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CURRENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH ON SETTLEMENT AND PROVINCIAL LIFE IN THE BYZANTINE AND OTTOMAN AEGEAN: A CASE-STUDY FROM BOEOTIA, GREECE

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Introduction

During the late 1970s in Greece – on the eve of the era of Intensive Surface Survey – new questions and new research methods developed aiming to examine rural landscapes and regional settlement histories with the blending of a wider range of disciplines. The first synthetic results and conclusions primarily concerned the prehistoric period and Greco-Roman antiquity, with very little or no focus on the medieval and post-medieval eras. With the development and mushrooming of regional surface survey projects in the Aegean in the late 1980s and 1990s and the refinement of surface and subsurface exploration by means of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and Geoprospection Mapping, remains of the medieval (or Byzantine and Frankish) and post-medieval (or Ottoman) periods started to gain the higher profile they deserve.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss recent archaeological evidence about settlement and village-life throughout the Greek Middle Ages, during the Early and Middle Byzantine (late 7th – early 13th), Late Byzantine or Frankish (early 13th – middle 15th) and early Ottoman eras (late 15th – 17th) in the Aegean. The paper draws on the 'Ancient Cities of Boeotia Intensive Survey Project' carried out in the region of Tanagra in Boeotia, central Greece (Fig. 1), by Rijksuniversiteit Leiden in the Netherlands, and with which the author has been involved since 2000 (Vionis 2004–5, 2006).

The ongoing 'Ancient Cities of Boeotia Project', which began its systematic Survey Programme at the site of the ancient city of Tanagra and its surrounding territory in 2000 (led by Prof. J.L. Bintliff, Leiden University), aims at the detailed examination of past human activity at the ancient city and its immediate countryside (Bintliff *et al*. 2004, 2004–5). Surface survey in the immediate territory of Tanagra (henceforth Tanagrike) has revealed the remains of a number of deserted villages dated to the Byzantine, Frankish and early Ottoman periods (Vionis 2006: 784), granting the project the potential to further investigate and interpret the material culture of this period in the area, in an attempt to provide a complete and more detailed picture of regional settlement history and rural/domestic life.

Project aims and methodology

Archaeological field survey

The first site to be investigated by means of a complete surface survey by the 'Ancient Cities of Boeotia Project' was the ancient city of Tanagra in Eastern Boeotia. Work on the site started in 2000 with recording by a variety of scientific means of traces and surface remains such as domestic structures, public buildings, temples and roads within the 4th century B.C. city walls (Fig. 2). The method undertaken in order to trace human activity in the ancient city (approximately 30 hectares in size) from prehistory to the latest occupation is intensive surface artefact survey (led by Prof. J. L. Bintliff and Dr. K. Sbonias). That involves the layout of a regular grid across the surface, counting the total density of potsherds on the ground and the collection of a sample of ceramics from each grid square (50 by 50 metres) for dating and analysing the functional dimension of each city quadrant at each phase of occupation (Bintliff 2000; Bintliff *et al.* 2000, 2001).

In parallel, the detailed Total Station Topographic Survey of the city by a Leiden University team (initiated by E. Farinetti and E. Sigalos) aims at the precise mapping of the surface architectural features that can still be identified and the reconstruction of the city's topography by means of GIS. This is accomplished by taking detailed measurements at regular (1–5 m) intervals using a total station device. This was the method that revealed the site of Bardzi (i.e. the group of four linked end-to-end long-houses) dated in the Ottoman period towards the west ridge of the ancient acropolis within the city walls (Fig. 3). Moreover, a team from Ljubljana University in Slovenia (led by Prof. B. Slapsak) is carrying out geoprospection mapping, employing geophysical devices in order to acquire evidence for subsurface architectural and sedimentary structures within the ancient city walls of Tanagra.

Results concerning rural activity attested by both dense and vestigial surface artefacts (mainly broken pieces of pottery) interpreted as villages, hamlets, family farms, villas, rural cemeteries and sanctuaries have derived from extramural surface field-walking at all directions out from the city wall. The aim is to identify loci of intensive extramural activity of all forms in the Tanagrike, by field-walking transects or long strips of 100–200 m width out from the city to the west, east, north and south for distances between 1 km and 2 km (Fig. 4). Surface pottery densities within these transects are recorded using manual counters by a group of field walkers spaced at equal distances from each other, also noting surface visibility, vegetation and any special features. This method has revealed densities of surface finds of all periods; some important medieval village and hamlet sites have so far been identified, such as Agios Thomas (TS5), Agia Aikaterini (TS15), Kastri (TS18) and Agios Polykarpos (TS21), dated between the 11th and mid 14th

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Figure 1 Map of the province of Boeotia in central Greece, with the region of Tanagra to the east.

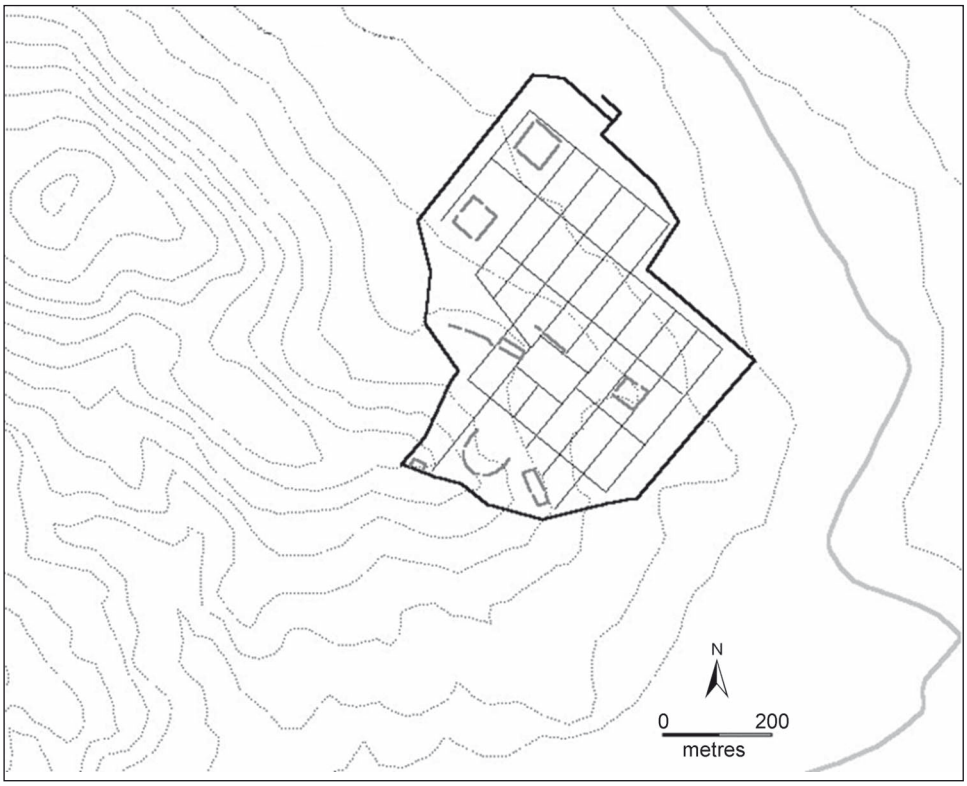

Figure 2 The ancient city of Tanagra (with visible ancient ruins) and its topographical situation.

centuries (Fig. 5). Although extramural transects were walked up to 2 km, extended survey on surrounding prominent hills indicating important sites was undertaken during the 2002–5 field seasons, especially to the south and southeast as continuous extensions of the south and east transects respectively. Indeed, more Byzantine village-sites were discovered (Kleidi, Agios Dimitrios, Agios Nikolaos, Agia Anna), together with the deserted Ottoman çiftlik estate of Guinosati (Fig. 5) on a fertile upland valley southeast of Tanagra (Vionis 2006: 785).

Architectural building survey

Apart from the immense and most vital contribution of archaeological surface field-survey to the study of post-Classical Greece, the more 'traditional' way of examining traces of past human activity remains the standing building evidence. Remaining medieval and post-medieval monuments in Boeotia, still providing evidence from above (rather than below) ground, however, are primary sources of information to be combined with textual/historical or other references. Our predecessor 'Durham-Cambridge Boeotia Project' (directed by Prof. J. L. Bintliff and Prof. A. M. Snodgrass) has already employed such research methods in the past. The British historian Dr. P. Lock (1986; 1996), for instance, has studied the surviving feudal towers of Boeotia and Euboea dated in the 13th–15th centuries; similarly, N. Stedman (1996), Prof. F. Aalen (Aalen *et al.* 1999) and more recently Dr. E. Sigalos (2004) have examined standing examples of the

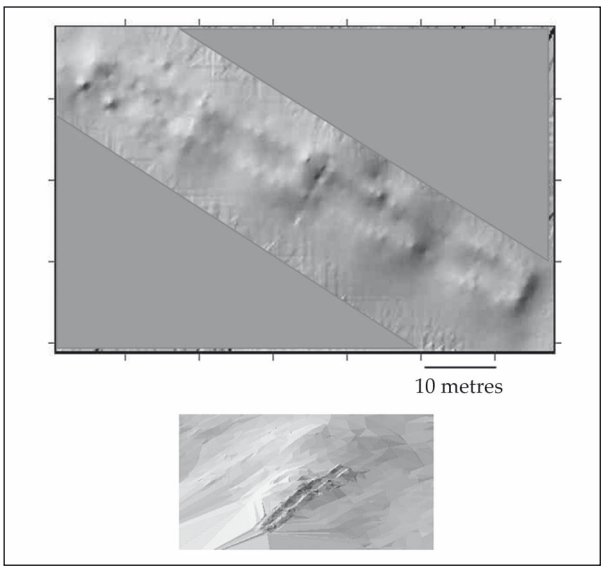

Figure 3 3D view of the long-houses at the site of Bardzi on the acropolis hill of ancient Tanagra (by E. Farinetti).

traditional long-house in most regions of Boeotia. During the course of our ongoing project, the Byzantine (10th–14th centuries) village site of Agios Thomas (TS5), approximately 1.5 ha in size, was identified at the end of the eastern extramural transect by the presence of a dense cluster of surface potsherds around a middle Byzantine church dedicated to St. Thomas. Bibliographical research has revealed that the church was constructed in the mid 12th century and converted into a Frankish feudal tower with chapel in the 14th century (Fig. 6). Thus, the architectural study of this monumental country church has confirmed not only our dated ceramic evidence but also the general pattern of old Byzantine villages being taken into close control by incoming Frankish minor lords in the 14th century (Simatou and Christodoulopoulou 1993; Bintliff *et al.* 2001).

Our building survey includes also the study of vernacular architecture in the region. Sites dated to the post-medieval (or Ottoman) period preserve remains of housing, the study of which can be supplemented by more substantial comparative examples of domestic architecture and literary sources of all kinds in order to trace the inhabitants' life-ways and living standards (Vionis 2006: 785). It is worth noting that the predominant house-type in both Greek and Albanian settlements of the region during the Ottoman period was the typical stone long-house (Fig. 7), with animals and humans sharing the same room: one half of the house was occupied by the livestock, the other half by the family. Geographical, climatic and economic factors determined house construction; in the plains single storey long-houses were mainly constructed of mud-brick and had thatched roofs, while in other areas long-houses were built of roughly cut local limestone, which was in cases mortared with mud, and had tiled roofs (Dimitsantou-Kremezi 1986; Stedman 1996; Bintliff 1997, 2001; Sigalos 2004).

Textual sources

The accounts of foreign (mainly European) travellers who visited Greece and other parts of the Ottoman

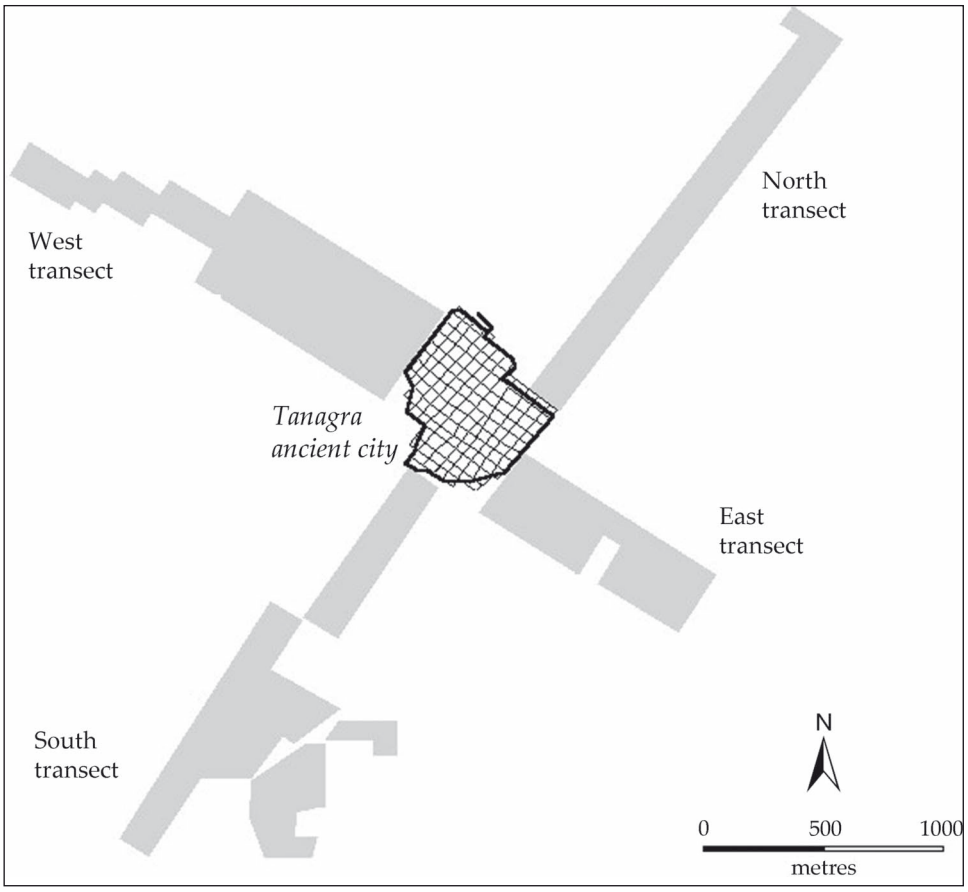

Figure 4 Extramural transects in the immediate countryside of ancient Tanagra.

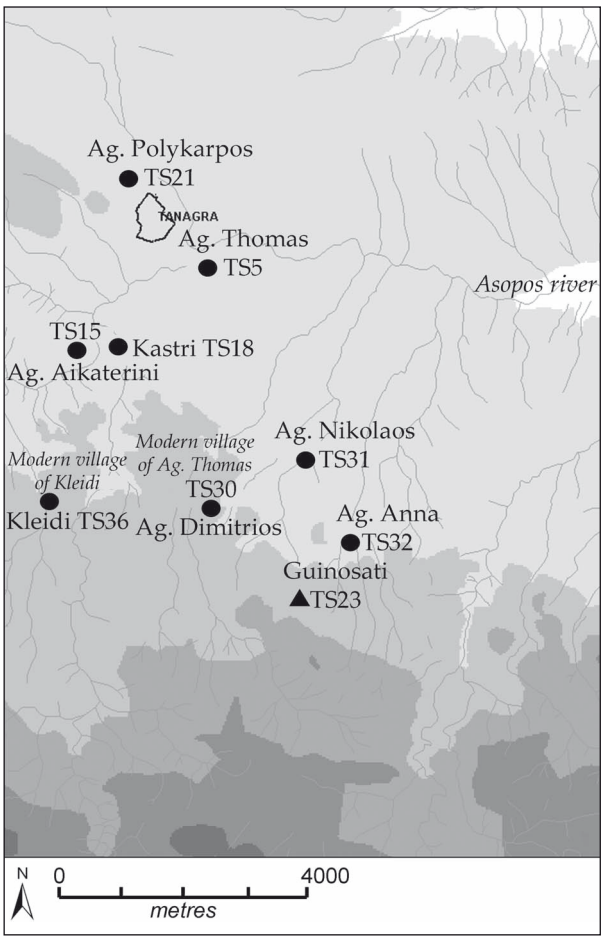

Figure 5 Map of the Tanagrike with identified extramural settlement-sites.

Empire are themselves a gold-mine of information concerning their contemporary state of affairs, especially in cases where any other type of written records are not accessible or simply lacking. One of the main interests of travellers who passed through Greece was the discovery and description of archaeological sites and the collection of Classical antiquities. Most importantly, descriptions and illustrative material published by travellers from the middle of the 16th to the late 19th

Figure 6 The middle Byzantine church of Agios Thomas (site TS5).

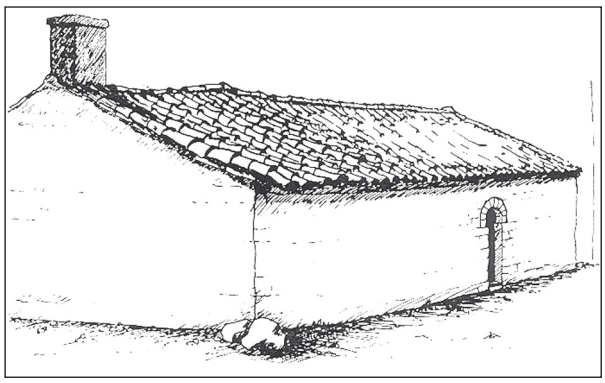

Figure 7 Example of a stone long-house from Boeotia (from Stedman 1996, Fig. 2).

centuries satisfied Western Europeans' avid thirst for knowledge of the Ottomans' customs, administrative and economic systems, as well as the behaviour, beliefs and everyday lives of the peoples who inhabited the Empire. Travellers' accounts in some cases further supply our project in central Greece with information about the location of existing or deserted settlements, house-types and their furnished interiors.

The detailed fiscal records from the Ottoman Imperial Archives for the 15th–18th centuries (translated and kindly provided to us by the Project Ottomanist Prof. M. Kiel) are undoubtedly the greatest input into the exploration and interpretation of Ottoman material remains in the Boeotian countryside. Both deserted çiftlik-estates discovered by our ongoing 'Ancient Cities of Boeotia Project' in the Tanagrike are included in the Imperial census lists of the *kaza* district of Thebes in the *sancak* or province of Eurippos/Egriboz. Guinosati (TS23) or *Kipos/Kinos Bala* is listed in the tax records for the years 1466, 1506, 1521, 1540, 1570 and 1646, while the group of Ottoman long-houses in the ancient Tanagra city site must be identified with one of the *Bardzi* villages listed for the years between 1506/1521 and 1570 (Vionis 2006: 786).

Old maps and pictorial evidence

The Ottoman census records (providing detailed lists of village names) and 19th century European military maps of Greece (retaining precise historical–geographical information with old village names) can prove a unique combination of data for the identification and location of documented deserted villages. This is a well-tested and well-proved method, initiated by the 'Durham-Cambridge Boeotia Project' in the past with remarkable results: 75% or more of the archive villages of Boeotia have been located, surveyed and studied (Kiel 1990, 1992, 1997; Bintliff 1995, 1997, 2001). The deserted çiftlik site, known as Guinosati today, can be identified with the ruined village of *Guinosi*, shown on the *Carte de la Grèce* of 1852 and the village of *Kipos* or *Kinos Bala* appearing in the Ottoman census lists.

Pictorial evidence, on the other hand, in the form of illustrative material published by foreign travellers, as well as religious icons and frescoes in Greek-Orthodox churches have proved very enlightening concerning aspects of domestic material culture and life. There is a considerable quantity of travellers' drawings, providing

Figure 8 Painting of a 19th-century peasant household by Stackelberg (from Dimitsantou-Kremezi 1986, Fig. 49).

scenes of rural life in remarkable detail, such as settlement settings, peoples' costumes, house interiors, culinary practices and dining habits in many regions of the Ottoman Empire, which can prove very useful when used with caution (Bintliff 2000: 49; Vionis 2003: 202–4, 2006: 786). The arrangement of houses across villages in Ottoman Greece depicted in travellers' representations provide good evidence for the reconstruction of settlement layout and the study of domestic life in the Ottoman countryside (Fig. 8) (Dodwell 1819; Dimitsantou-Kremezi 1986; Vionis 2006: 786). Moreover, ecclesiastical art, such as church frescoes and icons, provide evidence for dining habits, cooking and eating vessels, sometimes determining pottery shape and function: one has to examine such matters critically, however, as Byzantine artists were in some cases not depicting contemporary everyday reality but copying earlier originals or depicting artistic influences from the Islamic East and the Catholic West (Mango 1981: 50–1; Bakirtzis 1989: 129; Parani 2003: 218–20; Vionis 2006: 786).

Medieval and post-medieval surface survey pottery

The most important factors that solve many problems in dating medieval and post-medieval ceramic wares collected by surface surveys are undoubtedly the quantity, but most of all, the quality of the pottery, its state of preservation and its variety of diagnostic table-wares and imports. The 'Ancient Cities of Boeotia Project' aims at the finer chronology of post-Roman sites and their associated surface pottery, with its statistical, social and functional analysis. This is accomplished by a number of methods, as discussed below.

At first, the basic problem for dating post-Roman surface ceramics was solved by the so-called 'horizontal chronology', a method employed for the assemblages from the 'Durham-Cambridge Boeotia Project' by its directors Prof. J. L. Bintliff and Prof. A. M. Snodgrass (also tested on ceramic finds from a number of other archaeological survey projects in Greece). This method essentially relies on the fact that whenever a settlement-site is found from which the pottery includes datable fine or imported wares from a single historical period, a hypothesis is made that associated coarse/domestic pottery might be dated within the same period-range (Bintliff 1997, 2000; Vroom 2003). The success of this method was further aided by the fortunate incident that rural Boeotia has yielded many single-period medieval sites with well-defined chronological boundaries (Fig. 9). Consequently, this method is always continuously tested against excavated material from stratified contexts; ongoing rescue excavations in the neighbouring town of Thebes in Boeotia keeps providing excellent parallels to surface material from our rural sites in the Tanagrike.

A vital contribution for dating ceramics of the post-medieval period (between the late 15th and early 19th centuries) is the information retrieved from the Ottoman tax registers of the Imperial Archives. The lists provide detailed information on the foundation of new villages and their names, the number of households and inhabitants and important crop and stock figures. As a result, archaeological survey data, such as known deserted villages and their remains can be attributed a rough date on the basis of these accounts. Further comparisons of Byzantine and Ottoman ceramic finds from deserted villages in our survey area with recently excavated and published material elsewhere provide a finer dating (with further subdivisions, such as Early and Middle Byzantine, Frankish, Early Ottoman etc.) for settlement development, village flourishing and/or decline in the Tanagrike.

Settlement in a post-Roman countryside

As already noted above, intensive survey from 2000 to 2005 in the Tanagrike has revealed a number of sites dating

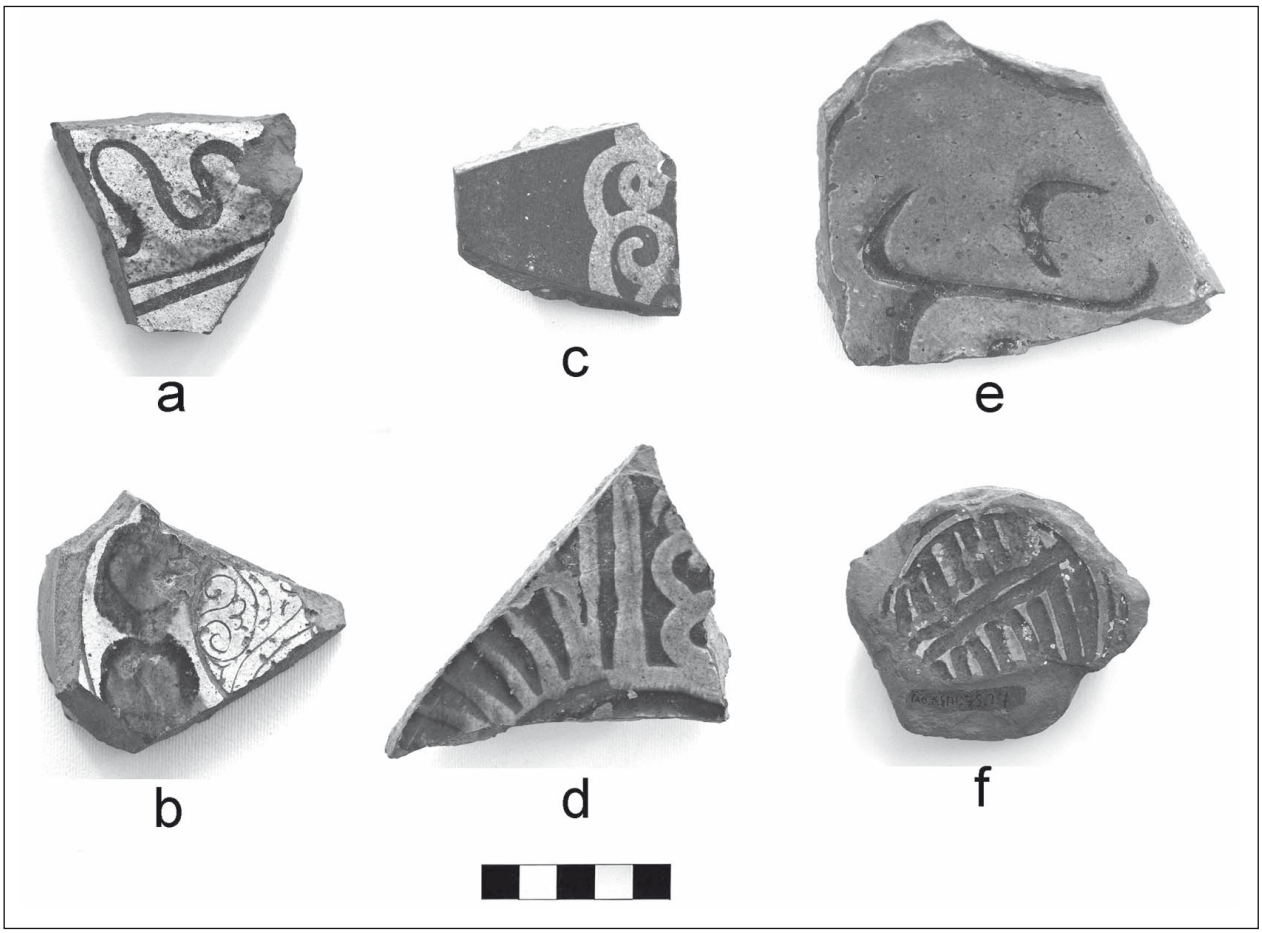

Figure 9 Representative examples of glazed table-wares of the late 12th and early 13th centuries from site TS5: a. Brown-and-Green Painted ware, b. Painted Fine Sgraffito ware, c–d. Slip-Painted ware, e–f. Incised Sgraffito ware.

to the Byzantine, Frankish and Ottoman periods. Apart from the Ottoman *çiftlik* or small hamlet of the (late 16th–) 17th– early 18th centuries with a group of four linked longhouses on the acropolis hill of ancient Tanagra, nine other post-Roman sites have been discovered in the area.

The hamlet site of Agios Thomas or TS5 (Fig. 5) identified around the 12th-century church of St. Thomas is located 1 km east from the city. It is approximately 1.5 ha in size, while the study of its ceramic assemblage suggests that the site was occupied from the 11th to the middle 14th century, reaching its peak from the middle of the 12th to the middle of the 13th century. Similarly, the large hamlet-site of Agia Aikaterini or TS15 (Fig. 5) is located around a rebuilt (possibly middle Byzantine) chapel dedicated to St. Catherine, 2 km southwest of ancient Tanagra. The site occupies an area of approximately 2 ha, while surface ceramic finds are also dated from the 11th to the 14th centuries. Agios Polykarpos or TS21 (Fig. 5) is another site identified as a tiny hamlet of the same period, occupying 0.5 ha around the renovated Byzantine chapel of St. Polykarp (Fig. 10), 0.6 km northwest of the ancient city. The site of Kastri or TS18 (Fig. 5) is located 2 km southwest of Tanagra and it occupies the hill of Agios Konstantinos; it also preserves the remains of a fortification wall around it, the largest part of it most probably dating to the Late Roman period. This is so far the only site in the territory with evidence for occupation during the Byzantine 'Dark Ages' in the 7th and 8th centuries.

Four other Byzantine-Frankish hamlet and village sites were identified in the upland Guinosati valley, east and west of the modern village of Ag. Thomas (Fig. 5). The village of Agios Dimitrios or TS30 is the largest site in the area; it is located on the top of a gentle hill and occupies an area of 2.3 ha to the northeast of the renovated (possibly Byzantine) chapel dedicated to St. Dimitrios. The sites of Agios Nikolaos (TS31), Agia Anna (TS32) and Kleidi (TS36) are all located around ruined or renovated churches and are rather small in size (hamlets). Like the sites in the immediate territory of Tanagra, the sites in the Guinosati valley are dated to the (10th?–) 11th–14th centuries.

The Ottoman serf-estate (*çiftlik*) of Guinosati or TS23 (Fig. 5) (approximately 6.5 km southeast of Tanagra) is another site of the Ottoman period, recorded in the Ottoman tax registers of 1466 (a tiny hamlet/*çiftlik* with 10 households). The site was possibly abandoned around the late 17th century (or later) since it was last recorded in 1646 with 23 households. Surface pottery from Guinosati suggests a date between the late 15th and late 17th (–early 18th?) centuries (Vionis 2006: 789–91).

The Early Byzantine period or 'Dark Ages', mid/late 7th–mid/late 9th centuries

The inability to recognise the material culture of the period after the end of Late Antiquity has resulted to the

general assumption by both archaeologists and historians that the beginning of the Middle Ages in the 7th century is marked by the transformation and ruralisation of the Late Antique city and the impoverishment of the countryside in the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean, caused by waves of Slav tribes invading from the north and Arab naval forces raiding coasts and islands (Foss 1977: 469–86; Laiou and Morrisson 2007: 38–42). The picture emerging from the limited material traces recovered or securely dated by archaeologists points to a declining urban and rural life, with the acropolises of shrinking ancient cities functioning as refuge focuses for Byzantine Greek populations (who seem to have remained on or near former foci of settlement) during the late 7th and 8th centuries in urban centres (such as Athens and Corinth in Greece, and Ephesus in Western Asia Minor) and the countryside (Bintliff 2000: 43; 2001: 38). Although it remains plausible that cities of the Late Antique era ceased to be the dominant unit of social and commercial organisation and that villages and fortresses became the dominant settlement cells of the early medieval world (Mitchell 2000: 145; Bintliff 2008: 1283–84), it should not be taken for granted that the contemporary landscape was necessarily overtaken by barbarian tribes whose only contribution was crude handmade pottery and the disruption of technology and trade.

In the Tanagrike, the small fortified hilltop of Kastri or TS18 is identified as a 'refuge settlement' of the period (after the abandonment of the ancient city of Tanagra 2 km to the northeast), where a crudely-built surrounding defensive wall and fragments of the so-called 'Slav' handmade pottery (Fig. 11) dated between the late 6th and 8th centuries have been noted. A number of Slav toponyms surviving in the province of Boeotia should provide hints for settlement continuity with probably replacement of a Greco-Roman with a Slav ethnic place-name (Bintliff 2000: 42). The ancient city of Hyettos in northern Boeotia was the only site in the region (surveyed by the Cambridge-Durham Boeotia Project) where handmade pottery of the 'Slavic' tradition was identified in the past (Vroom 2003: 107–08, 141–43). The fact that similar handmade vessels with a flat base and flaring rim made of coarse fabric have been found in association with wheel-thrown vessels (such as amphorae and imported wares) at a number of sites, mainly in the Peloponnese in southern Greece, could indicate the peaceful merging of local populations with the 'invaders' creating Slavo-Hellenic communities through intermarriage (Gregory 1993: 155; Avraméa 1997: 86; Bintliff 2001: 37–38; Vroom 2003: 143).

Continuity from Late Antiquity into the Early Middle Ages in the middle-late 7th century has recently been argued for by systematic excavations in mainland Greece (e.g. Corinth) and SW Turkey (e.g. Sagalassos) on the basis of ceramic finds (mainly plain-ware vessels). In Corinth, a re-evaluation of the so-called 'Assemblage 4' has shown that some of the coarse-ware types 'are later than the datable fine wares and should be placed at an unspecified time after the middle of the seventh century' (Slane and Sanders 2005: 273). At Sagalassos, a completely different pottery assemblage comprised of handmade and wheel-thrown cooking pots and other jug-types ('pattern-burnished ware' and 'libation jugs') from stratified contexts suggest continuous occupation and pottery production from Late Antiquity into the 'Dark Ages' in the late 7th and 8th centuries (Vionis *et al*. 2009: 150–58).

The Middle Byzantine period or 'Classical Byzantium', late 9th–early 13th centuries

The period between the 10th and 12th centuries has been characterised as a time of great Byzantine accomplishments, with increased growth on demographic, economic and socio-cultural levels (Harvey 1989). Farming was the prime occupation during the Byzantine era; farming settlements and villages were scattered across the Byzantine countryside and it seems

Figure 10 The middle Byzantine church of Agios Polykarpos before its restoration (site TS21).

that the provinces were focusing upon and were connected to urban centres administratively, ecclesiastically and commercially.

A number of archaeological surface surveys throughout Greece (Armstrong 1989; 1996; Bintliff and Snodgrass 1985; Cherry *et al.* 1991; Davis *et al.* 1997; Mee and Forbes 1997) have provided material evidence for relevant recovery and re-settlement of the rural landscape during the Middle Byzantine period. Similarly, excavations at provincial urban centres such as Corinth (Scranton 1957: 82–83; Sanders 2000: 171), Thebes (Symeonoglou 1985) and Athens (Thompson and Wycherley 1972: 216; Camp 2001: 240) have revealed Middle Byzantine layers of thriving life and re-organised settlement plan/layout.

The model of a Byzantine village or *chorion* (defined as a cluster of houses surrounded by farming land/fields) published by Ducellier (1986: 187–88) is probably the closest to Byzantine reality; a 'village' was composed of surrounding vegetable gardens, a wider area of cultivable fields, pasturelands, isolated farmsteads and hamlets (occupied by peasants/serfs). It is now generally held that population in Byzantine Greece declined during the 11th century, recovering throughout the 12th century and later.

Ceramic data recovered during the course of the intensive surface survey in the Tanagrike has shown widespread signs of recovery in the Byzantine countryside between the 11th and early 13th centuries (Fig. 5). middle Byzantine settlement is well-attested in the territory with diagnostic surface pottery reaching its peak between the middle 12th and middle 13th centuries. These new settlements of different size established across the landscape are interpreted as small nucleated hamlets and villages located at regular intervals (reminiscent of the modern nucleated village pattern). The locations of these settlements are both lowland–non-defensive and hilltop–defensive, usually concentrated around churches, possibly functioning as parish-churches for each settlement (J.L. Bintliff *pers. comm*.; Vionis 2004–5: 572–74; 2006: 785).

According to historical sources, such as the 11th-century *Cadaster* or Land Register of Thebes (Svoronos 1959), there was a process of estate formation, though at a primitive stage, and a predominance of major landowners against independent peasant producers. What this settlement density across the middle Byzantine countryside might suggest is that the fertile lands after the 'Dark Ages' had begun to become a sought-after resource, and a rising population was available to exploit it and be exploited by others. Agricultural intensification in Tanagrike and Boeotia as a whole was intended to meet the growing demand of major urban centres (e.g. Constantinople) for agricultural goods, particularly wheat, especially from the 11th century onwards (Dunn 1995).

The Late Byzantine period or 'Frankish' era, early 13th–middle 15th centuries

During the succeeding Late Byzantine or 'Frankish' period and after the conquest of Constantinople by the Latins of the Fourth Crusade in 1204, most of the Byzantine Aegean was divided amongst the western knights, who established themselves as ducal lords on the islands and the mainland. Boeotia was a Frankish possession from 1204 to 1311; it belonged to the Duchy of Athens, with its centre being Athens and Thebes (Bintliff 1996: 5). Members of the imported Frankish elite imposed the western feudal system into their Aegean estates and established themselves in castles and towers in or near the long-established towns and villages of the Middle Byzantine period (Bintliff 2000: 44). This is the period when the aforementioned church of Agios Thomas in Tanagrike was converted into a feudal tower with chapel. Such feudal towers in the Boeotian countryside (Fig. 12) functioned as control- and tax-collection points of dependent neighbouring villages (Lock 1986; Bintliff 2000).

It was only around the middle of the 14th century that most of the Boeotian countryside became depopulated and deserted. The devastating effects of the Black Death, continuous warfare between Byzantines, Franks and Ottoman-Turks, and successive raids by pirates in coastal Boeotia during the second half of the 14th century were particularly felt by the Frankish Dukes of Thebes and

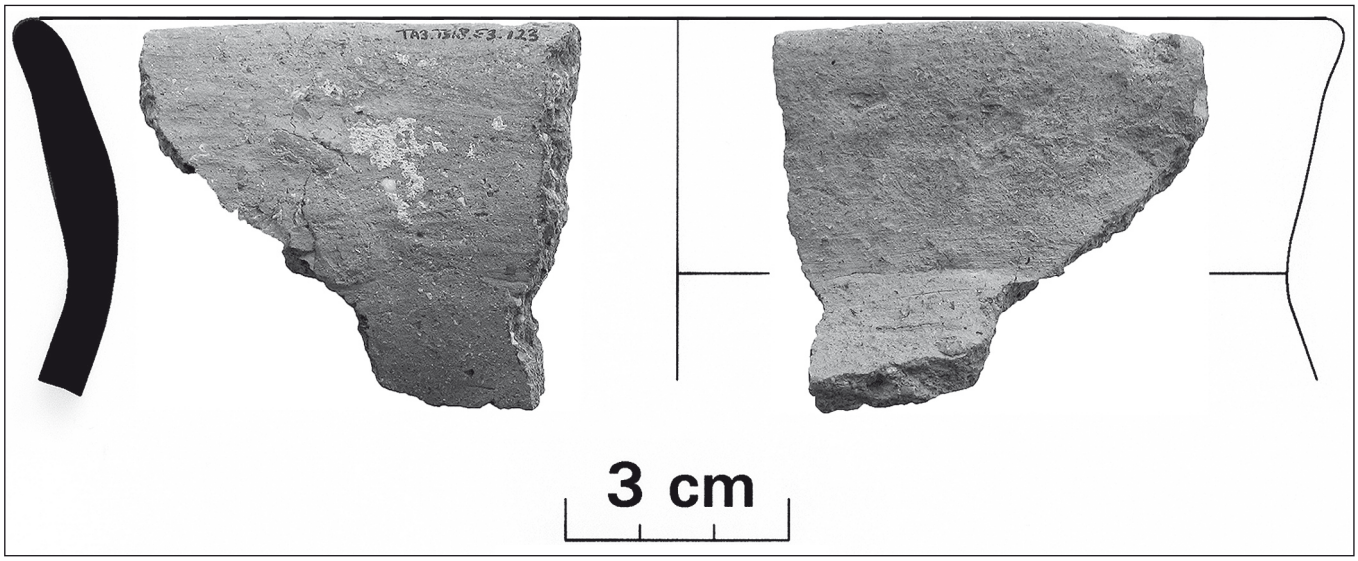

Figure 11 Rim fragment of handmade 'Slav' ware from Kastri (TS18).

Athens, who invited Albanian semi-nomadic clans to resettle deserted lands. The Albanian colonisation of much of central and southern Greece was a practice repeated by the Ottomans after their conquest of Boeotia in 1460 (Lock 1995; Bintliff 1995; Kiel 1997).

All of the middle Byzantine village and hamlet sites in the Tanagrike were taken over by incoming Frankish minor lords and continued to be inhabited throughout the 13th century, but they must have been depopulated and gradually abandoned towards the middle 14th century as attested by diagnostic tableware types, none of which post-dates the 1350s (Fig. 13). The Black Death must have ravaged much of the population in the valley of the Tanagrike as well (as has been argued for other Boeotian villages of the period), while rural settlements must have been abandoned and eventually re-colonised by incoming Albanian clans a little later.

The Early Ottoman period or 'Golden Age', 15th–16th centuries

In contrast to the traditional view of the Ottoman period as an era of total economic devastation and corruption, the subsequent period of *Pax Ottomanica* during the second half of the 15th and most of the 16th centuries saw a tremendous demographic recovery and significant economic growth. This is finely attested in the first surviving Ottoman tax register of 1466 for Boeotia, the settlements mushrooming in the countryside and the rapid development of urban centres such as Thebes and Livadeia. This development and recovery at all levels seems to have lasted until the 1580s, when the Golden Age reached its end and the Ottoman Empire entered a period of political, military and social crisis leading to inflation and fiscal exploitation of the peasantry which was gradually weakened (Kiel 1997; Bintliff 2000). As a result, many of the prospering villages originating in the 15th and 16th centuries were either abandoned or contracted in size, while most of the surviving ones were broken up into a number of small çiftlik or serf estates with the rise of tax-farming during the 17th century (Inalcik 1972, 1977; Kiel 1997; Bintliff 2000).

With the so-called çiftlik-*system*, the Ottoman State leased out abandoned plots of land to individual holders, substituting the State itself as lords/landowners/tax-farmers of small farms or çiftlik-*estates*, initially very small in size. The pure aim of these farming estates was commercial agricultural produce, mainly of cash crops intended to feed the growing demand for raw materials by rising industrial and capitalist states in Western Europe. This pattern fits perfectly well with the case of Guinosati. The last record for the village is for the year 1646, recording three households in total, a suitable number of households for a çiftlik in the early period of the system (ceramic evidence suggests gradual decline after the mid 17th century, so Guinosati was actually a short-lived çiftlik). Athough the site of Bardzi in ancient Tanagra, on the other hand, comprised just four long-houses, surface ceramic finds suggest continuous growth, reaching its peak during the mid 17th to early 18th centuries. The stereotypical çiftlik serf-estates of Guinosati and Bardzi constitute a homogeneous case of dispersed series of long-houses, spaced at almost equal distances to each other, usually dominated by a *konak* or tower-house owned by the landholder/tax-farmer (Fig. 14).

A case-study on daily life in the Byzantine and Frankish countryside

As it has already been noted, an interesting issue that resulted after the complete study of surface ceramic finds from five middle Byzantine – early Frankish hamlet-sites in the immediate territory of ancient Tanagra (TS5, TS15, TS18, TS21 and TS30) has shown that the countryside was most intensively exploited from the middle 12th to the middle 13th century, with pottery of this period representing 40% of the total assemblage (Fig. 13).

A great proportion of the pottery from those assemblages is indicative of food and beverage consumption with a relatively high percentage of glazed table-wares (42%) when compared to the unglazed common wares (58%). It is surprising that tableware used for food and beverage consumption reaches more than 40% of the total assemblage from Tanagrike (Fig. 15). One would have expected an assemblage typical of a rural community living entirely off the land, with a greater emphasis on vessels used for storage and food preparation rather than at meal times. Ceramics may thus indicate that glazed tableware would be rated as objects of daily use rather than objects reserved only for special occasions, further suggesting that peasants in the middle Byzantine and early Frankish countryside were possibly better-off than has been thought. It is worth noting that ceramic assemblages of excavated middle Byzantine and Frankish contexts from the neighbouring town of Thebes are identical to our rural surface survey pottery; no differences can be identified between the urban and rural samples of ceramic wares.

Figure 12 Frankish tower at the site of Palaiopanagia (VM4) in the Valley of the Muses, Boeotia.

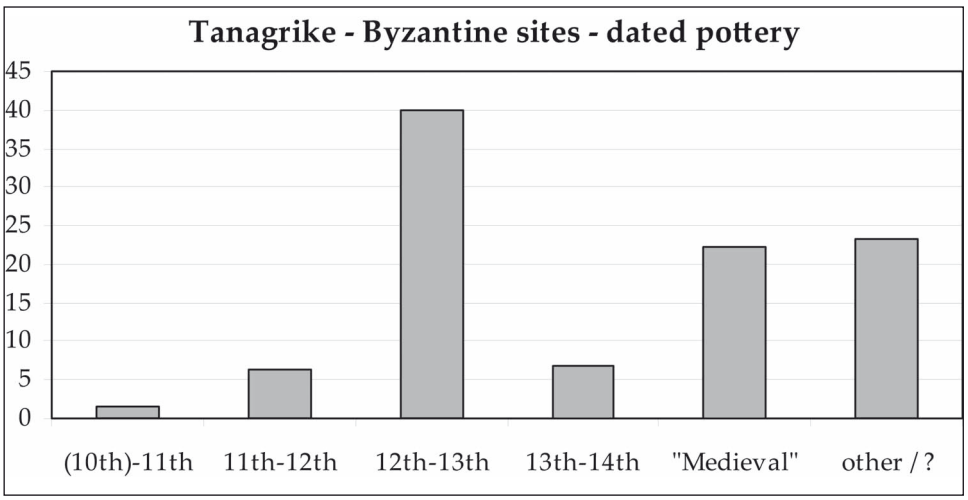

Figure 13 Percentages of middle Byzantine and early Frankish pottery from sites in the Tanagrike.

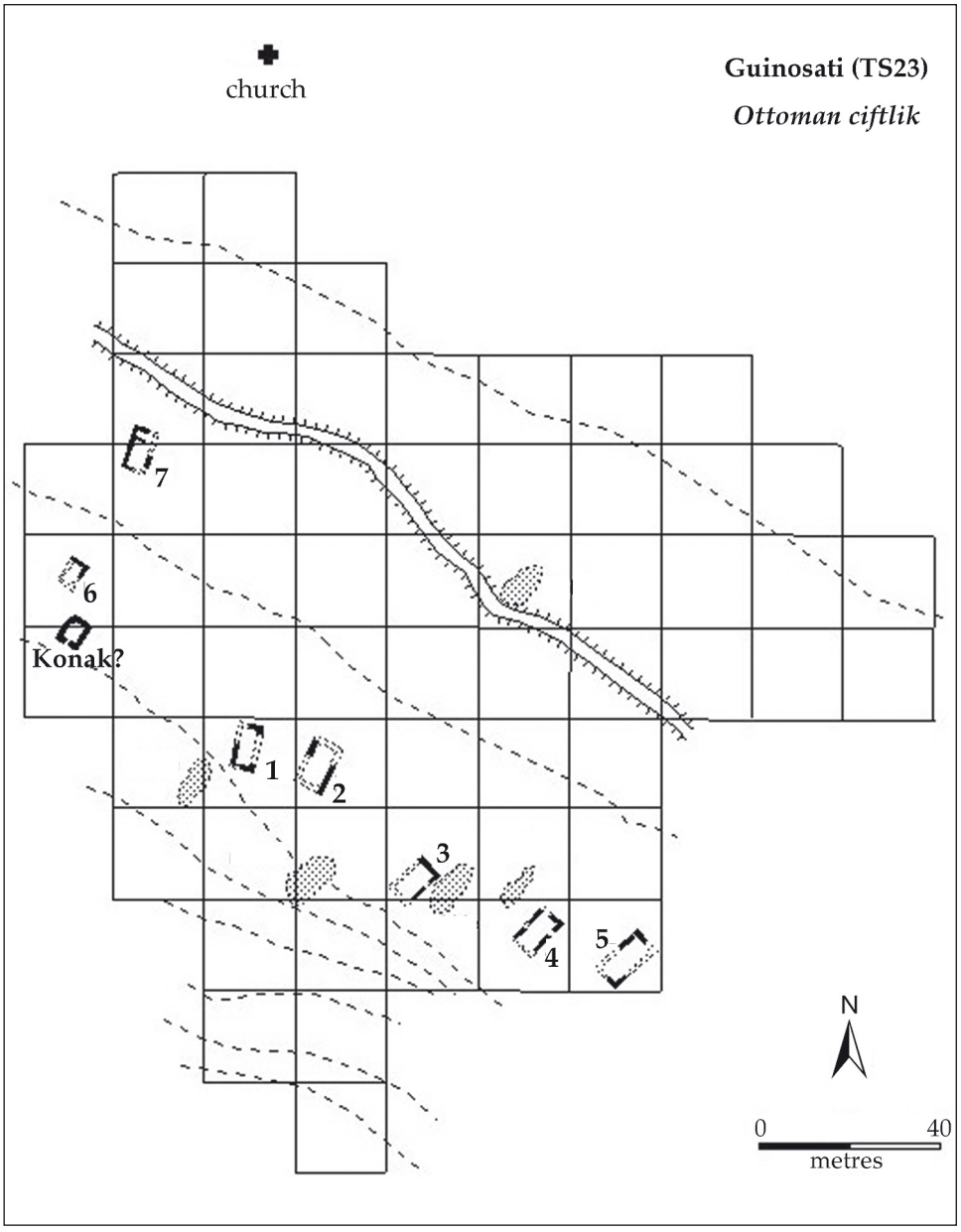

Figure 14 Plan of the deserted Ottoman village of Guinosati (TS23).

Byzantine writers and lists of monastery and house contents mention various kinds of vessels associated with food preparation and serving. Bottles, or pitchers for liquids, big decorated serving plates and deep flat plates of earthenware or wood seem to be the most common items in documents, suggesting rather simplified eating procedures; 'people ate with their fingers from a large serving plate and drank from a common cup or jar' (Oikonomides 1990: 211–12).

Studies on the history of food and cooking in medieval Britain have been related to archaeological finds and contemporary depictions of domestic life and have concluded that large, deep bowls for fish and meat were used communally by all diners sitting around the table (Black 1985). Similar conclusions have been drawn for the typical strong survival of glazed ring-foot base fragments discovered at medieval sites in the Tanagrike; communal bowls of open forms on the table possibly stressed the need for interior and highly visible ornament. This is clearly testified to by the proportion of open forms present, such as bowls (12%) and dishes (17%), which are amongst the commonest pottery types in the assemblage (Fig. 16). Thebes has been suggested as a possible production centre of decorated glazed pottery; the glazed tableware material itself is most probably locally produced and distinctly local or 'provincial' in appearance. A fragment of kiln furniture with glassy residues found at site VM4 or Panaya at the Valley of the Muses (discovered during the course of the 'Boeotia Survey Project' in the past) indicates that glazed pottery was produced on this rural site (Vroom 1998: 522). Imported glazed decorated wares identified in the Tanagrike assemblage come mainly from Corinth, Thessaloniki and possibly Lemnos, suggesting contact between rural Boeotia and other parts of the southern and northern Aegean.

It seems that contact between rural Boeotia and large urban centres is not merely evidenced in imported fine-wares but also in transport vessels, such as amphorae of the so-called 'Saraçhane 61' type (Fig. 17a), quite common in our assemblage. Transport amphorae are represented by 9% of the total assemblage (Figs. 15 & 16). Amphorae are themselves evidence for transport and trade/export of agricultural produce. Therefore, a first thought would be that rural Boeotia was probably exporting agricultural goods to large urban centres, such as Constantinople. Moreover, if we consider John Hayes' suggestion that Boeotia (or Athens) could possibly have been the production centre of 'Saraçhane 61' amphorae (Cherry *et al*. 1991: 354–55), our finds from all over rural Boeotia would rightly change our view of the economic dynamics of rural provinces such as central Greece. Meanwhile, an over-fired handle fragment (Fig. 17b) probably from a 'Saraçhane 61' amphora (a waster?) was also retrieved during our intensive surface survey a few metres to the north-east of the Tanagra city-wall, providing further hints for the production of this amphora type in the region. These amphorae could have been used for the transport of oil or other substances, while it has also been suggested (Hayes 1992: 61) that 'Saraçhane 61' may have functioned as a beehive (Cherry *et al.* 1991: 357). Although amphorae are accounted mainly as transport vessels, they could as well serve as storage containers in a secondary usage/reuse. By the 14th century they had been replaced, most possibly by wooden barrels.

Matters concerning food storage are equally interesting. Storage represents 13% in our functional analysis (Fig. 15), while storage containers such as jars and *pithoi* (very large clay containers used to store subsistence commodities) represent 10% and 3% respectively of pottery types in the Tanagrike assemblages (Fig. 16). Clay storage containers are rarely moved from their original position after the abandonment of their context, mainly because of their weight and size. Thus, we could argue that the number of *pithos* and storage jars recovered closely represent the volume of storage strategies in middle Byzantine and early Frankish rural Boeotia. The low presentation of *pithos* fragments (3%) is explained (Sanders 2000: 170) on the basis that

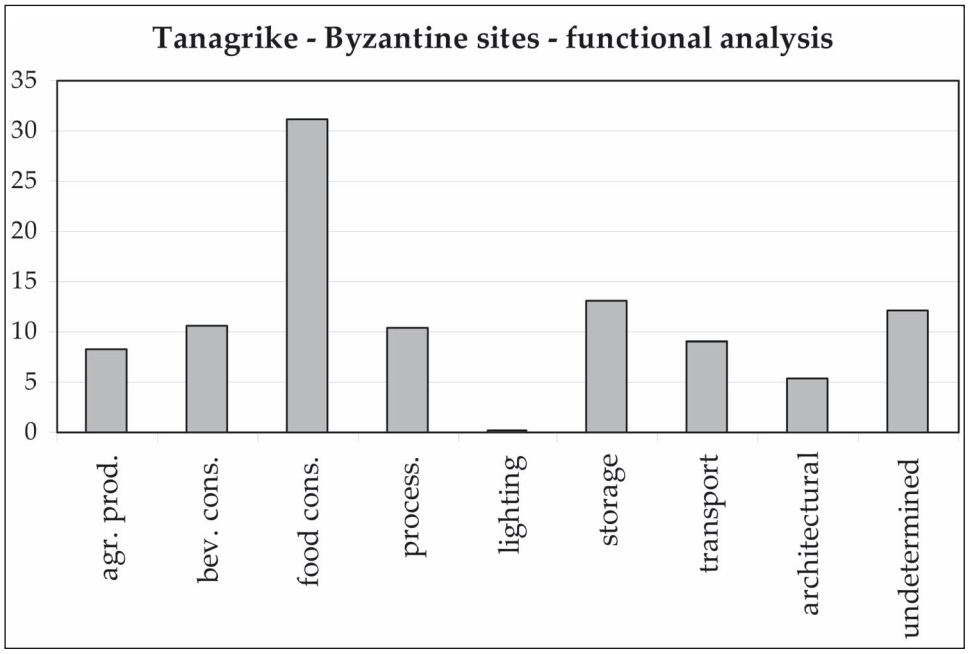

Figure 15 Functional analysis of pottery from sites in the Tanagrike.

these large ceramic containers were probably expensive to acquire and most people were expected to buy no more than two or three in a lifetime. It would seem logical to argue that this 13% of storage represented in our functional analysis was sufficient to cover consumption needs, avoid food shortage in case of an agricultural famine and meet tax obligations.

Summary and conclusions

It has been suggested that the documentary sources, the increased levels of church-building, and the discovery of large numbers of middle Byzantine and early Frankish rural sites by various surface surveys all over Greece imply population and economic recovery with the opening-up of new markets and trade expansion during the 11th and 12th centuries. It seems that the reforms of the Byzantine emperors also 'touched' the Boeotian countryside. New villages appeared, new elaborate churches and chapels were constructed, such as the one dedicated to St. Thomas, and glazed ceramics used for food consumption appeared in greater numbers in both urban and rural contexts. The appearance of the hamlet site-type during this period has been seen as an indicator of agricultural expansion, forming part of a village (Armstrong 2002: 397); indeed, all hamlet sites in our research area are located not far from the village of Agios Dimitrios (TS30), itself 2.3 ha in area.

After the Fourth Crusade and the coming of the Franks in 1204, the middle Byzantine sites in the Tanagrike continued to exist, while the mid-12th-century church of St. Thomas was converted into a Frankish feudal tower with chapel in the early 14th century. Surface ceramics from the region do not show a dramatic change after the arrival of the Franks in the early 13th century. However, decorated pottery styles slightly changed (i.e. from the delicate 'fine sgraffito' to the rougher 'incised sgraffito') and the shallow dishes of the 12th century were replaced altogether by the deeper and smaller bowls of the middle 13th. Likewise, everyday life in the early Frankish Tanagrike seems to have continued in the same relatively comfortable manner as during the Middle Byzantine era. The tower at Agios Thomas controlled the village, which had passed from a semi-feudal Byzantine secular or clerical landowner to a Latin feudal or secular landowner. It was only during the later Frankish period in the mid-14th century that most of the Greek countryside was eventually depopulated and abandoned, as a result of the Black Death and the continuous warfare between the growing power of the Ottoman-Turks, the weakened Latin landowners and the much confined Byzantines.

The abandoned Boeotian countryside was evidently re-colonised in the later part of the period of Catalan rule, when King Pedro VI of Aragon allotted land and animals to 20,000 Albanians in the 1380s and the early 15th century in order to settle a deserted land and replace its declining population (Slaughter and Kasimis 1986: 108; Kiel 1997: 321). The *çiftlik*-site of Guinosati on the hills above the Tanagra plain is one of the surviving Ablanian settlement-sites that are recorded as 'Albanian katuns' in the Ottoman defters of 1466.

The forthcoming population and economic recovery in the area during the flourishing period of the *Pax Ottomanica* in the 16th century is also reflected in the increasing number of settlement sites and their material culture. However, the material remains of this area during this period of its history remain to be further investigated and interpreted in order to get a more detailed picture of the late Ottoman and early modern Tanagrike.

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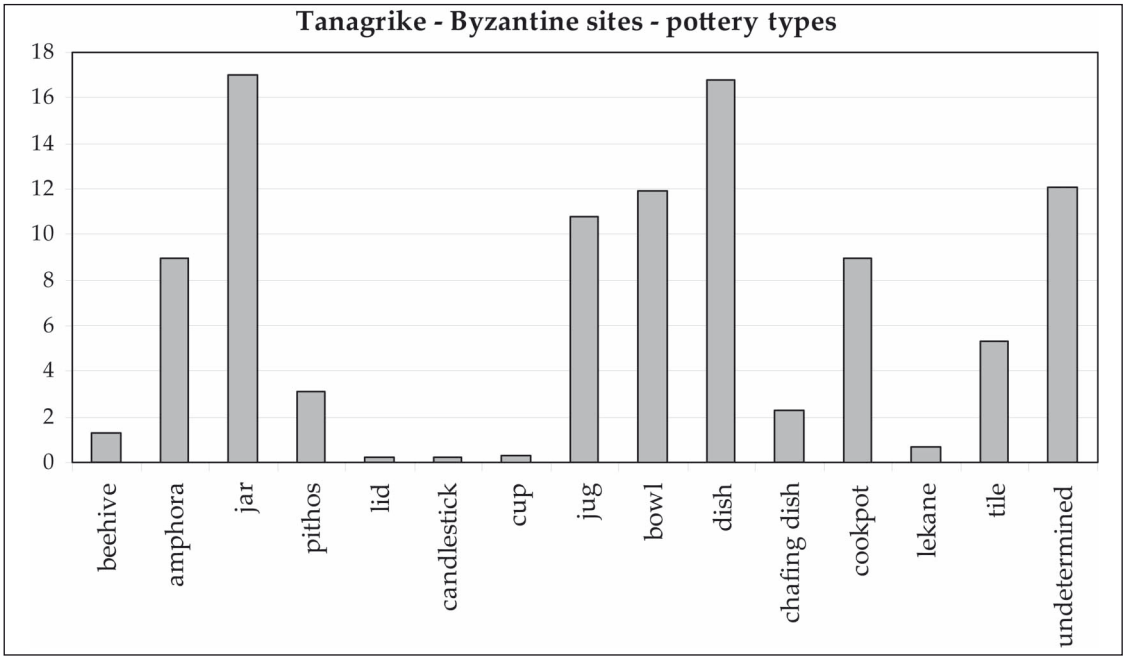

Figure 16 Percentages of middle Byzantine and early Frankish pottery types from sites in the Tanagrike.

Figure 17 a. Handle fragment of a 'Saraçhane 61' amphora from the Tanagrike, b. Possible waster of a 'Saraçhane 61' amphora from the Tanagrike.

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