Medieval and post-medieval ceramics from the archaeological sites discoverd by the Boeotia Project, Central Greece, to the present day

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7.1 Introduction

When one steps back from inspecting the individual sherds and takes a general view of all Boeotian field samples collected throughout the research region, it is striking that there are clear differences to be seen in pottery shape and pottery technology for each chronological phase. Tablewares of the Middle Byzantine period (ca. 10th-late12th/early 13th centuries) seem to have predominantly open shapes, such as large dishes, while in the Late Byzantine/Frankish period (ca.13th-mid 15th centuries), much smaller bowls form the larger part of the diagnostic forms.

Because the samples of the Boeotia Project under study here are largely the result of intensive surveying, one would expect that these changes are unrelated to varying sample strategies, biases in collecting, visibility or other research-related factors. The consistency of the variation in shape in all samples rather suggests that indeed changes occurred in the use of pottery through time, and that it was precisely these changes which led to the shifts in shapes. Here the question arises: how can we explain these changes and how are they related to the pottery shapes? It seems obvious that any search for answers must start with a more detailed analysis of the pottery itself, and that this analysis should be undertaken not only from a restricted perspective of ceramic shapes, fabrics and techniques but from a broader perspective in which pottery is regarded as primary evidence for the nature of Medieval society in a general sense (see also Vroom 2000b for this approach).

What I mean is that a farmer's frying pan must meet other needs than a nobleman's wine jug, and those functional requirements (and perhaps glimpses of their socio-economic context) can be traced in the fabric, the thickness of the walls of the vessel, the shape, the decoration and the applied slip or glaze. Looking at the relation between vessel shape and vessel function as a source of historical and socio-cultural information is, however, still an underdeveloped approach among archaeologists working in the Eastern Mediterranean as a source of historical and socio-cultural information.[1]

In short, apart from the search for models of ceramic production and distribution in Medieval and Post-Medieval Boeotia, it would seem fruitful to explore ways to link fabric and form of pottery on the one hand, with developments in social habits on the other.[2] In the search for archaeological explanations with all its technicalities concerning fabrics, slips, glazes etc., it is easy to forget that the main function of pottery has always been that of a common, everyday utensil – in the kitchen, on the table, in the cupboard, and in transport. Whether they were made by rural potters for the local consumer, or by organized workshops as a luxury item for long-distance trade, the shapes and proportions of Medieval pots should be judged on how well they performed the function for which they were designed.

I will restrict myself here to the changes in shape of the decorated tablewares, which were used for serving food and drink, and I will not discuss the no less interesting (but perhaps more complex and overwhelming) problems related to the changing shapes of the utilitarian domestic wares, which played a role in transport, storage and cooking.

7.2 Changing vessel shapes in Boeotia

7.2.1 TABLEWARES OF THE LATE ROMAN – EARLY BYZANTINE PERIOD (CA. 5TH-7TH C.)

In the Eastern Mediterranean, many Roman pottery techniques and features seem to continue in the Early Byzantine period (Hayes 1997, 49). It is for that reason (and because there is a much firmer grip on Late Roman than on Early Byzantine pottery) that I will discuss here some general characteristics of the pottery used for serving and eating in the Late Roman period for the Eastern Mediterranean in general, and for Boeotia in particular.

Tableware of the 4th to the 7th century consisted of a variety of fine textured and thin-walled vessels, finished with a smooth reddish slip (not a glazed treatment) on the in- and outside. These Red Slip Wares were specifi-

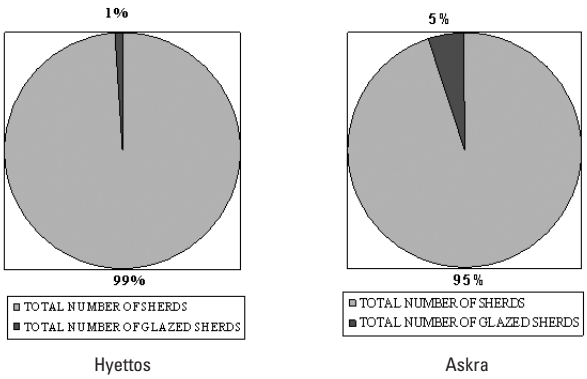

Table 7.1 Percentages of glazed and unglazed wares in Hyettos and Askra (main period: LR-EBYZ).

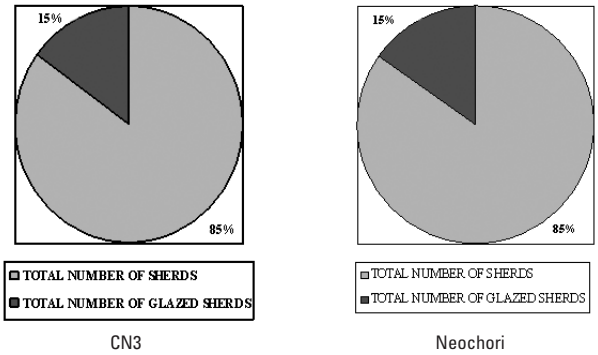

Table 7.2 Percentages of glazed wares and unglazed wares in CN3 and Neochori (1-3) (main period: MBYZ).

cally intended for use on the dining-table and therefore the finish had to be of the best possible quality. However, both fabric and slip suggest that the vessels were not useful for very watery dishes, for which glazing would be a much more suitable finish.

In line with this general picture, the two main sites with material of the Late Roman – Early Byzantine period in Boeotia, Hyettos and Askra, yielded quite some Late Roman Red Slip Wares, but a very small amount of glazed Medieval sherds on the same sites compared to the total number of sherds found (see table 7.1). The total number of glazed Medieval wares on both sites is only 1% and 5% respectively compared to 99% and 95% of unglazed tablewares, domestic wares and amphorae.

It is clear that the mass-produced Red Slip Wares from Northern Africa and Western Turkey provided models for local wares in Boeotia, such as the so-called 'Askra Ware' (Ware 1). The form repertoire of these Red Slip Wares consisted, in general, of a series of large open bowls, dishes and plates. The average rim width of the locally produced Askra Ware was generally 19-20 cm. (see fig. 6.1). The rim diameters of open Red Slip vessels from Northern Africa could even be larger, ranging from 29 cm. to nearly half a metre (see fig. 3.1). The average vessel volume of African Red Slip Ware had been increasing since the 3rd century onwards (Hawthorne 1997, fig. 5).

It has been suggested that this increase in the size of the vessels reflects a change in eating habits in Late Roman times: from small, individual-sized bowls to large communal dishes (Carandini 1981, 15; Hawthorne 1996; 1997). It has even been argued that the shape change can be related to the rise of Early Christianity in Africa, with the adoption of communal dining seen as a reaction to the individual dining of pagan Rome. For the Early Christian's meals were supposed to be communal and simple, with a 'minimum of material trappings' (Hawthorne 1997, 33-5; 1998, 168).

The Red Slip Wares were decorated with rather simple designs, such as rouletting and stamps (figures, fishes, crosses etc.). This 'lack' of decoration has also been interpreted as a reflection of some form of Christian asceticism (Hawthorne 1997, 34). However, other scholars suggest that the potters merely imitated vessels made in more expensive materials such as glass and silver (Poblome 1999, 298-303).

From the 7th century onwards, the decline in figural depictions on Byzantine pottery apparently took off throughout the Byzantine Empire, perhaps related to the Iconoclast movement in the 8th and 9th centuries (as suggested by Hayes 1997, 50 and Dark 2001, 102-3) The typical designs of the 5th and 6th century seem to disappear without evident successors. The few ceramic finds from the Late Roman-Early Byzantine period in Boeotia have hardly any decoration. Also in the rest of the Aegean figural ornament becomes rare, and what remains are simple decoration-techniques such as ridges and wavy-combing. It is only in the late 10th and 11th centuries that fully decorated tablewares return. The Late Roman and Middle Byzantine decorated styles, therefore, bracket a period of some 400 years when Byzantine pottery was essentially undecorated.

7.2.2 TABLEWARES OF THE EARLY BYZANTINE – MIDDLE BYZANTINE PERIOD (CA. 9TH-10TH C.)

The introduction in Boeotia of lead glazed pottery mark the transition from the Early Byzantine to the Middle Byzantine period. The relatively easy technique of lead-oxide glazing had been already known in some parts of the Roman Empire, but in the 7th century lead-glazed tablewares began to be produced in the neighbourhood of Constantinople. In the 8th century lead glazes, which produce translucency after firing at low temperatures (700-800° Centigrade), became more common on tablewares, generally without further decoration (e.g. handled cups, chafing dishes and dishes on a pedestal ring foot, the so-called 'fruit stands'). From this time onwards it remained the principal method of glazing for many centuries: first for functional reasons as a sealant, later (from the 11th century onwards) as a decorative-technique.

Two main sites in Boeotia with finds from the Middle Byzantine period, CN3 and Neochori, show a progressive introduction of glazed wares from about the 10th century onward. The total number of glazed wares on both sites is slowly rising in the Middle Byzantine period to 15% compared to 85% of the unglazed tablewares, domestic wares and amphorae (see table 7.2). This contrasts sharply with the percentages of 1% and 3% from sites of the Late Roman – Early Byzantine period in Boeotia (see table 7.1). The number of 15% coincides, however, with the proportions of glazed finds at the Saraçhane excavations in Constantinople/Istanbul, where approximately 10-12% glazed wares were found in 10th-11th century contexts (Hayes 1992; 1993, 85).

This first phase of glazed pottery in Boeotia is characterized by red-bodied chafing dishes, or vessels with a glazed bowl set on a hollow, ventilated stand (Ware 7) (see fig. 3.5; cf. Frantz 1938, 434, figs. 19, 22-24; Morgan 1942, 36-42, figs. 24-28, pls. I-III; Comsa 1980, figs. 1, 6).[3] The red fabric is coarse, sometimes with large lime inclusions, and relatively porous. These characteristics would make the vessel suitable for cooking. The colourless lead glaze is applied directly as a sealant to the coarse fabric, resulting in a dark brownish (or olive-green) tone. The glaze varies from some sparse spots (due to the application of the lead compound in powder form) to a thick glassy coating on the inside of the bowl.

It has been suggested that these chafing-dishes were placed on the table during banquets, as a sort of portable brazier and cooking pot (Morgan 1942, 37; Bakirtzis 1989). Their function could be either to heat food in the kitchen or to keep it hot at the table. The theory that food in the upper glazed bowl was kept warm by charcoal or by a small candle placed in the lower stand is confirmed by burnt parts in the fabric of the Boeotian fragments (and of pieces found at other excavations).

According to some scholars, chafing dishes are mentioned in Byzantine texts as *saltsaria, saltsera, gararia* or *garera*, because their main function was to prepare and serve warm sauces and, in particular, warm fish-sauces (the so-called *garoi*) at the table (Koukoules 1952, 162; Bakirtzis 1989, 55-65; Gourgiotis 1991, 82). The evidence, however, seems still inconclusive.

7.2.3 TABLEWARES OF THE MIDDLE BYZANTINE PERIOD (CA. 11TH-LATE 12TH/EARLY 13TH C.)

The archaeological finds in Boeotia confirm that from the end of the 11th century onward, the practice of using glazed pottery for table or display purposes became more widespread.In addition, the potters took much more trouble to ensure that vessels for the table, such as bowls and dishes, were pleasing to look at. They achieved this by covering their inside with a coating of white slip (known as *bandana* or *astari*) and a lead glaze, and further enhancing the surfaces with a colourful variety of incised and painted designs, coloured by oxides of copper (green) and iron (brown).

Perhaps this new zest for decoration was related to the rise of a new elite whose enjoyment of food and drink was enhanced by appreciation of artistic endeavour at the table, but perhaps it was even more related to the spread of glazing technology and the greater availability of raw materials.The more readily available metal ores, and the increase in figural expression in architecture and painting on buildings (evident from the 12th century), formed part of the aesthetic and technological background for the potters. The production of tablewares was perhaps part of a wider 'socio-aesthetic' development. Furthermore, the recovery of the countryside by the state in that period and the recovery of markets and crafts lead into more elaborate ceramic products and distribution.

In this perspective, it is no great surprise that the bulk of late 11th-12th century tableware found on Boeotian sites consists of Fine Sgraffito Ware (bowls and dishes decorated with fine line incisions through the

Fig. 7.1 'Kufic script' in a wall of the Monastery of Hosios Loukas (photo: J. Vroom).

Fig. 7.2 Frescoes in crypt of the Monastery of Hosios Loukas (photo: J. Vroom).

white slip with a sharp tool; Ware 11), Slip-painted Ware (on which the white slip was used as decoration-technique to paint the vessel surface; Ware 9) and Green and Brown Painted Ware (on which designs were painted with copper and iron oxides on a white slip; Ware 10) (cf. in general, Morgan 1942 and Papanikola-Bakirtzis 1999; see also figs. 3.7-9).

The decoration-techniques of the Middle Byzantine period were innovative, the designs colourful and non-religious. Often the potters who engraved these wares drew upon themes from popular life for their inspiration, or upon the decorative vocabulary of the Islamic Near East. They decorated their ceramics with animals, musicians, dancers, hunters and (mythical) warriors, which would have been gradually revealed as the content of the vessel decreased. Sometimes they used apotropaic signs (such as the so-called 'knot of Salomon') or rapacious creatures (lions, leopards, and hawks with their prey). It has, therefore, been suggested that these Byzantine designs were actually talismans with a protective significance to avert evil from the meal or from the owner/user of these vessels (Dauterman-Maguire & Maguire 1992, 9-10).[4] Another interpretation is that the single animals depicted represent birds of the chase or their preferred preys and are thus related to the imagery of falconry (Von Wartburg 2001b, 124-25).

Inspiration for the decoration found on these incised and painted vessels of the Middle Byzantine period could also derive from the repertoire of Medieval ornament employed by craftsmen working in other media and in other materials (cf. Le Patourel 1986). One can observe, for instance, exactly the same design of so-called 'Kufic script' in Fine Sgraffito Ware as in the abstract wall-masonry created by masons in the walls of the Monastery of Hosios Loukas (see fig. 7.1). Furthermore, the spiral painted motifs on the Brown and Green Painted sherds found on the Boeotian sites are comparable to the ornamental, figural frescoes produced by painters in the crypt of the same monastery (see fig. 7.2).[5]

How stylish and delicate this Byzantine pottery from Boeotia appears to be from the outside, the façade is only to hide the soft and rather coarse fabric. The clay is not very well levigated and contains many calcium carbonate inclusions. These calcium carbonate inclusions must have caused big problems for the Medieval potters, because they cause cracking of the clay during the firing process. What we have here are, in fact, not very sophisticated and rather porous vessels, which the potters tried to cover up with a white slip and a lead glaze as sealant.

In addition, the shapes of these decorated (11th-)12th century wares are generally very simple (figs. 6.17-22). We see thick-walled dishes and shallow bowls with a low ring foot, but jugs are unusual. The open dishes and bowls come in similar shapes, but a range of sizes. The larger open vessels were probably used for serving main dishes at the table; those of smaller dimensions were used perhaps for side dishes or sauces.

The wide, flat dishes and bowls of the Middle Byzantine period have, in general, large rim diameters, ranging from 24 to 30 cm. (see table 7.3). The function of these serving and eating vessels was probably intended for communal dining rather than for individual use at the table. However, because of their porosity they could

not have been very suitable for watery or greasy dishes.

Examples of similar shapes from the same period can be found in Medieval Spain, where the Muslim community used to eat communally from large centrally-placed dishes from Malaga (e.g. the *ataifor*) with their hands. Individual plates and small bowls were very rare here before the 14th century (Gutierrez 1997, 74). Comparisons can also be made with the so-called *mokhfia* (large polychrome painted dishes) from Fez in Morocco, which were used for the serving and communal consumption of couscous (Hakenjas 1988, 55; form table 2, nos. 4-8).

7.2.4 tablewares of the late byzantine/frankish period (ca. 13th-mid 15th c.)

The open-shaped tablewares of Byzantine times seem to have gone out of use in Boeotia during the 13th century. They were gradually overtaken in the Late Byzantine/Frankish period by Sgraffito wares with more deep and narrow shapes, and sometimes one or two colours in the glaze (Wares 16-20; figs. 3.10-11 and 6.25-27).

Still, the actual amount of real Late Byzantine/Frankish decorated tablewares sampled in Boeotia is not overwhelming. The glaze colour of the Monochrome Sgraffito sherds found on the Boeotian sites is either green (copper) or ochre-yellow (iron); a smaller number of Brown and Green Sgraffito fragments is enhanced with a combination of more colours: green (copper), brown-yellow (iron) and brown-purple (manganese). A new range of designs was also introduced. The emphasis of the engraved decoration was now rather on monograms, geometric and stylised floral patterns, although animals and human figures can still be found. In addition to the vast improvement in the quality of the lead glaze (which became thicker and with a more glassy appearance), a finer, thinly-potted ware replaced the previous thick, soft and coarse tablewares of the Middle Byzantine period.

An important innovation was the introduction of the tripod stand in the potter's kiln, which allowed better distribution of heat and flow of air around vessels compared to simple stacking. This was required when very controlled conditions were necessary for potters to produce highly decorated pottery and complex vessel forms. The introduction of the tripod stand (used for all later 13th century vessels) resulted in a tighter packing in the kiln and consequently a substantially increased output for the workshops, which had to compete with Western imports during this period.

Two of the main sites in Boeotia with occupation in the Late Byzantine/Frankish and Early Turkish periods in Boeotia, VM4 and Rhadon, show a further increase of glazed sherds in both periods compared to the total number of sherds found (see table 7.4). The total number of glazed wares on both sites rises to 24% and 32% respectively compared to 76% and 68% of unglazed domestic and tablewares. This is again a substantial rise from the 15% glazed wares during the Middle Byzantine period (see table 7.2).

Especially interesting, though, is the change in shape: from the 13th century onwards we see a clear increase of small, deep bowls with a high ring foot (figs. 6.25-28) instead of shallow dishes with a low ring base (figs. 6.17-22). The rim width of the bowls is generally smaller than their Middle Byzantine predecessors, ranging from 17 to 20 cm. (see table 7.3).

One of the most remarkable aspects of the Late Byzantine/Frankish period (and successively of the Early Turkish period) in Boeotia is the enormous increase of bowls and the lack of cups, compared to the use of other types of pottery (mainly jugs, jars and dishes) in all periods (see table 7.5).These bowls could have been used for liquid mixtures, or were perhaps even used as drinking vessels (as the so-called *hanaps* in Medieval Europe). Vessels such as bowls, with fairly high sides and thicker glazes, clearly imply that the contents are watery.

Apart from new dining habits and new diets, the introduction of new shapes in the Late Byzantine/-Frankish period may also reflect a growing demand for ceramic versions of more expensive metal ware utensils, or perhaps the well-recorded increase in the wine trade (and therefore wine-drinking among various classes) in Late Medieval society (McCarthy & Brooks 1988, 110). Cups, chalices and goblets are, for instance, also typical shapes of the later Middle Ages, and they clearly demonstrate the influence of metal forms on pottery (cf. Papanikola-Bakirtzis 1989, 41 for Cypriot parallels).In addition, it is known that during the 14th century earthenware tablewares were generally considered as rather low-value items in the hierarchy of materials.[6] Prestigious metal drinking jugs and beakers (especially silver, bronze and pewter) were much more valued, and in general some pottery of this period clearly imitates

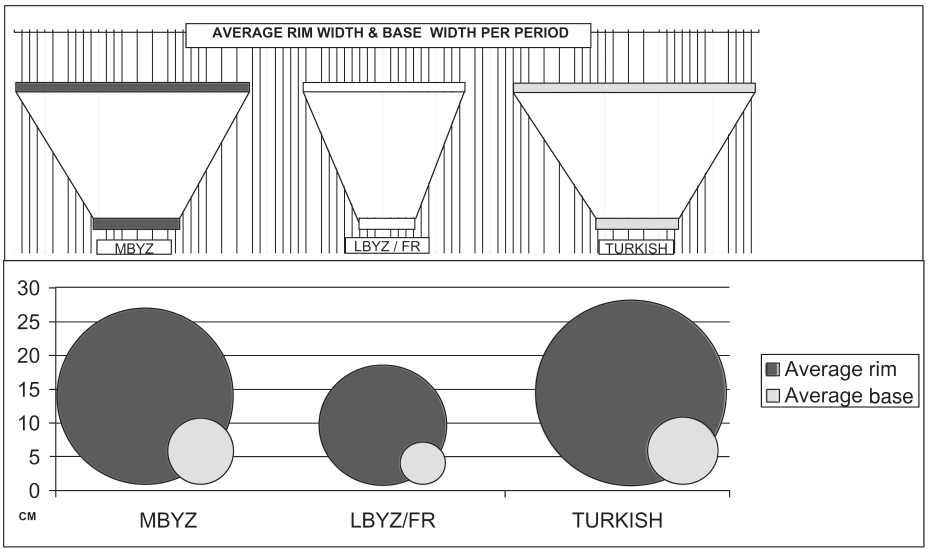

Table 7.3 Average diameters of vessels shapes from the Middle Byzantine period, from the Late Byzantine/Frankish period and from the Turkish period.

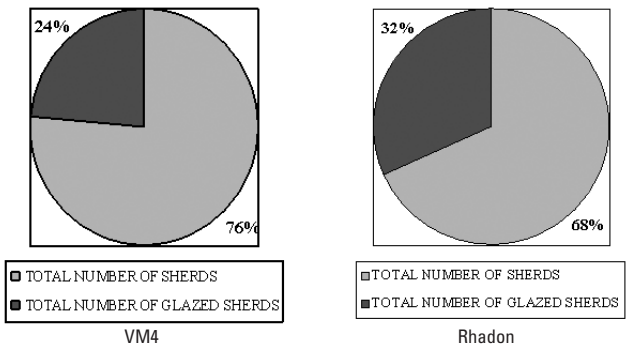

Table 7.4 Percentages of glazed and unglazed wares in VM4 and Rhadon (main period: LBYZ/F-ET).

metal shapes. As always, the 'missing artefacts' (like silver, pewter, bronze and treen) must be borne in mind when considering the full range of behavioural patterning evident in any one ceramic or glass assemblage.[7]

7.2.5 TABLEWARES OF THE TURKISH PERIOD (CA. LATE 15TH-18TH C.)

After the clear change of vessel shapes in the 13th century, a new change is visible in the Boeotian assemblages towards the end of the 15th century and the 16th century, when a range of new and more sophisticated ceramic products appear. Besides some Sgraffito imports with North-Italian features (Wares 24 and 25) a sudden increase of fine tin-glazed wares from Italy (Ware 27: Maiolica) and from Turkey (Ware 32: Iznik Ware) can be noticed. These imported wares were the result of improved pottery technology and apparently specifically designed for the table or for display purposes. Small deep bowls (also available in the imported Italian wares) remained popular in Boeotia into the Early Turkish period (see Wares 24, 26 and 28 and table 7.5).

In Greece the influence of these Italian and Turkish imports also gave a new impetus to local ceramics (such as Greek imitations of Maiolica: Ware 28) and new shapes. Innovations were, for instance, the trefoil-mouth jug and the jug with a spout (the so-called *ibrik*), both for serving and pouring liquids (Wares 27 and 38). These jugs were popular in unglazed, plain glazed, painted and sgraffito form, but their shapes were not very varied. Perhaps they were once used for serving or pouring water, diluted yoghurt, or *sherbets* made of fruit juices, the traditional drinks in Ottoman times (Scarce 1996, 89) The jug with spout or *ibrik* could also have been used for carrying and storing water, or for pouring water in a basin during the ceremony of hand-washing before and after a meal.

Another new shape in the Boeotian tablewares of the 16th and 17th centuries was the large flanged dish with

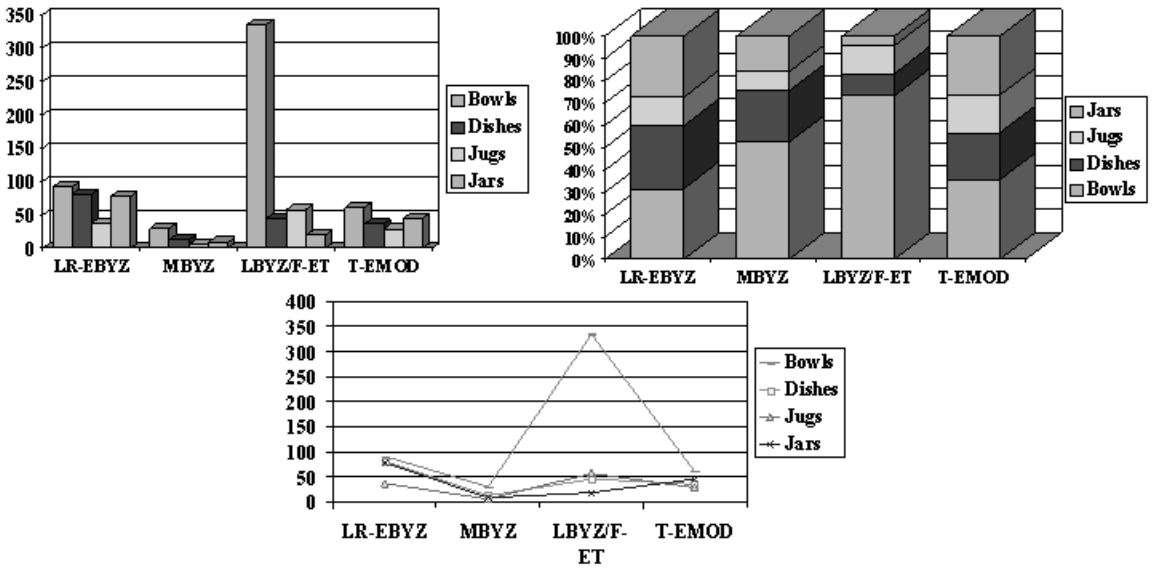

Table 7.5 Types of pottery in Post-Roman Boeotia: functional analysis of the ceramics.

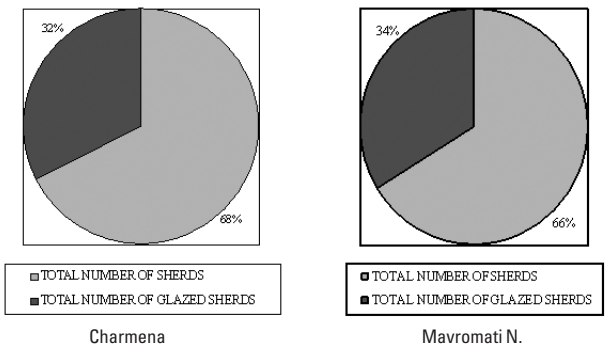

Table 7.6 Percentages of glazed and unglazed wares in Charmena and Mavromati North (main period: T-EMOD).

expanded flat rim, sometimes with notches or pie-crust decoration in the lip (see figs. 6.34-36). They are often monochrome glazed vessels with one colour (green, brown or yellow) in the glaze (Ware 29), although decorated examples also exist in Boeotia (Wares 30, 31 and 32). John Hayes has noted in his Saraçhane publication that the proportions of glazed wares in Constantinople/Istanbul increased markedly to around 35-40% of finds in Early Turkish contexts, with a further rise to 60-80% in the 18th/19th centuries when glazed wares become predominant (Hayes 1992, 233).

A similar (but not so dramatic) increase of glazed wares in the Turkish and Early Modern periods is visible in Boeotia. As mentioned earlier, sites VM4 and Rhadon yielded large quantities of glazed sherds in the Early Turkish period (24% and 32% of the total sample respectively; see table 7.4). Two of the main sites with occupation in the Turkish and Early Modern periods in Boeotia, Charmena and Mavromati North, show a moderate increase of glazed sherds compared to the total number of fragments found. The total number of glazed wares on both sites rises to 32% and 34% respectively against 68% and 66% of unglazed domestic and tablewares (see table 7.6).

The diameter of the rim width of the glazed large dishes of the Turkish period found on the Boeotian sites varies from 24 to 32 cm. (see table 7.3). The increase of average rim width in comparison with Late Byzantine/Frankish (17-20 cm.) is obvious. Perhaps the large bowls were used for substances containing a lot of fat or liquid like soup, in the 16th century one of the most common dishes in the Ottoman Empire (Dernschwam 1953-55 in Babinger 1923, 123). These liquid mixtures were probably eaten from a communal dish in which everybody who was sitting around dipped his or her cutlery.

The polychrome decorated wares of the Turkish period found in Boeotia have exterior as well as interior designs, often based on spirals and winding lines (Wares

24-36). The 'visual performance' value of the exterior designs must have been significant, as is suggested by evidence from the American Southwest for situations in which vessels were carried around for consumption or shared at the supra-household or community-wide levels (Mills 1999, 112-3). We know, for instance, that in traditional households on the Greek islands highly decorated wares were often arranged on wall-shelves or mantle-shelves to ornament the house and as a display of status, but were also used during special occasions (see fig. 3.15).

Towards the end of the Turkish period (probably in the 18th century), a new type of glazed tableware made its way to Boeotia. It concerns here thinly-potted, small cups, made of a fine, buff-coloured fabric, from Kütahya in Turkey (Ware 35). The polychrome painted designs (in blue, green, red, purple and yellow) were usually geometrical, floral or figural. This tableware from Kütahya was strongly influenced by Chinese Porcelain, and is, therefore, sometimes described as a cheap substitute of real Porcelain or 'peasant-porcelain' (Lane 1957, 65). The small Kütahya cups are clearly related to the spread of coffee-consumption and their shape was probably derived from those of Porcelain coffee cups made at Vienna and Meissen (Germany) about 1730-1740 AD (Lane 1939, 236; 1957, 65; see in general, Vroom 1996 for the spread of coffee drinking in the Ottoman Empire).

Noteworthy in this period is also the introduction of smoking in the Eastern style in Boeotia as indicated by the find of an earthenware fragment of the so-called *chibouk* tobacco pipe (Ware 37; see fig. 6.46). This type of pipe was in fashion throughout the Ottoman Empire from the 17th century onwards (Robinson 1985).

According to the Ottoman archaeologist Uzi Baram, coffee cups and tobacco pipes embodied in the Ottoman Empire during the 17th and 18th centuries 'the new, the modern, the rebellion against the social order' (Baram 1999, 151). He suggests that by the end of the 19th century and into the early 20th century these items had become old-fashioned, or in his words: 'the vestiges of an old empire', and eventually to be 'replaced by tea, cigarettes and nationalism' coming from the West (Baram 1999, 151).

7.2.6 TABLEWARES OF THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD (CA. 19TH-20TH C.)

The samples of the Boeotia Project indicate that in the 19th and in the beginning of the 20th century various types of typically Early Modern tablewares made their way into the rural areas of this region. By now, also the smaller settlements in the Boeotian interior imported glazed domestic and tablewares from all over the Mediterranean (Italy, Thrace, Crete, Siphnos, Turkey), and even industrialized mass-produced wares from North-Western Europe (France and Great Britain). Since the Industrial Revolution of the late 18th century, transfer-printed wares were widely appreciated in Europe and finds in Boeotia prove the influx of these industrial manufactured ceramics in Early Modern Greece. The printing technique, whereby the design of an inked engraving was transferred to paper and from there to the ceramic object, was a cheap process.

Very distinctive in the Boeotian samples are a few sherds of large, printed plates in a monochrome colour from North-Western Europe, such as '*opaque de Sarreguemines*' from the Utzschneider factory in France (in the catalogue of site-samples categorized as 'Modern plates'). Also a piece of printed pottery from the British firm Powell, Bishop & Stonier Ltd. in Staffordshire (1891-1939) was found in Boeotia, which features on the back a caduceus-mark above the words 'bisto' and 'England' (cf. Korre-Zographou 1995, figs. 452-55; 474-91; 515-17 for similar wares imported to the Cyclades).

The main use of the transfer-printed pottery was the serving of food, but there were also purely decorative purposes. In Early Modern Greece, at least in the more prosperous regions, printed plates were often arranged on wall-shelves or mantle-shelves to ornament the house (see fig. 3.15). Ideological themes on these plates were scenes or heroes from the War of Independence, such as Lord Byron or Kolokotronis, but also depictions of Alexander the Great were very fashionable (cf. Gourgiotis 1976; Korre-Zographou 1995, figs. 452-55 and 475-91).

Another widely imported, mass-produced ware of the Early Modern period was Grottaglie pottery, which was found quite abundantly on the Boeotian sites. This is a lead/tin-glazed earthenware from Southern Italy (or imitations from Corfu?) with an opaque white glaze on which the potters painted simple designs (such as small flowers and Greek meanders in blue, yellow or brown). One can distinguish thick-walled plates and shallow dishes with everted, flattened rims, and trefoil-mouth

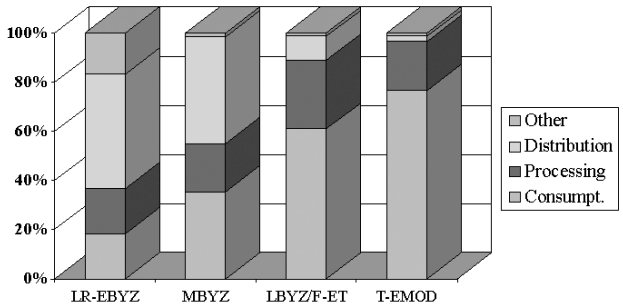

Table 7.7 Post-Roman ceramics in Boeotia: functional analysis.

jugs with flat bases and strap handles (Cuomo di Caprio 1982, 214-23).

This fine-textured and hard-fired Grottaglie Ware was a cheap imitation of the more costly *faience* and Porcelain from Western Europe. Interesting is the fact that all these Western imported wares have a white-fired fabric, whereas the more locally produced glazed vessels in the Aegean are made of red-fired *terracotta*.

In short, one can discern the appearance of decorative tableware, such as plates, dishes and trefoil-mouth jugs with purpose-designed rims for pouring and drinking. The shapes of these imported wares vary greatly, but were totally based on individual dining habits in Western Europe.Is it possible that the imports of this pottery indicate a slow trend toward different consumption patterns (such as individualized food serving) in these Boeotian rural villages? In fact, the population boom, the reclamation of land for agriculture, the easy access of Boeotia to sea-routes and the development of merchandizing in the 19th century created good conditions for Early Modern 'Westernization' and a new 'modernization' in Boeotian households. Table 7.7 shows the growing increase of vessels which were used for consumption in Boeotia (as opposed to processing, or transport and storage) throughout all periods, and the dramatic increase in consumption pottery during the Turkish and Early Modern periods is very obvious. (Noteworthy in this table is also the reverse dramatic decrease of vessels which were used for distribution and storage, such as amphorae, which were undoubtedly replaced from the 14th century onwards by wooden barrels or skin containers.)

For the local potters competition with imported manufactured wares from Western Europe, which were both cheap and usually of better quality, must have been difficult. Typical Early Modern products in the Greek folk tradition found in Boeotia, like the careless slip-painted green bowls from Didymoteicho and the simpler glazed domestic wares from Crete and Siphnos, were not very sophisticated and probably not suited for display in Greek households (see fig. 3.15), but rather practical in use for food preparation and consumption.In fact, the traditional evidence indicates that Greek consumers have often argued that these wares, manufactured in a traditional way, were excellent for cooking and for preserving the taste of food (G.London, pers. comm.).

7.3 Changing vessel shapes and vessel functions

The relation between changes in pottery forms and changes in the function of pottery has been the subject of various earlier studies, though none of those was related to the Mediterranean area (in Post-Roman times). The emphasis of most of these studies was on ethnographic material from the American continent. The first to approach the problem was Ralph Linton, who attempted to deduce some general morphological parameters for ceramic cooking pots from North America and to place them in a cultural context (Linton 1944). After his pioneering study, most researchers used in their contributions the principal functional categories, morphological parameters and governing factors formulated by Linton. Nevertheless, within this general framework quite different approaches developed in an ever expanding discussion (cf. in general, Juhl 1995, table 2.1).

A recent line of argument, for instance, is that differences in the nature and volume of the foods cooked, as well as the introduction of new foods and the methods of cooking are all important indicators of changes in the types and capacities of ceramic containers. In a case-study of increasing vessel sizes among Pueblo communities in the American Southwest, one of the explanations forwarded was the change in specific types of food (such as the adoption of corn) that might require boiling and serving in suitable containers (Mills 1999, 110).

Another approach is to look closely at the variations in size, wealth and status of the user group/household, and the occurrence of centralized, community-wide feasting, as factors in changes of pottery forms. Christy

Turner and Laurel Lofgren, for instance, introduced in their study of the Anasazi culture in North-Eastern Arizona the idea that the volumes of cooking pots and serving bowls can be directly related to the number of people served at a meal (Turner & Lofgren 1966). However, Ben Nelson showed that household size was only part of the solution of the problem, and that age distribution and social composition of the group using the pots were also significant factors (Nelson 1981).

However, as far as tablewares are concerned, most studies emphasise that easy access to the food in the vessels, and the size of the user group are the primary functional factors for shapes. Therefore, open vessels with a firm stand predominate in this category. Calculations seem to indicate that individual-sized serving and eating vessels are about three times smaller than family-sized serving and eating vessels, and that drinking vessels will have the smallest volume (Henrickson & McDonald 1983, 632 and Juhl 1995, 35 with more literature).

Furthermore, changes in the shapes or types of tablewares are also often related to changes in status display of individuals or of the household as a whole (e.g. Henrickson & McDonald 1983; Lischka 1978). For instance, vessels for the serving and consumption of food are often costly decorated, because one of their functions is to have a high display effect in the household.

A prominent representative of this more or less cultural approach to wining and dining habits is the anthropologist Jack Goody, who argues that class differences, the social context of food preparation and serving, as well as changes in 'cuisine' and 'manners' can all have far-reaching effects. Goody notes that 'the identity and differentiation of the group is brought out in the practice of eating together or separately, as well as in the content of what is eaten by different collectivities; this is the arena of feasts and fasts, of prohibitions and preferences, of communal and domestic meals, of table manners, and modes of serving and service' (Goody 1982, 38). Unfortunately, he does not discuss the effects on vessel shapes (Goody 1982, 38).

However, the approach of Goody to the cultural complex of changes in cuisine and dining habits might be helpful as an additional perspective in trying to explain the shift in shapes of the Boeotian pottery. The challenge here is to find a way to use the Boeotian collection of Post-Roman finds, not only as a source of typochronological information but also as a source of information on the functional and socio-cultural context of the pottery. A way of extracting this information is to compare the changes in the form of the pottery over time with changes in drinking and eating habits known from other sources, which I will undertake in chapters 11 and 12.

7.4 Summary

The Medieval and Post-Medieval surface material from the Boeotia Project shows that, at least in case of the tablewares, there are a number of very clear changes over time in the general shapes and techniques of the pottery. The first obvious change is in the Late Roman-Early Byzantine period from fine, large dishes and plates with the finish of a red slip to coarse utilitarian 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 and Early Turkish periods, and then to large, open dishes in the Turkish period again (see table 7.3). At the same time, innovations in decoration techniques in tablewares were introduced in the Middle Byzantine period, which have been practised in large parts of Greece until recent times without much change.

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 the white-fired, colourful tablewares, finally, was introduced in the Early Modern period, when cheap, mass-produced pottery from the West made its way to all corners of Boeotia in substantial quantities. In general, more varied shapes of plates and jugs became widespread during the 19th and 20th centuries.

The question to be answered is whether these technological and functional variations in pottery production from Late Roman-Early Byzantine times onwards in Central Greece were only the result of technical innovations in the potter's craft and of socio-economic factors (such as an increased demand for imports), or also of actual changes in the consumption of food and/or by changes in dining habits of the local population. And if so, the problem is how to get an adequate picture of

these changing socio-economic circumstances and dining habits. The obvious way to proceed seems, therefore, to explore the written sources and the pictorial evidence on these subjects in the next chapters. There, the entire field of the obviously complex relation between shape and function of pottery is to be explored further from a different perspective.

NOTES

1. An exception is Bakirtzis (1989), who made an important contribution towards the study of names, shapes and uses of domestic wares in Byzantine Greece (concentrating on the period from the 9th/10th to the 13th/15th centuries).

2. Blake (1980, 3-8) has questioned the value of the traditional approach to pottery for dating. He argues, for instance, that pottery 'reflects the components of demand' (rather than supply) and is therefore a 'unique measure of the consumption habits of past communities'. See also Vroom 2000b.

3. Cf. Hayes (1992, 41-43, fig. 15), although his 'Coarse Glazed Wares' have different shapes.

4. Various interpretations of the decoration on Middle Byzantine pottery are possible, but for the most part these must remain in the realm of speculations as we have no means of confirming or refuting them.

5. In England the possibilities of pottery acting as a means of defining regional cultures was propounded by E.M. Jope in a series of articles. Jope (1952, 61-76; 1972) identified regional traits and this was followed up with a more wide-ranging paper in which architectural style and building materials were considered.

6. The 14th century scholar and historian Nicephorus Gregoras (ii.788.15-18) stresses the hierarchy of materials when he exclaims that the poverty of the imperial court required the replacement of gold and silver vessels by those made of tin and 'ceramic and clay' (as cited by A. Kazhdan in Kazhdan et al. 1991, 2146).

7. See Smart Martin (1989, 1-27). However, vessels made of cheaper materials such as wood and leather were far more widespread than their survival today would indicate.