The data-base I shall use to shed light on the Frankish landscape in Central Greece will be essentially the results of the Boeotia Project, a collaborative archaeological field survey co-directed by myself on behalf of Durham (and formerly Bradford) University and Professor Anthony Snodgrass of Cambridge University (cf. Bintliff 1985, Bintliff & Snodgrass 1985, 1988a, Snodgrass & Bintliff 1991). Boeotia is a modern province in central Mainland Greece, immediately north of Athens, although our study area is that of the ancient tribal region or ‘ethnos’ of Boeotia, which has slightly different boundaries. The ancient province is equivalent to a large English county, at some 2580 sq km or around 1000 sq miles.

Clearly such a vast area would take several lifetimes to cover with total, intensive fieldwalking, which is the technique we have operated from the inception of the project in 1978. Our strategy has been to select a central district, with a variety of topography and soils, and territory belonging to more than one ancient political unit. The area chosen is in South-West Boeotia (Fig. 1), focussing on the two ancient cities of Haliartos and Theopse, and including part of the Plain of Thebes, Lake Copais, and the central hill-country so characteristic of Boeotian geography. Since our first field season in 1979, our field teams have walked a contiguous block of over 40 sq km in this district, omitting very few parts of the landscape however difficult the terrain. The area chosen is intended to provide us with a very detailed picture of the changing patterns of land use and population from prehistoric to modern times. A careful comparison with the much less detailed data available for settlement developments over the rest of Boeotia will hopefully reveal obvious parallels or contrasts to what is going on in the South-West. In addition, it will be possible to compare our results with smaller-scale archaeological surveys elsewhere in Boeotia, such as that carried out by John Fossey in the territory of the ancient city of Chorsiai, by Tim Gregory around Thisbe, and by Duane Roller at Tanagra.

Furthermore, as a smallscale control on the results of the major survey block, we were able to open up a second survey area from the summer season of 1989, in the upland basin once belonging to the city of Hyettos, a district in northern Boeotia remote from our initial survey zone and from any other survey work hitherto. Thus at the conclusion of the Boeotia Project, some three years hence, we believe we shall be in a position to write a new history and prehistory of this very important province of Greece, combining both general trends and detailed local fluctuations.

Before offering the data so far available from our survey area for the Frankish era, it is necessary to say something of our methodology, and then set the scene to the medieval landscape by describing the highlights of ancient settlement history.

**METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Archaeological field survey recovers past settlement patterns across a given landscape by detailed fieldwalking, during which each team scans the ground surface for visible remains of ancient activity. In the immensely long-settled landscape of Central Greece, the soils are thin and eroded to various degrees of severity, whilst the accumulated number of pre-Modern settlements is staggeringly high: if we extrapolate the density of sites so far discovered in our 40 sq km to the rest of Boeotia, allowing for variations in soil fertility, it is a reasonable calculation that some 5000 surface sites can be found and mapped today. We have well-founded suspicions that even this figure may be merely $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of the original number of settlements from Neolithic times onwards (cf. Bintliff & Snodgrass 1985, Bintliff 1985).

Although occasionally the surface remains of past settlements, shrines and cemeteries, as churned up by the plough or natural erosion, take the form of ruined structures or fragments of masonry, in almost all cases the surface evidence is confined to pottery scatters, sometimes enlivened with flint and hardstone implements. Recognising such a scatter as an abandoned farm or village is complicated by the fact that ancient, medieval and modern farmers habitually scattered manure and household rubbish, replete with broken pottery, over large sectors of the cultivated landscape (Bintliff & Snodgrass 1988b, Bintliff & Davies 1990). To assist us in separating out genuine habitation or major activity sites from such manuring debris, our field teams count all the surface pottery they see in their field transects, using a manual ‘clicker’. After
each transect of say 50 to 200 metres, the team leader will record surface pottery densities given by each individual walker, and anomalous highs will be revisited as suspect ‘sites’. Here the normal transect width of a 15 m wide swathe sampled by each walker is divided in two, and minitranssects 7.5 m wide and 10 m long are totally combed by each walker. A consistent zone of high density artefacts and their character will indicate confirmation that an archaeological site has been passed through or incursed on.

All such sites discovered are carefully planned and a systematic collection of pottery made from the grid of mini-transects covering the site. The changing density of finds across the site and the chronology of each subsample enable us to date periods of occupation, and indicate for multi-period sites whether different sectors of each site were in use at specific time periods. The crucial task of dating the vast quantities of surface sherds from our survey is the responsibility of Dr. John Hayes, formerly of the Royal Ontario Museum, whose expertise in this field is without parallel.

When sites are plotted period by period onto a regional map we can begin the process of settlement history analysis, using the number and size of settlements, and their spatial patterns, to suggest the main characteristics of demographic and economic history within the surveyed region.

**THE ANCIENT COUNTRYSIDE**

From 1979 to 1984 our field teams carried out total landscape survey, uncovering well over 100 previously unknown rural settlements of pre-Modern date. Then in 1985–1986 we turned our attention to the three urban sites within our survey region: the ancient cities of Haliartos and Thespiae, centres of autonomous city-states in Classical times, and the smaller urban site or “agro-town” of Askra (whose location had been lost in antiquity) – a dependent community of Thespiae. In all three cases we were able to reconstruct the complex settlement history of each urban focus purely from surface remains (luckily almost all the occupied area of Haliartos, and all that of the other two sites, are open fields today). Our approach with each site was to count surface pottery densities and collect representative samples within a two-level grid system set over each location: the large grid units gave total areal cover, but their necessarily small pottery samples were controlled by smaller sample units set into each large unit and more exhaustively combed for artefacts (Bintliff & Snodgrass 1988a, Snodgrass & Bintliff 1991). Thespiae, being by far the largest settlement (over 100ha. at its peak compared with 11 for Askra and 30–50 for Haliartos) required some 598 large grid units (each ca. 60 by 50m) before its edges were finally reached on all sides. Since 1986 further territory has been investigated south of Thespiae city, and by the end of the 1991 season the entire surface of the small city (16 ha) of Hyetos in northern Boeotia together with a sample of its immediate countryside will have been fieldwalked.

To begin to set the Medieval settlement of South-West Boeotia into context, let us consider that landscape at its Classical peak, around 400 BC (Fig. 2). Here we see a remarkable density of settlement over all the potentially cultivable landscape. Apart from the three urban sites, almost all these sites are small family farms, indicating a countryside dotted with dispersed settlement but in clear constellations around each urban focus. These latter all demonstrate sizeable communities to match surrounding high rural densities, as can be seen for example with the city of Thespiae (Fig. 3). From unusually detailed historic sources as well as study of this settlement pattern we have suggested that Classical and Early Hellenistic Boeotia was probably dangerously overpopulated and overexploited.

Perhaps not surprisingly, then, this flourishing era was succeeded by a prolonged phase of demographic and economic collapse, beginning in Late Hellenistic times (c200 BC) and continuing till around the 3rd century AD and possibly even later (Early to Mid Roman Imperial times in Eastern Mediterranean terms). The stark evidence of the total settlement map (Fig. 4) with its very diminished quantity of rural sites, for many of which occupation seems limited or possibly only part-time, is fully borne out by our detailed survey of the urban sites, for example Thespiae (Fig. 5) where occupation areas contract strikingly for the duration of this long phase. The reasons for this era of decline seem to include soil erosion, military destruction, and political and economic developments of a very far-reaching kind (Bintliff & Snodgrass 1988c, Bintliff 1991a, b).

What follows was however a great surprise to us. Whilst recent historical syntheses (eg. Koder and Hild 1976) have debated from the ambiguous historical sources whether Roman Greece collapsed at the end of the 6th or late 7th centuries AD, and was perhaps in terminal decline by mid-6th century, our survey data (Fig. 6) show something even the most optimistic historians have not been prepared to claim: Late Roman Greece, at least in South-West Boeotia, was flourishing in a manner comparable to Classical times. The pottery evidence suggests that this climax belongs to the period of the 5th to early 7th centuries AD, although technically the Late Roman phase in the Eastern Roman Empire begins earlier, around the turn of the 4th century; our current database however points to the 3rd to 5th centuries as largely a continuation of the Late Hellenistic/Early Roman slump. How populous was this recovered landscape? Although rural site numbers are somewhat lower than their Classical counterparts, the average site appears to be a medium-sized villa rather than a small family farm. On the other hand, whilst the urban focus of Askra is at maximum extent again, the occupied area of Thespiae (Fig. 7), has barely expanded beyond its Early to Mid Roman confines. Haliartos was destroyed by the Romans in 171 BC, and never reoccupied on a significant scale; the survivors not
sold into slavery seem to have founded a replacement at Onchestos two kilometres away, but this community, though typically growing in size by Late Roman times, remained a village of some 5 hectares.

THE DARK AGE

Traditionally, the incursions of Slavs from the late 6th century AD ushered in a catastrophic collapse of rural and urban life in Mainland Greece. Only in the great cities could Roman imperial civilisation survive, whence, transformed into Byzantine civilisation, it gradually reconquered the countryside both militarily and culturally in succeeding centuries. This era, the Early Byzantine (7th–9th centuries AD), is often referred to as a Dark Age, whilst recovery is generally agreed to have become clearly marked from the mid-9th century AD, with the inception of the Middle Byzantine era and the ascendance of the vigorous Macedonian dynasty on the Imperial throne.

Recent work has tended to blur these distinctions somewhat. In particular, the massive reorganisation of the empire into military provinces or ‘themes’ from the end of the 7th century AD (Boeotia and Attica being the core of the new theme of Hellas), might be seen as evidence of an early and successful response to the threatened disintegration of the empire under Slavic and other pressures. Was perhaps Central Greece a safer and less depopulated region than Northern Greece and the Peloponnese during the 7th to 9th centuries?

Let us turn to the archaeology. On the basis of the dated finds from the Late Roman rural and urban settlements in the survey area (Figs. 6, 7), we can say that our pottery evidence tends to support a late date for the collapse of the Roman population in South-West Boeotia: the end of the 6th century at the earliest, with certain forms suggesting a continuance into the first half of the 7th century AD. At present the data argue that late 6th century references to Slavic incursions are too early for any lasting local effects. Moreover, we have no secure chronology for the discontinuance of these Late Roman pottery styles in the provinces (Dr. J.W.Hayes, pers. comm.). Whereas in the capital of the Empire, early Byzantine glazed wares appear from around 700 AD, their adoption in the provincial countryside in preference to traditional Roman forms is a process for which we have no fixed points in Central Greece. These early glazed wares, until later Middle Byzantine times, are also hard to distinguish from plain glazes of later periods, especially from worn surface collections in the provinces.

With these considerations in mind, let us study the distribution of Byzantine sites within the survey area (Fig. 8). For Early Byzantine of the 7th to 9th centuries AD, all we can show are three sites where a few sherds might just conceivably represent early glazed wares of this period. No clear occupation sites at all, then, for the justly termed “Dark Age”.

Nonetheless, these three sites are significant ones. One which I have labelled “Palaeomavrommati” is probably a new settlement in Byzantine times, and both its surface pottery and a remarkable local folk tradition point to it being an ancestral community to the large modern village of Mavrommati some two kilometres to its southeast. It is a secluded location, peripheral to its potential farming land and out of sight from any distant point.

A persistent theme in popular, and many academic, histories of Medieval to Modern Greece is that of the flight from the plains and other exposed positions typical for most Greco-Roman farms, villages and even urban sites, into hillside, hilltop and other refuge locations for post-Roman settlements. Appropriately for this theory, the Early Modern village in Central Greece is characteristically in such a location, is very nucleated, and exploits its territory with virtually no associated dispersed farmstead settlement. Within our survey area the Early Modern settlements conform exactly to this picture, with the hilltop/hillslope villages of Neochori, Thespiae, Leondari, Mavrommati. Palaeopanagia lies in gently-rolling arable terrain, but the oldest part of the village is on a promontory knoll. Although modern Haliartos lies in the plain, beside the ancient city, it is a 20th century foundation and its immediate 19th century predecessor is the hill-village of Mazi to its south.

So it might be thought that our site of Palaeomavrommati demonstrates that the traditional scenario is not only valid but may have been enacted as early as the post-Roman Dark Age, or at least by Middle Byzantine times, when that site is definitely a small nucleated hamlet.

However, our other two sites with possible Early Byzantine traces are actually the two surviving urban sites of the Late Roman era, Thespiae and Askra. Moreover, the suspicion at these sites of continuity of occupation from late antiquity is reinforced by these scattered finds and the more plentiful definite Middle Byzantine finds being found in those sectors where late antique occupation was densest. In addition both city sites are not only in low-lying agricultural landscapes, but throughout their post-Roman occupation lack any signs of defences. On the other hand, I am grateful to my colleague Anthony Snodgrass for pointing out that the survival of the mid-Roman enceinte adjacent to the medieval village of Thespiae (hence its contemporary name of Erimokastro, or the village of the deserted fort) would have offered refuge to the local population in their exposed location. In ongoing investigations at the ancient city of Hyettos, in our newest survey sector in northern Boeotia, there are provisional results suggesting a further example where settlement continuity may have spanned the Roman-Medieval divide. Occupation at the main city site lasts into the Late Roman era, then at a satellite site some 500 metres away a small Late Roman site (CN3) provides a few surface ceramics that may date to Early Byzantine times. CN3 grows progressively through the Middle Byzantine period into a flourishing community in the Frankish period.
As a preliminary conclusion, then, South-West Boeotia certainly appears to have succumbed to an almost total depopulation between the 7th to 9th centuries AD, judged on surface pottery evidence. On the other hand, how late the Late Roman settlements with their typical ceramics survived into the 7th century remains an open question. And a transformation to a totally aceramic culture is always possible, if we lack any additional reasons to support this interpretation; the Slavs after all in the rest of the Balkans are certainly a ceramic society. And where are the Boeotian Slav settlers? There is plentiful evidence for Slav toponyms (Dunn, unpubl. report) and there exists a seal of one Dargdekavos, ‘Archon of Hellas’, dated stylistically to around 700 AD, who would seem to be a Central Greek Slav leader somehow involved with the Byzantine theme organisation (Dunn, op.cit.).

THE MIDDLE BYZANTINE PERIOD
(Mid-9th Century to 1204 AD)

From the mid-9th century AD there are widespread signs of recovery in town and country in Mainland Greece, both from the sources and in the major monuments (Dunn, op.cit.). Thus the first group of datable churches in Byzantine style throughout rural Greece belongs to this century and virtually all are extramural. In Boeotia the great church at Skripou is dated 873/4, although significantly this and the even more impressive Holy Luke monastery in nearby Phocis, of 10th-11th century date, owe their foundation to the patronage of imperial officials based on the regional city of Thebes.

By the 11th century Boeotia features in the historical debate over the progressive swallowing up of the Greek countryside into large estates, and the concomitant decline of the free peasant class, in the conflict of ‘the powerful and the weak’. The key source is the 11th century Cadaster of Thebes, a land tax register covering part of Boeotia and incorporating some 10th century material on landownership. Although the exact inferences to be drawn from the surviving fragments have been disputed, it is now generally agreed that the Cadaster demonstrates a predominance of major landowners against independent peasant producers by the 11th century (Dunn op. cit.; Harvey 1982/3). In fact there are more residents of Athens than residents of Thebes in the register. Harvey’s revaluation of the Cadaster also suggests that the process of estate formation is still at a primitive stage, since the landowners seem to possess numerous scattered holdings acquired piecemeal. This agrees with internal evidence that at the same time there is an expansion of cultivation into wasteland.

The long-term excavations in Thebes city have shown that by the 12th century the whole hilltop (Cadmeia) was occupied, whilst 11th-12th Venetian commercial records show great activity in connection with Central Greece. Moreover in the 11th century there was an influx of wealthy refugees to Boeotia from Greek Italy and the Jewish community in Egypt (Dunn, op. cit.). Finally, between the 11th and 12th centuries Notitia 13 shows a marked expansion in the organisation of the Boeotian church (Dunn, op. cit.): the Archbishopric acquires five suffragan bishops compared to none at the beginning of the period.

Turning again to the survey map, (Fig. 8) Middle Byzantine settlement is well-attested at 9 sites and is quite likely at a further 4. But the pottery of Middle Byzantine character from all these locations has no earlier diagnostic forms than the 11th/12th centuries. That is not to say that earlier Middle Byzantine occupation is ruled out at these locations, and indeed the possible Early Byzantine pieces from three of these sites make that quite likely. However, our relatively small samples of pottery give a clear picture only for significant activity at the end of the period, indeed precisely when the wider evidence for Boeotia as a whole, just reviewed, points to a clear upswing of demography and economy. Our very provisional interpretation of the archaeological data is that at a small number of sites a low population continued to occupy Late Roman/Early Byzantine settlements until a general recovery of the region during the 11th-12th centuries gave rise to population expansion at these sites and the founding of several new settlements across the landscape. This model is in agreement with the historical data for a late but rather dramatic revival of the region.

But what kind of Middle Byzantine settlements are we dealing with? Firstly they seem to be essentially small nucleated hamlets located at regular intervals across the landscape, reminiscent of the modern nucleated village pattern but greater in number and therefore closer to one another than their Early Modern successors. Secondly, the locations of these hamlets are both lowland, non-defensive, and hilltop/hillside defensive. Both here and in the putative Early Byzantine settlement sites, it is difficult to believe that the threat of attack is the real reason for the hill settlements, since their neighbours are so exposed; economic considerations are probably the explanation for these contrasted locational preferences. Later in time, of course, the existence of potentially defensive village sites may have led to their demographic enhancement and the disappearance of the lowland settlements (essentially during the Turkish period for most lowland sites in our area).

The ancient cities of Askra and Thespiae are hamlets, and there is definite evidence now at Paleomavrommati for a hamlet. All three settlements will give rise to modern villages in their neighbourhood. Moreover it is likely that the ancestor of the modern village of Neochori begins at this period, in a secluded hill location we term Paleonoeochori. An even more hidden location is the medieval hamlet we discovered beside the ancient Sanctuary of the Muses, high up at the limit of cultivation in the Valley of the Muses. But just to remind us that low lying, defenceless locations are just as popular, apart from
continued life at the ancient town locations we have a new
plain settlement of hamlet type at PP16, and a similar
exposed location at VM 21. Intriguingly, settlement at the
ancient site of Haliartos probably begins again at this time,
although just as at Thessai, outside rather than inside the
ancient defence walls. Only small windows of open or
disturbed ground are available for inspection within the
large town of modern Haliartos, but by good chance in
1985 and 1986, two such windows showed clear traces of
an extensive medieval community ("Palaeohaliartos").
Haliartos we may recall was abandoned in 171 BC, and
only scanty Roman activity is recorded from its acropolis
and the parts of its lower town free of modern buildings.
The new evidence of a possible late Middle Byzantine
settlement on the edge of the ancient site and largely
concealed beneath modern buildings, in the light of our
evidence from the other two ancient urban foci, does raise
the question as to whether the ancient inhabitants of the
Haliartos plain beside Lake Copais transferred their major
settlement from Haliartos to Onchestos for the duration of
the Roman period, then back to the ancient site sometime
between c700 and 1100 AD. Perhaps we will be lucky
enough on a future occasion, if rebuilding allows
temporary open ground within modern Haliartos, to clarify
this all-important transition from antiquity to the high
Middle Ages. For the present our evidence at least shows
that the ancient town location is in possible reoccupation
by the 12th century, and then develops into a very large
village or even town during Frankish and Early Turkish
times (see below). Haliartos is certainly another exposed
location, in fact the traditional main route through Central
Greece is its high street.

Also shown on our survey map (Fig. 8) is the
distribution of sites with pottery of 12th/13th century
forms, assignable either to the final Middle Byzantine or
early Frankish period, or both. As all definite settlements
with this pottery also have Middle Byzantine or Frankish
wares, this category of evidence tends to reinforce the
other dating evidence. But there are three possible sites
with this pottery alone, which might hint at shortlived
dispersed activity in the countryside (and one is a
reoccupation at a mountaintop lookout tower of the 4th
century BC).

If we now return to the debate over class conflict in the
Middle Byzantine era, it is not difficult in the light of the
evidence on the ground, and just summarised, to envisage
how the tiny hamlets of Central Greece developed until the
11th century as independent peasant communes. The vast
expanses of potentially-fertile land could only have been
sampled by these small communities, their productivity
would hardly have supported any landowning class in the
region, and undue pressure from an incipient feudal class
might easily have been avoided by relocation of the
peasantry. This hypothesized situation has obvious parallels
in Medieval England after the relations of land and labour
were revolutionised by the Black Death, and there the effects
on the breakdown of the feudal structure are well-known.

Were we to attempt to specify an archaeological context
into which the growth of the landowning class and the
decline of the free commune can be set, it is clearly with
the expansion of settlement size and numbers recorded for
the 11th-12th centuries within our area. Only now could
fertile land have begun to act as a sought-for resource, and
a rising rural population become available to exploit it and
be exploited by others. This also helps to explain why we
see towns like Thebes expanding at this stage, together
with its trade and industry. The suggested association
between demographic, agrarian cycles and the emergence
of social stratification is one that I have explored elsewhere
(Bintliff 1982) in the context of Late Bronze Age and
Archaic Greece.

THE FRANKISH COUNTRYSIDE

From 1204 to 1460 AD Central Greece was ruled by the
Franks or Latins, as a consequence of the conquest of
Byzantium by the Fourth Crusade. From 1204 to 1311
Boeotia belonged to the Duchy of Athens, with its two
power bases at Athens and Thebes. Latin rule was
continued under the Catalans, the Navarrese and the
Florentines until the Turkish conquest, although the 15th
century rulers at Thebes were already virtual vassals of the
Sultan.

The historical sources give only a very general picture
of the Duchy of Athens, and we have no clear idea of its
internal organisation or economic history (Lock 1986;
Dunn op. cit.). Longnon, for example, considers that the
13th century was a flourishing period, and Setton that
decline set in during the 14th century. Setton and Longnon
disagree about the mainstay of the economy, the former
favouring agricultural revenues, the latter trade and
industry. Three factors are considered significant in the
apparent decline of Latin Central Greece in the 14th-15th
centuries (Dunn op.cit.): the bubonic plague epidemics
throughout this period, internecine warfare between the
Latin powers, and increasing attacks by the Turks.
Symptomatic of the inferred collapse of rural life and
economy is the well-documented shift of policy towards
Albanian immigration into the region. Whereas Albanian
settlement had been positively resisted in the 1320's by a
Byzantine-Catalan league, in the late 14th and through the
15th centuries Albanian settlers were actively sought after
by the Frankish, Byzantine and Venetian authorities (Dunn,
op. cit.).

Turning to the archaeological survey map for South-
West Boeotia (Fig. 9) we have distinguished sites whose
pottery agree in showing a much more flourishing settled
landscape. Before the countryside is dominated by a
In a remarkable opportunistic discovery of 1989, the Boeotia Project has obtained unique evidence regarding the domestic structures that seem (on surface artefact evidence and rare wall fragments) to have customarily accompanied the feudal towers of Frankish Central Greece. In that year an extreme drought from spring to late summer lowered the level of Lake Hylite in the central part of Boeotia, exposing a long-lost medieval tower at the tip of the Klimmataria peninsula. A rescue operation to plan the tower and its well-preserved surrounding domestic settlement, and collect artefacts from each room and open space of the complex, was carried out over a period of a week in collaboration with Greek colleagues from the Thebes Museum. Even lower lake levels in 1990 enabled additional areas of the site to be surveyed and pottery-sampled. The Frankish phase of the site is the most prolific in structures and artefacts, and owing to prolonged submergence since the artificial raising of the lake since the last century, all its foundation walls and associated surface pottery material were found perfectly cleaned and washed. In the centre of the Frankish settlement is a typical feudal tower, with rectilinear blocks of rooms regularly planned on both the lakeward and landward sides. The architectural plan is typified by open spaces surrounded by barrack-like blocks of small rooms sharing party walls, perhaps to offer a protective outer facade for defensive purposes (in the absence of any other defences beyond the tower itself).

So far we have generalised for the archaeological period 1200–1600 AD, highlighting the obvious signs of economic and demographic expansion from the preceding Byzantine settled landscape. It is now necessary, particularly in the light of our earlier discussion of the historic sources, to consider whether within these four centuries a notable decline in this prosperity took place, especially during the 14th-15th centuries.

The known history of several of our villages, and the internal relations between our archaeological sites and their pottery assemblages, allow us some clarification of settlement continuity within these four politically-turbulent centuries. Thus at PP16, a prolific surface collection from a 12th-13th century hamlet contains no significant sherds of so-called Frankish-Early Turkish type. On the other hand we can be reasonably certain that the medieval villages at Paleomavrommati, Haliartos, VM4, Palaeo-neochori and Palaeothespi was continuously occupied until the end of the Early Turkish period, when several underwent relocation or partial settlement displacement to the modern village locations (on the evidence of travellers from the 17th century onwards and the distribution of Later Turkish pottery). Since the dominant pottery material from these village sites is our Frankish-Turkish ware, it is at present most likely that its use genuinely spans the whole period from the 14th to 16th centuries, crossing effortlessly that supposedly traumatic divide of the Ottoman conquest of the area.

Naturally this still does not allow us to estimate whether the sites of these two centuries fluctuated in size and prosperity, say during the final 60 years of Latin rule. Although the overall picture of site continuity argues against a collapse of rural settlement, some startling new evidence from an unexpected source reveals how demographic collapse, settlement stability and apparent prosperity can paradoxically be reconciled for Boeotia between 1400 and 1600.

On behalf of the Boeotia Project, Dr. Machiel Kiel has
been editing the highly detailed Ottoman tax registers for Boeotia during the 15th and 16th centuries. Very full records exist for the years 1466, 1506, 1521, 1540 and 1570, and the 1466 register even contains cross-references to an immediate post-conquest register of 1459/60. The level of detail in these Ottoman records is phenomenal, and immense care was taken to secure their accuracy on the ground through a system of consultation with all parties concerned. Thus for Boeotia at these time intervals Dr. Kiel has been able to present us with a complete breakdown of every village in the province, covering human and animal populations, and crop production by variety and yields. The towns are naturally covered as well, and industrial production. Two aspects of these archives, whose interpretation is only just beginning, deserve special attention.

Firstly, comparison of the province at successive tax intervals during the first hundred years of Turkish rule reveals an unmistakeable rise in rural and urban population, and associated growth in every aspect of economic production. This development is certainly in contradiction to the picture offered in many textbooks, especially those written by Greek historians, where the arrival of the Turks inaugurated a prolonged era of decline and stagnation in almost every aspect of Greek life. But historians of the Ottoman Empire have long been aware that the period up till 1600 AD was in many respects the ‘Golden Age’ of Turkish rule. These statistics also reveal a definite slowing down in growth by the last complete register of 1570, which Dr. Kiel suggests provisionally may presage the genuine stagnation that affects the Ottoman Empire (and indeed much of Europe) during the 17th century.

The changing conditions of the post-16th century Empire can plausibly be connected in various ways with those settlement relocations and abandonments which (as mentioned above) we can observe in South-West Boeotia. But the impressive growth of the region during the late 15th and throughout the 16th century recorded in these registers can also reasonably confidently be tied in with the flourishing settlement picture documented by our Frankish-Early Turkish sites; it now seems likely that a major part if not most of this pottery will belong to the Early Turkish period.

The second major, and equally remarkable, conclusion that Dr. Kiel has been able to support from this excellent database concerns the role of Albanian settlement. Very fortunately for our purposes, the early Ottoman tax registers separate villages into Moslem, Greek and Albanian communities. At a detailed level the village names and those of their inhabitants are available for future analysis into the question of ethnicity. Now if we look at the two administrative subdivisions of Early Ottoman Boeotia, most if not all our survey area will probably fall into the ‘Kaza’ of Thebes (essentially Eastern Boeotia). Taking the earliest post-conquest register, which should reflect in its main lines the situation found by the Turks on arrival, Kiel finds that the Greek population inhabit the town of Thebes, with 700 households, and 6 rural villages with ca. 300 households. Perhaps he estimates, ca. 4500–5000 people of whom around 9%ds live in Thebes. But the Albanian population of the Kaza live in 60 seasonal settlements or ‘Katuns’, comprising perhaps ca. 3100 people. For the whole district, then, we get 54% Greek and 46% Albanian population: but in the countryside it is 31% Greek to 69% Albanian rural population.

In the other (Western) half of Boeotia, the Kaza of Levadthia, the Albanian element is better balanced by rural Greek population: in 1466 there are listed 3 Muslim villages, 24 Greek and 28 Albanian. Incidentally in the southern part of the former Duchy of Athens, Attica, Kiel’s researches have shown an almost total domination of the countryside by Albanian villages.

Kiel points out, that if we subtract the Albanian immigrants, the Boeotian countryside in the later Frankish period must surely have been severely depopulated of its indigenous population. The effect of sponsored Albanian immigration in late Frankish and early Turkish times was a highly successful recolonisation of the landscape, and one which the archaeological evidence cannot as yet reveal, beyond the general evidence that, apparently in spite of the political turbulence of the period 1300–1460, the site pottery evidence indicates settlement stability and a probable overall growth of population.

Further light on the Albanian question can be shed by focusing on villages studied by our survey, listed in the tax registers, and mentioned by later travellers. Thus Mavrommatai, whose predecessor lay it seems at Palaeomavrommatai till c 1600 AD, is an Albanian village in 1466 (and essentially still today as the population proudly affirm), yet archaeologically it must have begun (from Middle Byzantine times if not earlier) as a small Greek hamlet. Here it seems the community was swamped by Albanian immigration and was renamed after its Albanian chief ‘John the Black-Eyed’. The VM 4 medieval village with its Frankish keep is known to be the Greek village of Panaya in the 1466 register; it obviously remained in Greek hands from Byzantine times, and possibly from antiquity via its predecessor at Askra. The large village at Palaeothespiai we have yet to locate in the Pre-17th century Ottoman registers, but in the late 17th century its gradual relocation onto the heights above was observed by the Englishman Wheler, who describes the community as a mixture of Albanians and Greeks; here again a significant Albanian repopulation of this long-lived Greek settlement can be postulated.

From these case-studies we can already see that the Ottoman ethnic designation of villages probably characterizes their dominant population rather than an ethnic exclusivity. Detailed future research, village by village, and on the ethnicity indicated by personal names in each village, could provide even greater clarity on these fascinating questions.
Bibliography


Fig. 1. Area of Boeotia Survey 1979–1986, showing archaeological sites located.
Fig. 2. Distribution of Archaic-Classical-(Early) Hellenistic sites.
Fig. 3. Thespiae, the Classical-Hellenistic surface pottery. Single potsherds identified by black circles, multiple finds by the number of sherds. Grid units with a zero have no known finds of this period. Shaded areas were inaccessible.
Fig. 4. Distribution of late Hellenistic-early Roman sites.
Fig. 5. Thespiae, the late Hellenistic-early Roman pottery. See note to Figure 3 above for key.
Fig. 6. Distribution of late Roman sites.
The Frankish countryside in central Greece

Fig. 7. Theseira, the late Roman pottery. See note to figure 3 above for key.

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Fig. 8. Distribution of early-late Byzantine/Frankish pottery.
The Frankish countryside in central Greece

Fig. 9. Distribution of late Byzantine/Frankish/early Turkish pottery.
Fig. 10. Thespiae, Frankish/Turkish pottery. See note to Figure 3 above for key.