8 – THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF THE CERAMICS FOUND IN BOEOTIA: A SHORT INTRODUCTION

8.1 Introduction
In this chapter I will try to sketch a preliminary framework for the socio-economy in Medieval and Post-Medieval Boeotia in which the production and distribution of goods (or pottery) must have taken place through the centuries. It is not my aim to present a detailed socio-economic history of Medieval and Post-Medieval Boeotia; the emphasis will be rather on structural socio-economic factors which enabled production and distribution of pottery within Boeotia. Questions raised here are, for instance, where pottery production centres could have functioned in the Boeotian landscape, and in what way the Boeotian infrastructure may have influenced the distribution of pottery for local use and export.

Written sources were explored to gather information on the social and economic context in which the Medieval and Post-Medieval potters could have operated. For the Byzantine and Frankish periods in Boeotia I have mainly used the secondary literature, in which these written sources are collected, discussed or summarized. For the Byzantine period, for instance, I have relied upon the publications of Alan Harvey, David Jacoby, Angeliki Laiou, Archibald Dunn, as well as the volumes of the Tabula Imperii Byzantini on Hellas and Negroponte by Johannes Koder and Friedrich Hild (Koder 1973; Koder & Hild 1976; Jacoby 1991-92; 1994; Harvey 1982-83; 1989; Laiou 1980-81; 1982; 1990; Dunn 1995). Peter Lock has presented, in general, the written documents of the Late Byzantine/Frankish period in Greece (Lock 1997).

For the Ottoman period in Boeotia, things are different. For this era, an important anchorage was provided by the fact that the Boeotia Project had access to very detailed Ottoman tax registers, which gave information about all sorts of economic output and resources in the research area. These registers were translated and studied by the Dutch Ottomanist Machiel Kiel (e.g. Kiel 1992; 1997). I make grateful use of his findings here. Further material was provided by the Ottomanist Suraiya Faroqhi, who published in general about merchants, markets and artisans in the Ottoman Empire (e.g. Faroqhi 1995).

Finally, scattered but often illuminating information on towns, the conditions of transport and communications in the Turkish and Early Modern periods can be found in the accounts of Western travellers (antiquarians, geographers etc.), who travelled in Boeotia from the late 15th to the 19th centuries.

8.2 The Boeotian infrastructure: settlements and routes
A fundamental part of the socio-economic background of the production and distribution of pottery in Boeotia is of course formed by the infrastructure of the area in Post-Roman times. The major features of that infrastructure were the two major towns (Thebes and Livadheia), the importance of the ports, the rural settlements, the land and sea routes (see fig. 8.1).

The importance of regional infrastructure for the production and distribution of pottery in a given time has been stressed in earlier research (Moorhouse 1983). It has been convincingly argued, for instance, that distribution patterns of other consumption goods may point to the directions in which pottery moved and, perhaps, the extent to which rural settlements located away from the major roads made use of pots from different sources (Hodder 1974). It seems clear that in general the land and sea trade systems functioned as the arteries along which pottery travelled. Research on Medieval settlements in Britain has shown that both the pattern of settlement and the road system in an area were of particular importance to the pattern of distribution of pottery (Moorhouse 1978, 16).

Here, I will discuss the main features of the Boeotian infrastructure in Post-Roman times, and their relevance for the production and distribution of goods (or pottery) over time in the region. These main features are the towns, the ports, the rural settlements, the land routes and the sea routes.
8.2.1 towns (figs. 8.2-3)

Thebes – Late Roman Thebes grew into the administrative centre for church and state in Central Greece during Byzantine times.[1] It was made the capital of the province (thema) of Hellas at the end of the 7th century, as well as an autocephalous archbishopric by the late 8th century (Koder & Hild 1976, 269-70; Dunn 1995, 757). The town became densely populated during the 12th century and was even acquiring new suburbs outside its walls (Dunn 1995, 769). Long-term excavations in the city centre of Thebes revealed a densely populated Medieval settlement with narrow streets on the Kadmeia Hill (Symeonoglou 1985; Harvey 1989, 218-9).

The town was located in the midst of a relatively fertile area, functioning thus as a large market for the agricultural and pastoral products of the region. This part of Central Greece was supplying Constantinople with significant quantities of wheat in the 11th century (Dunn 1995, 770).

Furthermore, Thebes was internationally known for its manufacture of high-quality silk textiles, red-dyed with kermes and purple-dyed with marine molluscs, by the 11th century (in general, Jacoby 1991-92; Dunn 1992, 290-91; see also Rackham 1983, 332-33 for references on kermes in later times). Silk was one of the most important national products in the Byzantine economy, both for use within the Empire and for exports. In an economy with a limited money supply, silk was even used as a supplementary currency, enabling the Emperor to pay a portion of salaries in silk (Oikonomides 1997, 147). Furthermore, Thebes high-quality silk cloths were also used as diplomatic gifts during the reign of Alexios III (1195-1203 AD) (Jacoby 1991-92, 467). The 12th century bishop of Athens, Michael Choniates, repeatedly complained that the Thebans were treated more leniently than the Athenians by tax-collectors, although Athens was not as famous as Thebes or Corinth for the quality of its cloth manufactures (Jacoby 1991-92, 488 and note 200).

However important as a regional centre, Thebes did not escape the apparent economic downfall in Greek lands during ‘the Dark Ages’ of the 7th-9th centuries. The settlement contracted to the Kadmeian Hill during the 7th century, and there is evidence of a prolonged abandonment of the other parts of the town (Symeonoglou 1985; Harvey 1989, 29).

The petty currency of small-scale transactions seems to reappear in Boeotia in the 9th century, during the reign of Theophilos (829-842 AD) (Dunn 1995, 765 and note 58; Galani-Krikoy 2000). A sign of the renewed economic vitality in Thebes is that there was probably a bronze coin mint operating from the late 11th century onward (Harvey 1989, 5; Hendy 1985, 310-12, 424-28, 435-37). In an attempt to cope with a livelier and growing degree of exchange and with a lower price-structure, this minted money had to facilitate a market in which silver coins had too high a value. The 12th century coin hoards from Central Greece seem indeed to
indicate a relatively high degree of monetisation of the local economy (Dunn 1995, 766; Galani-Krikoy 2000).

Written sources underline the importance of Thebes as an agricultural and industrial centre in the Middle Byzantine period. The 12th century Arab geographer Idrisi called ‘Istibas’ a flourishing city, and referred to Thebes as a great centre of agricultural production.[2]

His contemporary, the Byzantine statesman and historian Niketas Choniates, wrote of the ‘traditional wealth and fame of the town’, and referred to its commercial activity.

In spite of its inland location, Thebes attracted many foreigners in the Middle Byzantine period because of its agricultural and pastoral products, as well as its silk industry (Jacoby 1991-92; Dunn 1995, 769-70). Among them were Venetian and Genoese merchants who had been active in Thebes as early as the 11th century. The Venetians were engaged in business in Thebes already in 1071 AD (Jacoby 1991-92, 494-95 and note 241; id. 1994, 352 and note 15). The town became part of the Italian long-distance trade system from the 12th century onwards.

In the Ottoman census lists of the 15th and 16th centuries Thebes figured as the main centre of a large district (kaza) in the sanjak (sub-province) of Egriboz, including more than 100 villages. In 1570 AD Thebes had four mosques, two hamams, two schools and a caravanserai (Kiel 1999). The tax registers show that the Theban economy was based on the production of wheat, wine, cotton, wool and silk and on the breeding of sheep. The city appears to have been a fairly rich place which even supplied Attica with grain (Kiel 1987, 120).

During the 16th century the population of Thebes was almost entirely Christian, consisting in 1540 AD of 1290 Christian households, 300 unmarried men and 192 widows, besides 81 Muslim households with 25 unmarried young men and a group of 96 Jewish households. This gives a total of ca. 6500 to 7500 inhabitants in Thebes alone. According to Kiel, the year 1540 AD marked the limit of population growth for Thebes during the 16th century (Kiel 1992).

The 1570 tax register shows that the expansion of its population had come to a standstill, but economic life was further intensified. Between the years 1506 AD and 1570 AD, cotton production rose fivefold and the production of wine and silk doubled, as did the number of water mills, the market dues and the revenue of the public weighing house (kantar) (Kiel 1992, 406 and tables 5a-b). The city was even a centre for the manufacture of tobacco pipes, made of meerschaum. Meerschaum (called ‘sipiolithos’ in Modern Greek) is a hydrous silicate of magnesium, which is very light and can float in water. The mineral can be found in the area around Thebes.

Fig. 8.2 Painting of the town of Thebes by Hugh William Williams (1773-1829 AD), ca. 1819 AD (after Tsigakou 1995, pl. 12).

Fig. 8.3 Painting of the town of Livadheia by William Walker (1780-1863 AD), ca. 1804 AD (after Tolias 1995, fig. 29).
Observations of 17th century travellers seem to confirm the picture of Thebes as a prosperous and densely populated town (see also fig. 8.2). In 1654 AD Sieur du Loir remarked that Thebes was about the same size as Athens, but better provided with all the necessities of life (Sieur Du Loir 1654, 330). The French doctor Jacob Spon and his British companion George Wheler, who visited Thebes in the 17th century, reported that the town had perhaps 3000 or 4000 souls, two mosques and several churches (Spon & Wheler 1679, 55). They also mentioned that the houses inside the walls were compactly built, ‘higher and much better’ than elsewhere in the country.

This last observation is confirmed by the Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi, who was at Thebes in 1668 AD and noticed there elegant and decorated, stone-built and spacious houses (Yiannopoulos 1969; see also Kiel 1999). He counted seventeen quarters in Thebes inhabited by Greeks, six quarters by Muslims and one quarter by Jews, with approximately 2500 houses in the entire town. According to Evliya, the mosque of Egribozlu Ahmed Pasha was the most delicate, as well as the most artistically made and largest building at Thebes. An icon of St. Luke from ca. 1700-1720 AD, still to be seen in the Cathedral of Thebes, probably depicts this mosque with a number of domes and vaults.[5] However, not a single stone has been preserved of this mosque.

The British traveller Richard Pococke observed in 1745 AD that the outlines of Thebes, situated in a plain, measures one mile at least. It was the residence of an archbishop, as well as of a governor (voivode) and of a judge (kadi). One could count in Thebes, according to Pococke, 2000 Greek, 70 Jewish and 1000 Turkish houses (Pococke in Cramerus 1779, 208-9).

Two centuries later, this flourishing picture of Thebes seems to have changed into a grimmer one. In 1806 AD, the American Nicolas Biddle called Thebes a city of no more than 1500 or 2000 souls (Biddle 1806 in McNeal 1993, 109). According to the British traveller J.C. Hobhouse, Thebes was now a very poor town, containing about 500 houses, mostly of wood, and inhabited chiefly by Turks. It had two mosques, four churches, and there was further nothing worthy of notice in this place (Hobhouse 1813, 278).

Almost half a century later, the French writer and diplomat Eugène Yemeniz was a bit more optimistic. He suggested in 1845 AD that the population of Thebes was ‘numerous, animated and not without means’. The central road was surrounded by picturesque houses with shop-windows beneath which contained all kinds of things attracting customers (Yemeniz 1845, 256-57). His fellow countryman, Henri Belle, made forty years later the same observation. He described Thebes as composed of one large road, surrounded by small two-storey houses, of which the ground floor consisted of little shops (boutiques) (Belle 1881, 65).

Livadheia – From the 14th century onwards, Livadheia to the North-West gradually grew more important in Boeotia.[6] The town, seat of a bishopric, consisted of a cluster of houses below a well-bastioned square castle on a steep conical hill. This fortress was the stronghold of a small group of Catalan mercenaries, called the Grand Company, who took control of Central Greece after the battle of Skripou in 1311 AD. During the 14th century, Livadheia had Catalan settlers next to Greeks until it was occupied by the Turks in 1394 AD.

Though not as large as Athens, Livadheia became the seat of a kadilik and one of the largest cities in Central Greece during the Turkish period (see also fig. 8.3). It had an Ottoman garrison of twenty-two soldiers bearing Muslim Turkish names from the sanjak (sub-province) of Egriboz, because of its large and strong castle. Furthermore, a civil Muslim population of 51 households and 25 bachelors was settled in the town (Kiel 1997, 324).

Livadheia had altogether 237 families in the 1466-67 AD Ottoman tax register. This amounted to a total population of roughly 1000-1100 inhabitants, of which about 30% were Muslims (Kiel 1997, 325).[4] The 15th century Italian traveller Giovan-Maria Angioiello called Livadheia a place ricco di mercantia, e altre cose necessarie alla vita humana – ‘rich with merchandise, and all the other things which are necessary for human life’ (Reinhard 1913, 32).

During the 16th century, the Ottoman tax registers give information on the growing number of inhabitants (including a community of 36 Jewish families coming from the West), as well as of the foundation of Islamic institutions in Livadheia (among them lodgings for travellers, maintained from the rents of shops, watermills and gardens in or near the town) (Kiel in Bosworth et al. 1986, 772). In the late 16th century registers Livadheia counted five Turkish mosques, two Islamic schools, a Dervish convent and a hamam (hot bath). The Christians
had at least four churches (Kiel 1997). The Ottoman traveller Evliya Celebi visited Livadheia in 1667-68 AD. According to him, the town contained 2020 spacious and prosperous houses, inhabited by Muslims and Christians, as well as fountains and coffee shops. The population included many rich and notable persons, among them a voivode (representative of the Sultan) commanding 200 men (Kiel in Bosworth et al. 1986, 773).

The Western travellers Jacob Spon and George Wheler seem to confirm these numbers. For the 17th century, they mentioned that the town was large and populous and that it was mainly inhabited by Turks and Greeks (among whom only a few Jews), living from the production of woollen cloth and trade in corn and rice. By this time, the Turks had five or six mosques, and the Greeks as many churches. Spon and Wheler also mentioned a caravanserai, as well as water mills in the town centre (Spon & Wheler 1679, 49-50).

The British traveller Richard Pococke passed through Livadheia about 60 years later, in 1745 AD. He counted only 650 houses in the town, 50 of which were inhabited by Jews, while the rest was divided by an equal number of Christians and Turks. According to him, the Christians had three churches (Pococke in Cramerus 1779, 206). It is possible that Pococke’s number is not totally reliable, because the French traveller Pouqueville, visiting the town shortly before 1800 AD, counted at least 2000 households in Livadheia (Pouqueville 1820, 159-175).

We can notice this last number again in the travellers’ accounts of the early 19th century. Henry Holland, travelling in 1815 AD, also noted 2000 houses in Livadheia, ‘many of them very large and inhabited by wealthy and respectable Greeks’. He counted five mosques with minarets, but the Muslim-Turkish population was apparently quite small (Holland 1815, 395).

Livadheia was considered by the British traveller and geographer William Leake as a town with ‘a greater air of opulence than any place in Northern Greece, not even excepting Ioannina’ (Leake 1835, 118). The town had in Leake’s time circa 1500 large houses, of which 150 only were Turkish. Apparently, Leake only counted the large houses: they had spacious chambers and galleries ‘in the Turkish manner’, and were surrounded for the most part with gardens. Leake’s fellow countryman, the traveller J.C. Hobhouse, called Livadheia around the same time a place of considerable trade and counted as

many houses. According to him, the town contained 1500 stone houses, many of them in very good condition. Only one hundred of the families living at Livadheia were Turkish; the rest were Christians. There were six mosques in the town, as well as six churches (Hobhouse 1813, 260).

In the mid 19th century, the Frenchman Eugène Yemeniz considered the town as ‘delicate, picturesque and original’. Its houses lay one by one on the two shores of the river Hercina. He mentioned a small church as well as small minarets in the city centre. The roads of Livadheia were, according to him, lively and almost all converted into bazaars, where ‘textiles of a thousand colours’ were on display (Yemeniz 1845, 295).

Of the 19th century travellers, the American Nicolas Biddle was not so charmed by Livadheia. He called it a tolerably large town, built on a declivity of a hill. He described the houses, however, in general as mean, the streets badly built and there were few houses decent to live in. According to his report, only the Logothetis family had a really charming house, in which Biddle was quite well accommodated (Biddle 1806 in McNeal 1993, 104). The house of the Logothetis family survived as an official monument in the city centre of Modern Livadheia today.

8.2.2 Ports (Figs. 8.4-5)

In Medieval and Post-Medieval times, the port of Euripos/Negroponte (modern Chalkis) guarded the narrows between the Boeotian mainland and the island of Euboea (see fig 8.4). During the Byzantine period, its harbour facilities had both military and commercial functions. Euripos/Negroponte was an important harbour for the Imperial fleet (basilikon ploimon), and it had ship yards during the Middle Byzantine period (Koder & Hild 1976, 102).

Euripos/Negroponte was the most convenient port for access to Thebes and it was the main outlet for products from Boeotia. It acquired greater importance as the agricultural production of the region and the industrial production of Thebes intensified. The port was also a centre for fishermen of marine molluscs, which were used as a purple dye in the Boeotian silk industry (Koder & Hild 1976, 104).

Furthermore, Euripos/Negroponte was the dominant port in Central Greece for inter-regional sea connections. After 1082 AD, it was one of the ports listed
in the Venetians’ privileges, together with Demetrias (Koder & Hild 1976, 102). Euripos/Negroponte and other ports of the Western and Northern Aegean (together with their hinterlands) became not only the object of Western commercial penetration in their own right, but were also on the route from the West to the Capital of the Byzantine Empire.

Between the years 1261-1400 AD, Euripos/Negroponte was an important trade centre with dealings between the Cyclades, Crete, Thessaloniki and Constantinople, as well as a storage centre for cloth from the West. According to Johannes Koder, it had a Northern and Southern harbour. He suggested that the latter harbour was used as an anchorage place and depot, and probably as port for transit merchandise to Constantinople, Venice, Athens, the Peloponnese and Crete (Koder 1973, 85-6). The Northern harbour was, according to Koder, smaller and mainly used for the local exchange of goods in the Northern Gulf of Euboea and with Pteleon (Koder 1973, 86). Contrary to Koder, David Jacoby, however, thinks that Negroponte had only one harbour (D. Jacoby, pers. comm.).

In Ottoman times, exports of timber from Boeotia took place through the port of Euripos/Negroponte, where the Turks were in the majority (among them a garrison of 357 men) (Angelomatis-Tsougarakis 1990, 31; Kiel in Bosworth et al. 1986, 772). In 1745 AD, the British traveller Richard Pococke recorded that the port was ‘only’ twelve miles from Thebes. A basfa and a commander (aga) of the Janissaries resided in Euripos/Negroponte; the first one being involved with the administration of justice over a large region which extended to Salona/Amphissa in the West (Pococke in Cramerus 1779, 204). A century later, the Frenchman Alexandre Buchon counted within the interior of the fortress 300 Muslims, 200 Jews and two mosques. In his time, the town consisted of 5000 Christians (Longnon 1911, 27).

Other (minor) ports in Boeotia were mainly situated on the Northern coast during Byzantine times: at Anthedon, at Larymna, at Aulis and at Oropos (Koder & Hild 1976, 104). Excavations at the port of Anthedon have revealed that all the visible remains of the harbour works belonged to the 4th to 7th centuries (Schläger, 246)

Fig. 8.4 Engraving of the port of Negroponte in the Turkish period (after Koder 1973).
Blackman & Schäfer 1968; see fig. 8.5). Later pottery, which was found on the sea bed in the harbour and in the cement of the harbour works, showed that the port of Anthedon was also used during the 12th century (cf. Hayes in Hood 1970, 37, note 9). According to the Byzantinist Archibald Dunn, a large settlement of the Middle Byzantine period existed at Anthedon, which had preserved its name in the 12th century and must be Cavo di Lucaza (i.e. Loukisia) mentioned on an early 14th century portulan chart (Medieval book of navigation) (Dunn 1995, 762, note 43).

After 1204 AD, a few minor ports became more significant on the Southern coast of Boeotia: for instance, at Livadostro (Riva d’Ostro) and at Dombrena (Koder & Hild 1976, 102; Lock 1995, 262). Livadostro was mainly used by the Catalans as an outlet for Athens, having access with Brindisi and the West, because Venice prevented their ships to use the Aegean coast for some time (Setton 1975). According to the historian Peter Lock, the harbour facilities at Livadostro (Riva d’Ostro) were rudimentary. He considered the port little more than a roadstead guarded by a watchtower on the beach. All cargoes would have to be rowed ashore. Trade through it must have been limited, and quick access with the ports of Southern Italy seems to have been ‘its chief recommendation’ (Lock 1995, 117 and 262).

AppARENTLY, during the 16th century Livadostro was still active, because the Ottoman tax registers mention here port dues (H. Kiel, pers comm.).

8.2.3 RURAL SETTLEMENTS (FIG. 8.6)
Since ancient times, Boeotia has been an agriculturally rich and relatively densely populated region, which has apparently been inhabited continuously throughout the ages. Also rural sites from the Medieval and Post-Medieval periods are ubiquitous in the research area, which is still cultivated today (Bintliff 1995; 1996; 1997). A total of 74 sites with Post-Roman finds have been recorded during the field survey of the Boeotia Project (e.g. Vroom 1996; 1997; 1998a; 1998b).

Although the region was apparently continuously inhabited, the settlement pattern in Medieval and Post-Medieval Boeotia was never static. The archaeological evidence indicates the shrinkage or abandonment of the urban centres, as well as an apparent depopulation of the countryside in the Early Byzantine period.

The recovery must have started earlier than the 11th century. The importance of the church of the Dormition at Skripou and the continued architecture of the church of St. Gregory the Theologian at Thebes in the 9th century is to be noted (cf. Soteriou 1924; Megaw 1966; Trombley 2000, 990, note 2). The revival of the urban centre of Thebes in the 11th and 12th centuries has a parallel development in the Boeotian countryside, where a substantial increase of finds from this period is evident. This seems in accordance with the views that the middle decades of the 12th century witnessed a general population increase all over the Byzantine Empire (Hendy 1989, 11; Harvey 1989). From the survey results in Boeotia, we know that the research area contained at least 28 settlements with pottery finds from the 11th and 12th centuries against a mere three of the 9th and 10th centuries. These settlements seem to have been small nucleated hamlets distributed evenly across the landscape, both in lowland areas and on hilltops (Bintliff 1996).

The written sources confirm that the second half of the 12th century was a period of prosperity for Boeotia, as it was for its capital Thebes. An 11th century fiscal register for Eastern Boeotia, the much discussed Cadaster of Thebes, shows intensification of agricultural production and cultivation of former wasteland during the 11th century (Svoronos 1959; Lemerle 1979; Harvey 1982-83 with further literature; Dunn 1995, 768-69; Bintliff 1995, 4; Neville 2001). According to the historian Alan Harvey, this agricultural expansion led to population increase and acted eventually as a stimulus to the urban economy. As more land was cultivated, the wealth of the landowning elite increased and their stronger.
Furthermore, differences in peasant wealth in the rural communities from the 9th century onward formed the first significant sign of social stratification in the rural and urban economy (Hendy 1989, 9). A detailed but mutilated fiscal register for Central Greece, the so-called Prakti kon of Athens, which describes many properties in Attica and South-Eastern Boeotia in the 12th century, seems to demonstrate, for instance, that the majority of the peasantry was not impoverished (cf. Hendy 1989, 9 and Dunn 1995, 770-71 with further literature on this register). From 14 villages and 88 rural households in the Asopos Valley and Attica, 33% (or 37%) owned a pair of oxen, 24% (or 27%) owned one ox, while 31% (or 35%) were categorised as lacking their own oxen, though they were not without possessions. In short, apparently 65% of the rural households mentioned in this register could be described as economically successful despite the status of the farmers as tenants (Dunn 1995, 770-71).

The archaeological material suggests that the demographic and economic pinnacle for Medieval Boeotia seems to be in the 13th century, that is to say: in the Frankish period. At the beginning of the 13th century the Franks took possession of a settled and relatively flourishing land in which the population was growing (Lock 1995). The results from the Boeotia survey seem to show that the majority of the Boeotian population now lived in the countryside in nucleated hamlets and villages (Bintliff 1996, 5-6). Between 1325-28 AD, Boeotia was clearly talked of (and promoted) in the West as ‘a desirable place, as a land of prosperity and felicity’ (Lock 1997, 310 and notes 22-23 with further literature). In addition, monetisation and trade advanced in Frankish Greece in the 13th century (Lock 1995).

A most dramatic change of land use seems to have occurred in the 14th and early 15th centuries, when the Boeotian landscape almost became deserted. This process of massive depopulation was probably caused by the more or less simultaneous events: of the Plague from 1348 AD onwards (it is assumed that 1/3 of the Greek population succumbed to the Black Death), of increased raiding by Turkish pirates, as well as of destructive warfare in the region between the Franks, the Byzantine Empire and the Ottomans.

In the later 15th century, despite plagues, raids and wars, the population in Boeotia seems to increase by natural means and by immigration. The Dukes of Athens
and Thebes invited, for instance, large scale re-settlement into the region by the immigration of Albanian clans (Bintliff 1996, 5; 2000).

For the Turkish period, the Ottoman tax registers indicate that the Boeotian economy and population apparently took off as soon as the Pax Ottomanaica was established in the late 15th century, and that they flourished during the 16th century. The figures in the Ottoman census statistics show at least a spectacular growth (studied by Machiel Kiel). This is matched by a substantial growth in settlement numbers based on archaeological field survey in the area (collated by Sbonias 1999). The Boeotian censuses indicate that the highpoint of population density is around 1540-1570 AD, as it was with the Ottoman Empire as a whole. The records show a severe decline in most communities during the 17th century, a slight recovery in the 18th century, but full recovery only in the final decades of the 19th century (Bintliff 1997; 2000).

After the War of Independence agriculture initially made a bad start in Boeotia. The new Greek state took over the land previously occupied by the Turks, with the aim of redistributing it amongst Greek farmers. This proved to be difficult both politically and practically, and much land was left uncultivated (Slaughter & Kasimis 1986). The beginning of wealth creation began only at the turn of the 20th century and took off more dramatically in the 1950s with the distribution of the fertile lands of the drained Lake Kopais amongst adjacent townships.

Villages in Boeotia grew and developed rapidly; most houses have since been improved, extended or entirely rebuilt (cf. Slaughter & Kasimis 1986; Stedman 1996 with more information on settlement locations, traditional house-types and the growth of villages in Early Modern Boeotia).

8.2.4 land routes (figs. 8.1 and 8.7)
The most important road in Boeotia went from Lamia to the West through the Kephissos-valley, via Kopais Lake and Thebes plain, to Athens or Corinth in the East and South-east (Koder & Hild 1976, 95; cf. Belke 2002, 86-9 for the hierarchy in local roads during Byzantine times; see also fig. 8.1). Before the drainage of Lake Kopais, travellers used the low road between Livadheia and Thebes only during the dry summer months. The higher (or winter) route went from Livadheia, followed the foothills further inland from Koroneia to Evangelis-

tria and Mazi or Askra, and went then ultimately to Thebes (Stedman 1996, 180).

Another important road went from Thebes to the port of Euripos/Negroponte and was called the dimosia strata ('public street') in the 11th century Cadaster of Thebes, or via publica qua Thebas itur a Negroponte ('the public road which goes from Negroponte to Thebes') in the Frankish period (Koder & Hild 1976, 96). There were three other important routes in Boeotia: one, along the coast, from Euripos/Negroponte through Anthedon (Loukisia), Paralimni and Mouriki to Thebes. Another road was passing from Atalanti port via Orchomenos to Lake Kopais. The third one, via Kaparelli to Livadostro, connected Thebes with the Gulf of Corinth (Koder & Hild 1976, 97; see also fig. 8.1).

In Byzantine and Medieval times, the means of transportation were slow and frail in Greece. It took about three days to reach Adrianople (modern Edirne) from Constantinople and eight days from Thessaloniki to the Danube (Kahzdan & Epstein 1985, 49). Carrying cargo over land, a process burdened with a variety of tolls and the constant danger of banditry, must have been relatively costly and reduced in the 14th century because of warfare. The Byzantines used donkeys and mules for transportation; only under especially favourable circumstances were oxen used to draw carts (Kahzdan & Epstein 1985, 49). Until modern times, feet and mule back were still the only means of transport in the mountains of Central Greece (Bommeljé & Doorn 1996, 343).

During Ottoman times, the trade network continued on the main roads in Central Greece. From spring to the
beginning of winter, large organized expeditions of merchants (called caravans) moved on these roads during the daylight with some small intervals for rest (see fig. 8.7). Heavy goods were carried by wagon; in mountainous areas mules were the normal means of transport (İnalçik 1973, 146). Travellers on horseback or muleback accompanied the caravans; coaches were seldom used for such expeditions.

The journey was usually very dangerous, and the merchants and travellers were constantly armed. The 17th century Frenchman Robert de Dreux, for instance, observed a caravan with travellers and merchants in Boeotia, who travelled together to protect themselves against groups of bandits and thieves (Dreux in Pernot 1925, 139). Two centuries later his fellow countryman Eugène Yemeniz also remarked later that bandits made the Boeotian roads unsafe (Yemeniz 1869, 219).

According to the British traveller William Leake, the road from Livadheia to Thebes was not infrequently interrupted by robbers who established themselves at a pass with the name ‘Petra’ (Leake 1835, 137).

During the journey there were specific organized stopping places, called khani or caravanserai, where the caravans could temporally rest. A khan was a modest inn, where travellers could stay overnight, have a drink, take a simple meal, feed their animals and close deals with local sellers and buyers. These inns were often important landmarks, built in central places of the Ottoman Empire’s road network and indicating historic land routes and nodes of communication (Bommeljé & Doorn 1996, 347). Many inns were not located within a village, but often just outside or even in the middle of the countryside at geographically important sites (crossroads, mountain passes and river crossings). The construction of these khani was especially designed to resist the thieves’ attacks.

In Boeotia, the 17th century travellers Jacob Spon and George Wheler mentioned one khan at the entrance of Livadheia and two khani in Thebes (Spon & Wheler 1679, 47, 54). Richard Pococke mentioned only one khan in Thebes in 1745 AD (Pococke in Cramerus 1779, 209). A century later, Henri Belle remarked about a khan in Thebes, ‘from where there’s a rancid and stinking smell escaping which turns your stomach’ (Belle 1881, 65).

Also his contemporary, the German traveller Habbo Gerhardus Lolling, was not very charmed by this Theban inn and called it ‘ein höchst elendes Chani’ (Lolling 1989, 79). And the Frenchman Eugène Yemeniz described the interior of a 19th century khan on the border of Boeotia and Attica as ‘in perfect harmony with the rude and savage aspect of these places’ (Yemeniz 1854, 232).

According to the Greek historian Helen Angelomatis-Tsougarakis, who studied British travellers’ accounts of early 19th century Greece, there was no other khan on the road between Athens and Livadheia or Euripos/-Negroponte (modern Chalkis) than the ones on the border and the one in Thebes. This meant that in the whole of Attica and a great part of Boeotia there were just two stop-overs for travellers. She rightly stated, therefore, that ‘considering the fact that this was the only main road connecting three important towns as well as Northern Greece with the Morea, this lack of any provision for accommodation seems quite unusual’ (Angelomatis-Tsougarakis 1990, 54-55).
land, especially with respect to long-distance trade. Transporting goods by sea was less expensive and more efficient, although dangerous (e.g. storm risks at sea, pirates) and with restrictions. The sailing-season was not only limited by weather, but also by law: the Theodosian Code restricted maritime trade to between 13 April and 15 October (Dark 2001, 90). Byzantine cargo ships were small (no greater than 16-25 metres in length) and slow (Pryor 2002; Koder 2002, 120-24). According to the historian Antoniadis-Bibicou, their average capacity was 8.5 – 17 cubic metres (Antoniadis-Bibicou 1966, 132). It has been suggested that the maximum speed of these trading ships was in favourable conditions of around 3.5 knots but possibly no more than six knots (Dark 2001, 90; Pryor 2002, table 2.2).

The historian Archibald Dunn has assembled the written sources from the Byzantine era for the Boeotia Project in which Boeotian trade is mentioned (A. Dunn, unpublished report for Boeotia Project). Documents of the 10th century mention merchant ships travelling between Italy and Boeotia and Phokis. By the 1070s, ‘the time of the earliest surviving Venetian references to commercial transactions in Boeotia, high-value cargoes were involved. One was worth 300 pounds in silver denarii; another was worth 75 pounds in silver denarii. The cargoes being exported from Thebes were probably silk, the industry which made Thebes famous in the 12th century’ (A. Dunn, unpublished report for Boeotia Project).

Especially after the Fourth Crusade of 1204 AD, Thebes and Boeotia were inserted within the Venetian inter-regional maritime system. Before long the region developed into one of the heartlands for the Italian-dominated markets in the East (Koder & Hild 1976, 101; Lock 1995). The Venetian sea routes went, on the one hand, to Thessaloniki, Constantinople and the Black Sea; on the other hand, to the Italian ports (e.g. Venice), the Dalmatian coast, the Ionian Islands and Crete (Koder & Hild 1976, 101; Jacoby 1994). The Venetians tried to avoid the dangers of open sea and piracy by sailing along the Boeotian coast through the Gulf of Euboea. One portulan chart (Medieval book of navigation) described a route from the Eastern Peloponnesus via Euripos/Negroponte and Atalanti to Thessaloniki (Koder & Hild 1976, 102). Another portulan chart showed that the Gulf of Corinth was less important for the inter-regional sea trade (Koder & Hild 1976, 102).

The most important source of wealth in the 13th century was the silk industry at Thebes. Venetian references mentioned also trade with inland Boeotia, which exported wheat from Livadheia by way of the ports of Livadostro, Stiris (modern Antikyra) and Bidabos/Vidavi (modern Vitrinitsa) (Koder & Hild 1976, 102-3). In general, raw materials (which were used in the manufacture and dyeing of cloth and in the tanning of leather) were exported and manufactured goods (such as cloth from Flanders, Brabant and Northern Italy) were imported (Lock 1995, 257). Other important exports from Greece were grain, wine, olive-oil and olives, fruits, cheeses, honey and nuts (almonds and walnuts) (cf. Koder 2002, 113-15). The Greek harbours were used as stopping-places in the long-distance routes to the Black Sea and Egypt (Lock 1995, 253).

Next to this inter-regional trade system, there existed a local trade system of goods and persons by sea. Often these consisted of staple markets for local products (such as grain, wine, raisins, wax, honey, salt and fish) between Crete, Negroponte, Modon and Nauplion (Laïou 1980-81; Lock 1995, 252). The Aegean Sea was used as a transit centre for products from the East (Lock 1995, 253). Corinth and Thebes were the two most important centres of silk manufacturing in Central Greece during the 12th century, both received their raw material from neighbouring areas (such as the North-Western Peloponnesus) (Jacoby 1994b).

In addition, the fishing industry in Central Greece contributed to this local maritime trade system. Local transport was described by the 12th century bishop of Athens, Michael Choniates, as being carried out on fishermen’s boats. Furthermore, he mentioned fishermen of marine molluscs from Euripos, Karystos and Athens (Koder & Hild 1976, 104; Jacoby 1991-92, 481 and 492 on the purple fisher’s guild in Athens). Until the 13th century the fishing of Murex or marine molluscs, which were used as a purple dye in the textile production, was important for the silk industry at Thebes.

8.3 The Boeotian infrastructure: economic activities

Apart from the location of towns, ports, rural settlements, land and sea routes, there were also other factors which could be important for the distribution of material goods. The presence of craftsmen/artisans, of merchants,
of markets and fairs and of governing classes in towns, ports and rural settlements could, for example, initiate and influence exchange and distribution.

8.3.1 craftsmen/ artisans (fig. 8.9)
In Byzantine times, the craftsman/artisan and the merchant were often one and the same person; that is to say: a single person who produced and sold his wares (Oikonomides 1997, 144). In towns such as Thebes and Livadheia there must have been a variety of local craftsmen/artisans, for instance builders, carpenters, weavers, glass-blowers, wheelwrights and potters. Excavations in the Medieval centres of comparable towns such as Athens and Corinth have revealed physical evidence of such local workshops (glass factories, potters’ kilns etc.). Furthermore, the Book of the Eparch, which originates from the reign of Leo VI (886-912 AD) with later supplements, mentions the activities of 22 professional corporations of artisans in Constantinople that were controlled by the Eparch (the prefect) of this city (Mango 1980, 55 and note 69 with further literature).

Unfortunately, craftsmen/artisans from Boeotia are not easy to detect in the written sources of the Byzantine era. From the documents we only know that there were highly-skilled artisans, such as well trained dyers, weavers and tailors, operating in Thebes (Jacoby 1991-92). The manufacture of silk textiles, including the high-quality fabrics required by the imperial court, was exclusively carried out in private workshops, both on a domestic level as an industrial scale (Jacoby 1991-92, 467). There is reason to believe that guilds regulated the activity of silk workers and traders in 12th century Thebes, as they did elsewhere in the Byzantine Empire (Jacoby 1991-92, 492 and note 230).

The Theban silk industry employed both men and women. In a letter written between 1148 and 1154 AD the Byzantine scholar John Tzetzes praised the skill of the female silk weavers of Thebes (as well as the good running water in the area) (Jacoby 1991-92, 466 note 73). Furthermore, the Byzantine statesman and historian Niketas Choniates clearly stated that ‘the abducted artisans’ from Corinith and Thebes were often of low social rank, yet also seemed to suggest that Greek women of high social status skilled in weaving were among them (Jacoby 1991-91, 467-68, n. 83).

In 1147 AD, the Norman king Roger II conquered Thebes and carried off gold, silver, gold-lined cloth and some of the best silk workers (mainly Jews) to Palermo in Sicily (Koder, Hild & Soustal 1976, 270 with literature; Jacoby 1991-91, 463-66). However, this setback seems to have had little effect on the town’s industry. The Theban silk industry still prospered in the 1320s, the red samite it manufactured was exported then to Egypt (Jacoby 1994b).

According to the traveller Benjamin of Tudela, the Jewish population in Thebes alone amounted in 1160 AD to no less than 2000 people. He described them as ‘the most eminent manufacturers of silk and purple’ in all of Greece (Asher 1840, 47, 16.2). Nowadays, three Medieval stelai with Hebrew relief and incised inscriptions can still be seen in the courtyard of the Thebes Museum (cat. nos. 32126-8). They seem the only remaining evidence of the existence of a Jewish community in Thebes during the 14th century (cf. for the publication of these Hebrew inscriptions from

During the 16th century, Thebes produced its own school of Greek orthodox fresco- and icon painters. Frangos Katelanos and the two brothers Georgios and Frangos Kontaris were the chief exponents of this School of Thebes, whose surviving works can be found in a number of places in Greece (Chatzidakis 1966-69; 1974; Kiel 1990, 431-33 and fig. 1). The link between increased economic prosperity, population growth and expanding artistic activity seems to suggest that there was a wealthy group in Thebes, which was able to indulge in luxuries such as art.

In Ottoman times, Thebes was also a centre for the manufacture of tobacco pipes, made of meerschaum (a hydrous silicate of magnesium). The Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi visited the meerschaum quarries at Thebes in 1668 AD. He recorded that ‘of this white stone they make chibouk bowls, which they carve very beautifully’ (Evliya Çelebi in Yannopoulos 1969, 171).

The Western travellers Jacob Spon and George Wheler also visited a place near Thebes, where meerschaum was dug up. They reported that tobacco pipes were carved out of this ‘white hard stone’ at the quarry itself or in little shops (boutiques) in the city centre. The normal ones were sold for 5 aspres a piece, the best pipes for 9 or even 10 aspres (Spon & Wheler 1679, 54). However, by the time that J.C. Hobhouse and Colonel W.M. Leake visited Thebes at the beginning of the 19th century, this pipe production appears to have ceased all together (Hobhouse 1817, 234-35; Leake 1835, 222).

For the other Boeotian town Livadheia, on the other hand, we do not have much information about craftsmen/artisans working here during Ottoman times. In the tax register of 1506 AD we find among the 70 Muslim households seven tanners, two blacksmiths, a boza maker, a shopkeeper, a shoemaker and a dyer. About 60 years later, the 1570 register mentions no professions at all, although this may very well be the result of the changes in the system of recording the Ottoman tax registers. In many registers between the years 1570-1590 professions were not mentioned at all (Kiel 1997, 325). Apparently, there were Jewish brokers working in Livadheia and in Euripos/Negroponte during the 19th century (Angelomatis-Tsougarakis 1990, 159).

8.3.2 merchants (fig. 8.10)

Apart from the above-mentioned artisan-merchant, the Greek historian Angeliki Laiou distinguishes three other types of merchants operating in the Eastern Mediterranean during Byzantine and Medieval times (see in general, Laiou 1982).

The first of these were the small retail traders and pedlars or middle-range businessmen, who conducted the internal trade. These independently operating merchants frequented the local fairs of the towns to sell widely-consumed items. However, they worked only with small quantities of capital and merchandise, and they had no resources to organise trading on a large scale. Most of these middlemen were active on the local level, but some also went to Constantinople personally to sell their merchandise. This was not, however, something to be done on an individual basis. The Byzantine scholar Nicolas Oikonomides has drawn attention to the fact that all merchants who sold the same product joined forces together in a cartel, and thus could collectively negotiate with their colleagues in Constantinople (Oikonomides 1997, 151).

A second group of merchants were the naukleroi, the ship-owners or merchant-captains who operated as a guild. They transported not only merchandise on commission from others, but were also engaged in trade (especially in the Aegean and in the Black Sea). The ship-owner was usually also the captain of his ship (magister), and conducted trade for his own profit. It seems that this was not a particularly prestigious occupation. The important ship-owners of Constantinople had at least no special social prestige (Oikonomides 1997, 149).

Thirdly, there were the wealthy merchants and bankers with a somewhat larger capital, and a greater geographic radius of activity. Their rise is closely linked to the development of an urban economy, beginning in the 10th century. These wealthy merchants stood as a group somewhat apart from the rest of the urban population. A large, varied, but not exactly determinable proportion of this group were members of the aristocracy, sometimes of the same family (Laiou 1980-81, 201; 1982, 112).

All merchants and bankers had to face one economic reality: the Byzantine state controlled and protected imports and exports of goods, and had an exclusive monopoly over the trade of luxury items (mostly from abroad) (Hendy 1989, 19). Besides monopolies, the state
forbade the export of products included in the ‘list of obstructed goods’ (such as silk, purple dye and gold). The state controlled the market prices at a certain stable level. Byzantine merchants were first forced to sell their goods to foreigners and then to buy foreign goods with the money gained from this transaction. In this way, the ‘foreign exchange’ of Byzantine money was hindered (Herrin 1969-70).

**Italian merchants** – From the late quarter of the 11th century onwards, the situation changed in the Eastern Mediterranean. By that time, Venetian merchants (followed in the 12th century by Genoese and Pisan merchants) began to penetrate into the internal trade and maritime networks of the Byzantine Empire. Thanks to the commercial privileges granted them by the Byzantine Emperor, the Italian merchants could stay as long as they wanted, they enjoyed political and economic independence, and they did not had to pay the full 10% tax on sale of goods (Herrin 1969-70, 192).

Furthermore, according to Angeliki Laiou, they controlled the main prerequisites for international and internal trade: ‘communications through their fleets, the money markets through their elaborate banking and financial techniques, and the information mechanisms through their system of representatives in all important trade centres’ (Laiou 1980-81, 211).

Before long, the Venetians had established themselves in every commercial centre in the Empire (such as Thebes) and organised the export of Greek products. Written sources (such as the reference of a *taxegium de Stīves* in a document) reveal that Venetian merchants undertook regular voyages to Thebes as early as 1071-1073 AD (Jacoby 1994, 352 and note 15). They were interested in the silk as well as in the agricultural and pastoral products of the region, and organised the transport of these goods, overland and by sea, both to the great markets of the Empire and to foreign markets (Italy, Egypt and the Frankish states) (Dunn 1995, 770). Despite its inland location, Thebes had accommodated a resident colony of Venetian merchants by 1170 AD, where they were able to keep a close check on their interests and act as intermediaries for wealthier merchants with more extensive interests (Herrin 1969-70; Harvey 1989, 223). However, Constantinople was the predominant centre of exchange transactions and of the transit trade, and the Byzantine hinterland was an exporter of some food and raw materials (grain and provisions) and an importer of manufactured goods (cloth and soap) (Laiou 1980-81, 179-87).

Until recently it was thought that the Italian presence, even dominance, of Byzantine markets in the 12th century was an economic disaster both for the Byzantine state and for Byzantine society (e.g. Herrin 1969-70; Oikonomides 1997, 164-65). However, that picture seems too bleak. The stimulus given by the Italian merchants to Byzantine economic activity has often been ignored. The general view nowadays is, therefore, that the Venetian exports must have encouraged production, exchange, and monetisation in Constantinople, Corinth and Thebes (Laiou 1980-81, 188-89; Hendy 1989, 24; Dunn 1995, 770).

**Byzantine merchants** – The Byzantines engaged in trade were primarily involved in retail sales and not in large-scale activities. From the 11th century onwards, they played, in general, a service role to the Italians: they bought cloth and sold grain, skins, raw silk and wool, they invested their money, and the end product of their activity was channelled to Constantinople to be used locally or to be sent to Italy (Laiou 1980-81, 204 and 211). The Byzantine merchants had capital, sometimes quite substantial capital, but they invested it in a money and commodities market controlled by the Italians.

Angeliki Laiou studied the published and unpublished documents on Byzantine merchants of the Palaeologan period (ca. from the 13th to the 15th centuries) in the Venetian and Genoese archives (Laiou 1982). According to her, ‘the Byzantine merchant is an elusive figure. He is supposed to have played a dominant role in the Mediterranean until the 12th century, and to have controlled the internal trade of the Byzantine Empire, secure behind the protective barriers erected by a strong government’ (Laiou 1982, 96). However, the role of the merchants in the Aegean is not to be underestimated.

Laiou’s research shows that after the 12th century these merchants had rarely access to the Italian markets, and were hardly involved in long-distance trade. From 1261 to 1310 AD, the Byzantine traders dealt with small scale trade primarily in the Black Sea (slaves, a little grain, some fish) and in the Aegean (cloth and cochineal: red dye extracted from the ‘kermes’ beetle). The capital involved in these operations was normally very small (Laiou 1982, 100). From 1311 to 1352 AD, a proportion...
(18%) of Byzantine merchants and investors belonged to the aristocracy. Laiou explains this by the fact that the Byzantine aristocracy, having lost its lands to the Turks, by necessity turned to trade (Laiou 1982, 105). It is therefore no coincidence that during the final conquest by the Ottomans of the remaining parts of the Byzantine Empire, from 1353 to 1402 AD, the number of Byzantine traders in trade rose dramatically (Laiou 1982, 105-6).

During this second half of the 14th century the situation seems to have changed considerably in another respect, according to Laiou. The Byzantine merchants were now also trading in places far from home, and sometimes disposing of considerable capital (Laiou 1982, 118). There was a symbiotic (not competitive) trade in the Aegean in this period, linking Crete, Cyprus, Constantinople, Chios and Rhodos. Whereas the control of the Byzantine state declined in this period, a part of Byzantine society became more free and participated in the expansion of the economy which was taking place in the Eastern Mediterranean and in Italy (Laiou 1982, 118-20).

Ottoman merchants – Little is known about the economic background of the inhabitants of Ottoman Boeotia. There seems to be, however, no reason to think that the region missed out on the general trends in the Ottoman world. According to the historian Suraiya Faroqhi, very wealthy merchants were not common among the urban elites in the provinces of the Ottoman Empire, but the overall volume of internal trade grew steadily, especially during the 16th century. She argues that so many new inns (khans) and covered markets were built in this period that a considerable part of the growing urban population must have made a living in crafts and trade (Faroqhi 1995, 99).

Ottoman statesmen considered it good policy to encourage an ever-increasing flow of manufactured goods into the Empire (İnalçık 1973, 138). As a result, Greece also became an open market for European traders. During the 18th and 19th centuries, European merchants imported Western manufactured and colonial goods, and exported from the region raw materials and food (such as cereals, olive oil, silk, wax, valonia and currants). Most of the long-distance trade was dominated by the French and the Venetians (the last ones dominating the important harbours of Nafpaktos and Patras, as well as the Peloponnesus), but also British and Dutch merchants were active in the region. The internal trade was in the hands of local merchants, both Muslim and non-Muslim (Wagstaff & Frangakis-Syrett 1992, 79-81).

8.3.3 Markets (fig. 8.11)
Merchandise (including pottery) may pass from a village market to a provincial fair, and from there to a centre of interregional trade. The market and fair had very different functions. The market had as a centre for the surrounding villages never been entirely absent from the peasant economy: it provided basic foodstuffs and essentials for customers, was held usually weekly for one day only and was generally scattered (Hendy 1989, 25). It seems likely that common people bought most of what they needed at the market, as well as from itinerant merchants. There often existed permanent markets in

Fig. 8.11 Painting of the Marketplace (Bazaar) in Athens by Eduard Dodwell (1767-1832 AD), ca. 1801/1805-6 AD (after Tsigakou 1995, pl. 6).

Fig. 8.12 Modern fair (panigiri) in Thebes (photo: J. Vroom).
cities and ports: in Boeotia, for instance, at Thebes, Livadheia, Euripos/Negroponte and Ipsilantis.[8] These markets were on major route ways, and functioned as communication junctions, but also as economic centres.

According to the Byzantinist Nicolas Oikonomides, markets were increasing in number from the mid 9th to mid 11th centuries. Merchants from the provinces went as middlemen from market to market, and brought supplies to the villages on their routes (Oikonomides 1997, 150). Furthermore, the provincial cities were getting more important, and merchants began to establish themselves permanently in the marketplaces. We also find mention made of market fairs held outside Boeotia, such as Corinth, Halmyros and Negroponte (Oikonomides 1997, 151).

Between the years 1506 AD and 1570 AD, the market dues and the revenue of the public weighing house (kantar) at Thebes doubled, as did the production of wine and silk and the number of water mills (Kiel 1992, 406 and tables 5a-b). According to the 17th century travellers Spon and Wheler, however, Thebes had a ‘scantily provided’ bazaar with small shops and Euripos/Negroponte one ‘of the poorest sort’ (Spon & Wheler 1679, 54).

Livadheia is another example of an important market town in Boeotia during Ottoman times, which was also involved in external trade (Angelomatis-Tsougarakis 1990, 66). From Livadheia, Boeotian products were distributed to European markets, as well as to Thessaly and to the Eastern Greek Mainland. In the tax register of 1570 AD we find a tax yield of 11,716 akçe (silver coins) of market dues and dues of the public weighing house (Kiel 1992, 325). The town traded during the 17th century in wool (which was produced in Livadheia), in grain and rice (which were exported all over Greece) (Spon & Wheler 1679, 49). The market of Livadheia was attended by peasants from the nearby villages of Mount Parnassus (Angelomatis-Tsougarakis 1990, 183).

Finally, from the Ottoman tax registers in Boeotia we know that the rural settlement of Rastamites, now Ipsilantis, also had a market (panigiri) during the Turkish period (M. Kiel, pers. comm.).

8.3.4 Fairs (fig. 8.12)
Apart from the regular local markets, there existed large periodic markets or fairs, the so-called panigiri, which grew in importance from the late 10th century onwards (see in general, Laiou 1990). These fairs were more regional, sold more exotic goods, were held normally once a year and lasted for a number of consecutive days, or in some instances weeks. Fairs would attract more distant customers and acted as magnets for traders and buyers from all over the Empire. They were founded by the Emperor or churches and monasteries, and were often connected with the feast day of a saint.

In the Byzantine period the most important periodic fair in Greek lands was the annual fair of Saint Demetrius in Thessalonica (26 October). It was even the biggest fair in the Balkans and ‘all merchants’ gathered here. The anonymous author of the dialogue Timarion (Ex. 3-4) described the annual fair of Saint Demetrius in Thessaloniki in the first half of the 12th century as the ‘most considerable panigiri’ (meaning both fair and festival) among the inhabitants of Macedonia. Merchants came from places as distant as the Greek islands, the Balkans and even Western Europe (Italy, Spain and Portugal are mentioned). According to the author of the Timarion, the merchants put their tents in two lines facing one another. ‘The lines ran a long distance, leaving between them a broad lane that allowed for the rush of the crowd’.

The author of the Timarion saw all kinds ‘of fabric and thread of men’s and women’s garb,’ produced both in Boeotia and in the Peloponnesus and carried on commercial ships from Italy to Greece (see for a discussion of this translation, Kahzdan & Epstein 1985, 236 and Jacoby 1991-92, 462, n. 53). The merchants brought the most diverse and exotic goods directly from their countries to the fair of Thessaloniki.[7]

Other important annual fairs on the Greek Mainland were panigiri at Vervena in the Peloponnesus, and the panigiri of Saint Demetrius in the area of Clarence (which was attended by Venetian merchants). It is known that the transfer of silk from the Peloponnesian producers to the ports was also carried out by merchants or agents visiting the inland regional fair at Vervena (Jacoby 1994b, 45 and 59).

During the Ottoman period, trade centres grew up around covered markets, where valuable goods and trust money were stored (the so-called bedestans), in all large Ottoman towns in the Balkans, such as Serres, Thessaloniki, Larissa, Verria and Yenice –; Vardar (İnalıç 1973, 143; M. Kiel, pers. comm.). As a transit and re-export centre, and as an exporter of manufactured
goods, Istanbul provided an economic link between regions, in return for foodstuffs from the Balkans (İnalçık 1973, 145). Edirne in Turkish Thrace and Bursa in North-Western Anatolia became important commercial centres in the Ottoman Empire. Chinese Porcelain, for instance, formed an important part of the merchandise coming to Bursa from Central Asia (İnalçık 1973, 125).

According to the historian Suraiya Faroqhi, there existed two types of Balkan fairs in Ottoman times (Faroqhi 1978). The first one was more local in character. Here consumers purchased their basic supplies of cloth, shoes, pottery and similar goods, which were often meant to last throughout the following year. In the second fair, retailers met wholesalers. The former supplied themselves with goods for resale to consumers, while the latter bought up foodstuffs and raw materials. In practice, the two functions were never clearly separated.

For the 16th century, very little is known about the differentiation of functions between various fairs (Faroqhi 1978, 54-55). The Balkan fairs were no longer mainly concerned with imported goods. They largely served internal trade on all levels, interregional, intercity and local. They may to some extent have acted as a funnel for the channelling of exports. Not all important towns maintained fairs inside the city perimeter. Sometimes fairs were established outside the areas dominated by major cities. Nothing is known, however, of fairs in Boeotia.

We have not much information about the outward appearance of fairs in Greece during the Ottoman period. We hear that Ibrahim Pasa had a wall built around the fair of Maskolur (Thessaly), and that about 1000 shops were constructed upon his orders. The number of stores at the nearby fair of Dolyan (in Thessaly?, or Doyran in Macedonia?) was around 700. The fairs seem to have lasted only for circa ten to fifteen days. Traders seem to have possessed fairly permanent rights to the shops they tenanted (Faroqhi 1978).

8.4 Non-commercial ways of distribution: the role of the governing classes (fig. 8.13)

Apart from trade, there are also other factors involved in the distribution of goods. The British numismatist Grierson already pointed 50 years ago to alternative explanations for the presence of luxury goods or exotic coins, such as personal gifts, dowries, payments, property carried around by itinerant pedlars or households and even political payments in goods (Grierson 1959).

At Thebes, the emergence of a wealthy elite or upper class (the archontes, literally ‘magistrates’ or ‘rulers’) is evidenced from the mid-10th century onward, but it becomes much more prominent during the 11th and 12th centuries (Dunn 1995, 763). The archontes were at that time a city-based class: according to the Byzantinist M. Hendy, they generally owned both urban property, including residential and industrial/artisanal which they probably tended to lease or rent out, and also quantities of land in the vicinity of its city (Hendy 1989, 18). The Cadaster of Thebes covering the region between Thebes and Chalkis revealed an extremely complex pattern of landownership in which scattered holdings sometimes in
partial ownership (and clearly acquired through purchase, exchange or inheritance) were not uncommon (Svoronos 1959; Lemerle 1979 and Neville 2001). The families involved formed dynasties and were related by inter-marriage. By the end of the 12th century they were regionally all-powerful, and from amongst the more prominent of them a number of dynasties were already emerging as dominant (Hendy 1989, 18).

The Boeotian urban elite was involved in rural expansion, trade, transportation, banking and the renting of premises. Local archontes played perhaps a direct role in the industrial promotion of the Theban silk industry (Jacoby 1991-91, 479-80). The lords were not involved in the actual production of raw silk, yet their officers collected small quantities of this commodity on their estates. It has been assumed that the rise of the provincial elite implies an impoverishment of a once-free (and fairly prosperous) peasantry in Central Greece. But it is probable that the upsurge of trade offered benefits to a part of the peasants as well, even if they had become tenants of the aristocracy (Dunn 1995, 770-71).

According to the Byzantinist Archibald Dunn, the endowment of churches and monasteries, and notably extramural ones (Skripou), from the year 870 AD onward showed changes in the region’s economic history (Dunn 1995, 763-64). A great upsurge in the endowment of small churches and monasteries in Boeotia took place during the 11th to 12th centuries. In the late 10th to early 11th centuries the principal focus of the patronage of the Boeotian elite may have been Hosios Loukas (Dunn 1995, 763). The phenomenon is linked by Dunn with economic prosperity and religiosity of the Theban elite (Dunn 1995, 764).

During the Frankish period in Boeotia, the landscape was covered with square towers at more or less regular intervals (cf. Bintliff 2000 for latest map). According to Peter Lock, these towers had no strategic purposes, but were rather agricultural and domestic in inspiration. Although some of them occupied strategic positions, they were apparently not sited with reference to administrative centres, to roads, or even to each other. Much more important was their siting with reference to amenities: water, building materials, fertile lands, and access to the hinterland (Lock 1986; 1989, 138). Peter Lock’s conclusion is that they were residences or tower houses for the lowly Frankish vassals, as well centres of small agricultural estates. All in all, we do not know much about the Frankish rural elite, and we know nothing about their economic role.

We are better informed about the officials in Ottoman Thebes.[9] From 1461 onwards there was, for instance, a senior judge (kədə) in Thebes, which was the centre of a kadılık. It is noteworthy that this kadi earned no less than 150 akçe or silver coins a day (in the 16th century the equivalent of ca. three Venetian ducats), and that he held in 1660 AD the 15th position on the official list of all kadas in the Ottoman Empire.

The Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi gave a list of Ottoman officials in 17th century Thebes (Evliya Çelebi in Yannopoulos 1969). Among them were a representative of the Sultan (voivode) with 200 soldiers, a commander of the local cavalry, a commander of the Janissaries, a tax inspector and an inspector of the market. In addition, Evliya noted that there was no garrison commander, because Thebes had at that time no town wall.

The 18th century initiated the period of the semi-independent holders of çiftlikleri (serf estates) who invested in agriculture (irrigation works etc.) and increasingly produced for the world market as producers of raw materials (Kiel 1997, 331). The çiftlik-system developed mainly as a means of increasing and overseeing the production of grain in the Ottoman Empire for the markets of Western Europe. They were common on the plains of Thessaly and swiftly penetrated further South to Boeotia. By 1724 AD, most people were producing for the world market, whether of their own free choice, or forced by their landlord.

Favoured by its status as a vakif (charitable holdings for religious or educational institutions), Livadheia was governed by a voivode, who farmed the revenue from the administration of the royal mosques; or more commonly by a deputy (vekil), for whom the farmer was answerable. The 19th century British traveller William Leake suggested that ‘the Turk now residing at Livadheia is in the latter capacity, but is himself farmer and collector of the customs’ (Leake 1835, 202-4).

Furthermore, he mentioned that the municipal power of Livadheia was divided among three principal Greek families, of which the first is that of John Khondrohimas, commonly called Logothetis (from his office in the church; see fig. 8.13). All the affairs of the town passed through the hands of a clerk (grammatikos), appointed by these families (Leake 1835, 202). One can notice by now the development of a relatively large class
of Greek merchants, living in fine stone mansions in the town, besides the largely Turkish landowning class (Kiel 1997, 339). During the 18th and 19th centuries, many landowners became merchants involved in exports to European markets. This closed but united wealthy elite became even richer by their participation in the distribution of products.

Leake was not very positive about the Greek elite living in Livadheia, although he underlined their role in the monetary economy. He stated that ‘the upper class of Greeks at Livadheia are as insolent and unfeeling to their inferiors, as they are malignantly jealous of one another; though it cannot be denied at the same time, that they have all the hospitality, wit, and sociable disposition of the nation, and, unlike the thesaurizing Jews and Armenians, generally live to the full extent of their means’ (Leake 1835, 204). Most of the Western travellers were, however, impressed by some of the most powerful and rich of the Boeotian notables, like John Khondrodimas Logothetis (Dodwell 1819, 211; Angelomatis-Tsougarakis 1990, 79, n. 24). One of the better buildings in Livadheia was Logothetis’ house, where many travellers had visited and lodged in during the 19th century (e.g. Dodwell 1819, 211-12; Biddle 1806 in McNeal 1993, 104; see supra). Hobhouse was also impressed by the number of Logothetis’ household, ‘making in all an establishment of fifty persons’ (Hobhouse 1813, 261).

8.5 Summary

There is no direct written evidence concerning pottery production and distribution in Boeotia from Byzantine to Ottoman times. There is, however, no reason to suspect that ceramics played a different role in the market economy during the Medieval and Post-Medieval periods compared to other household goods. The general socio-economic background of Boeotia, and all its consequences for local production and distribution as sketched above, most probably applied to ceramics as well.

The socio-economic infrastructure of Boeotia is marked by several diachronic fundamentals from Byzantine to Early Modern times. There were two important towns: Thebes and, from the 14th century onwards, Livadheia. The first one was an important centre of both commodity-production and of the redistribution of agricultural products, such as grain. It was surely from the Byzantine period onwards an industrial centre with an important silk industry. From the 11th-12th centuries onward, Thebes was also inserted within the Venetian maritime system for long-distance trading operations, as many documents testify. The development of urban communities with artisans/craftsmen created new pockets of demand. One of the principal features of the town was the possession of a market (and a mint).

Furthermore, Thebes and Livadheia developed into the resorts of a wealthy urban elite, governors and other officials. These towns, by their nature of being the centre of a region and of its commerce, may have provided many opportunities for pottery to travel in Boeotia. The town and its surrounding countryside were an entity: one drew on the resources of the other. For instance, the existence of a town attracted commercial activities in the form of markets and fairs.

Ports with military and commercial functions in Boeotia (such as Euripos/Negroponte) must also have been important for the distribution of pottery. Not only were ports the principal means of exporting goods overseas but they also had a very large catchment area for the goods which passed through them, either leaving or entering the country. Euripos/Negroponte had, for instance, an anchorage place, dock facilities and depots which enabled cargoes to be handled and distributed to local retailers.

The number of rural settlements shows that Boeotia was at least for the Middle Byzantine period onwards a good and large outlet for products. Its countryside was relatively densely inhabited. The Boeotians lived in hamlets and villages, but were not isolated. The changing social and economic conditions sometimes led to abandonment or expansion of settlements, but the region remained by and large populated over the centuries. Increasing population numbers certainly must have affected pottery production, if only by providing a larger market.

In addition, Boeotia benefited from a fairly convenient road system, linking it to the coast and to Athens and Corinth in the East and to Lamia and Thessaly in the West. The importance of the overland roads grew in the 12th century, in connection with the industrial expansion of Thebes. The long-distance movement of pottery in Medieval and Post-Medieval Boeotia must also have taken advantage of an easy access to transport over water. These land and sea routes must have been packed
with goods travelling all over Greece and the Aegean. It is not more than probable that pottery, either as saleable items in their own right or as containers, formed part of this traffic. While some customers may have travelled long distances to buy needed supplies, for instance at annual fairs, stall holders in local rural markets were known to have travelled equally long distances to sell their wares. Merchants (locals and Westerners) within Thebes, Livadheia and Euripos/Negroponte had both local and long-distance customers (in the Aegean and abroad). Tradesmen would travel considerable distances and not restrict themselves to the local markets in Boeotia or the larger fairs in Thessaloniki and in the Peloponnnesus. This will also have applied to the buying and selling of pottery (household and luxury).

NOTES

1. See for the different names of Thebes in Medieval and Post-Medieval times, Koder & Hild (1976, 269-71).


3. The rediscovery of this remarkable building was made by John Bintliff, who observed it in the background of the icon when the latter was included in an exhibition of Boeotian ecclesiastical photographs by George Kopanyas at the Cultural Centre of Livadheia, and subsequently obtained a photographic enlargement of the Ottoman town perspective for the publication by the Ottomanist Machiel Kiel (1999, pl. 1).

4. According to Machiel Kiel (1997, 325), the demographic expansion of the town was very rapid. Between 1466 AD and 1570 AD, the Muslims grew with a yearly percentage of 1.36%; the Christians with a yearly percentage of 1.15%.

5. See also for more information on the Jews in Medieval Thebes, Bowman (1980, 403-9).

6. See for the different names of Livadheia in Medieval and Post-Medieval times, Koder & Hild (1976, 200-201).

7. Also the 12th century Western chronicler Robert de Torigny mentioned Thessaloniki as an important trade centre (*Chronique*, ed. L. Delisle, vol. 2, Rouen 1873, 87).

8. The reference to the market at Ispilantis was found by Machiel Kiel in the Ottoman tax registers of Boeotia. I would therefore, like to thank him for this information.

9. I would like to thank Machiel Kiel for this information.