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THE BOEOTIA PROJECT 1992-93

Since active fieldwalking of new areas of the landscape ceased in 1991, work has concentrated on revisits of known sites to clarify their exact chronology and study of previously collected material, together with ongoing mini-projects in connection with the deserted villages and vernacular building programmes. This report covers the work of the 1992 and 1993 seasons. The dating of the sites discussed here is provisional. The project is directed by myself and Prof. Anthony Snodgrass (Cambridge University) with annual student participation from Durham. Figure 1 illustrates the location of sites and districts where the Project has been active in the last two years.

The Mavrommati region: south-west Boeotia

This area was the focus of fieldwork from 1979-1986. All the ceramic finds from this district are being restudied and wherever necessary sites are being revisited to refine uncertainties in chronology.

The vernacular architecture programme

Up to 1992 the programme was confined to the villages of Boeotia, under the direction of Dr Peter Lock (College of York and Ripon St. John). This had successfully identified characteristic house types and associated rural lifestyles back to the 17th century AD for every district of Boeotia. In 1993 the accelerating rate of destruction of traditional houses in the regional capital, Livadhia, prompted a reassessment of priorities, and Dr P. Spoerry and I began a major survey in the town. This revealed a far greater variety of house forms and confirmed the short life-expectation of traditional housing areas in the city.

The deserted village programme

Increasing confidence in our ability to date the main assemblages of medieval and post-medieval ceramics in central Greece from surface collection (the work of Prof. J. W. Hayes, Oxford University), together with the extraordinarily abundant and diverse pottery forms typical of large and small rural sites in these periods, encouraged the Project to establish a new programme to refine the post-Roman ceramic series and if possible fill any gaps up to the early 20th century. It was hoped to provide for the first time in Greece a reliable long-term sequence of ceramic types from antiquity to modern times. Our expectations have been heightened by the occasional references in Byzantine and Frankish texts to locatable sites in our survey region, but chiefly by the remarkable detail offered in the village tax registers of the early Ottoman Empire for Boeotia (translated for us by Dr M. Kiel, Bonn), supplemented by the less detailed registers for late Ottoman times and the accounts of European travellers from the 17th century onwards.

Thanks to the Leverhulme Foundation, Mrs T. Lane (Durham) is working for a three-year period on a seriation and functional analysis of post-Roman surface assemblages from the Project database. To assist this work we have been seeking to add to the deserted village sites already studied by the Project since 1979, by identifying villages mentioned in the Ottoman archives which can be relocated from toponyms or old maps, and visiting them to check the nature of surface finds and compare ceramics found with the known history and population of the villages. North of our base of Mavrommati we relocated the village of *Domenico Mazaraki* (Fig. 1), an Albanian foundation of the 15th century AD, which was reported as abandoned both in later Ottoman archives and in the late 17th century travel account of a Durham

Fig. 1



scholar, Dr. Wheeler. Apart from unexpected prehistoric finds and the expected evidence of Classical farming (probably with surviving terrace walls), the majority of the surface ceramic observed was late Frankish-early Turkish style. Small amounts of Frankish and perhaps even final Middle Byzantine wares suggest, however, that, as elsewhere in central Greece, the Albanian settlers were encouraged to reoccupy sites abandoned by earlier Graeco-Slav villages (perhaps during the troubled 14th century).

East of Mavrommati we relocated the twin villages of *Upper and Lower Archontiki*. Both existed in the Ottoman archives as Albanian settlements, one giving rise to the other in a relatively short time during the early Turkish period. By the late 19th century only one appears as a deserted community on contemporary maps, but the sources were unhelpful on which one outlived the other. The surface ceramic material, however, was abundant and clear in character: both sites have Archaic-Classical settlement (probably farm establishments), then a gap in occupation until Lower Archontiki is established as a village in Frankish or possibly late Middle Byzantine times (12th-13th centuries AD). As was the case with Mazaraki, the associated Graeco-Slav inhabitants fled, died out or were enslaved by pirates, because the plentiful surface ceramic of late Frankish-early Turkish style at both Lower and Upper sites must belong to the Albanian colonists newly-arrived in the 15th-early 16th century Ottoman registers. The subsequent inception of activity at Upper Archontiki correlates with the daughter foundation noted in the same sources. Also confirming and clarifying the later, map data, only the younger, Upper Archontiki site shows significant occupation in later Turkish times.

South-west of Mavrommati, we revisited a deserted village first identified early in the project, the original location of the modern village of *Neochori*, a few hundred metres uphill from the contemporary community. This visit yielded a much richer surface collection from several discrete subareas of this extensive site, including one with additional Prehistoric and Geometric-Classical occupation (III), another with an additional small Classical farmstead (II), and a third where the medieval village is both earliest and richest in finds (I). In the last-named locality surface material is essentially Middle Byzantine to early Turkish in date, with the merest hint of earlier Byzantine and a marked absence of later Turkish ware - the latter indicating the time at which the village relocated to its present position. Suggestions of village growth can be seen in locality II, into which the community extended itself in late Frankish-early Turkish times.

A final deserted village was relocated in north Boeotia, south of the village of Pavlo and not far from the city of Hyettos. The village of *Rhadon* was recorded as abandoned due to banditry in the late 19th century AD, but also appears as an Albanian foundation in the early Ottoman registers around 1500 AD. Apart from the ubiquitous Classical farming occupation, the bulk of the surface material observed at this rich location covers exactly the phases noted in the historic sources, late Frankish-early Turkish, late Turkish and early modern.

The city of Hyettos and its region

Preliminary results of our researches on and around the ancient city of *Hyettos* in north Boeotia were published in 1991 and 1992.¹ The entire city area has now been subjected to intensive 'urban survey', using an updated methodology to that we employed in the mid-1980s for the urban sites of Askra, Haliartos and Thespieae. The experiment revealed once again how much new information can be obtained, with a small team and in a limited time, from controlled surface collection wherever an ancient town is unvegetated and not presently built-over. Analysis of the surface densities, corrected

¹ *Archaeol. Reports for 1990*, 13-16; *Archaeol. Reports for 1991*, 23-28.

for visibility, indicates that the fullest extent of the ancient town - some 28 hectares - is much larger than previously estimated.

Wherever feasible the entire city was studied through a regular grid of 20 x 20 m square units aligned north-south. 664 of these units were supplemented by five double units and a single block of 15, in both cases where the precipitous Acropolis slopes required amalgamation of sample modules, to bring the formal number of discrete ceramic sample units to 670. In addition the equivalent of 12 units were inaccessible due to ancient and early modern mine shafts. With sample units providing typically some 50-200 sherds, the total city database of over 70,000 sherds, each locatable to a relatively tiny sector of the city, promised a reliable insight into the dominant trends in the occupational history of the site, as detailed study of the ceramics is proving. We can now confirm the qualitative impression obtained during active survey, that the town has a significant Bronze Age community in the Acropolis and adjacent sectors, subsequent early Iron Age activity in the same area and in a rather wider radius south of the Acropolis, then during Archaic to Classical times the fullest extent of the 28 ha city area is reached. The density and extent of activity during the Hellenistic period awaits plotting of the analysed ceramics, but certainly by Early Roman times the town has shrunk to perhaps two-thirds or less of its Classical peak. This reduced area is approximately that kept to in the Late Roman era after 400 AD. During the Roman period, the surface finds comprise a rich variety of forms and fabrics, and regular trade wares (though never at a very high level). Since throughout the history of the town, local pottery production plays the overwhelming part in the composition of ceramic assemblages (a situation characteristic for Boeotia from our researches hitherto), we feel confident in drawing direct comparison between the quantity and extent of surface finds and population levels during the Graeco-Roman and later periods. It seems that Hyettos remained a flourishing city throughout the Early and (Eastern) Later Empire, until at least the end of the 6th century AD, whilst never recapturing its climax extent of Classical Greek times. A bishop may be attested in Late Roman sources, and one piece of 'Slav Ware' may (or may not) bear witness to the arrival of northern settlers in the troubled final decades of the 6th or earliest 7th century AD.

In contrast to the results in south-west Boeotia - where the cities of Askra and Thespieae arguably continued to exist, as villages, from the final Late Roman through Early to Middle Byzantine eras - the very large database from Hyettos yielded just a handful of sherds from mature medieval times, pointing to abandonment of the town by Early Byzantine times (7th-mid 9th centuries AD) and a lack of significant later occupation. The story does continue in the near vicinity of the ancient town, as will be discussed in the context of the regional survey, below.

The Hyettos region

At the conclusion of fieldwalking some 2.74 km² of countryside in the territory of ancient Hyettos (its *chora*) had been surveyed, all to the north of the town, resulting in the discovery of 17 rural sites. The field methodology has been fully described in previous reports. Terrain comprised an extensive plain to the immediate north-east, a small plateau-plain immediately north, and low, rolling hills which alternate between rocky barrenness and highly fertile chalky soils in the north-west, outer north and outer north-east sectors of landscape. The majority of the city's territory remained unsurveyed, but it was hoped that this large sample might provide a reasonable insight into the vicissitudes of the rural settlements associated with the town.

Some clear contrasts in off-site ceramic deposition evidently primarily reflect deliberate manuring activity in Graeco-Roman times. The large plain in the inner north-east sector was already known to be a major recipient of urban rubbish for fertilizing purposes, whilst the hill-land of the outer north to northeast sectors was

mainly manured from farms and villas located there (and hence comparatively low in off-site density). A major surprise of our subsequent survey of the small plain due north and the hill-land in the outer north-to-northwest sectors has been the very high density of off-site deposition. The small plain was arguably benefitting from urban rubbish, and it is clear that the outer hill-land had a greater density of rural settlements; on the other hand the quantities are so great that local rubbish production was probably insufficient, and we would suggest that urban material was being transported into this zone preferentially to enhance its food production. The reason for this is not far to seek: the chalky, well-drained hill-land provides the finest agricultural soil in the areas hitherto surveyed, and is particularly favourable to mixed cultivation of tree-crops, vegetables and cereals; surface water even today is common for both human, animal and irrigated garden consumption.

Ceramic study, though still incomplete, is at a sufficiently advanced stage to permit some general impressions of settlement history from 15 sites in the Hyettos rural zone (two sites await ceramic analysis). Several sites showed Bronze Age activity, though only the city appears to be of village proportions in this era. In the post-Bronze Age 'Dark Age' of Protogeometric to Geometric times four rural sites have definite or possible occupation to accompany the more abundant evidence of the upper city, with CN9 potentially important for the early part of that period. Unsurprisingly the peak of city occupation by the Classical-early Hellenistic 5th-3rd centuries BC is reflected in ubiquitous rural settlement (8 rural sites definitely occupied, possibly 4 more in use). For comparison with the vigorous if shrunken Roman city, 6 rural sites can be assigned to Early Roman times, and 5 to the Late Roman period. Geophysical survey at CN7 has produced comparable results to that carried out earlier at CN6, with a largescale groundplan arguably indicating in both cases substantial villas; whether these plans reflect just the later, Roman occupation at these sites, as we suspect, will await confirmation from careful plotting of the dated surface ceramics.

At an early stage of our investigations in the Hyettos region our attention had been drawn (through two neglected chapels) to the secluded, shallow valley north of the ancient city and on the boundary between the small plain and outer hillcountry referred to above. A full survey of this locality has revealed several discrete foci of medieval activity, otherwise lacking in the other sectors of rural landscape surveyed. Although our methodology of 100% landscape cover in contiguous blocks of countryside seems rather slow, this discovery is perhaps a useful reminder of the dangers inherent in other approaches to rural survey using wide strips of country and 10-20% sampling, where key components of this cluster might have escaped recognition entirely! In addition to the first recognized focus between the chapels, CN3, we now have a small site some 150 m to its east, CN8, another small site 200 m to its northwest, CN15, and a site focussed around an early modern monastic farm complex 0.5 km to its north-east, CN4.

The greatest interest is currently emanating from the low hill site of CN15, where Mrs Lane and Prof. Hayes have identified a hitherto unique assemblage that may represent a ceramic group intermediate in time (7th-8th century AD?) between the final Late Roman of the nearby city and the glazed assemblages of the final Early Byzantine and Middle Byzantine traditions (8th-12th century AD) which are found very sparingly at the same site and in much greater amounts at other sites of the cluster (CN3, CN8). Occupation probably ceases at CN15 by Frankish times, and is perhaps less important than at CN8 compared to the latter's Middle Byzantine florescence; CN3 however, probably a genuine village since Middle Byzantine times, continues to be important in Frankish times and in the subsequent ceramic phase termed late Frankish-early Turkish (which should comprise the 14th-16th centuries AD). Surface finds from site CN4, the monastic site, suggest occupation in Frankish to early Turkish eras, and in the late Turkish and 19th century (confirmation of 17th-18th century activity awaits detailed

examination of the pottery). Apart from a heavily overgrown watermill site, CN16 - without ceramic associations but probably the utility mentioned in the early Turkish archives for this locality, and conceivably remaining in use until quite recently - only the monastic site betrays occupation in the survey area for late Turkish times. On the other hand, much of the former lands of ancient Hyettos city were cultivated from early Turkish times by the Albanian foundation villages of Pavlo, Loutsi and Rhadon, each a few kilometres from Hyettos in respectively a south, west and south-westerly direction. A tentative summary of the medieval occupational sequence would postulate CN15 as a small settlement following the latest phase of city life, being essentially replaced by CN3 & CN8 in Middle Byzantine times. In Frankish times, CN3 is the main settlement, with some continuing activity at CN8 and the beginning of settlement at CN4. During early Turkish times CN3 & CN4 continue in parallel, with CN4 alone representing later Turkish and post-Turkish settlement.

We have not yet unravelled the exact relationship of our medieval site cluster to the development of the early modern traditional villages of the Hyettos region. Although Rhadon does not seem to replace a Byzantine community, we have no knowledge of the pre-Albanian occupation history at Pavlo and Loutsi. However, Hyettos with its 'replacement' medieval site cluster is noticeably at the outer extreme of access from the two nearest traditional village sites of Loutsi and Pavlo. When these villages were smaller, it possessed its own exploitation focus according to the first Ottoman registers - another Albanian village called *Gjin Vendre*. Whether this name fits our site CN3 or CN4, or both, requires closer investigation, as their ceramic finds indicate occupation at this time. Since both were previously occupied in pre-Albanian times, with a putative link back even further to the earliest post-Roman centuries via CN15, we can assume once again that by the final Frankish period a Greek-Slav population had abandoned the medieval site-cluster adjacent to ancient Hyettos, to be replaced through controlled Albanian immigration. Apparently this Albanian hamlet did not flourish, in contrast to neighbouring Loutsi, Pavlo and Rhadon, and may have merged with those neighbours in the late 17th-18th century. The Ottoman register hamlet of *Gjin Vendre* has a small population of 50-60 people from 1466 to 1688, then disappears. The absence of an immediate exploitation focus for the fertile lands around the ancient city was then the stimulus for a monastic grange foundation established by the distant monastery at Martino on the medieval site of CN4. Doubtless the survival of the Albanian village toponym in this locality prompted its conversion by the Greek monks from its original Albanian clan leader's name 'John Vendre' into modern Greek *Sta Dendra* - 'the place with the trees', the name under which the grange is recorded in early modern sources.

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