13.1 The state of previous research of Post-Roman ceramics in the Aegean

When I was offered in 1996 the opportunity to study 12,000 fragments of Post-Roman ceramics sampled in the course of the Boeotia survey, there was not much literature concerning pottery from this period in the Aegean area and in the region itself to build upon. Of course, substantial progress had already been made since the first publications on Medieval and Post-Medieval pottery from the Eastern Mediterranean appeared at the end of the 19th century, especially as far as the classification, description and dating of decorated glazed wares is concerned. On the other hand, the bulk of the material upon which this knowledge was ultimately based, still is limited to poorly described museum objects (often of unknown provenance), to finds of sparse and unstratified excavations (wells and fills), and to surface survey ceramics (which are often categorized in very broad periods). There were, though, a handful of recent exceptions, which will be discussed below.

However, many fundamental problems related to terminology and chronology remained, and it is therefore not surprising that this study begins with an effort to create some clarity in this field. To this end, a typo-chronological division for all the Medieval and Post-Medieval ceramics from the Boeotia Project is proposed here, which could be used as a framework for the study of the Post-Roman survey ceramics in the region. This division of the sherds found in Boeotia from ca. the 7th to the mid 20th centuries is based on observable changes in the shapes, fabrics and other visible features of the pottery, and not on the traditional historical chronology. The main feature of this division is that it fully recognizes that pottery has its own rhythm of change, and does not necessarily obey the chronological schedules of historians and archaeologists at all places at exactly the same time.

The next step was an effort to assemble the widest possible range of publications of the last 20 years which could offer more or less systematic, stratigraphical information on Post-Roman ceramics in the Aegean. These publications included of course the most important studies in this field (prior to 1996) relating to large excavations in Greece, Cyprus and Constantinople/Istanbul. This preliminary survey per period and per region indicated that while there is some sort of basic consensus on the typo-chronology of the Post-Roman glazed tablewares, there is still much uncertainty. As far as local production and unglazed domestic wares is concerned, there is hardly any knowledge. Most studies on Post-Roman pottery have been (and some still are) written from a purely art-historical perspective, showing little concern for the humble but vast genre of unglazed domestic wares and amphorae.

For the period between the 7th century and the 9th/10th century, for instance, when we lose sight of the last datable Late Roman wares, there exists a very real gap in our knowledge of the ceramics in the Aegean area. The amount of pottery in use was apparently less, the imported, mass-produced fine tablewares and amphorae from North Africa, Western Turkey and Cyprus, which had been used until the 7th century, seemed no longer being produced and distributed in notable quantities. In their place came glazed tablewares in a white fabric from Constantinople. However, the presence of these first Byzantine glazed wares, let alone its dating, is in many regions of the Aegean (except for Constantinople/Istanbul) still obscure because of lack of publications.

For the study of ceramics from the Middle Byzantine and Late Byzantine/Frankish periods in the Aegean, the emphasis of research and publication is mostly on the decorated sgraffito and painted wares and not on the less recognizable cooking wares and amphorae. This also holds true for pottery of the Turkish and Early Modern periods. It even seems that the more recent the pottery, the more art-historical and ethnographical the study of it – and less archaeological. Post-Medieval pottery from excavations in the large urban centres in Greece (e.g. Athens, Corinth, Thessaloniki) is unfortunately still very unsatisfactory studied and hardly published (at least, not in a stratigraphical context). Studies of the distribution...
and use of ceramics in the Aegean area in Ottoman times are lacking altogether.

At this moment there are two large, multi-period urban centres from which the pottery has recently been studied and published in such a way that we can use it as measure for the chronology and classification of Medieval and Post-Medieval ceramic finds in the Aegean: Constantinople/Istanbul (e.g. Stevenson 1947 and Hayes 1992) and Corinth (e.g. Sanders 1995 and Williams & Zervos 1988-1999). An excellent example of a recent, all-period approach is especially the publication by John Hayes of the pottery from the Saraçhane Djami excavations at Constantinople/Istanbul (Hayes 1992). This volume is a landmark for Post-Roman pottery in the Eastern Mediterranean for several reasons: 1) the multi-period nature of the excavation; 2) the excellent presentation of the finds; and 3) the exhaustive comparison with other excavations.

However, much remains to be done. For instance, more information is needed on production centres and kilns in the Aegean area. Furthermore, more studies are needed of closed deposits from excavations in the large urban centres, including all excavated material (fine tablewares as well as domestic wares), to create new typochronologies (especially for the Turkish and Early Modern periods). Finally, research on the social aspects of pottery, which has in recent years become a concern of archaeology in its widest sense, is still completely lacking in the study of Post-Roman ceramics in the Aegean. In spite of the recent ‘renaissance’ of this research subject, Aegean archaeology is in this respect still lagging far behind studies generated, for instance, from Italian and British material. Virtually nothing is known about the relation between changes in artefacts, and changes in production and distribution patterns, let alone changes in eating and drinking habits of the people who used the pottery on a daily basis.

13.2 A classification system for the pottery found in Boeotia

Without losing sight of the many problems involved with working with surface material, it is safe to state that the Post-Roman collection of the Boeotia Project offers an unprecedented opportunity to study a large, regionally based assemblage which encompasses a continuous time-span of some 13 centuries. It was conjectured that this collection even offered the chance to try and construct a horizontal chronology of wares ‘overlapping’ in time from ca. the 7th century up to the mid 20th century, thus visualizing the long-term changes of human activity at sites.

I have refrained from any discussion of the question whether the substantial fluctuations in the quantity of sampled pottery per period on sites may be interpreted as clear indications of fluctuations in population, or that other factors (e.g. visibility, or durability of the pottery) may have influenced these fluctuations. Of importance here is that two decades of field research in Boeotia have made it clear that several sites in the study area have yielded material of (more or less) consecutive periods, throughout Antiquity and the Middle Ages until Modern times, while other Post-Roman sites have yielded material of only single and apparently clearly limited periods of time. This provided the possibility to combine the ceramic data from all these sites in a regional typochronological seriation, and a preliminary classification of 48 diagnostically valuable wares for Medieval and Post-Medieval Boeotia from ca. the 7th to the mid 20th century.

However, due to the fact that the Modern cities of Thebes and Livadheia are built on top of the Medieval and Post-medieval layers, there are hardly any good stratigraphical sequences from these two major Boeotian urban centres of Medieval and Post-Medieval times in the research area. Unfortunately, there have until now not been long-term excavations designed to explore Medieval and Post-Medieval Boeotia. What was available to control the classification of the surface ceramics, amounted to publications of some rescue excavations (mostly small interim reports), which were valuable in their own right but a far cry from establishing some sort of vertical stratigraphy for the Post-Roman ceramics in this part of Central Greece. In addition, most of the information from these reports is related to the Byzantine period, and virtually nothing to the Turkish and Early Modern periods. As a result of this, the classification system for the ceramics found in Boeotia I present here is based mainly on the clearly diagnostic glazed tablewares and less on the unglazed domestic wares, which are still largely terra incognita in the region, as in many parts of the Aegean.

Still, the creation of the classification system for the ceramics found in Boeotia was helped by four factors.
Firstly, all the survey material of the Boeotia Project was previously dated in a general way by John Hayes. Secondly, the dating of the sherds found in Boeotia of the Middle Byzantine and Early Modern periods was especially facilitated by many parallels in shapes and decoration-techniques with (recently) recovered material from the Corinth excavations (partly unpublished yet, but kindly made accessible to me by Charles Williams II and Guy Sanders). Thirdly, I had also the opportunity to study recent excavated ceramics from a well excavated context in Thebes. This study of several closed deposits in the city centre of Thebes (including a few vessels with complete shapes) proved a great help in recognizing formerly unknown wares of the Turkish period (see Vroom forthcoming a). Finally, some Post-Medieval ceramics found on some Boeotian sites could be controlled in a more unconventional way by information gathered from the travellers’ accounts and Ottoman tax registers (translated and studied by Machiel Kiel) with reference to the region. Some sites in the catalogue presented here could be firmly related to detailed information in the tax registers from the Turkish period (especially from the 16th century); and another six sites in catalogue were mentioned as ‘ruins’ or ‘villages’ by Western travellers in their accounts and diaries from the 17th century onwards. Especially in the case of site VM4, the combination of the Ottoman tax registers and other textual evidence in relation to the survey finds proved to be helpful in formulating a conjectural habitation history of the site (see also Vroom 1998a).

However, apart from the dating and the diagnosis of types and shapes, many problems related to the pottery found in Boeotia remain untouched here. I have not threaded, for instance, into the complex field of relating the surface sherds found on the Boeotian sites to actual historical developments in the region (Although the amount and quality of the finds perhaps would make certain suggestions concerning general trends possible).

Another problem not fully discussed here is how to relate a typo-chronological classification based on survey material to the fixed date chronology of excavated sites (such as Corinth). Chronologies based on excavated material often tend to assign to wares rather restricted dates (short periods of time for the circulation of pottery types), while problems encountered in a ‘horizontal chronology’ based on the survey finds might be solved when we would suggest that several types of wares (especially domestic wares and amphorae) found on the rural sites in Boeotia have been used by the villagers for longer periods of time than is commonly accepted, and that transition periods between various wares are rather fluid.

The obvious criticism of working with surface material might be that an attempt to construct a classification system for thirteen centuries without a vertical stratigraphy amounts to little more than a ‘bold conjecture’. The one possible answer to such scepticism is that the ceramics of the Boeotia Project offer by their sheer number, quality, time range and regional provenance, an opportunity for a new approach, a new perspective, new questions and new answers. And in the end, all progress in science – including archaeology – is fuelled by new conjectures, preferably bold ones. This, of course, means nothing more than that the study of pots should be done as carefully and meticulously as possible, and that it should never rush to conclusions, but that it should also be done from the perspective on scientific research formulated by Karl Popper, who underlined that scientific knowledge advances by seemingly unjustified (and unjustifiable) anticipations, by tentative solutions to problems, in short: by conjectures. These conjectures are controlled by criticism: that is, by attempted refutations, which include critical tests. Or in Popper’s words: ‘As we learn from our mistakes our knowledge grows, even though we may never know – that is know for certain’ (Popper 1963).

In the end, the importance of the site-samples collected in the course of the Boeotia Project lies therefore not only in the fact that they helped to find answers, but also that, at the same time, they have opened up a whole array of new questions and problems.

13.3 A typo-chronology of the ceramics found in Boeotia

The intensive survey of the Boeotia Project was undertaken in two parts of this Central Greek region. It resulted in a substantial amount of systematically sampled Post-Roman ceramics, supplemented with grab samples collected at sites outside the core areas of research. The first core area included the territories of the ancient cities of Haliartos, Thespiae and Askra; the second one the area around the small ancient city of Hyetos.
The total number of Post-Roman find spots or sites recorded in the course of the Boeotia Project is seventy-four. Of the seventy-four site-samples, a selection of thirty site-samples is discussed in this book. The selection is based on the criterion whether the site sample offered typo-chronological information which could contribute to the assembling of a horizontal chronology of Post-Roman ceramics in Central Greece. In short, the thirty selected sites yielded highly diagnostic wares, while the unselected sites did not (and contained mostly only small to very small amounts of Early Modern coarse wares).

Of the selected thirty site-samples, twenty were collected in the two core areas of research where the intensive survey resulted in total coverage samples. The remaining ten site-samples were not the result of intensive survey but of diagnostic judgment sampling, in other words by collecting ‘grab samples’ of diagnostic wares.

Of the thirty site-samples under discussion here, twenty-two are multi-period with pottery diagnostic of several chronological periods; the remaining eight contain pottery of a single period. The pottery in the Boeotian site-samples under study range in date from the Late Roman period (ca. mid 3rd century) to the Early Byzantine period (ca. 6th-7th centuries). Eleven samples contained pottery from the Late Roman period (about half of all the ca. 250 sites recorded in the course of the Boeotia project have Late Roman material, but that material was not seen by me). Perhaps four sites yielded a few (problematic) sherds from the Early Byzantine period (Late Roman and Early Byzantine sherds together amount to 16% of the total diagnostic wares per period). At least twenty-one yielded a substantial amount of wares from the Middle Byzantine period (47% of the total diagnostic wares per period). Sixteen sites produced a small amount of ceramics of the Late Byzantine/Frankish period (only 5% of the total wares per period). Fourteen sites produced a substantial amount of pottery fragments of the Turkish period (24% of the total diagnostic wares per period). Finally, twelve sites of the thirty under study (and many of the smaller sites not discussed here) produced ceramics of the Early Modern period (8% of the total diagnostic wares per period).

In total, the thirty selected Boeotian site-samples with Medieval and Post-Medieval pottery included ca. 2800 diagnostic sherds used here to develop a continuous classification system for the Medieval and Post-Medieval periods (or 23% of the total of 12,000 sherds). The classification system of 48 wares presented in this book does not include all Medieval and Post-Medieval wares known in the entire Aegean region. The classification system does include, however, all main types of wares found in Boeotia, and offers a continuous typo-chronological sequence of wares suitable for (quantitative) analysis.

Much of the Late Roman–Early Byzantine wares found on the Boeotian sites appear to be locally produced, given the frequency and large amount of typical 6th and 7th century wares (e.g. Askra Ware, LR 2 amphorae and the unglazed beehives) in the survey region. No clear Early Byzantine wares of the 8th and 9th centuries can be identified with full certainty in the Boeotia survey collection, though some sherds may be designed as ‘possible’ Early Byzantine. The uncertainty is partly due to the fragmentary condition of the sherds concerned, which offer little information on the diagnostic shape of the pots they originate from.

Sherds known from the Middle Byzantine period (10th to about early 13th centuries) are much more common (one could even say abundant) in the samples from the Boeotian sites. The vast majority of the Middle Byzantine pottery consists of plain glazed chafing dishes, as well as the standard painted and incised wares of this period (e.g. Slip-painted Ware, Green and Brown Painted Ware and Fine Sgraffito Ware).

As far as it is possible to tell anything of the provenance of these glazed wares, most of them were probably made somewhere on the Greek Mainland, in or not far from Boeotia. The workshops at Corinth may also be a place of origin, while part of the wares may have been locally produced, for instance in Thebes (although no kilns have been found there yet). The imported wares of the Middle Byzantine period show, however, that Boeotia clearly looked to the East rather than the West for its pottery during these centuries.

The 13th century marks the beginning of another period in the archaeological record for Boeotia. Sherds of the Late Byzantine/Frankish period are few in numbers, but most of the diagnostic wares were imported: first from Corinth and Thessaloniki and later from Italy (such as ‘RMR’ Ware). This gradual change in focus from East to West must have taken place in Boeotia towards the end of the 13th century and during the 14th century. During the same period, a gradual decline of
large amphorae for transport and storage can be noticed in Boeotia, which contrasts quite sharply with the large amounts of amphorae in the Middle Byzantine period. This demise into virtual absence of transport vessels may reflect the increasing use of containers of different material (e.g. wood, leather) for transport.

Finds on the Boeotian sites become much more abundant again in the (early) Turkish period. The many imports in this period come from the East (e.g. Iznik Ware and Kütahya Ware), as well as from the West (e.g. Polychrome Sgraffito Ware, Maiolica, Marbled Ware). Most of the imports date of the late 15th – early 16th centuries (the period of the ‘Pax Ottomanaica’ in the Aegean). The bulk of these imports seem to have come from Northern Italy (from the Veneto-region), and they seem to show that the rural settlements in Boeotia became more incorporated into a more ‘international’ operating distribution system of ceramics.

The Early Turkish period is further characterized by the development of distinctive regional workshops in Greece (e.g. in Athens, Arta and Northern Greece), which sometimes tried to imitate the Italian imports (e.g. Maiolica and Polychrome Sgraffito Wares). Of particular interest is the fact that for the Turkish period no glazed domestic wares were found in the Boeotian site-samples (while these wares are abundant at the Saraçhane excavations in Istanbul).

Pottery of the 18th century is relatively sparse with only a few (and mostly imported) ceramic finds. However, ceramics of the 19th and early 20th centuries are quite plentiful in the Boeotian site-samples. Also smaller sites of the Early Modern period yielded imported glazed and domestic wares from all over the Mediterranean (from Southern Italy, from Thrace, from Crete, from Siphnos and from Çanakkale in Turkey).

When all the 12,000 sherds of the 48 diagnostic wares of the 30 selected Boeotian sites are taken together, the following picture emerges. The periods most abundantly represented in the samples are the 12th/early 13th centuries (named here the Middle Byzantine period), and the 16th century (Early) Turkish period. Periods much less represented in the samples are the 8th and 9th centuries (Early Byzantine) and the 14th and early 15th centuries (Late Byzantine/Frankish). Once the typochronology of the wares had been defined, it became possible to try to establish the processes and influences underlying the changes in pottery types over time.

13.4 Form and function

Archaeological ceramicists have become increasingly aware of the fact that besides considering pottery as an aid to dating, it is also possible to explore its technological, socio-economic and cultural aspects. Although never attempted before, this holds also true for the Post-Roman ceramics in the Aegean. In fact, pottery was (and still is) an everyday utensil, manufactured and used by human beings as quintessential part of their behaviour with regard to storage, cooking and transport. Questions with regard to the organisation of the pottery workshop, the changing focus of supply and demand, the importance of the road system and the settlement pattern to the distribution of pottery, the taste among the elites and the poorer classes, as well as the cultural values of food and drink in relation to changing shapes may all be considered in order to answer questions about changing vessel shapes as well as about past societies.

In this book a first attempt was made to look at Post-Roman survey material from a functional point of view. The Medieval and Post-Medieval surface ceramics from the Boeotia Project shows that, at least in case of the diagnostic tablewares, a change occurred during the Early Byzantine period from large dishes and plates with a finish of a red slip to vessels with a lead glaze as a sealant on the inside. Noteworthy is also the change from shallow, open vessels in the Middle Byzantine period to smaller, deeper bowls in the Late Byzantine/Frankish period, and then again to large, open dishes in the Turkish period. At the same time, changes in decoration techniques in tablewares were introduced in the Middle Byzantine period, which have been practised in parts of Greece until recent times without much change.

On the other hand, new and more technically advanced types of tin-glazed tablewares, such as trefoil-mouth Maiolica jugs from Italy (for serving and pouring liquids) and coffee cups from Turkey, were introduced in Boeotia during the Turkish period. The use of these white-fired, colourful tablewares really took off in the Early Modern period, when cheap, mass-produced pottery from the West seemed to find their way into the Boeotian rural sites. During the 19th and 20th centuries, more varied shapes of plates and jugs became widespread in the region.

One of the questions is whether these technological and functional variations in pottery production in
Central Greece between the 7th and the mid 20th centuries were only influenced by autonomous technical innovations in the potter’s craft, or that they were also generated or influenced by external ‘socio-economic’ factors (such as changes in distribution and demand) or ‘cultural’ factors (such as changes in dining habits). The way chosen here to approach these questions is to explore the written sources and the pictorial evidence on this subject. This proved to open up an entire field of research for the relation between shape and function of Medieval and Post-Medieval pottery.

13.5 Form, function and socio-economic background

There is no direct written evidence concerning the pottery production and distribution in Boeotia from Byzantine to Ottoman times. There is, however, no reason to think that ceramics played a different role in the slowly emerging market economy of the region than other household commodities.

The socio-economic infrastructure of Medieval and Post-Medieval Boeotia is marked by several diachronic fundamentals which remained unchanged from Byzantine to Early Modern times. There were two important towns: Thebes and, from the 14th century onwards, Livadheia. Especially the first was an important centre of both commodity-production and of the redistribution of agricultural products, as well as an industrial centre with an important silk industry. From the 11th-12th centuries onward, Thebes was also one of the Venetian centres for long-distance trading operations, as many documents testify. The development of these urban communities with artisans/craftsmen and a wealthy urban elite must have created new pockets of demand. One of the principal features of Thebes was the possession of a market (and a mint).

Ports with military and commercial functions in Boeotia (such as Euripos/Negroponte) must also have been important throughout the ages 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. The long-distance movement of pottery in Medieval and Post-Medieval Boeotia (for which there is ample evidence from the 10th-11th century onwards) must also have taken advantage of an easy access to transport over water.

The number of rural sites suggests that Boeotia provided at least from the Middle Byzantine period a steady demand for (household) products. Furthermore, the region benefited from a fairly convenient road system, linking it to the coast as well as to Athens and Corinth in the East and to Delphi and Lamia in the West.

The textual, archaeological and ethnographical sources of information used in this book suggest that pottery production in Medieval and Post-Medieval Greece must have been much more common and much more widespread in the countryside than is often assumed. Noteworthy from the point of view of local pottery production is that one kiln site (site VM4), including the fragment of a kiln floor with glassy residues on top, has been found in the course of the Boeotia Project.

The traditional view on ceramic production and distribution in Medieval times seems often somewhat biased by the traditional emphasis on the finds of beautiful manufactured vessels, made by skilled artisans in large urban centres such as Constantinople or Corinth. Those are, however, the fairly exceptional, expensive imported wares, whereas the general picture which arises from the survey finds in the rural area of Boeotia, is that domestic pottery was a relatively cheap and widespread everyday utensil, made by (local) peasant-potters directly for a local market.

There are, however, two points to be stressed here. The designations ‘expensive’ and ‘cheap’ for pottery can not be more than relative terms. The large quantities and widespread occurrence of certain types of fine pottery on even the most modest of the Boeotian sites, surely indicates that the prize to be paid for these wares was no impediment for their distribution. These wares were clearly mass-produced and ‘mass-consumed’ which made low prices possible. On the other hand, an increase of economic prosperity in these rural regions (for instance during the Pax Ottomanica) led to an increase in purchasing power, a greater demand, and thus a larger production of pottery.

Ethnographic and ethnoarchaeological observations of traditional potters in Greece and Cyprus suggest that regional diversity and overlapping types of production workshops (urban and village potters, sedentary and itinerant potters) characterized ceramic production and
distribution processes in Early Modern times. This may very well have also been the case in previous centuries.

The picture emerges is that, although they were small, the Early Modern potter’s workshops did not produce only for the own household, but rather for wider markets. They invested in technology, including a foot-operated kick wheel and an up draught kiln, for the manufacture of pots during the summer months. The finished products were sold on the nearest market or village fair, or directly to local customers. When pots travelled in quantity over longer distances, middlemen were often acting as links between potters and customers. The situation on rural sites (such as VM4) in Medieval Boeotia probably resembled this pre-industrial/pre-modern organisation of production and distribution.

In order to obtain a better understanding of the processes involved in the changes in production and distribution of pottery over time, I have applied three complementary models (of Blake, Orton and Wallerstein) on the Boeotian survey material. All three models appeared to offer only a rudimentary insight into the complicated mechanisms of changing demand and supply of pottery, certainly not on a regional scale as the one in Boeotia.

In addition, I have made an effort to understand the Post-Roman assemblages from Boeotia in a wider perspective, specifically in the perspective of socio-economic and historical developments in the entire Mediterranean area. For this, I tried to explore the possibility of applying to the Boeotian situation Wallerstein’s model of economic development (better known as the world-system model). When applied to the pottery found in Boeotia, Wallerstein’s model seems to highlight the fundamental differences between the capitalist structure of the Maiolica industry in Italy (a core area in the emerging ‘world-system’) and the feudalist Ottoman system of the Iznik-Kütahya workshops in Turkey (an area becoming more ‘peripheral’ during this period).

The archaeological record indicates that especially during the 16th century a side show to the larger competition in the world between trade goods and court goods was unfolding on Boeotian soil, as a result of which this rural area was gradually incorporated into larger economic developments in this part of the world.

The changes in the pottery industry and pottery imports in Boeotia, as well as the introduction of new fine wares (notable from the 13th century onwards) may well have been related (directly or indirectly) to changes in the Boeotian social structure. These changes probably included the formation of a new local elite and wealthier middle class (land owners, artisans/craftsmen, merchants), who could afford a greater freedom of choice in ceramics and other goods. Furthermore, the growth of trade with the pre-capitalist Italian cities apparently facilitated the circulation of pottery, promoted the spread of innovations and favoured a general process of acculturation.

13.6 Form, function and cultural background

Another perspective explored in this book to enhance the understanding of the changing shapes and techniques of the pottery found in Boeotia may be called a ‘cultural’ approach. To this end a survey was made of the use of table equipment (pottery and cutlery) as well as dining habits in textual sources and pictorial evidence from Late Roman to Early Modern times. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to pursue anything more than a first and provisional exploration of this complex subject, several observations can now be made.

The textual sources and the pictorial evidence corroborate the clear trend in the archaeological evidence from the Boeotia survey, that at least in the decorated tablewares there occurred a pattern of clear changes in pottery shapes over time. The main trend is the change from shallow, open vessels in the Late Roman – Middle Byzantine periods to smaller, deeper bowls in the Late Byzantine/Frankish and early Turkish periods, and then back again to large, open dishes in the Turkish period again. In this book I have tried to understand these shifts in shape and technology (changes in glaze) by relating them to shifts in cuisine and dining habits. As a result a clear pattern seems to emerge (cf. table 13.1).

I would suggest that in Boeotia there must have been gradual changes from communal dining in Late Roman-Byzantine times (characterized by large open dishes) to a more ‘Western’ form of small group dining in the Late Byzantine/Frankish period (characterized by more food in smaller bowls), and back to communal dining again in the Turkish era (characterized by large open dishes). These were probably no sudden, complete changes in habits (or in pottery forms), but slow though nonetheless
### Dining Habits

*textual and pictorial evidence*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Dining Habits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Late Roman / Early Byzantine</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ancient style</em></td>
<td>small semi-circular table, reclining dining position on couch, centrally placed, communal dish, few individual drinking beakers, no cutlery, loaves of bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Middle Byzantine</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>byzantine style</em></td>
<td>introduction high square table, introduction of sitting upright, centrally placed, communal dish on high foot, flanked by 2 drinking cups, introduction of table cloth and napkins, introduction of cutlery in 12th-13th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Late Byzantine / Frankish</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>early western style</em></td>
<td>white table cloth, increase of tablewares and cutlery, shift from communal to small group dining, sharing dishes and goblets by 2/3 diners, introduction glass in 14th c., introduction Maiolica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Turkish</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>eastern style</em></td>
<td>no specific dining area, low round table, no stools or chairs, one centrally placed main dish with food, no drinking vessels, communal dishes of porcelain, spoons only for liquid food, no knives or forks, much use of watery and greasy dishes: soups, stews and pilavs, use of rice, sugar, mutton and butter, no oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>western style</em></td>
<td>introduction of dining room, high square table, several main dishes, individual plates of Italian Maiolica, drinking goblets of transparent glass, cutlery sets, consisting of sharp-pointed knives and two-pronged forks, candle-standards, use of bread, wine, fish and olive oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Early Modern</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>late western style</em></td>
<td>high square table, all food in separate dishes, individual plates, individual drinking vessels of transparent glass, individual cutlery sets</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Centuries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5th-9th C.</td>
<td>LATE ROMAN / EARLY BYZANTINE, relatively open shapes (Ware 1), hardly any glazed tablewares, but slipped wares, average rim width 19/20-30 cm, unglazed domestic wares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th-12th C.</td>
<td>MIDDLE BYZANTINE, introduction glazed decorated wares, average rim width 24-30 cm, increase glazed wares, glazed drinking cup (Ware 8), unglazed domestic wares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13th-15th C.</td>
<td>LATE BYZANTINE / FRANKISH, introduction of smaller deeper shapes, increase of glazed wares, thicker, vitreous glaze, average rim width 17-20 cm, first imports from Italy, unglazed domestic wares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16th-18th C.</td>
<td>TURKISH, dominance of large open dishes, increase glazed wares, average rim width 24-31 cm, relatively few luxury imports (Iznik &amp; Porcelain &amp; Kütahya), introduction coffee cup, introduction tobacco pipe, unglazed serving jugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19th-20th C.</td>
<td>EARLY MODERN, imports for display, industrial pottery, mass-produced tablewares, introduction glazed domestic wares</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Pottery Shapes in Boeotia

*archaeological evidence*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5th-9th C.</td>
<td>LATE ROMAN / EARLY BYZANTINE, relatively open shapes (Ware 1), hardly any glazed tablewares, but slipped wares, average rim width 19/20-30 cm, unglazed domestic wares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th-12th C.</td>
<td>MIDDLE BYZANTINE, introduction glazed decorated wares, average rim width 24-30 cm, increase glazed wares, glazed drinking cup (Ware 8), unglazed domestic wares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13th-15th C.</td>
<td>LATE BYZANTINE / FRANKISH, introduction of smaller deeper shapes, increase of glazed wares, thicker, vitreous glaze, average rim width 17-20 cm, first imports from Italy, unglazed domestic wares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16th-18th C.</td>
<td>TURKISH, dominance of large open dishes, increase glazed wares, average rim width 24-31 cm, relatively few luxury imports (Iznik &amp; Porcelain &amp; Kütahya), introduction coffee cup, introduction tobacco pipe, unglazed serving jugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>EARLY MODERN, imports for display, industrial pottery, mass-produced tablewares, introduction glazed domestic wares</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 13.1 Dining habits and pottery shapes: Late Roman - Early Byzantine to Early Modern periods.
clear transitions, which lasted throughout the 13th to the early 16th centuries.

The rise of a Western form of ‘non-communal’, small group dining in the Late Byzantine/Frankish period can perhaps be related to a gradual fragmentation of communal dining habits introduced in Greece and in Boeotia from the West. The gradual changes of dining habits during the 13th century through the 16th century are clearly supported by the pictorial and written evidence, and appear to be reflected by changes in the average rim width during this period (from wide open shapes in the Middle Byzantine period to smaller deeper shapes in the Late Byzantine/Frankish period, to wider shapes again in the Turkish period).

In addition, changing shapes of cooking pots and changing use of glaze seems to corroborate the rather scarce written sources which suggest that besides the dining habits also the food itself changed. The archaeological evidence suggests that changes in shapes and technology of the pots followed the shifts from a vegetable based diet in Byzantine times to a more watery/greasy meat(?) based diet in Late Byzantine/Frankish times (meat was a well-known status symbol in the Western world) to a more soup/rice based diet in Ottoman times. Finally, the Late Byzantine/Frankish period witnessed the introduction of individual cutlery, which was abandoned again in the Turkish period when communal dining became the standard again until the rise to dominance of the Western dining habits at the end of the 19th century.

These developments from the 13th century onward occurred against a socio-economic background of growing wealth in urban centres (and thus a more developed social hierarchy and more personal consumerism) in Boeotia and growing imports from Italian pottery production centres. It may well be that together with the Maiolica also ‘Western habits’ were imported from Italy.

Without wanting to sound in any way politically correct, it should be stressed that ‘individualization’ (in dining habits) is no indication of a higher standard of civilization or that the course of Boeotian cultural history can be seen as an inevitable route leading to its ‘natural’ ending in Westernization. It concerns here very complex cultural developments, involving for instance the concept of ‘individualism’ in the Byzantine world and Orthodox religion, which can only be referred to here as fields for future study. The same goes of course for the abandonment of individual dining and the re-introduction of communal meals in the Turkish period, the first centuries of which probably were a relatively prosperous period in Boeotian history, as compared to the probably confused Late Byzantine/Frankish period with its Western influences.

The interlocking processes of the mergence of new pottery shapes, new dining habits and new diets may have been the direct result of the arrival of new political rulers from the West and the East, but they may have been also be related to larger socio-economic changes in Boeotia from the 13th century onward, and probably they were the result of both. Perhaps archaeology alone can never fully provide answers here, but it may be considered a step forward that archaeology can formulate questions in this field.

The relation between dining habits and diet in the Turkish and Early Modern periods on the one hand and pottery shapes of wares found on the Boeotian sites on the other hand is at least as complex as in Medieval times. There seems to emerge a pattern of relationships between acculturation, enculturation and technological innovation which is surely interesting enough to serve as an incentive to further research. What the Boeotia pottery indicates, at least, is that there seems to be a clear relation between communal dining (the ‘Eastern model’) and individual dining (the ‘Western model’) and wider c.q. smaller rim widths of vessels (see table 13.1).

While the 16th century witnessed the re-introduction in Boeotia of communal dining (and of course a new elite, this time imported from the East), supported by Islamic rules and traditions concerning dining and food, the 18th century saw the slow rise of specialised ceramics for specialised types of foods and drinks. These signalled not only an increase of individual wealth for certain Boeotian inhabitants but also the beginning of a more individualized manner of consumption, which was to triumph in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Even this first overview of the problems and the possibilities of interpreting survey finds in a socio-cultural perspective suggests that it is possible and fruitful to use the collections of surface pottery such as the one sampled in Boeotia for something more than mere typo-chronological study or the (re)construction of settlement patterns. One of the advantages of survey ceramics is that they can offer a broad geographical and
chronological perspective that is not only restricted to one single site, but rather to wider trends in a region. In Boeotia, for example, the finds do seem to offer the chance to form a notion of the development of pottery use and dining habits of all sections of the population: from the rural villagers to the wealthy town folks. It is obvious that a farmer’s frying pan must meet other needs than a nobleman’s wine jug, and those functional requirements can be traced in the fabric, the thickness of the walls of the vessel, the form and the applied slip or glaze. However, looking at the relation between vessel shape and function is still a somewhat underestimated practice among archaeologists, let alone that it is fully appreciated as a source of historical and socio-cultural information.

In the end, one of the conclusions of this book must be that various fields for future research clearly emerge. In the first place, the classification system of diagnostic wares presented here provides a basis for further study of the Post-Roman pottery of Boeotia, especially the coarse wares which were not discussed here in detail. I mean both the (yet) not clearly diagnostic unglazed domestic wares in all samples as well as the wares of the Early Modern period in the samples which were not used to develop the classification system and the horizontal chronology.

In addition, the problem of the relation between the ‘fixed’ chronology of excavations and the chronology based on the survey pottery deserves further study. Here, the ongoing excavations at Corinth may prove especially valuable, as well as the recognition that chronological boundaries between different pottery types may differ per place, region and period, and may be more ‘fluid’ than is traditionally often assumed.

More study is also needed on the vast and complex subject of the relation between changes in pottery shapes and techniques on the one hand and socio-economic and cultural changes on the other hand. The interplay between supply and demand, between technology and purchasing power, between urban areas and rural areas, as well as between cultural lifestyles and pottery need all to be further explored.

And lastly, comparisons between Boeotia and other well-researched areas in the Mediterranean will undoubtedly contribute to sharper questions and perhaps more comprehensive answers.