LATE ROMAN AND BYZANTINE GREECE

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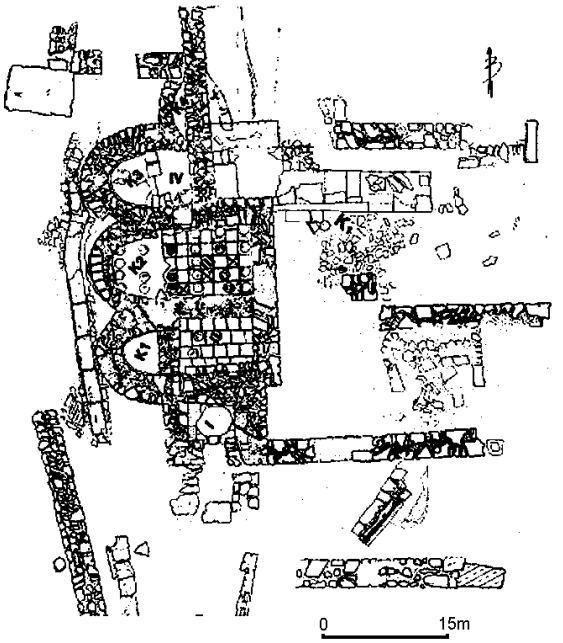
An important and continuing trend is the discovery and exploration of Late Roman 'villas', once an apparent rarity in the Greek Aegean. In the northern Aegean, at ancient **Hephaistia**, Lemnos, the Italian School explored a colonnaded peristyle house whose total dimensions are not yet stated. If within a still coherent urban site, it belongs to a well-documented feature of towns in Late Roman Greece. Otherwise it belongs in the equally interesting suburban or rural category. Coins in the destruction layer include a follis of Heraclius of 610–611. The second decade of the seventh century witnessed violent destructions at urban and rural sites all over northern Greece (the mainland and islands, for example Thasos), whose causes are much debated. In Macedonia (nomos of Kozani), at **Ag. Menas**, **Velvendos**, the 17th EBA explored a well-appointed baths complex (**Fig. 31**) attributed to a suburban villa whose full context is not yet known. There is an associated coin of Justinian (527–562). However, one should also consider the possibility that this complex belonged to an ecclesiastical establishment.



31. Ag. Menas, Velvendos, Macedonia: hypocausts and remains of marble paving in baths attached to the church. © Ministry of Culture and Tourism: 17th EBA.

The 17th EBA previously reported an Early Byzantine church associated with baths at **Larissa**, **Phrourio** (**Fig. 32**). This association is normal at pilgrimage centres. Five hundred metres northwest of Ag. Menas, the 17th EBA explored in 2007 a larger baths complex (**Fig. 33**), in the decoration of which capitals of three dates in the Late Antique era were used (fourth- and fifth-century and of *ca.* AD 500). This is interpreted by the excavator, M. Tsiapali, as a public baths complex. But again, one should ask to what extent any provincial *civitas* (as opposed to the Church) was building such facilities by AD 500.

At **Molos**, 2km outside ancient Abdera, the 19th EPCA explored from 2004 onwards an élite residence with *triclinium* of the fourth to fifth century. Outside Edessa, the 17th EPCA explored in 2007 part of a complex combining an agricultural storeroom for no less than 30 pithoi associated with third-, fourth- and fifth-century finds (ID480), a discovery which suggests the centre of an agricultural estate (whether or not an élite residence is attached; there is accumulating evidence of such basic granges). All these discoveries enrich an emerging archaeology of the lay and religious élite's presence in, and management of, the rural economy.



32. Larissa, Phrourio: fifth- to sixth-century AD baths in sector Γ, east of Proto-Byzantine basilica of Ag. Achilleios. © Ministry of Culture and Tourism: 17th EBA.



33. Ag. Menas, Velvendos: Proto-Byzantine bath complex northwest of the basilica. © Ministry of Culture and Tourism: 17th EBA.

Rarely explored, but of great significance for any understanding of the Late Roman settlement patterns of mainland Greece (arguably with the exception of the Peloponnese), are rural fortifications of various origins. The 7th EBA explored in 2008–2009 the fortress of **Velika**, in the vicinity of ancient Meliboia, Thessaly (**Fig. 34**). The site overlooks an important north-south route through eastern Thessaly and partly reconditions an ancient fortification. It is powerfully constructed in a lime-mortar bonded masonry. It contains a church (whose dimensions seem not yet established) and has yielded sixth- to seventh-century pottery. It thus has all the characteristics of a type of Late Roman site found throughout the Balkan peninsula. Interestingly, a similar complex at **Kastri Livadiou**, near Doliche in Thessaly, was previously reported by the 7th EBA.

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34. Velika, near ancient Meliboia: re-use of Hellenistic walls in Byzantine fortress. © Ministry of Culture and Tourism: 7th EBA.

Different but complementary aspects of the Late Roman cities of Greece continue to be revealed by surveys and excavations, demonstrating the value of both methods. The intensive survey by the Dutch-Slovenian **Eastern Boeotia Archaeological Project** (EBAP) plotted the shrinkage of the settled area of Koroneia in Late Antiquity, and the same mission explored, in the extra-mural area of ancient and Late Roman Thespiai, part of a clearly large Early Byzantine basilica at Makri Ekklesia, **Thespies**. Those familiar with the earlier Boeotian Survey will know that Late Roman/Early Byzantine Thespiai was focused upon a small spolia-built fort. This large basilica was built outside the now-invisible fort in its *suburbium.* On the site of ancient and Late Roman **Sparta** (or perhaps of Late Roman Sparta's *suburbium*?) the 5th EBA reported the discovery on Alcman and Lysander Street of an olive press 'in proximity' to an Early Byzantine basilica, a juxta-position which is extremely interesting for the total archae-ology of ecclesiastical complexes: a fast-developing story. The Ephoreia has also found (2006–2009) monumental structures which may have Late Roman and Middle Byzantine phases on the site of ancient Sparta (but, implicitly outside the Late Roman defences; see ID1903, 1904, 1905; see also ID1906, Sparta acropolis basilica).

The Late Roman city as an object of imperial concern and investment is well illustrated by new discoveries behind the waterfront of **Thessaloniki**, where two distinct phases of its seawall have been identified by the 16th EPCA during the renovation of the Stoa Hirsch on Tsimiski Street between 2008 and 2010: a mid third-century phase that is 2.5m thick, and a subsequent, still Late Roman, phase that is *ca.* 3.5m thick. Both the third- and fourth- to fifth-century phases of the land walls have long been recognized and were recently analysed by Professor Velenis. The third-century phase would have been part of the complex set of responses to the Gothic invasion of 238.

The rescue archaeology of **Thessaloniki** (Late Roman provincial capital, occasional imperial residence and usually from the late fourth century onwards residence of the Praetorian Prefect of Illyricum) continues to generate excellent case-studies of the Late Roman use of urban spaces: a glassmaker's workshop (fifth- to seventh-century; **Figs. 35, 36**); a high-status Late Roman townhouse with *triclinium* (of which many have been recorded there in some detail in recent decades); a secular public building of the fifth century which is more than 53 x 31m.

The long-term characteristics of the transformation in the uses of the public or at least monumental buildings of Graeco-Roman cities is well documented by the Italian School's excavations at **Gortyn** (capital of the province of Roman and Late Roman Crete), where the excavations of the Theatre of the Pythion (beside the Temple of Apollo) reveal that the approaches to the stage were already the site of stables before the theatre's destruction in the great earthquake of AD 365.

The archaeology of the principal new monuments of Late Roman cities – churches and their ancillary buildings – is often also a documentation of the transformation of civic spaces, of the public and private aspects of Christianization and many linked cultural processes. The University of Athens' excavations at **Palaiopolis**, **Andros** (site of the ancient city of Andros) continued in 2009 to explore the construction, upon the lower terrace of the city's agora, of an Early Byzantine basilica (**Fig. 37**). The floor mosaic includes an élite donor's inscription (a not uncommon feature of the floors of these churches). Excavations by the 16th EPCA in 2010 explored an Early Byzantine cemetery basilica just outside the eastern walls of **Thessaloniki** (Plateia Syntrivaniou). As excavations have made plain, monumental churches were not rapidly built within cities' walls (except by imperial intervention) after the Edict of Toleration, so this church (as opposed to 'house churches') may have been as close as the Christian



35. Thessaloniki: glassmaker's workshop. © Museum of Byzantine Culture, Thessaloniki.



36. Thessaloniki: fragments of vessels from the glass-maker's workshop. © Museum of Byzantine Culture, Thessaloniki.

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37. Andros, Palaiopolis: aerial view of the mid fifth-century three-aisled basilica, succeeded in the second half of the sixth century by a single-aisled church. © University of Athens (L. Palaiokrassa-Kopitsa).

community could be to the city for many years. **Sparta** provides a potentially ambiguous example of the arrival of monumental churches within urban centres. Is the basilica of *ca.* AD 500 recorded by the 5th EBA on the **property of A. Biba and St. Spyridakou** in 2007 within the Late Roman enceinte or not? In a very real sense the presence, extra-mural or intra-mural, and other characteristics of Early Byzantine churches provide yardsticks by which to evaluate the post-Roman trajectories of urban centres. So the discovery of structures that are clearly two large Early Byzantine basilicas with donor's inscriptions at **Nafpaktos (Noti Botsari Street)** and at **Kryoneri** by the 8th EBA is of great interest.

Both research and rescue archaeology continue to enrich our knowledge of another type of site which, like rural fortresses and rural ecclesiastical complexes, begin

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to characterize parts of Late Roman Greece, that is the locus of maritime traffic. At **Livadi** on **Schoinoussa**, the 2nd EBA has since 2007 explored dwellings and harbourside installations (unspecified) of the Early Byzantine period. And at **Leukos**, **Karpathos** the Canadian Institute's Synergasia with the 4th EBA has held its second season of excavation and survey of an extensive, densely settled Early Byzantine harbourside settlement, which includes a large basilica of the fifth to sixth century and the kilns that produced the site's Late Roman common wares. Meanwhile, other Late Roman kiln sites for common or coarsewares continued to be explored at the maritime site of ancient **Halasarna** (modern Kardamaina, **Kos**) by the 2nd EBA and the University of Athens, and at two sites in eastern Boeotia near to the Euboean Gulf (**Dilesi** and **Mandri Danou**, **Tanagra**) by the 9th EPCA and the 23rd EBA (ID2007).

The transitional period of the seventh to eighth or ninth century is still proving hard to identify, particularly in the lesser centres of 'historically' continuous habitation. But recent discoveries at both major and lesser sites seem to be extremely useful. At **Gortyn**, the Italian School has paid particular attention to the Late Roman and transitional Byzantine levels over the last 30 years, making it a crucial site for Byzantine archaeology in general. Here there is evidence (or rather good further evidence) of sequences of non-monumental made street surfaces (which are themselves proof of organization and are of a type identified in the area of the New Acropolis Museum in Athens too), as well as of a two-storeyed building containing amphorae of the seventh and eighth centuries. The Italian School has demonstrated that the community reorganized its water supply in the seventh century and survived two devastating earthquakes, one in the early seventh century, the other sometime before *ca.* 670. Also on Crete, at the site of **Priniatikos Pyrgos**, excavations in 2010 revealed that by its good natural harbour people used Constantinopolitan Glazed White Wares (=GWW), which have a long history (Transitional and Middle Byzantine). It would be interesting to know to which of John Hayes' phases of GWW these belong.

Exploration and recording of the Middle Byzantine phases of multi-period urban centres proceeds on a small scale: we note work at **Monemvasia**, at **Larissa** and at **Palaia Episkopi**, **Tegea**. In the centre of **Thessaloniki** the 9th EBA has excavated since 2009 a complex which is thought to contain the burial place of St Theodora of Thessaloniki, the city's major Medieval female saint.

The systematic excavation of Middle Byzantine rural religious complexes is a comparatively recent development (as opposed to architectural studies and conservation projects). Professor Panagiotis Vokotopoulos' excavations of the 13th-century site at **Philippiada** in Epirus (conducted as part of an architectural and conservation project) were for many years almost unique. More recently the 10th EBA has excavated the 10th- to 12th-century Athonite monastery of Tou Zygou (Phrankokastro, Nea Ouranoupolis). In 2005–2006 the 7th EBA explored a rural Byzantine monastery at **Koutsoupia**, modern Meliboia, a probably 11th- to 13th-century complex containing an expensively decorated Katholikon, cells, winery and enclosing walls. At **Psili Vrysi** near Edessa, a Late Byzantine monastery (ID481) of the 13th to 14th century (i.e. relatively short-lived, but not necessarily rare in this respect) was explored by the 17th EPCA as a rescue project in 2007. It contained a Katholikon (used for burials), a kitchen, an apsidal refectory, a phiale and a tower. The exonarthex (a secondary phase of the church) has external frescoes.

The productive installations of the Medieval Byzantine rural economy have rarely been studied. But at Kampos, **Kastro Limenarion**, Thasos, the 18th EPCA in 2007 explored parts of such a complex: six wine presses, built of lime-mortar bonded masonry, associated terrace walls and a watch-tower. The site is argued to be Late Byzantine and post-Byzantine. It is not reported whether the site has been historically identified, but Thasos was a location for estates of the monasteries of Mount Athos, Late Byzantine and post-Byzantine, and one of their consistent investments was in winemaking for the market. This excavation could be of great interest for the history of the Late Byzantine rural economy.

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