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## LATE ROMAN AND BYZANTINE GREECE (SIXTH TO TWELFTH CENTURY)

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This unavoidably selective overview of the archaeology of Late Roman and Byzantine Greece will first draw attention to some significant recent advances in the recognition and analysis of material culture and then to some important current debates about, or challenges to, the interpretation of the results of surveys (typically the Roman and Byzantine aspects of multi-period surveys). There can be no attempt at an encyclopaedic assessment of activity (even if it were desirable), and on this occasion justice cannot be done to the burgeoning archaeological exploration of Frankish Greece or to Byzantine numismatics and sigilligraphy. Feeding or reflecting on some of the new developments are some significant publications and potentially significant recent conferences (published and unpublished), which deserve to be considered in their own right. In reviewing the current state of this archaeology in Greece (or these ‘archaeologies’, see below), it might be useful to draw attention to some of its/their specific circumstances.

First, important external stimuli, both traditional and new, have helped to shape post-Roman archaeological research and its priorities in Greece (as elsewhere), including ‘Christian’ archaeology, the development of a national heritage and (not unrelated to the former) ‘rescue archaeology’. Secondly, a growing engagement with archaeology among Byzantinists over the last 40 years or so is itself a source of ideas and stimulus. Thirdly, whatever one may think about the absence or under-developed state of a body of theory for Late Roman and Byzantine archaeology (such as that which, for instance, drove many of the intensive interdisciplinary surveys conducted in Greece), the very absence of this ‘body’ makes external stimuli, for better or for worse, very important as drivers. There are latent, but still ineffectually articulated, disagreements about the conceptual framework (therefore logical strategies) for an archaeology of ‘post-Roman’ Greece which appear in relevant conference proceedings (for which see below).

**Late Roman Greece and the transition to Medieval Byzantium (ca. AD 300–800): excavations and surveys**  
Turning first to significant achievements in excavations and surveys, and to some challenges affecting them, it will be useful to consider separately the archaeologies of Late Roman Greece plus the ‘Dark-Age’ transition, from the archaeology of Medieval Byzantine Greece, partly because of current differences in the tempo and scale of research and publication of their respective findings, and partly because of significant differences between the respective archaeologies. Many interesting factors underlie the differences between these two endeavours, which have long tended to be distinct specialisms, and one of these differences should be mentioned at this point, namely the traditional impact of ‘Christian’ archaeology upon the archaeology of Late Antiquity in Greece.

The recent documentation of several kiln sites and/or areas of production for Late Roman amphorae (for example, on Crete), and for plain and coarse domestic wares, together with the recent documentation of Greek

sites and/or areas of production for Late Roman lamps (for example, Athens) and glass (for example, Thessaloniki), will encourage further progress in the characterization of Late Roman sites and settlement patterns, and more widely the characterization of economic and cultural changes. The documentation of Greek regional imitations of several common Mediterranean amphora types (LRA1, LRA2, LRA 13) and of lamps, as well as of regional plain or coarse domestic wares from excavations (for example, at Gortyn and Delphi) and surveys alike (for example, the Boeotia Survey), also facilitates new ways of characterizing Late Roman occupation *vis-à-vis* Roman occupation in both excavations and surveys, both urban and rural. The first systematic publication of Late Roman pottery from sites in Macedonia provides case-studies relevant to many of these themes (Malamidou [2005]). These developments take the interpretation of sites’ functionality, and the relationship of sites to Late Roman socio-economic structures, to a new level, for instance in the first part of the final report of the British Academy’s Boeotian Survey (Bintliff *et al.* [2006]). This is not a criticism of more circumspect interpretations of rural surveys, such as Liverpool University’s Methana Survey, but an observation that increasing recognition of sites, or regions, for the production of all classes of Late Roman pottery, and the mapping of these findings onto an evolving settlement pattern in which *villae*, ‘estates’, ‘hamlets’ and ‘farms’ are recognized, ushers in a new phase of research into the history of the Late Roman countryside in the east Mediterranean. Here, studies based upon Egyptian and Palestinian papyri, monuments, economic installations and epigraphy, and studies based on the intensive rural surveys (for which Greece together with Cyprus are probably still the most significant arenas) must pay very close attention to each other. Meanwhile, however, as case-studies of complete and representative Late Roman (and even Medieval Byzantine) settlement patterns, intensive surveys still remain inadequate for a number of reasons (see below for a new generalized critique of the current relationship between Late Roman archaeology and history, with particular reference to Greece).

Meanwhile, a methodologically complementary critique of Greek rural surveys’ simple counts of ‘diagnostic’ sherds has been field-tested by the East Korinthia Archaeological Survey and other projects in Greece and Cyprus, and makes the case that the Roman presence in the Greek countryside has been consistently underestimated (Pettegrew [2007; 2008]). The parabola of a Late Roman ‘surge’ would, on such a basis, be reduced. If the findings of these revisions were to be accepted, then both Romanists and Late Romanists will need to rethink their inferences about the demographic trajectory, and about non-demographic factors (for example, fiscal ones) that could affect the ‘ceramic landscapes’, which form the basis for interpretation of intensive survey data. This inevitably requires close study of the history of Late Roman Greece and a re-evaluation of the brave attempt made in this direction by Cynthia Kosso (in relation to surveys conducted in the area of the province of Achaea) (Kosso [2003]).

The ‘End of Antiquity’ (as a sub-phase of Late Antiquity whose temporal boundaries shift across geographical space) is a significant subject of archaeological enquiry in the Greek-Aegean space which has been

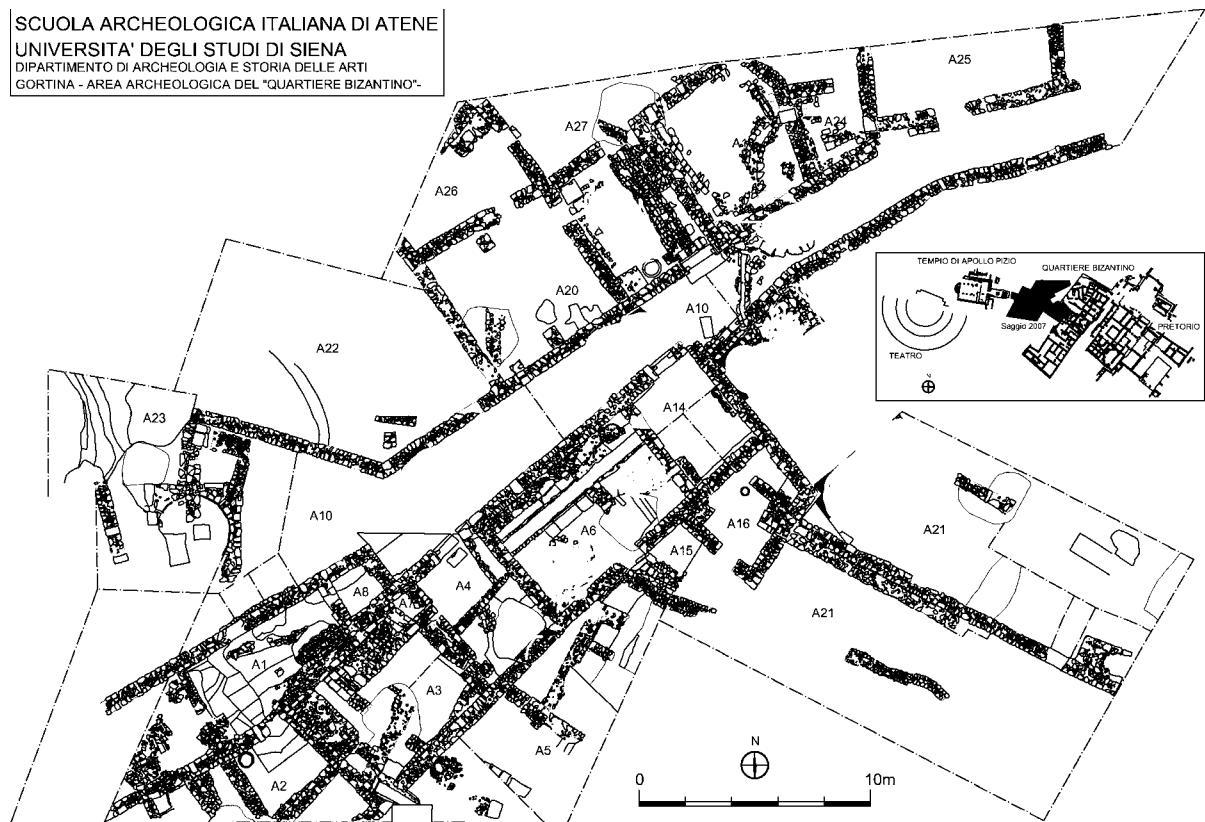
making waves since the 1930s. It also merges with the archaeology of the transition to a Medieval Byzantine *habitus* and is being brought into increasingly sharp focus by the recognition of seventh- to ninth-century pottery (coarse, plain and decorated). Exploration of the seventh- to ninth-century transition (traditionally the Byzantine ‘Dark Age’) has recently been stepped up. This development now enables a close dialogue with specialists in the Balkans (for example, in the new project under the aegis of the École française d’Athènes concerning the ‘Komani-Kruja Culture’, which links together research in Albania, Greece and F.Y.R.O.M.). Progress in the recognition of seventh-century and eighth-century amphorae from kiln sites on Crete and Kos, and/or areas of production on Crete, also has the potential of bringing archaeologists into dialogue with historians (as yet undeveloped).

A spate of recent articles, by A. Yangaki (2006), Ch. Diamanti (2010), N. Poulou-Papadimitriou and S. Didioumi (2010) discuss sites and areas of amphora production on Crete and at Halasarna (modern Kardamaina) on Kos. When writing about the Koan sites the authors tacitly disagree about their chronology: between a mid sixth- to early seventh-century *floruit* and a seventh- to eighth-century *floruit*. When writing about the Cretan sites, there is agreement that amphora production continued on the island through the seventh and eighth centuries. But all agree that some of this production, which is characterized by great homogeneity of design, despite increasing dispersal and down-scaling (relative to

Late Roman levels of production), should be connected with the Byzantine state’s interventions in the economy. The nature and extent of these interventions are the subject of continuing debate among Byzantinists, which cannot even be summarized here, but the fact that a Koan amphora of this period is stamped before firing (as opposed to receiving *dipinti* or *sgraffito* inscriptions after firing) and stamped with a title (*endoxotatos*; Latin *gloriosissimus*) in the genitive that was held by very high fiscal officials in the seventh century is strongly indicative of fiscal intervention in amphora production and control of their contents. This remarkable, and now well-documented, continuity of amphora production through the transitional era in Greece is part of a complex picture of contrasts across the Greek-Aegean space.

The recently published mid sixth- to early seventh-century kilns of Delphi (Petrides [2010]) are an excellent case-study of a widespread phenomenon, namely the end of production of high-quality pottery in many regions during the seventh century. The current excavations of Gortyn, one of the most important for the study of this period in the Byzantine world, document the survival through the eighth century of a Late Roman provincial painted domestic pottery tradition. But Gortyn looks like an exception, albeit an interesting and instructive one, to the trend across Greece (Fig. 154).

These are a few of the highlights in the archaeology of the period *ca.* AD 300–800, illustrating its potential value for the study of a period and area (Greece) about which relatively few non-epigraphic texts speak in any detail.



154. Gortyn, Crete: Byzantine quarter of the Pythion. © SAIA.

### **Byzantine Greece (ninth to 15<sup>th</sup> century): excavations and surveys**

The following periods, conventionally defined as ‘Middle Byzantine’ (ending with the Fourth Crusaders’ breakup of the Byzantine Empire from AD 1204) and the subsequent ‘Late Byzantine’ age, are not, by contrast, well represented in recent academic monographs or final reports, although much potentially significant work is under way. It is not realistic to discuss either Frankish Greece or numismatics in this first report. Many excellent general studies, addressing a wider public, regularly appear under the imprint of TATTA. The period is given less than two pages in the recently published first volume of the Boeotian Survey (Bintliff *et al.* [2006] 166–67). Among the exceptions are two valuable syntheses of the work of the 12<sup>th</sup> Ephoreia of Byzantine Antiquities (eastern Macedonia and, until recently, western Thrace) concerning western Thrace. R. Ousterhout and Ch. Bakirtzis (2007) present the Ephoreia’s work in the context of the Byzantine archaeology of Turkish Thrace. D. Papanikola-Bakirtzi and N. Zikos (2007) present the finewares from kilns or areas of production, Middle Byzantine and Late Byzantine, in western Thrace. Art and architecture as such cannot be considered in this first report, but most readers will not be surprised to learn that there are plenty of new developments and important publications under those headings.

### **Some recent conferences, proceedings, series and festschriften**

A number of recent academic publications illustrate other important developments in the Late Roman and Byzantine archaeology of Greece, and in some of these the later centuries are more prominent than they are currently in the domain of the monograph and the final report. One notable development is the significant presence of Greek material, and of Greek specialists, at the two major conferences dedicated to the pottery of the Late Roman and subsequent eras around the Mediterranean, *Late Roman Coarse Wares, Cooking Wares and Amphorae in the Mediterranean. Archaeology and Archaeometry* (LRCW 4) and *La céramique médiéval en Méditerranée* (CERAMM). The former event was held at the University of Thessaloniki in April 2011, and included 18 papers about Greek sites, or Greek distributions of particular wares, or the wider distributions of wares now identified as originating in the Greek-Aegean space. The seventh Congress of the Medieval series was held in Thessaloniki in 1999 and the ninth was held in Venice in 2010. Also within these last few years, in 2006, the Archaeological Institute for Macedonian and Thracian Studies organized the first comprehensive conference dedicated exclusively to the burgeoning Late Roman ceramic material from Greek excavations, material which was effectively contextualized by the speakers and is now published (Papanikola-Bakirtzi and Kousoulakou [2010]). In these important ways, Greek material becomes properly integrated into the wider Late Roman assemblage.

The very broad front along which the archaeologies of Late Roman and Byzantine Greece advance is meanwhile better represented by recent festschriften and the published proceedings of the conference *Medieval and Post-medieval Greece. The Corfu Papers* (Bintliff and Stöger [2009]). The volume in honour of Professor Nikos Nikonanos (*Nikonanos Festschrift*) includes no less than 38 papers concerning Byzantine archaeology and art

history (though primarily the latter) in which members of the Archaeological Service and the universities of Greece present and interpret monuments both religious and secular in ways that continue to be of undoubted value. Much of this work is based upon the never-ending requirements and discoveries of heritage management, and its careful publication is a constant source of useful material. There is also one excellent example of the forensic confrontation of Byzantine manorial archives with archaeology, which is especially possible across northern Greece (Macedonia and Thrace), namely the reidentification by N. Zikos of the ‘Pyrgos tis Apollonias’ (Karyani, Nomos Kavalas) in the Athonite archives. These types of identifications, and their accompanying archaeological projects, are a vast collective long-term effort (in which your contributor is also engaged at **Thisive [Kastorion]**), and work to the substantial mutual benefit of both archaeology and history. Your contributor is constantly amazed by airy statements made by archaeologists (including one in the festschrift for Professor Tim Gregory) to the effect that ‘Greece lacks Byzantine archives’. Not only are there many, but their value is widely transferrable beyond their topographic points of reference.

The volume in honour of Professor Gregory (Caraher *et al.* [2008]) illustrates a rigorous new reflection on the techniques and interpretation of multi-period Greek field surveys and its implications for the parabola of Late Roman ‘expansion’; the value of a long-term commitment to a major urban excavation (that of Corinth) and to the study of its *chora*; the Byzantine construction of ‘sacred landscapes’; and some of the challenges of the confrontation of texts and archaeology. *Medieval and Post-medieval Greece. The Corfu Papers* (Bintliff and Stöger [2009]) illustrates most comprehensively the breadth of the front along which the archaeology of post-Roman Greece now advances: the mutually advantageous collaborations with environmental archaeologists (two projects); the combination of Medieval Byzantine with post-Byzantine archaeology and with historical enquiry (most projects); the articulation of the role and impact of cultural forces, such as those that have shaped ‘Christian’ archaeology (in the contribution of W. Bowden); and the importance of region-wide ‘extensive’ surveys for the comprehension of post-Roman settlement patterns (for example, the Aetolia Survey). However, discussion of the broader conceptual framework is still generally underdeveloped, and therefore the value of the application of ‘theory’ to the raw data has yet to be demonstrated. Applications of Central Place Theory (for example, by J. Koder) and of ideas involving ‘Cultural Memory’ could have been cited and evaluated, as could the impact of the ‘Annales School’ and the impact (good and bad) of historical materialism on eastern European Byzantine archaeology. The attempt, albeit rather unsatisfactory, to apply a ‘body of theory’ to the post-Roman findings of the first intensive survey in Greece (the Melos Survey of 1974–1977) should definitely have been cited! The actual complexity of many Byzantine archaeologists’ engagements with history (and its theories) and with archaeological, geographical and cultural concepts, deserved to be acknowledged. In short, there has, as yet, been no clear demonstration of the superiority, let alone viability, of an alternative approach to those that are being rather tentatively developed. So the present reflection should be seen as a summons to a more rigorous discussion.

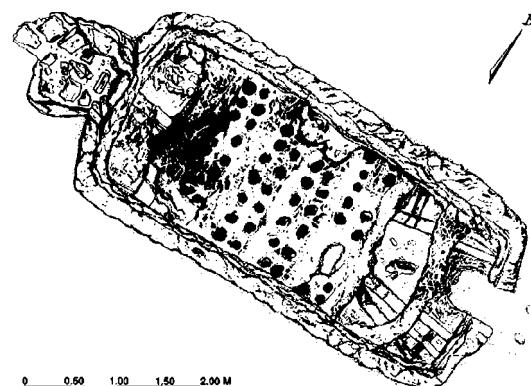
Meanwhile, data from pure research, rescue archaeology (see Figs. 155, 156) and basic heritage management keeps on accumulating. A related development that is positive for regional archaeology, but at the same time challenging for libraries and calling for endless vigilance by all students, is the publication by the Ephoreias of Byzantine Antiquities of their own bulletins and databases (so far mostly in hard copy, but at least one is on DVD). The 9<sup>th</sup> EBA (Thessaloniki and Central Macedonia) publishes *Tetrapádia Archaiologías*, which began to appear in 2000, and has aspects of what is familiar to field officers as a ‘Sites and Monuments Record’ whilst also including the collections of historic churches. Volume 5 is a substantial work of reference (at 650 pages) about the monuments of the Nomoi of Thessaloniki, Kilkis and Pieria. Volume 6 (2010) by C. Striker concerns dendrochronology and its contribution to Byzantine studies. The Aegean Dendrochronology Project has collected many samples in Greece. The 10<sup>th</sup> EBA (covering the Chalkidiki) publishes an annual bulletin on its work, *H Δεκάτη*, which remains ahead of *ADelt.* Volume 2 covers the years 2005–2006 and volume 3 is in press. Parts of the text are bilingual, in Greek and English, and every activity of the Ephoria (excavation, planning, restoration and conservation) is illustrated by informative high-quality colour images. The bulk of these bulletins (which can reach almost 100 pages) is devoted to longer reports than could ever be accommodated in *ADelt.* The 12<sup>th</sup> EBA (now eastern Macedonia) publishes an occasional series of reports on its major projects (such as the 14<sup>th</sup>-century fortress at Pythio, Byzantine Empythion, in the Nomos Evrou, and the Byzantino-Ottoman aqueduct of Kavala), a series which does not include the two works about western Thrace mentioned already. The reader will note that while I have only been able to refer to three Ephoriai so far, this is a significant, but highly dispersed publishing activity, which makes available both raw data and an intermediate level of report between the provisional and the final.

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155. Athens, Agora: Middle Byzantine ceramics found during 2010 in Section BΘ. © ASCSA.



156. Mikrothives: Byzantine kiln. © Ministry of Culture and Tourism: 7<sup>th</sup> EBA.