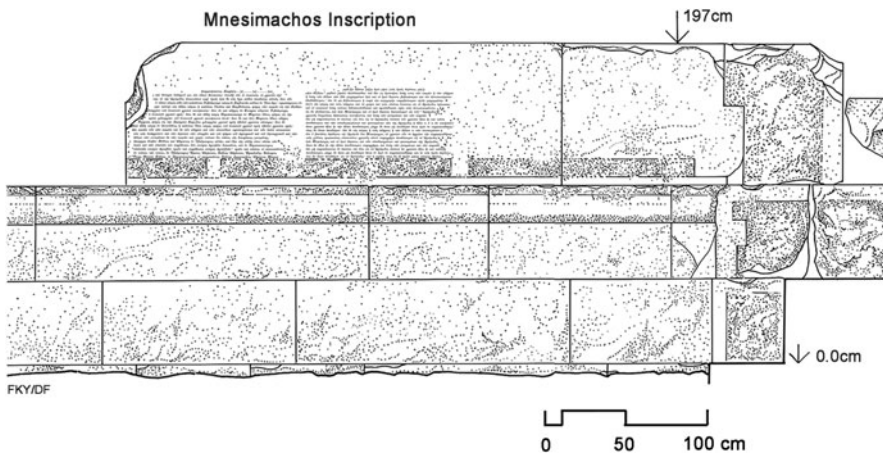


Figure 4. Sardis, Temple of Artemis, north-west anta with Mnesimachos inscription on north wall, interior frontal elevation (author).

1932.<sup>2</sup> The longest and the most detailed epigraphic record of a financial accord between an individual and a sanctuary of the Hellenistic world, the Mnesimachos inscription (then also called ‘mortgage inscription’) attracted the attention of many scholars, engendering overlapping as well as different views and readings. Notable among the recent studies are by Kathleen T. M. Atkinson, P. Débord, R. Descat, P. Briant (see nn. 23, 40), R. A. Billows, P. Thonemann, and R. Boehm.<sup>3</sup> These studies and others mainly focus on the historical and linguistic message of the inscription and

<sup>2</sup> H. C. Butler, *Sardis. The Excavations 1910–1914, I.1* (Leyden, 1922), 52; W. H. Buckler and D. M. Robinson, *Sardis. Greek and Latin Inscriptions, VII.1* (Leyden, 1932), no. 1, 1–7.

<sup>3</sup> K. T. M. Atkinson, ‘A Hellenistic Land-Conveyance: The Estate of Mnesimachos in the Plain of Sardis’, *Historia* 21 (1972), 45–74; Débord (n. 1), 224–51; R. Descat, ‘Mnésimachos, Hérodote, et la système tributaire achéménide’, *REA* 85 (1985), 97–112; P. Briant, ‘Dons de terres et de villes: L’Asie Mineure dans le contexte achéménide’, *REA* 87 (1985), 53–72, and nn. 21, 37; R. A. Billows, *Kings and Colonists. Aspects of Macedonian Imperialism* (Leiden, 1995), 111–45; P. Thonemann, ‘Estate and Land in Early Hellenistic Asia Minor: The Estate of Krateuas’, *Chiron* 39 (2009), 363–93. See also P. R. Franke, ‘Inscriptifliche und numismatische Zeugnisse für die Chronologie des Artemis-Tempels zu Sardis’, *MDAI(A)* 76 (1961), 197–8; M.-A. Levy, ‘Au sujet des *laoi* et des inscriptions de Mnésimachos’, *Actes du Colloque 1973 sur l’esclavage. Annales littéraires de l’Université de Beçanson* 182 (1976), 259–71; P. Scheibelreiter, ‘Der Vertrag des Mnesimachos: Eine dogmatische Annäherung an I Sardes 7.1.1’, *ZRG* 130 (2013), 40–71; G. G. Aperghis, *The Seleucid Royal Economy. The Finances and Financial Administration of the Seleucid Empire* (Cambridge, 2004). For a broader view of Hellenistic and Achaemenid economy and urbanism, see R. Boehm, *City and Empire in the Age of the Successors* (Berkeley, 2018), 89–120. See also n. 38.



its various and sometimes overlapping interpretations. None really deals with the physical and thematic relationship of the inscription to the history and architecture of the temple; few display a first-hand knowledge of the building. The present work gratefully relies on these historic and epigraphic studies, leaving future interpretations on linguistic and epigraphic matters to specialist colleagues; however, it benefits from some thirty years of field study of the temple (and its recent two-volume final publication).<sup>4</sup> Recent archaeological work at Sardis focused on and revealed the social and urbanistic history of the late Achaemenid and Hellenistic development of the city that changed our earlier knowledge in significant ways (see below).<sup>5</sup> In interpreting the motives and meanings of Mnesimachos' financial relationships with Artemis, I aim, unlike previous studies, to focus attention to his life sequence in relation to the history of the temple and the city and the motives surrounding his financial undertaking. I primarily follow the original translation by Buckler and Robinson and more recently that of Billows.<sup>6</sup> What does the preserved part of this long and elaborate inscription tell us? Let us review the salient points.

Going back to an earlier period in the history of Sardis (rather than the time of the various events registered in the temple-wall-carved text), the inscription records that Antigonus awarded a large estate to 'me' – that is to Mnesimachos speaking in the first-person – after the boundaries of the land were carefully determined by one Chaireas, probably one of the king's cadastral and land survey officials ('Chaireas having investigated these matters a division was made', col. 1, line 1). This seems like an indication that the king was very careful to ensure that the far-flung estates he considered as a gift were not previously owned. Chaireas, and probably other surveyors, searched for possible existing claims for ownership. Two small allotments (*kleroi*) of land and a house belonging to Pytheos and Adrastos emerged and these were duly excluded from the grant as hold-overs, with earlier rights (probably going back to Lydian days), or as *exairema* (exception).<sup>7</sup> All

<sup>4</sup> F. K. Yegül, *The Temple of Artemis at Sardis. Archaeological Exploration of Sardis, Report 7*, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA, 2020).

<sup>5</sup> A. M. Berlin and P. J. Kosmin (eds.), *Spear-Won Land. Sardis from the King's Peace to the Peace of Apamea* (Madison, WI, 2019).

<sup>6</sup> Buckler and Robinson (n. 2), Billows (n. 3), 137–45; see also Atkinson (n. 3), 45–8; Débord (n. 1), 246–7.

<sup>7</sup> Billows (n. 3), 121–2, 138–9, 142; C. H. Roosevelt, 'The Inhabited Landscapes of Lydia', in Berlin and Kosmin (n. 5), 151–2.

this is very professional and almost modern, reminding one of ‘title search’ undertaken by title companies obligatory in most land property transactions today.<sup>8</sup> The study of the inscription indicates that the donor was none other than Antigonus Monophthalmos (the ‘One-Eyed’), one of the leading Macedonian generals of Alexander who had established control over western Asia Minor from c. 315 BCE onward, assumed the title of king in 306, and died in 301.<sup>9</sup> The practice of the king awarding royal and often newly conquered lands to prominent members of local communities in order to win their loyalty and support and assure that these new lands were productive and taxable assets of his domain was a well-established system whose origins can be traced back to the fifth century BCE and familiar in Achaemenid and Macedonian practice;<sup>10</sup> one might argue that it lasted into the Ottoman *timar* system.<sup>11</sup> The recipient of the king’s land cultivated it, paid all taxes on it, but possibly also derived a comfortable income from it. In all practical ways the grantee was the legal owner of the land: he could rent it, ‘sell’ it, monetize it, and pass it to his heirs.<sup>12</sup> The definition of selling the land, or its ‘alienation’, may require some explanation. Thonemann, in his 2009 study of an inscription about one Krateuas (c. 326/5 BCE), who sublet an estate given to him in the Kaikos Valley to a third party as usufruct, but not sold outright, signals that this more restrictive ‘non-alienable’ land grant may be typical of earlier periods (probably Achaemenid) while, as evidenced

<sup>8</sup> Billows (n. 3), 113–17.

<sup>9</sup> Franke (n. 3), 197–8; C. Marek, *In the Land of a Thousand Gods. A History of Asia Minor in the Ancient World* (Princeton, 2016), 81–92, esp. 91–2; P. J. Kosmin, ‘Remaking A City: Sardis in the Long Third Century’, in Berlin and Kosmin (n. 5), 75–8; Débord (n. 1), 246–7.

<sup>10</sup> Atkinson (n. 3), 59–60; Billows (n. 3), 111–12; Rostovtzeff (n. 1), I. 246–7; Thonemann (n. 3), 363–5. The early Achaemenid policy encouraging the cultivation of land (and punishing if not) is demonstrated in an alleged letter of Cyrus to his governors: Xenophon, *Oec.* 4.8–11. See also L. Fried, ‘The Role of the Governor in Persian Imperial Administration’, in A. F. Botta (ed.), *The Shadow of Bezael. Aramaic, Biblical, and Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Bezael Porten* (Leiden, 2013), 325–6, 329–31.

<sup>11</sup> This socio-military system, which formed the core of the Ottoman cavalry (*sipahi*), flourished from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Those who were the favoured recipients of the sultan’s land were expected to keep the land productive, pay taxes, and maintain a set number of horsemen ready to join the Ottoman military forces whenever needed. It was ultimately the sultan who owned the land and could regain it whenever he wished. The model for Ottoman *timar* was probably the Byzantine *pronoia*. D. Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and the Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2007), 77 ff.; H. Inalcik, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1914* (Cambridge, 1994), 73–4, 114–17. For *pronoia* and the Byzantine origins of *timar*: H. Inalcik, ‘Ottoman Methods of Conquest’, *Studia Islamica* 2 (1954), 103–29; B. Lewis, ‘Ottoman Land Tenure and Taxation in Syria’, *Studia Islamica* 50 (1979), 109–24.

<sup>12</sup> Billows (n. 3), 111–14, 137, 168; W. L. Westermann, ‘Land Registers of Western Asia Under the Seleucids’, *CPh* 16 (1921), 12–19.

by an inscription about a land grant by King Lysimachus (*c.* 285 BCE, Hellenistic), later periods allowed full alienation. This distinction based on chronology does have merit, but its statistical basis rests on a few incomplete inscriptions. I am more inclined to think that both types coexisted, depending on the nature of the land and the king's desire.<sup>13</sup> However, in all the cases, early or late, Achaemenid or Macedonian, the ultimate ownership and title of the land belonged to the king who could reclaim and repossess *his* land any time he wished, no questions asked. So technically one never really owned the king's land, one merely curated it for the next generation (of kings), like a Patek Philippe watch.

Our inscription lists in detail an inventory of the lands granted to Mnesimachos and their estimated annual income. These include four villages (*komai*), separate allotments of land (*kleroi*), farmsteads, gardens, vineyards, dwellings, plus the value in gold of total labour of all the peasants and peasant-serfs (*laoi*) who lived on and were bound to the land. The estates were probably not contiguous but all were in the 'Sardis plain', the well-watered Hermus (Gediz) Valley north of Sardis.<sup>14</sup> Sometime after Mnesimachos was granted his estates by King Antigonos, he took, for whatever reasons, a large loan of 1,325 gold staters from the Sanctuary of Artemis for which he was not expected to pay interest as normal in a modern mortgage; this was more in the nature of a 'deposit'.<sup>15</sup> However, Mnesimachos put up his lands as collateral or security against this massive loan. And some time after that, 'the bank', or the Sanctuary of Artemis (the great temple had not been built at that time yet), again for whatever reasons, wanted its money back. 'Now the temple-wardens are demanding from me the gold of the loan belonging to Artemis', Mnesimachos declared and continued rather tersely, 'But I have no funds whatever to pay them'. Other technicalities might have been spelled out in the missing top section of the inscription. It is important to note that the inscription we have on the temple anta wall is not an original. It represents the

<sup>13</sup> Thonemann (n. 3), 365–81; C. H. Roosevelt, 'The Inhabited Landscapes of Lydia', in Berlin and Kosmin (n. 5), 145–64, 151–2.

<sup>14</sup> Buckler and Robinson (n. 2), 2–4; Atkinson (n. 3), 45–51.

<sup>15</sup> The term 'loan' here and hereafter is used loosely in a modern sense; some scholars prefer the concept of a 'deposit entrusted to one's care', or *parakatheteke*, because there was no interest involved. The ancient equivalent of a mortgage with interest would be better defined by the term *hypotheke*. See Billows (n. 3), 137–42; Débord (n. 1), 244–51; Atkinson (n. 3), 57–8. See also Cohen (n. 1), 111–89.



third stage in the series of financial transactions involving the king, the goddess Artemis, and Mnesimachos separated by time and events which should not be conflated: first, Mnesimachos is awarded the royal estates by Antigonus in *c.* 310 BCE before he became king, because the inscription does not give his royal title (this was probably recorded on an original document, which is lost); second, Mnesimachos takes a loan of 1,325 gold staters from Artemis, putting up the estate as collateral (if this transaction was recorded we also do not have the original copy); third, Artemis wants her money back but Mnesimachos cannot or does not give the money back and as per his agreement forfeits the land and all of its usufruct privileges to Artemis. This last is the document we have on the temple wall in the form of a later copy which records and summarizes the previous two.

We know that what Mnesimachos borrowed from Artemis, 1,325 gold staters, was good money, but how much money was that? While it is notoriously difficult to put a number on it by today's standards, one can very tentatively estimate the market value of the loan. This would have been enough money to cover the total grain purchases of two medium-sized Greek cities for a whole year.<sup>16</sup> Or this money could pay the annual upkeep and the salaries of about 100–110 soldiers or mercenaries. Or, in a very tentative way, it would amount to a value around 500,000–600,000 USD today in the Western economy. However, in order to give a larger economic perspective of money related to the building of the temple, and using near-contemporary figures from the Temple of Apollo at Didyma (*c.* 300 BCE) as comparison, the full value of one of the Roman-era nearly eighteen-metre-high larger exterior columns of the Temple of Artemis of Sardis (marble, transportation, shaping carving, erecting) would have come to about 34,000–35,000 drachmae, or about 700,000–800,000 USD today; so Mnesimachos' loan could have built nearly one of the temple's smaller interior columns.<sup>17</sup>

Another important clue to the value of the money he borrowed comes from the inscription itself, which reveals Seleucid tax obligations

<sup>16</sup> Lebedus and Teos put up 1,400 gold staters for that purpose and could hardly pay it, as recorded in an inscription: *Syll.* 344, lines 72–94. See also Dignas (n. 1), 72–3; Billows (n. 3), 130.

<sup>17</sup> Yegül (n. 4), 257; O. Bingöl, *Arkeolojik Mimari'de Tas* (Istanbul, 2005), 161–2; W. Woigtländer, *Der jüngste Apollontempel von Didyma. Geschichte seines Baudekors. Istanbul Mitteilungen*, Suppl. 14 (Tübingen, 1975), 74–82, 92–102. The figures above, based on the average skilled worker's salary/day of *c.* 100 euros in Germany, have been roughly adjusted for preindustrial purchasing power parity in wages.

in detail. Mnesimachos' estate, based on an estimate of the sum of its various income bearing assets, owed the king a total tribute (*phoros*) of 116 gold staters and seven obols annually to be paid directly to the king's military officers, or *chiliarches*.<sup>18</sup> This sum represents the royal tribute predicated on a fixed proportion of the average annual yield from the land ('land's value'), either one-tenth (or *dekate*) or one-twelfth. Scholarly opinions about the percentage change. The former *dekate*, or tithes, is supported in Pseudo-Aristotle's *Oeconomica* II as the early Hellenistic/Macedonian tax standard and it is verified by other examples known from inscriptions (*Oec.* 2.4). The latter, one-twelfth, representing the Persian tradition, is viewed as a system left over from over two centuries of Achaemenid bureaucracy in western Asia Minor, especially in Sardis, which continued as a satrapal centre.<sup>19</sup> Considering their paramount interest and excellence in land surveying and taxation, the continuity of Achaemenid bureaucratic systems into the post-Alexandrian period of the Mnesimachos inscription enjoys some early support among scholars. In either case, the principle behind the taxation of agricultural land is the same; the percentage variations make little difference in the land's estimated value. Separate from the standard *phoros*, Mnesimachos would have overseen the payment of additional taxes and fees, *ekphoria* (such as poll taxes, harvest taxes, market and pasture taxes, revenues from forests and minerals, etc.), which would have decreased his share of the estate income or profit by at least another one-fifth. What was then Mnesimachos' gain or profit from the estate after all the taxes and the full expenditure needed for the livelihood of the peasants and serfs and other operating expenses were deducted? Billows' well-considered guess is that what remained to the estate grantee after all taxes and expenses were subtracted would be 'at least another one tenth of the estate's produce, that is to say in an average year at least

<sup>18</sup> As listed in the inscription, three villages, Tobalmaura, Tandos, and Kombdilipia, paid a total of fifty gold staters; the village Periasassosta paid fifty-seven, and the village Ilos/Iouokome, three gold staters and three obols (it was probably a very small village). There are also small land allotments or farmsteads (*kleroi*) that paid additional tributes: Kinaroa paid three gold staters and Nagrioa three staters and four obols. Adding these we arrive at a total of 116 gold staters and seven obols. Buckler and Robinson (n. 2), 3; Billows (n. 3), 119–21.

<sup>19</sup> A near-contemporary mid-third century BCE inscription exempts some soldier-settlers under Antiochos I from the one-tenth land tax: *ISmyrna*, 573 (= *OGIS*, 229, lines 100–1). Supporting the one-tenth taxation (contra Descat), see Billows (n. 3), 123–6, esp. n. 32. For the primary support of the one-twelfth system, see Descat (n. 3), 99–103; Thonemann (n. 3), 383; Aperghis (n. 3), 142–4. See also Briant (n. 3), 53–72.

as much as the royal *phoros...*, which would then be around 116–20 gold staters annually.<sup>20</sup> Achaemenid royal tax was paid preferably in cash, in silver coin, or weighted silver (rarely gold), metals being a more effective form of supporting distant armies and military spending. However, grains would have been acceptable in a limited way, especially for the needs of military stationed in the country where wheat was produced (like Sardis). Aperghis and Thonemann underline the benefits of a mixed tax of cash and grains for both the Achaemenid and Hellenistic systems. Seleucid taxation of land, especially for the grantee, seems to accept cash but also payments in kind or in labour reflecting practical local needs (especially for non-perishable items).<sup>21</sup> There is a distinct reference to ‘wine vessels’ as an item of his estate’s production, indicating that Mnesimachos was engaged in and profited from both viticulture and the production of amphorae and probably other ceramics – exactly the primary agricultural activities modern villages of Hermus Valley engage in today: grapes, wine, and pottery, and wheat further north.<sup>22</sup> Mnesimachos probably could have lived on the land comfortably and used the cash/gold for his luxury spending. He probably made good money but not a killing.

The total gross value of Mnesimachos’ estate (around 1,200–1,400 gold staters) was probably close to or a little less than what he had

<sup>20</sup> Billows (n. 3), 126–8. Basing his preference on the Achaemenid taxation system and using very generous quantifying assumptions, in a 2004 study Aperghis (n. 3, 140–5), who argues for a fixed royal tribute of one-twelfth and about one half ‘land rent’ of the total produce collected by the grantee, awards Mnesimachos an annual profit of 550 gold staters. This argument, which originally comes from Descat, is not unequivocally supported (see n. 19). A. Monson questions Descat’s argument for the Achaemenid-based one-twelfth tribute (which he derives from the assumption that Mnesimachos’ 1,325 gold stater loan represents his full land value): ‘without corroborating evidence the ration of (Mnesimachos’) tribute [one-tenth or one-twelfth] in gold to be the value of his loan is of doubtful significance’. See A. Monson, ‘Hellenistic Empires’, in A. Monson and W. Scheidel (eds.), *Fiscal Regimes and the Political Economy of Premodern States* (Cambridge, 2015), 191. J. Ma, in a positive review of Aperghis’ book, nonetheless observes that ‘Aperghis’ maximal quantifying...leads to acrobatic speculation for...rates of rent or tribute’. J. Ma, review of G. G. Aperghis in *Hermathena* 187 (Summer 2007), 182–8.

<sup>21</sup> Aperghis (n. 3), 99–107; Thonemann (n. 3), 384–5.

<sup>22</sup> Billows (n. 3), 128–9. Briant points out the basic problem of procuring silver, gold, or ‘weighted silver’ to pay the king’s *phoros*, which required transforming the agricultural produce to metals. This was clearly the preferred method in payments to a king’s court, Achaemenid or Seleucid: ‘In some instances, the satraps received the product...directly in silver from their communities...[otherwise] paying the tribute in silver inevitably necessitated the transformation of goods in kind into money.’ When ‘money’ in this instance denoted gold or silver, this ‘transformation of goods’ necessitated and supported the development of cities with their market economies. P. Briant, ‘Tribute Payments and Exchange in Achaemenid and Hellenistic Asia Minor’, in A. Kuhrt (ed.), *Kings, Countries, Peoples. Selected Studies on the Achaemenid Empire* (Stuttgart, 2017), 422–3 (original in 1994). See also Bresson on the wide use of money in the taxation systems of the Greek cities of Asia Minor: Bresson (n. 1), 293–9.

borrowed. We are informed that Artemis ‘now’ wanted her money back, but since Mnesimachos defaulted on his loan he conveyed the estate to her as per the terms of the agreement. Full use of the land and full profit from it, though not full ownership, would now be transferred to the goddess. It would have taken Artemis roughly eleven years to amortize her cash loan and start making profit ( $1,325/120 = 11$  years; or at 1,400 staters,  $1,400/120 = 11.7$  years). Still, this was not a bad deal for the temple whose capital investment created a return of almost nine per cent ( $120/1,325 = 0.09$ ), nearly twice the four per cent that was the normal rate then.<sup>23</sup> This advantage was countered by the high-risk factor assumed by the temple because, if the king repossessed his lands, which he could any time, the temple would be left holding an empty bucket. Or nearly an empty one because the contract did contain a warranty that in the case of the king’s intervention, Mnesimachos would be required to pay the full 1,325 gold staters to the temple, the original sum of his borrowing, plus the cost of any improvements the temple-wardens might have made to the estate during their possession of it. Other, stiffer penalties reaching up to twice this amount were written into the contract if Mnesimachos repudiated any of his obligations. However, these penalties were in essence very difficult or impossible to enforce – especially if he really did not have the funds.<sup>24</sup>

Let us consider the dates and chronological relationships of the documented events as we know them from the inscription. Although Antigonus the ‘One-Eyed’ received the title of king only in 306 BCE, by about 315–310 BCE he was at the height of his powers and already the undisputed ruler of western Asia, especially Lydia and Phrygia – perhaps a king *de facto* though not *de jure*. Since Antigonus’ title as king is not included in the text we have, it would be logical to assume that Mnesimachos received Antigonus’ generosity sometime around 310 BCE.<sup>25</sup> Let us explore the events that followed. First question: when did Mnesimachos decide to borrow money against the land? We propose as a working hypothesis that Mnesimachos kept his land

<sup>23</sup> Billows (n. 3), 130–1; W. H. Buckler and D. M. Robinson, ‘Greek Inscriptions from Sardis, I’, *AJA* 16 (1912), 73–4.

<sup>24</sup> Atkinson (n. 3), 57–60.

<sup>25</sup> Marek (n. 9), 81–92; Billows (n. 3), 144–5; R. Billows, *Antigonos the One-Eyed and the Creation of the Hellenistic State* (Berkeley, 1990), 81–2, 114–16, 132–6. See also C. Schuler, ‘Seleucid Rule in Asia Minor – Küçük Asya’da Seleukos’lar Egemenliği’, in O. Tekin (ed.), *Hellenistic and Roman Anatolia – Hellenistik ve Roma Dönemlerinde Anadolu* (Istanbul, 2019), 14–27.

and profited by its agricultural returns to the end of his benefactor's life in 301 BCE or a little later, perhaps around 295 BCE when he might have felt freer, morally at least, to borrow against his king's land in order to make investments of his own. Those were good years for urban growth and investment in Sardis (see below). Still, we may never know what really prompted him to ask for and receive a colossal cash loan from the sanctuary nor do we know how he fared financially with his big loan. All we know is when, seemingly suddenly, Artemis asked for her money back, he declared he had no funds whatever to pay it – which sounds a bit suspicious. So, Mnesimachos defaulted and gave over his estate, the king's estate, which had been pledged as collateral to the sanctuary. The sides (probably mainly Artemis' temple-wardens) prepared a legal document governing the rights and conditions between the parties, detailing the sequence of events leading to Mnesimachos' default. They probably placed the original of the legal document in the city archives and another one, carved on a marble stele, to be displayed in the sanctuary (which then had no temple). The hypothetical original is lost.<sup>26</sup> Later, with the building of the temple, a copy was carved on the temple wall (see Figures 2, 3, and 4). Epigraphically, the inscription we have is dated to c. 230–220 BCE (see below), which is fully supported by the archaeological evidence for temple building chronology. Mnesimachos could not be expected to be alive by that date, but his heirs would – and that is why the re-carving a copy of the original document on the new temple wall was essential.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> For the importance of Sardis as a Seleucid capital and the location of the 'royal archives' (probably in the Artemis' sanctuary), see Yegül (n. 4), 160, n. 38; M. M. Austin, *The Hellenistic World from Alexander to the Roman Conquest. A Selection of Ancient Sources in Translation* (Cambridge, 1921), 305–7, n. 185. It is likely that there were other documents of civic and religious importance carved on other walls of the west *pronaos* of the temple; these walls do not survive. Four of the reused anta blocks of a fourth-century BCE Temple of Cybele/Kubaba (Metroön) in Sardis were inscribed by civic records, most importantly the letters of Antiochos III to the Sardians (213 BCE): N. Cahill, 'Spotlight: The Metroön at Sardis', in Berlin and Kosmin (n. 5), 91–5.

<sup>27</sup> I am gratefully including a personal communication from R. Billows, which clarifies the somewhat murky legal concept of ownership and the necessity of including a copy of the original document on the newly finished temple wall: 'The situation is thus: the king owns the estate; he has granted possession and usufruct to Mnesimachos and his descendants, contingent on good behavior (loyalty above all); Mnesimachos has conveyed possession and usufruct to the temple, but he and his descendants remain legally the possessors and must thus continue to guarantee the temple's possession indefinitely. This is very revealing for how the kings granted estates (giving hereditary possession but retaining ultimate ownership). Thus, the temple was not listed in the royal record offices as holder of the estate, and hence the importance of re-inscribing. . . the contract which guaranteed their right to estate via Mnesimachos and his *ekgonoi* [descendants, singular *ekgonos*]'. Billows to Yegül, 30 November 2021.



Let us take the second question: when and why did Artemis decide to reclaim her loan? Was there a particular and overpowering need that prompted the goddess to act so? We suggest there was one. Based on intensive research on the temple during the last thirty years, archaeological evidence supported by historical considerations indicates that the construction of the temple must have been started soon after the Battle of Kourepedion in 281 BCE, which consolidated Seleucid rule in western Asia Minor under Seleucos I, Nicator. Upon the death of Seleucos a few months after his great victory, Sardis was made a regional Seleucid capital and the royal residence of King Antiochos and his extraordinary Queen Stratonike, the fiery Macedonian (who had married her step-son) who lived and died at Sardis.<sup>28</sup> I have shown in the final publication of the temple that the colossal project with its sixty-seven-metre-long *cella* must have been initiated soon after this date and completed as a *cella*-only temple by the last quarter of the third century BCE.<sup>29</sup> I have also proposed that Queen Stratonike was the primary patron and the inspiration behind this great temple.<sup>30</sup> The project that might have been intended as a *dipteros* (a temple surrounded by two rows of columns around its *cella*), like the giant archaic-era *dipteroi* of Ionia, needed money. Around the 270s, as the deep ashlar foundations of the building were laid, as the marble mountains around the sanctuary were hewn to produce gigantic blocks, column drums and exquisitely shaped Ionic capitals, as the dust, the din, and the clamour of big construction echoed in the Pactolus stream valley, Artemis needed money. So, we propose that on the occasion of the building of the temple around 275 BCE Artemis demanded the payment of her big loan – but received only land instead with an annual income of about 120 gold pieces. We should add a degree

<sup>28</sup> Yegül (n. 4), xix–xxiii; 159–62. See also, F. K. Yegül, ‘The Temple of Artemis at Sardis’, in T. Schulz (ed.), *Dipteros und Pseudodipteros. Bauhistorische und Archäologische Forschungen*, Byzas 12 (Istanbul, 2012), 95–111.

<sup>29</sup> For epigraphic, numismatic, and archaeological evidence for the completion of the Hellenistic *cella* by mid- to late-third century BCE, see: Yegül (n. 4), xxii, 163–6, nn. 68, 69; G. M. A. Hanfmann, *Sardis from Prehistoric to Roman Times. Results of the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis 1958–1975* (Cambridge, MA, 1983), 119, no. 13; Buckler and Robinson (n. 2), no. 87, 92. See also C. B. Welles, *Royal Correspondence in the Hellenistic Period. A Study in Greek Epigraphy* (New Haven, 1934), 89–104.

<sup>30</sup> F. K. Yegül, ‘Queenly Gifts to Golden Sardis and the Temple of Artemis – Artemis Tapinagi ve Altın Sardes’ in Kraliçeleri’, *Seleucia* 10 (2020), 9–33; Yegül (n. 4), 160–2; E. D. Carney, *Women and Monarchy in Macedonia* (Norman, OK, 2000), 171–2, 219. For Stratonike’s dedication to Artemis in the shape of inscribed marble balls, see Buckler and Robinson (n. 2), no. 86, 91–2; nos. 90–3, 94–6.

of financial and psychological perspective to this by remembering that the money Mnesimachos had received from Artemis, if returned, could have nearly paid for one of the smaller interior columns of the *cella*.

Since this *cella*-only temple could not have been sufficiently complete for religious and civic use, and consequently for the display of carved documents on its walls, before the third quarter of the third century BCE, or even a little later, the carved contract inscription we have could not have been the original one. Indeed, approaching from a technical and epigraphical angle, many scholars, including the late Hasan Malay and Georg Petzl, are agreed in dating this inscription to around 220 BCE. The marble walls of the temple, whose construction from the ground up must have started around 275 BCE, could have advanced to eye-level height by the middle of the century; however, waiting for another decade until the full height of the wall, free of its scaffold, was finished would have made sense.<sup>31</sup>

Scholars who studied the Mnesimachos inscription, following its official publication by William Buckler and David Robinson in 1932, agree upon the basic chronology that can be construed from its incomplete text, especially the two gate-keeper dates separated by nearly a century, *c.* 310 BCE for the original granting of the Sardis estates to Mnesimachos and *c.* 230–220 BCE for the date of the inscription carved inside the west *pronaos* porch of the temple. Of the events in between, little has been explored, reconstructed, or analysed in reference to their chronological sequence and their relationship to Mnesimachos' estimated lifeline. While agreeing to a mid- to late-third-century date for the completion of the original *cella* and *c.* 230–220 for the anta inscription, many scholars, based on a cavalier reading of two passages in Polybius, argued for an additional 'late Hellenistic', or post-214 BCE, phase to the Temple of Artemis, which they designated as the 'new temple' that received the inscription. But there was no 'new temple', no post-214 phase as such – there was only one Hellenistic phase, *c.* 280–220 BCE, which was a *cella*-only building and one Roman Imperial phase, which commenced the peristasis as a pseudo-*dipteros* (a dipteral temple with the inner row of columns omitted) and reconstructed the *cella* for the accommodation of the imperial cult (see below). In these passages,

<sup>31</sup> 'Mnesimachos inscription could not have been carved as early as 300–290 B.C.' (Georg Petzl to Fikret Yegül, 22 September 2014); Buckler and Robinson (n. 2), 1–7, no. 1; Franke (n. 3), 197–8. Supporting the *c.* 220–200 date, see also L. Robert and J. Robert, 'Bulletin épigraphique', *REG* 78 (1952), 173, n. 143; Yegül (n. 4), 163, n. 62.

Polybius (7.15–18 and 8.15–21) describes the siege of Sardis by Antiochos III in 214–213 BCE in a successful effort of taking the city and evicting Achaeus, the usurper of the Seleucid throne.<sup>32</sup> Following uncritically the description of the conquest, destruction, and burning of Sardis, many authors assumed that the temple also suffered major damage and was entirely rebuilt. Yet, the temple is located at a considerable distance from what we know to be the city centre associated with any burning or destruction. More importantly, Polybius makes no mention of the temple let alone its destruction. The assumption that the temple was destroyed and hence required a major rebuilding soon after 214 BCE furnished the justification for neatly joining Sardis and its temple with one of history's 'big events' vindicated by the written word. Making this big event even bigger, it was noted that this was just the time when the great Hermogenes was active in Anatolia inventing the pseudo-dipteral scheme: what would be more fitting than assigning Sardis' pseudo-*dipteros*, grandest of this type, to the master!<sup>33</sup>

Complicating matters and misleading these scholars might have been the identification in 1960s by G. M. A. Hanfmann, then the director of the excavation, of certain destruction evidence in a sector called Pactolus North (then believed to be within the city wall but subsequently shown to be a suburban area) and thus associated with Polybius' story.<sup>34</sup> Later, investigations by Hanfmann himself indicated with little doubt that what was believed to have been the destruction level of Antiochos III '(proved)...to be earlier, and not actually a destruction level at all', nor a part of the inner city. Furthermore, starting in the 1960s and up to our own time, six decades of excavations at the Sanctuary of Artemis and the temple uncovered no traces of burning or destruction, and no archaeological or architectural evidence emerged for the rebuilding of a 'new temple'.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> The list of scholars who followed Polybius asserting that the Temple of Artemis was 'destroyed and rebuilt' along with most of Sardis after the siege of Antiochos (which I call the 'new temple' theory) and a copy of the inscription re-carved on the new temple wall is long and distinguished: Débord (n. 1), 244–7; Descat (n. 3), 97–112; Atkinson (n. 3), 62–4; Billows (n. 3), 143–4; Dignas (n. 1), 71.

<sup>33</sup> Hanfmann (n. 29), 120.

<sup>34</sup> N. D. Cahill, 'Inside Out: Sardis in the Achaemenid and Lysimachean Periods', in Berlin and Kosmin (n. 5), 11–36, esp. 18. See also in the same collection, P. J. Kosmin, 'Remaking A City: Sardis in the Long Third Century', 75–90, esp. 86–7; N. D. Cahill, 'Mapping Sardis', in N. D. Cahill (ed.), *Love for Lydia. A Sardis Anniversary Volume Presented to Crawford H. Greenewald, Jr.* (Cambridge, MA, 2008), 117–21.

<sup>35</sup> Having made over ten deep sondages in the *cella* in 1960–1 and 1972, Hanfmann unequivocally pointed out that 'we have observed no trace of burning in the Hellenistic parts of the Artemis

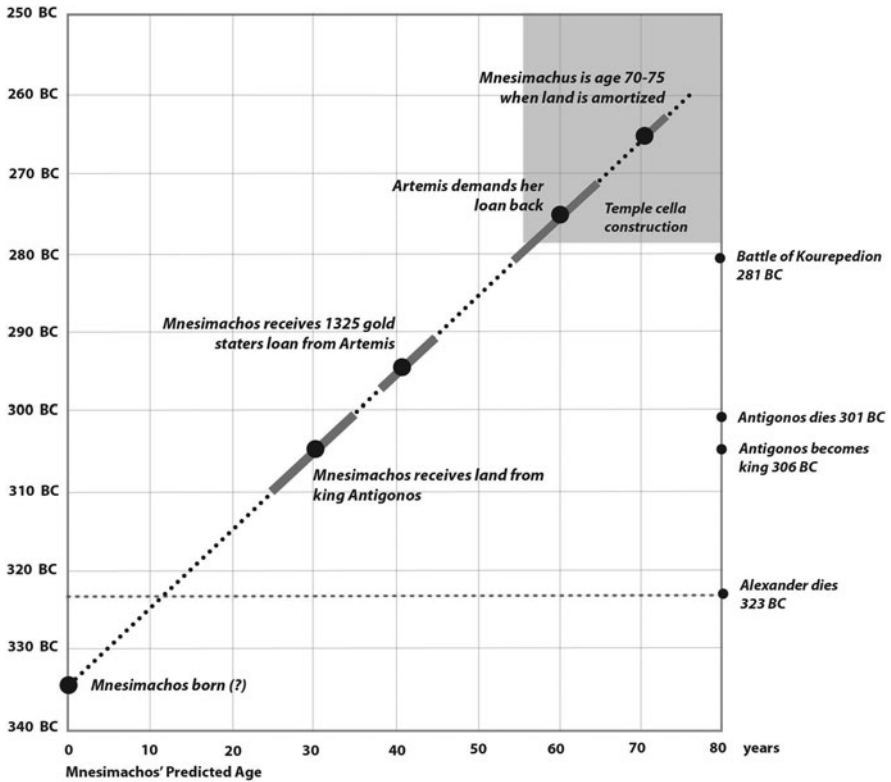


Figure 5. Hypothetical graphic representation of Mnesimachos' life sequence in time scale in relation to the architecture of the Temple of Artemis (author).

Let us return to Mnesimachos and follow the sequence of narrative events that recorded or alluded to his life in the temple inscription (Figure 5). Starting with the working assumption that if Mnesimachos was about thirty years old when Antigonos granted him the estates on the Sardis plane, *c.* 310 BCE, he would have been born around 340 BCE. Kings granted such privileges to prominent and successful members of their communities; Mnesimachos could

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temple'. After an additional seven or eight small sondages undertaken between 2002 and 2012, neither had the group discovered any evidence to support the destruction and the 'new temple' theory. G. M. A. Hanfmann and J. C. Waldbaum, *A Survey of Sardis and Major Monuments Outside the City Walls. Archaeological Exploration of Sardis, Report 1* (Cambridge, MA, 1975), 180–1, n. 44; see also *BASOR* 166 (April 1962), 34–5.

have been a little older, but not much younger. If, as proposed, he waited until his king's death in 301 BCE, or a little later, say, 295 or 290 BCE, before taking on a big loan, he would have been forty-five to fifty years old. He might have kept the loan (and the land) for another fifteen to twenty years, until about 275 BCE because that was when, under the Seleucid rule of King Antiochos I and Queen Stratonike, a semblance of stability was established in Sardis and the exciting project of building a monumental temple to Artemis got underway; and that was, as I suggest, when the ladies, Artemis and Stratonike, needed the money and asked for it back. Mnesimachos had now reached the ripe age of about sixty-five; he would have been alive (because he made the contract with Artemis), but well past the average life expectancy of his times.

At the annual return of about one-tenth profit, which comes to about 116–20 gold staters, it would have taken Mnesimachos some eleven hard-working years to break even or to amortize the loan, i.e. to recover the 1,325 staters the temple wanted from him ( $1,325/116.6 = 11.3$  years). In other words, it would have taken eleven years or so before he started making profit from the estate, *c.* 265 BCE, when he would be about seventy-five years old, an age he might not expect to see; an age, at any rate, too advanced to start profit-seeking initiatives.<sup>36</sup> So, when asked by Artemis to return his loan, the sixty-five year old Mnesimachos would likely have to turn to the goddess and say, no, I have no money, you take the land as per agreement, I keep the cash. Mnesimachos, true to his calling as a shrewd businessman (one need not be particularly 'shrewd' to do the maths), a senior leader of his community, and knowing that, according to the terms spelled out in the financial contract he had made, Artemis could get nothing from him, chose what many businessmen might have done: he kept the capital and bamboozled the goddess.

Yet, as the title-holders of the land, Mnesimachos and his heirs were still fully responsible for the royal estates. The conveyance of the land to Artemis, or any other business deal, would not have changed that responsibility: the land was left to Artemis as a usufruct, not an alienation; it was ultimately owned by the king (by the middle of the

<sup>36</sup> The relative chronologies of Mnesimachos' age and the events involving the temple (as shown in Figure 5) are educated guesses within five to ten year parameters. Still, even if we were to take the lowest possible age options for Mnesimachos, he would have been no less than seventy years old before he could expect profits from reclaiming his land.



third century BCE that king would have been Antiochos II) but, as long as the king did not repossess his land, the title to the estate resided with Mnesimachos and his heirs. That was why it was essential to include all the legal conditions defining the land into a comprehensive contract and to incorporate it into the architecture of the newly completed temple.<sup>37</sup> This could have been *c.* 230–220 BCE, by which time Mnesimachos would have been dead, but not some of his heirs. Mnesimachos would have seen the starting of the construction of the Temple of Artemis but not its completion.

The story of Mnesimachos took us from the end of the fourth century BCE to the beginning of the third, when Artemis's newly completed temple graced the venerable sanctuary as a shining marble box without exterior columns (see [Figure 2](#) top). This is also where the main story ends for us, since there are no further historical records alluding to and illuminating any legal and financial relationship between the Mnesimachos clan and Artemis. We do not know when and if the Seleucid kings of Asia Minor decided to retrieve their royal estates from Mnesimachos' heirs or if this relationship continued all the way to, say, the Peace of Apamea, in 188 BCE, when Antiochos III and the Seleucid dynasty abandoned all western Asia Minor (and Sardis, of course) to the rule of Eumenes of Pergamon, a Roman ally. For the next piece of clear information on the subject we have to wait for some 350 years or so: the major rebuilding of the temple as a pseudo-*dipteros* under Roman rule when the Mnesimachos inscription on the temple anta wall was obliterated – the contract and its content obviously having lost all its real and legal significance. Under the Roman Imperial system, kings and the granting of kingly estates to prominent local individuals in this part of the world were, ordinarily, no more.

Going back to a time when kings were shaping the Anatolian landscape, and King Antigonos Monophthalmos was granting an estate to Mnesimachos, may be an appropriate moment to pause and look at the larger picture surrounding this prominent Sardian and his estate. The issue we wish to consider here, one that occupies a central position in the scholarly discourse going back to Buckler and Robinson (1912 and 1932), is how much we can view the conditions documented in the Mnesimachos inscription as a product of Achaemenid legal and

<sup>37</sup> See also n. 27 and Figures 1, 2, and 3.

administrative systems as opposed to Macedonian/Hellenistic ones.<sup>38</sup> The estate was granted by a Macedonian king a quarter of a century after Alexander the Great ended the Achaemenid rule in Asia Minor. Yet, spearheaded by Pierre Briant, a leading scholar of Achaemenid history and civilization, the many scholars who looked at the Mnesimachos inscription viewed it as a document reflecting land tenure and taxation traditions of the Achaemenid system still in place early in the fourth century BCE when Antigonos gave the land to Mnesimachos. This argument for the continuity of stable and effective administrative systems, which probably went back to the distant Lydian past of Sardis, makes practical and technical sense.<sup>39</sup> Neither the Achaemenid interest in the countryside as a reliable agricultural base for taxation nor the Achaemenid technical expertise in surveying, measuring, and registering this land needs reiteration. The use and continuity of such technical systems through successive regimes would have been not only convenient but necessary. One only has to remember that the late Ottoman cadastral system (also admired for its thoroughness) was in use well into the Republican period in Turkey; pragmatism often trumps ideology.

There is a broadly shared agreement that the Achaemenid rulers of Sardis were, in general, lenient and distant, allowing many of the Golden City's vanquished denizens to follow their ways as long as they were subservient to the satrapal authority and paid taxes to the Great King. However, much also depends on who is *doing* the modern scholarly asking, an exaggerated assessment of one's own speciality being normal. Even a scholar of Briant's caliber, who knows and cares about the wide reach of the subject he specializes in, arrived at his sophisticated interpretations of Achaemenid presence at Sardis and western Anatolia through a detailed and labyrinthine parsing of the epigraphical and literary evidence, but with little of the evidence from

<sup>38</sup> Viewing the differences between the economies of the Achaemenid and Hellenistic worlds, R. Boehm argues that the Macedonian/Seleucid taxation system was largely aimed at benefiting the city and its civic institutions, unlike the Achaemenid system which tended to funnel the land tributes to royal treasuries; the growing monetary economy of markets encouraged the development of cities under the Seleucids. See Boehm (n. 3), 105–20. On the importance of cities in the development of fiscal systems based on royal and civic lands and markets, also see Bresson (n. 1), 110–17, 286–305. For a comparative overview of Persian and Seleucid approaches to the valuation and taxation of land, see Monson (n. 20), 170–4.

<sup>39</sup> On the Lydian origins of agricultural and military allotments of land, farmsteads, and gardens, see C. H. Roosevelt, 'The Inhabited Landscapes of Lydia', in Berlin and Kosmin (n. 5), 151–2; C. H. Roosevelt, *The Archaeology of Lydia from Gyges to Alexander* (Cambridge, 2012), 113–15. See also N. V. Sekunda, 'Achaemenid Colonization in Lydia', *REA* 87 (1985), 7–29.

the built world – and little tolerance for opinions opposed to his own.<sup>40</sup> Operating at a more theoretical level, Briant's assessment of the dominant Western view of Greek-Macedonian achievement (and its undue emphasis of Alexander the Great as its most prominent icon) as a construct of Western colonialism and a form of 're-Europeanization' of eastern Mediterranean cultures carries the weight of a powerful intellectual warning.<sup>41</sup> Nonetheless, the sophisticated formula of 'authority' (central and benevolent) and 'autonomy' (peripheral and about individuals and their freedom), presented as the firm and kindly model of the Achaemenid presence in Anatolia, appears to be a construct in need of filling by something more substantive than Achaemenid hegemonic style in luxury goods, behaviour, and manners shared (and imitated) by the notables of Sardis, Persian or Lydian alike.<sup>42</sup> It is highly likely, however, that it was the Achaemenid notables, not the native Sardians, who owned the estates on the fertile Hermus plain until they were taken away from them by Alexander and his followers. A notable Sardian, like Mnesimachos, had to wait until a Macedonian king identified him worthy of trust for an (ultimately self-serving) benefaction.

The half-century or so between Alexander's standing on the acropolis of Sardis in 334 BCE (Arrian, *Anabasis* 1.17.3–6) and watching the spectacular but neglected Golden City he had 'liberated' (certainly conquered) and that city's spectacular urban revival under Seleucid rule must have been a period of transition (and strife) when the city's famously diverse ethnic population followed diverse systems in town and country and strove to accommodate the changing interests of

<sup>40</sup> Some of Briant's valuable essays on the Achaemenid Empire have been translated into English by A. Kuhrt (n. 22). Among this rich collection, the following are most directly relevant to our subject: 'From the Achaemenids to the Hellenistic Rulers: Continuities and Changes', 429–58 (originally published in 1979); 'Alexander in Sardis', 499–517, esp. 506–15 (originally published in 1993); 'Asia Minor in Transition', 556–89, esp. 578–82 (originally published in 2006). An indefatigable fighter for the enduring presence and importance of the Iranian/Near Eastern cultural component in Anatolia and taking no prisoners (see especially contra Billows 'Asia Minor in Transition', 579–82), Briant nevertheless ends his occasional polemical stance with a generosity and common sense we can all applaud: '...Any study [of the lands Alexander left behind in western Asia Minor and Sardis] must combine the Achaemenid heritage, Macedonian traditions and Hellenistic innovations and try both to give each other proper weight and understand the mechanisms of mutual encounters and interactions' (p. 582). Recently, pointing to the similarities but also important structural differences between the Persian and Hellenistic taxation principles, Monson has touched the 'revisionist' tendencies seen in Briant, Descat, Aperghis, and others. Monson (n. 20), 174–5; see also n. 20.

<sup>41</sup> Briant (2006) in Kuhrt (n. 22), 578–9.

<sup>42</sup> E. R. Dusinberre, *Empire, Authority and Autonomy in the Achaemenid Anatolia* (Cambridge, 2013), esp. 266–71. See also 'Sealstones from Sardis, Dascylium, and Gordion', in Berlin and Kosmin (n. 5), 37–43.

political power play at their doorsteps. Although considerable work has been done to illustrate the mutual validity of these closely related systems, Achaemenid and Seleucid, the scholarly discussion remained at a narrowly defined technical sphere (does it really matter if the tax base was calculated following the one-twelfth Achaemenid standard or one-tenth Seleucid tithes?). The big picture was never there: the nature of Persian/Achaemenid culture in Sardis during and after the two centuries of rule was never asked in reference to the bigger, material world Mnesimachos lived in. There is a lot about taxation systems and tribute denominations; alienations or usufructs of royal lands under slightly different regimes; about the admirable if confounding syncretism of cult and religion; about table wares and table manners inspired by the Iranian elite – but little about the city, its fortifications, thoroughfares, plazas, neighbourhoods, civic buildings, shrines, and institutions. A researcher would be hard put to find a single civic institution (an agora, gymnasium, theatre, a city gate) mentioned in the text or included in the index of most Sardis–Mnesimachos related publications of the last half-century let alone a substantive discussion of such architecture and urbanism as agents of acculturation and tax base.

This may be partly due to the natural bias of some historians whose primary interest and expertise gives precedence to the written word over physical evidence, but I suspect the main reason was simply the scarcity of physical evidence. Baldly put, little of the urban fabric of Sardis was known until recently. It is interesting that most of the last half-century's scholarship on Sardis relied as primary source on a remarkable synthetic study by Hanfmann published in 1983 summing up of the first quarter century or so of research and excavation.<sup>43</sup> This broadly conceived and chronologically ordered interdisciplinary work dealing with the history, topography, culture, art, architecture, cult, and religion of Sardis and greater Lydia is indeed impressive and authoritative – and on many subjects, such as the syncretic religious life of Sardis, still irreplaceable. However, there is little of the urban shape of the Lydian, Achaemenid, and Hellenistic city, because it was simply not known, or what was known or surmised turned out to be wrong: we did not know which side of the thick Lydian fortifications the city lay until the very end of 1990s! Now may be a special moment in the creation of the next chapter for an evidence-based synthetic look

<sup>43</sup> See n. 29.

the Achaemenid-Hellenistic phase at Sardis following that of Hanfmann of some forty years ago. Starting as a site seminar with the participation and contribution of more than a dozen interdisciplinary scholars ('The Sardis Project', 2014–17) and incorporating the results of the last two decades of intense fieldwork (including the temple), the collection of essays published in 2019 can be seen as the new seminal study offering a cautious, up-to-date insight to the big picture. 'The Sardis Project' presents a critical and comprehensive view of Sardis between the Achaemenid conquest and the Roman dominion following the Peace of Apamea, in 188 BCE.<sup>44</sup> In terms of our understanding of the main lines of the city's urban culture, history, and architecture, it has been a dramatic revelation and a 'cautious re-evaluation' that is still continuing with each year of excavation.<sup>45</sup> We will summarize these main lines below.

The conquest of Sardis in 547 BCE by Cyrus the Great effected not just the complete burning and destruction of Croesus' city but its demotion from the capital of an empire to an unremarkable military and satrapal station in the Achaemenid administrative network of Anatolia. The Lydian fortifications were largely destroyed, including the impressive masonry-clad west gate of the city, demolishing in the process the main east–west thoroughfare that must have been the urban heart of Sardis, not to be revived before the Hellenistic period. The city within the walls was abandoned, replaced by modest extra-urban settlements along the Pactolus stream valley. This must have been the wasted Sardis of 499 BCE on the eve of the Ionian Revolt described by Herodotus as a hovel of mudbrick and reed houses with thatch roofs (5.101). Lydian terraces of monumental ashlar construction that graced the privileged higher northern slopes of the acropolis and supported palaces, mansions, and gardens were abandoned and demolished, bearing no trace of being occupied or enjoyed by any group until the Seleucids appeared on the scene. Where was the mixed society of Achaemenid and Lydian elites that kept the urban flame of Sardis alive? Where was 'the Persian palace of Cyrus, or his satrap, or... "maybe an apadana"'? The complete de-urbanization of the Lydian city is summed up by Cahill: 'I would... argue that the Persian period represented a profound discontinuity in the urban history

<sup>44</sup> Berlin and Kosmin (n. 5). Briant's misgiving about the 'absence of a synthesis on the Achaemenid-Hellenistic phase in Anatolian archaeology...' has been, at least as far as Sardis is concerned, largely alleviated. See Briant (2006) in Kuhrt (n. 22), 558.

<sup>45</sup> Cahill, 'Inside Out', in Berlin and Kosmin (n. 5), 11–36.



of Sardis.<sup>46</sup> It is true that the suburban Sanctuary of Artemis retained its sanctity by incorporating new and Iranian-inspired cults and deities; the core of the monumental altar to the goddess also appears to be an Achaemenid contribution – but it was the Seleucid rulers, particularly a Seleucid queen, not Achaemenid satraps, who added one of the grandest and finest of Ionic temples of the classical world to the sanctuary within the first half-century of their rule.<sup>47</sup>

Our new archaeological evidence has made it fairly clear that the crucial turning point in Sardis's later first-millennium history, the major *metabolē* between the Achaemenid conquest and the dominance of Rome, can be placed in the second quarter of the third century. That is to say it was during the independent rule of Antiochus I (281–261) [and I would add 'his extraordinary Queen Stratonike'] that...Sardis enjoyed an urban transformation...the revitalization and reinhabitation of the old city, and new, massive public constructions of a polis type

is how P. Kosmin put it in his study of Hellenistic Sardis where he demonstrated that the de-urbanization of Sardis under the two centuries of Achaemenid rule was reversed along a trajectory that might have begun with Alexander, but achieved reality and momentum under the Seleucids following 281 BCE.<sup>48</sup> Primary monuments of Seleucid urbanism included a gymnasium, a theatre (possibly making an architectural complex with a stadium), stoas with workshops and shops, and an agora. A rich collection of terracotta Kybele figurines found beneath the cavea of the Hellenistic theatre, all displaying a mature Hellenistic style and iconography, indicates the presence of a centre-city Kybele sanctuary by early or mid-third century BCE.<sup>49</sup> Few existing studies of Mnesimachos' Sardis take into account how the rich urban renaissance of the early third century would have affected the tax revenue of the city, making it an urban powerhouse vis à vis the countryside. Urban building, urban culture, and urban wealth go hand in hand.<sup>50</sup> Recent and continuing archaeological exploration illustrates the vigorous nature of third-century urbanism and the revival of the monumental terrace structures on the northern slopes of the

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 23. On the extra-mural settlements in the Pactolus River valley, see W. Bruce, 'Spotlight: Life Outside the Walls before the Seleucids', in Berlin and Kosmin (n. 5), 22, 44–9.

<sup>47</sup> F. Yegül, 'The Temple of Artemis', in Berlin and Kosmin (n. 5), 132–8.

<sup>48</sup> For a strong, evidence-based argument of how Sardis embraced Hellenistic political and cultural standards and institutions during the long third century, see Kosmin in Berlin and Kosmin (n. 5), 34, 75–90, for the quote, 78.

<sup>49</sup> Frances Gallart Marqués, 'A Clay Kybele in the City Center', in Berlin and Kosmin (n. 5), 120–31.

<sup>50</sup> On cities as engines of consumption, production, and market economy creating wealth in the Seleucid-Hellenistic period, see Boehm (n. 3), 105–20, esp. 105–12.

acropolis (sectors Byz Fort and Field 49); this historically elite residential area, going back to the Lydian period (and currently under excavation), was rebuilt under the Seleucids after centuries of neglect.<sup>51</sup> Whether and when Sardis had assumed the official title of a Greek *polis* seems irrelevant for what we are trying to understand, although the evidence for this distinction points to the last quarter of the third century – an appropriate civic honour in harmony with the completion of the great Temple of Artemis.<sup>52</sup> What seems to be relevant is that throughout the long third century Sardis ‘projected some compelling aspects of a typical Greek city’.<sup>53</sup>

The long neglect the city endured under its Achaemenid rulers should not be a reason to brand them as rude colonists untutored in urban culture; their great cities and monuments in their eastern home deflates such an argument, although colonial masters they were. The explanation may be found in their political aims and colonial worldview concerning their presence in Sardis and western Asia Minor. The Achaemenids did not build (or retain) urban thoroughfares with shops, palaces, and temples in Sardis because they did not want to: Sardis for them was primarily a fortress, a frontier military post, a garrison, lastly a city.<sup>54</sup> There was no satrapal residence built over Croesus’ palace because the satrap, as a military commander, belonged to the formidable acropolis. The vanquished city centre and city economy could no longer be conceived as a tribute source for the Great King. The country could and was. And it is in those great country estates, like the one Mnesimachos had, that the Achaemenid notables, landowners, must have lived in manor houses, and entertained (with Achaemenid silverware and silver manners), and died and been buried in the kingly tumuli of Bin Tepe, the cemetery of the Lydian nobles and kings in the plain. It was these landed estates (inherited from the Lydians) that generated wealth for the king. They were therefore carefully surveyed and measured; their due revenue calculated following precise

<sup>51</sup> Cahill (n. 45), 29–33.

<sup>52</sup> P. Gauthier, *Nouvelles inscriptions de Sardes II. Hautes études du monde gréco-romaine* (Geneva, 1989), 151–70. See also C. Ratté, ‘Reflections on the Urban Development of Hellenistic Sardis’, in Cahill (n. 34 [2008]), 125–33, esp. 129.

<sup>53</sup> P. Stinson, ‘The Hellenistic City Plan: Looking Forward Looking Back’, in Berlin and Kosmin (n. 5), 139–42, esp. 140.

<sup>54</sup> A fourth-century Aramaic-Lydian inscription refers to Sardis as a *byrt*, a fortress, a distinction found in other Achaemenid documents, although, as Briant points out, the word does not necessarily mean that the settlement ‘consists of nothing but a citadel and garrison’: Briant (1993) in Kuhrt (n. 22), 510.

formulas, and their taxes duly gathered by military *chiliarches*. The early Hellenistic rulers inherited from their Achaemenid predecessors this technical, formulaic, and pragmatic expertise, not the principles and philosophies of taxation nor the forms and constructs of urbanism. For the latter the Achaemenid models were not available; the Western ones, such as they were, were. Whether we call it a Western, ‘re-Europeanized’ view or not, starting from Seleucid rulers and continuing on to the imperial ones in Rome, for urban paradigms Sardians looked to the classical cities of the West as their city’s aspirations were smoothly transformed from the dreams of a Greek *polis* to the pride of a Roman metropolis and neokorate.

The Roman phase of the temple was occasioned by the granting of Sardis its second neokorate privilege when Hadrian and Sabina visited the city in 124 CE. Instead of building a new and lavish imperial cult temple – the usual practice – the cult was housed in Artemis’ temple. This was perhaps fundamentally an economic decision that also created the opportunity to finish the goddess’s long-unfinished temple (Figures 1, 2 bottom). With the addition of the peristyle (the colonnade surrounding the temple), the Hellenistic *cella* emerged as a glorious but unorthodox pseudo-*dipteros* under Hadrian. In order to accommodate the imperial gods, the *cella* was divided into two back-to-back chambers whose westward extension partially covered the inscription. Artemis stayed in the west-facing *cella* and the imperial cult with its six or eight colossal imperial statues (their iconic heads all found in or near the temple) occupied the east *cella*, making a very rare arrangement not unlike Hadrian’s Temple of Venus and Roma in Rome. The east end columns facing the imperial cult chamber were largely finished, but ironically the west, Artemis’s side, remained, with the exception of the six-column *pronaos* porch, undone. The city’s love of and respect for its venerable goddess clearly was no impediment for its sense of duty towards a master with deep pockets and twenty-eight legions.<sup>55</sup>

Although the religious history of the Sanctuary of Artemis during the long period between Mnesimachos and the rebuilding of the temple as a double-cult shrine under Hadrian is well documented by many honorific and votive inscriptions, none refer to any financial activity at the temple per se. It is unlikely that there was none. Roman temples retained, even expanded, the range of banking and financial activities

<sup>55</sup> On the Roman phase of the temple as an unorthodox pseudo-*dipteros*: Yegül (n. 4), 225–7, 236–44; on the Hadrianic connection and imperial cult in the temple, 193–9, 215–17, 220–3.

associated with Greek temples, including owning and managing capital assets.<sup>56</sup> Already a major financial institution under the Hellenistic kings, it is natural that the great temple at Sardis also retained its position under the Roman rule. Unlike the rich record of euergetism at centres like Aphrodisias and Euromos, both in Caria, there is no indication of major civic gifts to the Sardis temple during its great Roman rebuilding. Perhaps it was not that the citizens of Sardis were stingy, but that their temple did not need or encourage private donors because it possessed a lucrative financial house and investment base. This hypothesis is supported by an important and unusual record of economic independence and self-identification from the temple in the form of a business-minded talking column.<sup>57</sup> The fourth column of the east front (on the north side of the centre axis) bears an inscription in Greek that circles its bottom, declaring or boasting in the first-person that of all the columns of the temple ‘I was the first to rise’ (Figure 2). Based on epigraphic style and literary content, the inscription is judged to be of the mid-second century, thus confirming the Hadrianic date for the neokorate and the Roman phase of the building. More to our concern, however, the column further proudly informs the passerby: ‘My torus and my foundation block are carved from a single block of stone, given not by the people (*demos*) but by the house (*oikos*) of the temple’. If not given by individuals, what was the ‘house’ of the temple? Scholarly opinion, including from my conversations with Peter Herrmann, Georg Petzl, Hasan Malay, and Angelos Chaniotis, are united in believing that the column was almost certainly paid for by the temple itself and not by an individual; it was given by the ‘house of the temple’, meaning it was furnished by the temple’s own financial establishment, not by the people/*demos* of Sardis. The inscription was probably referring to the extensive marble quarries (located just 2.5 km south of the sanctuary) that provided almost all of the marble for the temple, a major asset that must have been owned by the sanctuary from the beginning.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Andreau (n. 1); S. Reden, ‘Money and Finance’, in W. Scheidel (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Economy* (Cambridge, 2012), 266–86; Dignas (n. 1), 54; B. Bromberg, ‘Temple Banking in Rome’, *The Economic History Review* 10.2 (1940), 128–31.

<sup>57</sup> Buckler and Robinson (n. 2), no. 181, 143–4. For a study of this inscription as a ‘talking column’, see F. K. Yegül, ‘A Victor’s Message: The Talking Column of the Temple of Artemis at Sardis’, *JSAH* 73 (2014), 204–25; Yegül (n. 4), 189–93.

<sup>58</sup> Yegül (n. 4), 193, 189–90, nn. 168, 169. See also N. D. Cahill and L. Lazzarini, ‘The Quarries of the Magara Deresi and the Marble of the Temple of Artemis at Sardis’, *Marmora* 10 (2014), 36–7.

So, while Mnesimachos must be judged quite crafty in tricking the goddess, some 400 years later in the economic world created under Roman rule in Asia Minor, Artemis and her *oikos* appear alive and well as a religious and economic powerhouse.

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