

Greece in the Late Roman Period

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is on Greece in Late Antiquity. Since 146 BC, the Greek peninsula and mainland were part of the Roman Empire¹. There is much attention for Roman Greece, but mostly, this attention goes to the periods of the Late Republic and the Early Empire. The influence of the Greek culture on Roman art and the influence of the Roman rule on the Greeks are the main interests. The period of Late Roman Greece is less discussed.

When in 330 AD Constantine established a new capital of the Empire on the site of Byzantium, the focus of the Empire moved more and more to the East. And when Late Antiquity is discussed, usually the subject is Constantinople and the East. But almost all attention is paid to the prosperity and success of the new capital. While Constantinople is growing, the former centers of prosperity, Rome and the Greek cities, seem to decline and are therefore not of interest anymore for historians and archaeologists.

1.1 Late Antiquity

The term ‘Late Antiquity’ is used to describe the transitional period between the Classical Antiquity and the Middle Ages. This period was initially seen as a period of moral and cultural decline. This bias is still widespread, although more and more studies have done that contribute to the revaluation of Late Antiquity.

The Empire underwent considerable social, cultural and organizational changes in the Late Roman period. From the 3rd century we see a reorganization of the army and the government: multiple emperors were installed and the status of the emperor changed; the capital moved from Rome to Constantinople; Christianity became state religion, while paganism was banished; the focus on the East also caused the rise of Greek as the official language in the Empire; migrations of barbarian tribes, such as the Goths, the Huns and the Slavs resulted in many confrontations at the frontiers of the Empire. Some tribes even settled within the borders of the Empire and joined the Roman army.

These changes eventually led to the end of Antiquity and we already see some signs of the Middle Ages, of which the growing role of the Church is the most eminent one. But not everything changed, there are also signs of continuity. The cultural heritage of classical antiquity, for example, was still available. Moreover, the changes did not happen suddenly and they did not always cause decline. Especially the East, when comparing to the West, experienced a period of economical prosperity. Late Antiquity should not be seen as a period of decay, but more as a period of transition.

Because the changes of the Late Empire happened gradually and the different regions of the Roman Empire did not experience the same changes at the same moment, it is hard to mark the beginning and the end of Late Antiquity². The accession of Diocletian in 284 AD is usually

¹In 148 BC the last Macedonian king Andriscus was defeated by the Roman general Quintus Caecilius Metellus. In 146 BC the province Macedonia was established. In the same year the Battle of Corinth was fought between the Roman Republic and the Achaean League. The Roman consul Mummius defeated the army of the Achaean League, Corinth was utterly destroyed and the Peloponnese added to the province Macedonia. In 133 BC the Aegean Islands were added to this territory. In 31 BC, after the Battle at Actium, the Peloponnese was separated from Macedonia, and in 27 BC Augustus established the province Achaia.

²Cameron 1993, p. 7 and p. 128

taken as the beginning of the Late Roman Empire because of his dramatical reforms of the administrative and governmental system of the Empire. The period of Constantine I also can be seen as a transition to a next period. He not only moved the capital of the Empire to his 'New Rome', Constantinople, but he also caused a lot of changes for Christianity, which took an important role in the following centuries.

Appointing the end of the Late Roman period causes even more discussion. Formerly, the end of the western Roman Empire in 476 AD was also seen as the end of Antiquity³. The question is if the people of that period experienced this event as a turning point. There was still a Roman Empire, but the rule of the Empire was only in the hands of the Emperor of the East. Emperor Justinian I tried to reconquer parts of the lost territories. That is why later historians give a later date of the end of the Late Roman period than 476. They say that the Arab invasions in 7th century mark the end of Antiquity⁴.

To give the most complete overview, I will start the chapter on the historical background (Chapter 2) with the reign of Diocletian in the 3rd century and I will end it with the reign of Heraclius in the 7th century.

1.2 Greece

From their incorporation into the Roman Empire, the Greek mainland and the Peloponnese played an important role in many respects. Macedonia and southern Greece were combined in a senatorial province until in 27 BC Augustus separated the province Achaia from Macedonia. Both remained senatorial provinces, although some poleis, like Athens and Sparta, maintained a partial independence and avoided taxation. The Greeks were not always very pleased with their Roman rulers. In 88 BC Mithridates of Pontus started a campaign against Rome and he won the support of many Greek poleis. Mithridates was driven out of Greece by the legions of Sulla, the revolt was suppressed and the rebel poleis were plundered. Especially Athens and Thebes were severely punished. Sulla took with him many works of arts from Greece to Rome.

The Roman emperors were generally philhellenic and they contributed many new buildings to the Greek cities. Also other prominent Romans and Roman colonists adorned the cities with their building activity. The Greek art and culture influenced the Roman: authors like Virgil were inspired by the Greek epics of Homer, works of art were taken from Greece to Rome, where they were copied by Roman artisans, many Roman elites spoke Greek.

In 66 emperor Nero visited Greece and he ensured that all panhellenic Games (the Olympian, Pythian, Nemean and Isthmian Games) were held in that same year. Despite the non-Greek participation, Nero performed at all games and, of course, he was victorious in every contest. The most philhellenic emperor was Hadrian. He was very interested in the Greek culture and philosophy. He even attended the Eleusinian mysteries. The reign of Hadrian caused a new cultural heyday for Greece. He embellished many Greek cities, especially Athens, with new buildings. Hadrian also had a Greek lover, Antinous, who accompanied him on his journeys. Antinous drowned in the river Nile, and after his death, Hadrian ordered Antinous to be deified. Not only many statues of the deified boy were erected, also temples were dedicated to him. In this period of prosperity, Herodes Atticus played an important role. He was a Greek rhetorician, who became prefect of the free cities in the province Asia, was elected Archon in Athens and

³In 475, the western emperor Julius Nepos was driven away from the capital Ravenna by Orestes, who served at the court of Atilla the Hun as a secretary. Orestes proclaimed his own son Romulus Augustus as emperor, but Orestes was murdered by the Germanic leader Odoacer and Romulus Augustus was deposed. In 476, Odoacer was proclaimed *rex Italiae*, king of Italy.

⁴Cameron 1993, pp. 2-32

was a famous teacher. But he received most fame with numerous building projects he financed, not only in Greece, but also in Italy and Asia Minor.

As the Romans were philhellenic, the Greeks were also loyal to Rome and the life in Greece during the Roman Empire continued much the same as previously. But things changed in the 3rd century also for Greece. Nomadic tribes invaded Roman territory from the north and the east. The Germanic Heruli plundered Attica and sacked Athens in 267. Also other major cities, like Corinth, were ruined by the invading tribes. After the accession on Diocletian, Thessaloniki became one of the capitals of the Empire, from where Roman troops fought the invading tribes. With the establishment of Constantinople the focus was moved to the Greek East. At the same time Greece, like much of the rest of the Roman East came under the influence of Christianity. The apostle Paul had preached in Corinth, Athens and Thessaloniki, and Greece had become one of the most highly Christianized areas of the Empire.

1.3 This thesis

The situation for the Greeks changed considerably in the Late Roman Empire. The aim of this thesis is to show what happened in this period in Greece. What were the effects of the ongoing invasions, of the reorganization of the Empire under Diocletian, Constantine and Justinian, and of the Christianization? And how can we see these changes in the archaeological data?

This thesis comprises three parts. The first part is concerned with the background. In the first chapter of part one, i.e. chapter two, I will give an overview of the historical events in the period from Diocletian until Heraclius. In chapter three I will discuss all the ancient sources that are available for the Late Roman period and especially for Greece in that period. During the making of this thesis, I noticed that to understand the events and the effects of the events, it is important also to know how the Empire was organized. That is why I added a third chapter to part one, that is concerned with the organization of the whole Empire and of the Greek territories in particular.

The second part of this thesis is concerned with the case studies. I have chosen to divide them into two categories: city and countryside. Of course, the city and its countryside are closely connected with each other, but the archaeological data can vary sufficiently⁵. In chapter five I have chosen four major cities from the Roman period, Argos, Athens, Thessaloniki and Corinth. I will describe the archaeological data that have been found for the Late Roman period and what these data can tell us about how the cities looked like. In chapter eight, I give an overview of the most well-known surveys in Greece and I will discuss what those surveys tell us about the countryside in the Late Roman period.

In the third and last chapter of this thesis, I combine all information. I will try to give a picture of Late Roman Greece. What effects had the events in the Late Roman Empire on the people living in the Greek cities? And what on the people living in the countryside? What effects had the situation in the Greek cities on the countryside, and vice versa?

⁵Especially in the case of Corinth, we see that the research is not only concerned with the city itself.

Part I

Late Antiquity

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Diocletian

During the 3rd century, invasions at the different frontiers destabilized the Empire. In the East the Roman Empire was threatened by the appearance of the Sassanid Empire and in the West by the appearance of alliances of German tribes. Internally, the Roman government was powerless. This resulted in a temporary loss of parts of the Empire. The crisis of the 3rd century had a great affect on the economy of the Empire. The city of Rome gradually became less important. The seat of the Senate was in Rome, but Rome was no longer the administrative center of the Empire; emperors moved from one ‘capital’ to another¹. The Roman Empire became more and more decentralized and destabilized.

The predecessors of Diocletian introduced some modifications to the existing system, but events made it clear that a new, more uniform system was required. Diocletian made fundamental changes in the governmental, economical and military system, which caused more centralization. In other words: more soldiers, more bureaucracy and more taxes².

The most striking reform was the new governance system, called the Tetrarchy. Diocletian appointed Maximianus as co-emperor or Augustus. Maximianus acquired the power in the western part of the Empire, while Diocletian ruled the eastern part. Each Augustus appointed a younger colleague, a Caesar, who shared in power. The Caesar was destined to succeed his Augustus. Galerius became the Caesar of Diocletian in the East and Maximianus appointed Constantius I Chlorus as the Caesar of the West. Both Caesares held power of one quarter of the Empire. The Empire was now controlled by four rulers, the Tetrarchs³. The Tetrarchs had their seat in cities near the borders of the Empire, in order to have a better defence of the frontier⁴.

This division of the Empire constituted the basis for a new payment system, in which the civil sector was separated from the military sector. Diocletian tried to make the collection of the annona⁵ more uniform and equitable by introducing a more systematic system of assessing the landowners. The Empire was further divided in dioceses to guarantee a better control and to ascertain a more regular income of taxes⁶.

The system of the Tetrarchy made it easier to fight at different fronts more effectively. The Roman Empire had proven to be strong when it concentrated at only one front, but when it was attacked at more than one front, it appeared to be weaker. Diocletian increased the number of legions and tried to upgrade the defensive infrastructure along the frontier by building new forts and military roads⁷.

¹Cameron 1993, p. 1

²Naerebout 1995, p. 353

³after the Greek word for four: τετρα (tetra).

⁴Naerebout 1995, pp. 353, 385

⁵literally the annual yield, this was the grain that the Roman government collected from its provinces for the people of Rome.

⁶Naerebout 1995, p. 385

⁷Cameron 1993, p. 53; Bowman 2005, pp. 67-89

2.2 Constantine I

2.2.1 the end of the Tetrarchy

After the death of Constantius a struggle for the power in the West started between the son of Maximianus, Maxentius, and the son of Constantius, Constantine. In 312 the conflict came to a decisive battle nearby Rome at the Milvian Bridge. Maxentius and his troops were in the majority, but Constantine managed to win the battle. Constantine gained the power on the western Empire⁸. In the East Licinius, a friend of the deceased Galerius, had taken the power. He also got in a fight with Constantine and in 324 Constantine defeated Licinius near Adrianople. Constantine was now sole ruler of the whole Empire.

2.2.2 Constantine as sole emperor

Rome had become less important and Constantine felt that Rome was no longer worthy as an imperial capital. He moved the seat of the Empire and in 330, he founded Constantinople as a second Rome on the site of Byzantium. He called it Nova Roma, New Rome, but later it was called Constantinople after its founder. A new senate and new civil offices, similar to that of Rome, were introduced.

After the foundation of Constantinople, the axis of the Empire was more and more placed in the East. This was a decisive period for the permanent split of East and West.

Constantine built upon the administrative reforms introduced by Diocletian and made important changes to the civil and religious constitution. He introduced extra taxes and stabilized the coinage⁹. And because the city lay astride the seaway from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean Sea, many sea and land trade routes between East and West came together in Constantinople.

Constantinople was an ideal base for the defence of the eastern frontier and the Danube frontier. Constantine rebuilt the Trajan's bridge across the Danube, in order to reconquer Dacia, a province that had been abandoned under Aurelian. He conquered the Goths in that area and made a treaty with them. He also defeated the Sarmatians. In this way he extended his control in this region. Regarding the foreign policy, his Empire took a strong position which hadn't been the case since the 2nd century. Constantine also reformed the Roman army; he divided the administrative responsibilities by replacing the *praefectus praetorio*, who held both military and civil functions¹⁰, by regional praefecti, who would only hold civil authority. The legions were reclassified as well. It was clear that the existing legions were not able to defend the frontiers optimally. That is why Constantine divided the legions into two categories: the *limitanei*, the mobile frontier legions of less quality, and the *comitatenses*, the structured legions who were stationed in the provinces. The Empire had recovered much of its military strength under Constantine and enjoyed a period of stability and prosperity¹¹.

The great persecution of Christians ended in 311 when Galerius issued an edict of tolerance, but Christianity enjoyed imperial preference since Constantine adopted Christianity after the battle near the Milvian Bridge in 312. In 313 Constantine I and Licinius announced toleration of Christianity in the Edict of Milan, which made the Empire officially neutral with regard

⁸The battle at the Milvian Bridge is the famous battle which marks the beginning of Constantine's conversion to Christianity. According to Eusebius, the night before the battle Constantine saw a cross of light at the sky with the words ἐν τούτῳ νίκα, in this sign you shall conquer. In the following night, he had a dream in which Christ explained that he should use the sign as a military standard in the battle against Maxentius.

⁹The gold solidus that he introduced became a highly prized and stable currency.

¹⁰The *praefectus praetorio* was originally the head of the praetorian guard and thus one of the highest officials.

¹¹Bowman 2005, pp. 120-130, Naerebout 1995, p. 386

to religious worship. Under Constantine, Christianity did not become the exclusive religion of the state; most influential people in the Empire, especially high military officials, were still pagan. Constantine supported Christianity with generous privileges: churchmen were excluded from certain taxes, Christians were promoted to high ranking offices and bishops gained legal power. Constantine supported the church also financially by building an extraordinary number of basilicas and churches, returning property confiscated during the Great Persecution of Diocletian and endowing the church with land and other wealth¹².

In the last years of his life Constantine made plans for a campaign against Persia. In 336 the Persian prince Narseh invaded the Christian kingdom Armenia and installed a Persian client on the throne. However, the campaign was called off when Constantine fell sick in the spring of 337. In Nicomedia he was baptized and after he died, his body was buried in the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople¹³.

Constantine was married to Flavia Maxima Fausta, the daughter of his enemy Maximianus. He had six children: two daughters, Constantina and Helena, and four sons, his bastard son Crispus, Constantine II, Constantius II and Constans. After the execution of Crispus and Fausta¹⁴, only three heirs were left. After the death of Constantine, the three sons divided the power of the Empire. In the beginning, Constantine II was the guardian of his younger brother Constans. But as Constans came of age, Constantine would not relinquish the guardianship and in 340 he marched against Constans in Italy. Constantine was defeated at Aquileia and died in battle. Constans more and more behaved like a tyrant and in 350 the general Magnentius declared himself emperor and defeated and killed Constans. After several years of battle Constantius II finally defeated the usurper. He appointed his nephew Julian as Caesar and sent him off to Gaul¹⁵.

Constantius II is known for his active role in the affairs of the Christian church. He was also successful in stabilizing the frontiers, although the war with the Persians had varying degrees of success¹⁶.

2.3 The dichotomy of the Roman Empire

The officer Valentinian was chosen emperor in 364. Again, the Empire was ruled by two emperors for Valentinian appointed his brother Valens as his colleague in the East. Valentinian dedicated himself to the defence of the frontier. He was repeatedly confronted with barbarian people, especially the Burgundians, the Alamanni and the Saxons. He managed to stabilize the Rhine and Danube frontiers and achieved several military successes. At the same time, in the East, a migration was happening: the Huns, people from Central Asia, took over the kingdom of the Alans near the Caspian Sea and together they plundered the Ostrogothic state in 375. They repulsed other people, like the Tervingi, to the western Roman Empire. The Goths who were driven over the Danube by the Huns, were tolerated by the Romans on the condition that they defended the Danube frontier. But a famine broke out and the Romans were unwilling to supply them with the food or the land they were promised. Therefore, the Goths revolted and it came to a battle in 378 near Adrianople. The Roman forces were slaughtered and the Emperor Valens was killed during the fight. This event forced the Romans to negotiate with

¹²Naerebout 1995, p. 416

¹³Bowman 2005, pp. 90-109

¹⁴The reason for this act remains unclear, but it was commonly believed that the Empress Fausta was either in an illicit relationship with Crispus, or was spreading rumors to that effect.

¹⁵Cameron 1998, p. 1-39

¹⁶Cameron 1998, p. 11-39

the barbarians and to settle them within the Empire's boundaries¹⁷.

2.3.1 Theodosius the Great and his sons

Gratian, son and successor of Valentinian, appointed Theodosius, a former commander of the province Moesia, as Augustus of the East in 379. After the death of Gratian, Theodosius reunited the western and eastern part of the Empire under his rule. His elder son Arcadius was co-emperor of the East, while he appointed his younger son Honorius as co-emperor of the West. From the beginning of his reign, Theodosius had to cope with the Goths and in 382 a treaty was made which allowed the Goths to settle along the southern Danube frontier in the province of Thrace. They largely governed themselves. As a result of the treaties, the Goths who settled within the Empire had military obligations to fight for the Romans as a national contingent. The situation was temporarily stabilized and Theodosius was provided with enough military troops. Many Goths would serve in Roman legions and others fought as *foederati*¹⁸ for a single campaign, but the bands of Goths, who were switching loyalties, became a destabilizing factor in the internal struggles for control of the Empire¹⁹.

Theodosius was a convinced Christian. He promoted Christianity as the only legitimate imperial religion. Paganism was banished from daily life and was made illegal by his further legislation in the early 390's²⁰.

Theodosius only reunited the Empire for a short period of time. After his death in 395, it came to a decisive division with Honorius as emperor in the West and Arcadius in the East. Contemporaries would not have felt this last separation as a turning point. The laws of the emperors were valid in both parts of the Empire and the consuls of the West were acknowledged in the East, and vice versa.

Nevertheless, after 395 the two halves were growing apart. The condition of the western Roman Empire around 400 was economically far worse than that of the East. The East still had enough resources to resist the barbarian threat and its institutional and administrative system of the 4th century remained more or less intact until the 6th century. The West became already very weak in late 4th century and was divided in 5th century²¹.

The sons of Theodosius were both no strong leaders. They were influenced by their advisers and other people at court. In the West, the actual power was in the hands the *magister militum*²², Flavius Stilicho. Because of his powers, Stilicho made many enemies who forced Honorius to have Stilicho executed. In the East, Arcadius was also influenced by many people, including one of his ministers, Rufinus, the eunuch Eutropius, the *praefectus praetorio* Anthemius and his wife Aelia Eudoxia²³.

2.3.2 The Western Empire

The western Empire was seriously troubled by barbarian tribes; Africa, the granary of the western Empire, was conquered in 439 by the Vandals led by king Gaiseric; Spain was more and more taken by the Suevi and the Visigoths; Gaul was occupied by the Franks, Alans and Burgundians, while the Huns and their King Atilla threatened the eastern Empire. Some of the barbarian leaders who settled within the borders of the Empire had great influence on the

¹⁷Cameron 1993, p. 13 and p. 36; Cameron 1998, p. 80-101

¹⁸The Latin term *foederatus* literally means 'allied by treaty'.

¹⁹Cameron 1993, p. 13; Cameron 1998, pp. 101-110

²⁰Cameron 1998, pp. 103-104

²¹Cameron 1993, p. 2 and p. 15, for the end of the western Empire see 2.3.2 The Western Empire.

²²The *magister militum* was the highest military command.

²³Cameron 1993, p.16; Cameron 1998, pp. 113-118

emperor and on the succession to the throne. Sometimes, barbarian chieftains were even given a high position at the court. Ricimer, a prince of the Suevi, became *magister militum* and although he himself could not be proclaimed emperor, he set up his own marionette emperors. Also the Vandal Gaiseric and the Germanic Odoacer were very important for the imperial control in the West. They established their own kingdoms within the borders of the western Empire, but refused to obey the appointed emperor of the West²⁴.

The barbarian invaders were not the only problem which the western Empire had to face. In this period, the West continually had to deal with struggles for the succession of the throne. The different involved parties tried to get their own favorite man on the throne. Emperors were usually strongly influenced by their own parties and they were not strong enough to offer resistance against the barbarian pressure. Many emperors were dethroned or killed.

Finally in 476, the Ostrogothic king Theodoric took power in Ravenna, the capital of the western Empire. This event is considered as the end of the western Roman Empire, because no new emperor was appointed to the western Roman Empire. Theodoric the Great sought alliances with or hegemony over the other Germanic kingdoms in the West. He respected the agreement which he had made and allowed Roman citizens within his kingdom to be subject to Roman law and the Roman judicial system. Even after Theodoric, the kings of the *foederati* states still recognized the Emperor of the East as their sovereign. It is therefore doubtful whether the population of Italy noticed much difference²⁵.

2.3.3 The Eastern Empire

The eastern Roman Empire experienced a relatively peaceful period, which was only interrupted a couple of times by wars at the Danube frontiers with the Huns and Germanic tribes and by two wars with the Sassanid Empire²⁶. Only in the second half of the 5th century, the eastern Empire really needed to defend its frontiers. The eastern Empire was largely spared the difficulties which the West was facing in the 3rd and 4th centuries. This was due, partially, to a more firmly established urban culture and greater financial resources, which allowed the emperor to placate invaders with tribute and to pay foreign mercenaries. The diplomacy of the eastern government managed to redirect several attacks to the West. The influence of the, mostly barbarian, generals could be minimized and repressed. Admittedly, Arcadius and his son Theodosius II were no great rulers, but the governance of the Empire did not suffer²⁷.

Their successors Marcian, Leo, Zeno and Anastasius were continually troubled at all frontiers with the pressure of the Huns, Vandals, the Goths and the Sassanians. Gaiseric and Theodoric were also afflicting the East, but the eastern emperors were usually able to defeat the barbarian tribes or to force a peace treaty²⁸. Intrigues at the court of the eastern Empire influenced the emperor and the succession to the throne, but much less than in the western Empire. Fewer parties competed for influence and power. The throne and the power of the emperor of the eastern Empire were therefore more stable. On the other hand, emperors of the East were facing different kinds of problems. They were all involved in Church matters. In Late Antiquity, different movements arose within the Orthodox Church. Christian people quarreled especially with each other about the nature of Christ. Many Church councils were convened at the orders

²⁴Cameron 1993, p. 33; Cameron 1998, pp. 113-128

²⁵Cameron 1993, pp. 33-43; Cameron 2000, pp. 1-32, 112-134

²⁶Persian Empire. When the Parthian, or Arsacid, Empire fell, Ardashir I established the Sassanid Dynasty. Unlike the Parthians, the Sassanians managed to create a strong and centralized state. They were a serious threat for the eastern Roman frontier. The Sassanid Empire existed until 642.

²⁷Cameron 1993, p. 84; Cameron 1998, pp. 113-118, 128-129; Cameron 2000, pp. 34-42; Naerebout 1995, p. 432

²⁸Cameron 1993, pp. 30-32

of the emperors, trying to maintain the peace and the unity of the Church, but the schism was never made undone²⁹.

2.4 Justinian and the end of the Late Roman period

The year 476 is not only considered the end of the western Roman Empire, but also the end of the Roman period. But there was still a Roman emperor in the East and the barbarian kings in the West still recognized him as sovereign. Probably, the situation for the population of the West did not change very much. Moreover, the next great emperor, Justinian, was seen as a real Roman emperor, who ruled in accordance with the classical tradition.

2.4.1 Justinian

As Justin, the successor of Anastasius, became senile near the end of his reign, his nephew Justinian became the *de facto* ruler and upon Justin's death in 527, Justinian became the sole sovereign.

Justinian was experiencing especially many problems from the Sassanians. But when their king Kavadh I of Persia died in 531, Justinian concluded an 'eternal peace' with his successor, for which he had to pay the Sassanians a lot of gold. After securing the eastern frontier, Justinian turned his attention to the West. As a Christian Roman emperor, Justinian considered it as his divine duty to restore the Roman Empire to its ancient boundaries.

The first kingdom that Justinian attacked was that of the Vandals in North Africa. There was a constant tension in the African state between the Arian Vandals and their Trinitarian subjects³⁰. This made it easier for Justinian to reconquer this part of the Roman Empire.

Like in Africa, dynastic struggles in Ostrogothic Italy provided an opportunity for intervention from Justinian. But during his campaign in the West, the Sassanid King Khosrau I had broken the 'eternal peace' and invaded the Roman territory in 540. During this war with the Sassanians, the situation in Italy deteriorated. The Ostrogoths reconquered the major cities of Southern Italy and soon held almost the entire peninsula. Rome changed hands three more times.

The recovery of Italy was very expensive for the Empire. The eastern Empire also conquered parts of Visigothic Spain. Around 560 Justinian triumphed at nearly every frontier, except for the Balkans. This region suffered from several incursions by the Turkic and Slavic peoples who lived north of the Danube³¹.

Justinian's rule was not universally popular; early in his reign, he almost lost his throne in 532 during the Nika riot, the most violent riot that Constantinople had seen³². Another

²⁹Cameron 1993, pp. 18-25; Cameron 2000, pp. 42-62

³⁰Arianism is a tendency within the Christian church, arisen in the 4th century. It was named after its founder Arius. Arianism did not accept the dogma of the holy Trinity. Supporters of Arianism belief that the Son Christ was subservient to God the Father and that the Holy Spirit was subservient to both the Father and the Son. The Father was the only true God. Supporters of Trinitarianism belief that God exists in three persons and one substance, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

³¹Cameron 1993, pp. 104-17; Cameron 2000, pp. 72-79; Naerebout 1995, p. 434

³²In 531 some members of the Blues and Greens had been arrested for murder in connection with deaths that occurred during rioting after a recent chariot race. Two of them, a Blue and a Green, escaped and were taking refuge in the sanctuary of a church. Justinian was in the midst of negotiating with Sassanians over peace in the east and there was some discontent among the nobility about the high taxes; a crisis in the capital would be very inconvenient. He announced new races and changed the sentences to imprisonment. The Blues and Greens demanded that the two men be pardoned entirely. At the day of the chariot race an angry populace arrived at the hippodrome and at the end of the day the crowd broke out and started to violate the palace. For the next

source of trouble for the population was the bubonic plague in the early 540's, from which also Justinian suffered.

Justinian's reign is characterized by his judicial reforms, particularly through the complete revision of all Roman law. The first version of the *Codex Justinianus* was emitted in 529. It was followed by the *Digesta*, a compilation of older legal texts, and by the *Institutiones*, a textbook explaining the principles of law. New laws during Justinian's reign were issued as the *Novellae*. Together they are known as the *Corpus Juris Civilis*. The corpus formed the basis of later Byzantine law. The code was also introduced in Italy from where it was passed to western Europe in the 12th century and became the basis of much European law code³³.

Justinian is also known for his building program. The historian Procopius described the building activity of Justinian in his *Περὶ Κτισμάτων* (about the things that are built), but this work was merely a panegyric on the emperor and some of the constructions and reconstructions were dated to the period prior to the reign of Justinian. This earlier activity can be ascribed to Anastasius³⁴. Still, the building program of Justinian can be described as prolific. There was some rivalry with the aristocracy, who were not always on the side of Justinian. Justinian used his building activity in the city as a means of strengthening his dynasty's prestige.

Beside the construction meant for embellishment, Justinian also rendered other advantageous constructions. To strengthen the frontiers, fortifications were built along these frontier; underground cisterns were constructed in Constantinople to ensure the city of its water supply; in Bithynia the Sangarius Bridge was built to secure a major military supply route to the East; cities that were damaged by earthquakes and wars were restored; the newly found Justiniana Prima was to replace Thessaloniki as the political and religious center of Illyricum³⁵.

Justinian was married to Theodora, a courtesan by profession and about 20 years younger. Emperor Justin made this marriage possible by passing a law allowing intermarriage between social classes. Theodora would become very influential, especially in the religious policy of Justinian. Both Theodora and Justinian became saints in the Orthodox Church³⁶.

The eastern Empire dominated the Mediterranean during the reign of Justinian, but most of the conquests proved ephemeral. The greater part of Italy would be lost to the invading Lombards three years after Justinian's death, and within a century and a half Africa and Spain were forever lost for the Empire³⁷.

2.4.2 the emperors of the Late Roman Empire

Because Justinian left an empty treasury, his successors were not able to pay enough tribute to placate the Empire's enemies. At the Danube frontier, the Empire was threatened by the Avars, the Slavs and the Lombards and in the East there was a continuous fight with the Persians and their Sassanid Kingdom. In 626 the Avars, who were besieging Constantinople, were even helped by the Persians³⁸. In the 7th century, another threat appeared: the Arabs. They were no longer divided, but united by their new religion, the Islam. The situation grew even worse with the internal conflict between the Orthodox Church and the Monophysites, who

five days the palace was assaulted and several fires destroyed large parts of the city. The angry mob was helped by the member of the Senate that opposed to Justinian's new high taxes. After five days Justinian had about thirty thousand rioters killed in the hippodrome by his imperial troops.

³³Naerebout 1995, p. 343

³⁴Poulter 2007, *The transition to Late Antiquity*, p. 9; Cameron 2000, p. 718

³⁵Cameron 2000, pp. 718-719

³⁶Cameron 2000, pp. 79-82

³⁷Cameron 2000, pp. 63-85

³⁸Naerebout 1995, p. 435

believed that Christ had only one divine nature³⁹.

The position of the emperor became less certain. Justinian and his wife Theodora left no children and therefore Justinian was succeeded by his nephew Justin II. From now on the succession to the throne was very unstable. The two emperors after Justin, Tiberius and Maurice, were no relatives of their predecessors, but generals, who were already proclaimed Caesar before their accession. Maurice was deposed and succeeded by the subordinate officer Phocas, who himself was later deposed by Heraclius, the son of the exarch of Africa⁴⁰. Heraclius adopted the Persian title 'King of Kings', and later he even called himself 'Βασιλεύς' (Basileus), the Greek word for monarch. This was the title used by the emperors for the next 800 years, and hereby, the traditional title of Augustus was dropped⁴¹.

³⁹Naerebout 1995, pp. 434-435, 442. Monophysitism is the Christological position that Christ has only one divine nature. This position was opposed to the position that was accepted by the Council of Chalcedon of 451, which said that Christ has two natures, one divine and one human.

⁴⁰Cameron 1993, pp. 186-190

⁴¹Cameron 2000, pp. 86-111; Naerebout 1995, pp. 435-436

CHAPTER 3

SOURCES

3.1 Literature

The literature of Late Antiquity does not show any decline. The traditional and classical education remained very important in Late Antiquity. Rhetorical training was essential to the functioning of the political and social structure. The training was firmly based on the classical authors and it was similar throughout the Empire. Both in the West and the East, Latin was learned from the great authors like Virgil¹. It was still a matter of the well-to-do, and usually, men. The literary culture of Late Antiquity was even more class-based than previously². But literature itself changed. As the Empire was settled by different barbarian people, a cultural change was caused by the mixed population and settlements. The growing power of the Church also had its influence on culture and literature. This made the linguistic and cultural pattern of Late Antiquity extremely complex³.

3.1.1 Language

Latin remained the official language of law, administration and the army until mid 6th century in both the eastern and the western Roman Empire. Even after the fall of the western Empire, Latin retained its place in the West. But in the East it was different. Apart from the imperial court, the principal language of the educated class used in the eastern Roman provinces had always been Greek, even before the decline of the western Empire⁴.

The Greek language of the late eastern Empire, and also of the Byzantine Empire, gained a dual nature. At the one hand, the primary spoken language was *Koine*, which was also used for the New Testament⁵. At the other hand, literature was largely written in a style of Atticistic Greek reaching back to Homer and the writers of ancient Athens. By the 6th century, the spoken language in Greek was diverging markedly from this high literary language⁶.

It was not until Heraclius that Greek was introduced as the official language of the government, although laws were also circulating in Greek since the early Empire⁷. This language barrier enlarged the gap between the Greek eastern Empire and the Latin West. The *Novellae* of Justinian I was the last official Latin monument. During his reign, a revival of Latin was noticeable. The upper class followed a solid education of Latin language and literature. After Justinian, scholarly Latin would rapidly fall into disuse among the educated classes, although the language would continue to be at least a ceremonial part of the Empire's culture for some time.

Beside Greek, different languages of groups that settled in the Empire in the 3rd and 4th century were used. Georgian, Armenian and Coptic took a written form during this period. The second main language in the Empire, beside Greek, was Aramaic, especially in the form of the Syriac dialect. The eastern Roman Empire had a direct influence on the eastern regions

¹Cameron 1993, p. 131

²Cameron 1993, p. 135

³Cameron 1993, p. 185

⁴Cameron 1993, p. 2 and p. 139

⁵Ἑλληνιστική Κοινή, literally 'Common Greek', was a newly formed common dialect introduced under the reign of Alexander the Great. It was the lingua franca in the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire.

⁶Cameron 1993, p. 135

⁷Cameron 1993, p. 2

and their inhabitants. The impact was especially noticeable in cultural terms; the Romans gave a strong intellectual impulse to the eastern regions, enriching its scholarly literature. In the Late Roman period, Christian and secular literature in Syriac flowered. Syriac gained many Greek loan words and Greek literature, in turn, became influenced by Syriac. In the 7th century, Greek was still used, but a decline in use of classical Greek and Latin is discernible. Adversely, Syriac and Aramaic had become more widely used by the educated classes in the eastern provinces. Similarly, Coptic, Armenian, and Georgian were more appreciated among the educated people in the provinces⁸.

3.1.2 The influence of Christianity

As Christianity became the official religion of the Empire, it is not strange that it influenced cultural life. Literature was a matter of the aristocracy. Because the clergy of the Church was appointed from this educated class, many writers were writing on Christian topics.

The vast Christian literature of the 3rd to 6th centuries established a synthesis of Hellenic and Christian thought. Their works embodied highly literary qualities. Many Christian writings are extremely rhetorical in character, and use all the panoply provided by a classical education⁹.

Only the upper classes concerned themselves with literature. That is why literature was written by and meant for the highly educated class and why it followed the classical tradition. Although most literature was aristocratic or theological rather than popular, we still must not underestimate the influence of Christian writings on other classes of society. Alongside the 'high' literature, more 'popular' works were published, like the saints' lives, that appealed to all classes of society¹⁰. Christianization also changed reading practices, especially through the availability of the Bible. The New Testament was written in *Koine* Greek, in order that all people in the Empire were able to read it¹¹.

One of the biggest intellectual centers of the Empire was Alexandria. Here, paganism, Judaism and Christianity came together. It was also the center of the Hellenistic civilization where the Attic movement started. In Alexandria, ecclesiastical writers worked alongside pagan rhetoricians and philosophers. Another important center was Antioch, where the influence of the barbarian settlers on Christian works was noticeable. In Antioch, a school of Christian commentators flourished under St. John Chrysostom¹² and here arose the Christian universal chronicles. In surrounding Syria, we find the roots of Greek ecclesiastical poetry, while from neighboring Palestine came St. John of Damascus¹³, the last of the Greek Fathers¹⁴. The authors from this provinces mainly wrote in Greek, but also Christian writings appeared in Aramaic, Coptic, Armenian, and Georgian¹⁵.

⁸Cameron 1993, pp.2, 140, 182-185

⁹Cameron 1993, p. 137

¹⁰The number of men and women in the empire who had dedicated themselves to the religious life must have amounted to 1000's in 5th century. The biography of saints, therefore, became a very popular genre in the 5th and 6th century.

¹¹Cameron 1993, p. 138

¹²John Chrysostom was an important Early Church Father from the 4th century. He was especially valued for his preaching and public speaking. He was a priest in Antioch, but later became the archbishop of Constantinople.

¹³John of Damascus was an Arab Christian priest from Damascus in the 8th century.

¹⁴Church Fathers are the early and influential writers and teachers of the Church. Those who wrote in Greek are called the Greek Fathers

¹⁵Cameron 1998; pp. 667-673, 698-704, Naerebout 1995, p. 390

3.1.3 Historiography

Prose literature clearly shows a dual character, with on the one hand historical literature, on the other annalistic literature. Historical prose was aristocratic and secular, while annals were ecclesiastical and monastic. The former was classical and the works of the historians belong to scholarly literature. The works of the historians were carefully elaborated. They confined themselves to the description of the present and the most recent past. The historical sources were especially valuable for political history. The Chronicles of the annalists, however, belonged to the literature of the people. They only gave raw material as they covered the whole history of the world as known to their own period.

Classical literary tradition set the standard for historians in the Late Roman period, as well as for the aims of their work, as for the style of their composition. Historians of Late Antiquity were men who stood out in public life, belonging to the social and intellectual upper class. Their Greek predecessors, like Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, and Polybius, became their guides and models. Sometimes, a historian chose a classic writer to imitate in method and style. The majority, however, took several authors as models. This kind of mosaic style became characteristic for the later period. The Attic movement also penetrated historiography. Especially the works of Thucydides and Xenophon, authors from the Athenian golden age, were regarded as an example for several historians of Late Antiquity. Historiography in classical style flourished until the 7th century. After the coming of the Arabs, this kind of historiography disappeared¹⁶.

Most historians were interested in warfare, political power policy and the intrigues at the court in Constantinople. We can read little about the circumstances in the cities in the rest of the Empire, about the military organization or the countryside. It is also unfortunate that the historiography of Late Antiquity is not continuous. Especially in the late 4th century and 5th century, historical sources are scarce and mostly fragmentary.

4th century

The most important source for the first period is the historian Ammianus Marcellinus. His work *Res Gestae* describes the history of Rome from 96 to 378. Only the sections covering the period 353 - 378 survived and even these are in many places corrupt and have many interstices¹⁷.

For the last quarter of the 4th century we rely on the *History* of Eunapius, of which only fragments survived in works of later historians. The work of Eunapius is a history of events from 270-404. He wrote his work within a strong pagan setting in Athens and was therefore very hostile to Christianity¹⁸.

Another source for the 4th century is Olympiodorus of Thebes. The *History* of Olympiodorus gives a description of the western Empire from 407 to 425, but his work only survived in fragments of other historians like Zosimus. Zosimus wrote the *Historia Nea*, a history of the Empire from Augustus until 410, where it suddenly ends. Zosimus' work was especially valuable for his last books, because he is the most important surviving non-ecclesiastical source for this period. As he was a pagan, Zosimus criticized all Christian emperors¹⁹.

¹⁶Poulter 2007, *The transition to Late Antiquity*, p. 12

¹⁷Cameron 1998, p. 685; Cameron 2000, p. 200

¹⁸Poulter 2007, *The transition to Late Antiquity*, p. 6; Liebeschuetz 2006, II p. 177-201; Cameron 1998, pp. 687-688

¹⁹Poulter 2007, *The transition to Late Antiquity*, p. 6; Liebeschuetz 2006, II p. 201-206 Olympiodorus, p. 206-216 Zosimus; Cameron 1998, pp. 687-688

5th century

There are no detailed sources in the first half of the 5th century. This interstice is partially filled by inscriptions. For the second half, the number of sources increases, but the quality of the various sources is very different. Our main source for the 5th century is Priscus of Panium (Thrace). He is the author of a historical work probably about the period from the accession of Attila to that of Zeno (433-474). Only fragments of his work remained, but his work was used by later historians. Priscus is the most authorized source for the lower Danube in Late Antiquity as he is impartial and neutral. He is also our primary source for the invasions of the Huns in the 440's. In 448, Priscus went to the court of Attila. His report on this event is very valuable, as it is an eyewitness-report²⁰.

Jordanes, whose work was also based on the work of Priscus, is our main source for the Goths. His *Getica* is the only remaining work from Late Antiquity that deals with the early history of the Goths. It is a contiguous and comprehensive description of the origin of the Goths, their migration across the Danube and their interference in the imperial policy in the eastern Balkans in the late 4th and 5th century²¹.

Another source for the 5th century is Malchus of Philadelphia. His historical work probably continued the work of Priscus, dealing with the period 473/74 - 480, but it only survived as fragments in works of later historians. He was originally from Illyricum and therefore more familiar with the Balkan region than his contemporaries²².

6th century

For the 6th century and especially the reign of Justinian we have several available sources. The first and most important source is the historian Procopius of Caesarea. He wrote three important works, *The Wars of Justinian* (Ὑπὲρ τῶν πολέμων λόγοι), *The Secret History* (Ἀνέκδοτα) and *The Buildings of Justinian* (Περὶ Κτισμάτων)²³.

Procopius was the *adsector*²⁴ of Belisarius, the *magister militum* of Justinian I. Procopius went on campaign with Belisarius on the eastern front in 531, against the Vandals in North Africa in 533, against the Ostrogoths in Italy in 538-540. He also witnessed the Nika Revolt and the massacre in the Hippodrome in 532²⁵. These events are described in his *Wars of Justinian*²⁶.

Procopius' *Buildings* was a description of all the construction and reconstruction work done in the Empire on instigation of Justinian, being above all a panegyric on Justinian. The account of all the buildings is very important to set certain cities, buildings and renovations in the correct perspective of time, especially when no or few inscriptions are available. Procopius also refers to the eastern Balkans in the fourth book. But as it is a panegyric, it is hard to tell how trustworthy Procopius is here. In some cases archaeological work has already shown that Procopius accredits building activity to Justinian that had already begun under the reign of Anastasius. Besides, he relies on several other sources, who all use a different way of describing the locations. In this he sometimes made mistakes, which makes his description in some places unclear²⁷.

²⁰Poulter 2007, *The transition to Late Antiquity*, p. 14; Cameron 1998, p. 488

²¹Poulter 2007, *The transition to Late Antiquity*, p. 7

²²Poulter 2007, *The transition to Late Antiquity*, p. 7

²³Cameron 1993, p. 9; Poulter 2007, *The transition to Late Antiquity*, p. 9-10; Rich 1992, p. 125; Liebeschuetz 2006, XI p. 230-239

²⁴An *adsector* was a legal adviser

²⁵For the Nika Revolt see p.9, note 24.

²⁶Cameron 2000, p. 66

²⁷Cameron 2000, p. 718

Procopius' *Secret History* gives an opposite picture of the emperor Justinian I and his wife Theodora. It is a source of information on the intrigues of the imperial court. It provides us a picture of the common life in Constantinople and contemporary attitudes toward sex and power.

His work was continued by his successor Agathias Scholasticus. Like Procopius, Agathias was a principal source for the reign of Justinian. After the death of the emperor, he wrote the history on the reign of Justinian, from where Procopius had ended his history on Justinian's wars. It deals with the wars with the Vandals, Goths, Franks and Persians, when the army was led by Narses. He is our main source for the period 552-558. For information on Greece and the Balkans in this period, Agathias is not very useful, for he is mainly interested in military events in Italy and the Persian territory²⁸.

Agathias himself was later used as a model by his successor Menander Protector. Only fragments of his work survived, but he gives us valuable information on the period after Agathias. He is our primary source for the period 558-582, starting with the coming of the Kutrigurs in Thrace and ending with the death of Theodosius II²⁹.

7th century

Our primary source for the 7th century is Theophylaktos Simokattes, also known as Theophylact Simocatta. The history of Theophylact is an account of the reign of Maurice (582-602) and the wars against the Persians, the Slavs and the Avars. He is therefore an important source for information on Greece, and especially Thessaloniki, in Late Antiquity. Theophylact is usually seen as the last historian in classical style. This way of describing history would disappear after the invasions of the Arabs³⁰.

3.1.4 Church Histories and Chronicals

At the opposite of the historians that work in the classical traditions, we see an explosion of Christian literature, especially in the 4th and 5th century, when Christianity became state religion.

3rd and 4th century

For the earlier period, Eusebius of Caesarea is the most important Christian historian. He was a bishop, living in the late 3rd and early 4th century in Palestina. The most valuable works are his *Chronicon* and *Church History*. The former has been lost in its original form, but is very often used by later chronicles. The *Chronicon* provided a history of sources and a synchronism of the historical material. For his *Church History* Eusebius is praised as the first 'Father of Church History'. This work is a history of the Christian Church from the period of the Apostles until Eusebius' own period³¹.

His work was continued by the *Church Histories* of Socrates Scholasticus, Sozomen and Theodoret, who were contemporaries living in the late 4th and early 5th century. Their histories started with the period of Constantine and ended at their own period during the reign of Theodosius II³².

²⁸Poulter 2007, *The transition to Late Antiquity*, p. 8 and 11

²⁹Poulter 2007, *The transition to Late Antiquity*, p. 8

³⁰Cameron 1993, p. 9; Poulter 2007, *The transition to Late Antiquity*, p. 11-12 and 14

³¹Liebeschuetz p. 151-152; Cameron 1998, pp. 688-689

³²Cameron 1993, p. 9; Liebeschuetz 2006, p.151-163; Cameron 1998, pp. 688-689

5th and 6th century

Their successor was Evagrius Scholasticus. The *History* of Evagrius covered the period 431-594, following the reigns of Theodosius until Maurice. His sources did not only consist of his Christian predecessor, but he also used non Christian writes like Zosimus, Priscus, Procopius and Agathias³³.

Evagrius was a contemporary of John of Ephesus, one of the earliest church historians, who wrote in Syrian. The Church History of John was not a continuation of all the previous work, but covered the whole period from the time of Julius Caesar until 588.

In the 6th century, another kind of literary source flourished: the chronicle. Chronicles are different in form from the historical narrative. The purpose of a chronicle is to record historical events without the interpretation of the author. It became a typical form of Christian historical writing. They are very remote from the Classical literary tradition. The *Chronicon* of Eusebius is seen as the starting point for the chronicle tradition, but Eusebius himself was influenced by the *Chronography* of Sextus Julius Africanus, a Christian historian of the late 2nd and early 3th century. The Chronicles used a simple and popular language and therefore they were more accessible for a greater audience.

In the first half of the 6th century, Marcellinus Comes wrote his *Annals*, a chronicle covering the period 378-534. Although he wrote in Latin, he primarily describes the affairs of the eastern Empire. He gives detailed references to the Balkan region during the reign of Anastasius. An anonymous writer continued his work until 548³⁴.

The second chronicle of the 6th century was the *Chronography* of John Malalas. The work is actually the first example of a historical work meant for instruction for monks and the common people. It became a popular historical work, but was full of historical and chronological errors. The beginning of the chronicle is lost, but it ends with the expedition to Africa under Marcianus, the nephew of Justinian³⁵.

7th to 9th century

The chronicle of John Malalas was succeeded by the *Chronicon Paschale* in the early 7th century during the reign of Heraclius. It was a chronological list of events from the creation of Adam until the writer's own period³⁶.

A very late chronicle, but interesting for the Late Roman period, is the *Chronicle* of Theophanes the Confessor. The monk Theophanes produced his work in the early 9th century, but it covers the period 284-813. Theophanes gives valuable information on the reign of Justin II 565-578, for he is own of the few sources for this period³⁷.

3.1.5 Other literary genres

As said above, literature remained a business of the aristocracy. The aristocracy was still educated with classical authors. As there was a tendency in literature to Atticistic style, imitating the major authors from the Greek, mostly Athenian, past, it is expected that the same literary genres were still in use. But of the surviving literary works only a very small portion was secular literature.

³³Cameron 1993, p. 9; Liebeschuetz 2006, p. 162-163

³⁴Poulter 2007, *The transition to Late Antiquity*, p. 8 and 11

³⁵Poulter 2007, *The transition to Late Antiquity*, p. 8 and 11; Cameron 1993, p. 9

³⁶Poulter 2007, *The transition to Late Antiquity*, p. 7 and 11. The *Chronicon Paschale* is written by an anonymous Greek author, who said to be a contemporary Heraclius. He probably was a cleric.

³⁷Poulter 2007, *The transition to Late Antiquity*, p. 11

The rest of the surviving work belongs to the ecclesiastical and theological literature. The production of Christian literature increased in the 4th and 5th century. We find different kind of Christian literary genres, beside historiography and chronicles. The first flowering of ecclesiastical literature is closely associated with the names of the Church Fathers, the early and influential writers and teachers of the Church, of whom Basil of Caesarea, Athanasius of Alexandria and John Chrysostom are the most famous in Late Antiquity.

The second flowering can be seen in the development of the ecclesiastical poetry. Ecclesiastical poetry experienced a major Syrian influence with Romanos as its best known poet. He was famous for his hymns on Biblical themes.

A new genre in the later period of the eastern Empire, introduced by Christian writers, is martyrology. The number of men and women in the Empire who had dedicated themselves to the religious life was very large. There was an increase of attention given to individuals, which resulted in the interest in the biography of saints, known as the saints' lives³⁸.

A genre that was used by both Christian and non Christian writers was the epigram. The historian Agathias was also known as an epigrammatist. Another genre that was written for non Christian aims was comprised by panegyrics, glorifying the emperors and their achievements. It had become a tradition that was practised from imperial Rome to Constantinople as part of ancient rhetoric.

The prestige Atticistic literature remained cherished until the 7th century. From this period the Empire was threatened by Arab invasions. City life and education seem to have declined, and along with it, the use of the classicizing language and style. The classical sense of proportion, beauty, and poetry was replaced by the grotesque style of the Byzantine period.

3.2 Other written sources

When we think of other written sources, we firstly think of epigraphical material. Inscriptions provide information on both public and private affairs. They can shed more light on the urban governance of the Roman Empire and they are the chief source of information for our understanding of the structure of Roman civic life.

The Empire has produced a wealth of epigraphical material of building inscriptions, honorific inscriptions and funerary inscriptions. The vast majority of the inscriptions was inscribed in the 2nd or the early 3th centuries AD. In the 3th century the number of texts which were inscribed, dropped dramatically. This is true of all kinds of inscribed texts, but more particularly of formal, public inscriptions, honoring rulers or benefactors, recording decrees, or dedicating buildings.

It is assumed that this change is a result of the policy of emperor Caracalla, who allowed citizenship to all free men in the Empire in 212. The lost of exclusivity led to a diminishing of the privileges. Although it was open for almost every citizen, the willingness to take public offices was decreasing. The curial class was loaded with the burdens of the liturgies imposed by the Tetrarchic reforms in government. Because the curial class was not able to take up the public services anymore, this role was slowly taken over by bishops and their clergy³⁹. Citizens themselves no longer had the financial resources to construct municipal buildings. The construction and repair of buildings was now in the hands of the imperial governance. This caused the decrease of the traditional visible establishment of urban inscriptions from the public buildings and monuments of the elite, although we do find imperial inscriptions of good quality⁴⁰.

³⁸Cameron 1993, p. 145

³⁹see chapter 4.2 for the role of the curial class in the Late Roman period.

⁴⁰Poulter 1992, p. 120-123

We find imperial inscriptions in cities that had the attention of the emperor, like the capital of the Empire, Constantinople, and the provincial capitals. We also find military inscriptions, which most of the time attested the construction of fortifications. These building inscriptions are usually meant as glorification of the emperor or his generals, and their reliability cannot always be guaranteed. Where individuals are named on inscriptions, they are regularly soldiers or members of the praesidial administration⁴¹. Beside public inscriptions, another primary source of epigraphic material is provided by Christian funerary inscriptions⁴².

The same trend is noticeable in Greece and the Danube region as in the rest of the Empire. Almost no inscription attests urban administration during the 4th century. The total disappearance of inscriptions which mention cities or decurions is remarkable since imperial dedications and military funerary inscription are still not uncommon finds. For example, the last inscription mentioning the boule and the demos in Nicopolis ad Istrum dates to 270⁴³. The only 4th century building known by inscription to have been erected, mentions an official, but not the city or its civilian administration. The majority of the epigraphical material consists of imperial inscriptions that attest the building programs of the different emperors, especially Diocletian and Justinian. In the interior, much fewer inscriptions are found compared to the frontier, where the army was stationed, and compared to coastal cities, where, due to trading business, the economical circumstances were much better⁴⁴. Several cities, like Thessaloniki, were also well provided with Christian funerary inscriptions.

Another striking feature was the change in the epigraphic style of public inscriptions from the late 3th century. The tendency towards uniformity, which had so dominated the preceding centuries, was abandoned. From the early 4th until the 6th century, inscriptions are cut on a series of widely differing principles. The public inscriptions of the earlier imperial Roman periods were of a consistent level of legibility and provided information in fairly standardized forms; the inscriptions of the Late Roman period often convey little formal or official information, but offer affected honors to individuals. The inscriptions that survive seem to be used as decorations and we mostly see them as adornment of the many churches.

The role of inscriptions, providing information on urban government, was taken over by law codes, like the *codex Theodosianus* and the *codex Justinianus*⁴⁵. Law codes are part of a collection of imperial documents, remaining from the Late Roman Empire.

One valuable imperial document is the *Notitia Dignitatum*, the only surviving official document of all imperial civil and military officials from the imperial court down to the provincial level, dated around 400⁴⁶.

From the late 6th century we have the *Strategikon* of the emperor Maurice, a practical manual of war. It was written to codify the military reforms brought about by the emperor⁴⁷.

In addition to the imperial documents, other types of documents were issued in the Late Roman period. The most important ones are the ecclesiastical documents. These documents are of various categories. The documents of the patriarchs and bishops resemble the documents of the emperor. They consist mainly of correspondence with other bishops, churches and the imperial court. The remaining documents of all the church councils provide us with their canons and decrees. The monasteries also left a collection of documents, consisting of liturgical books, monastic rules and archives.

⁴¹Poulter 1992, p. 119

⁴²Cameron 1993, p. 170

⁴³Poulter 1992, p. 116. ἡ βουλὴ (boule) was the council of citizens appointed to run daily affairs of the city, ὁ δῆμος (demos) was the population of a city.

⁴⁴Poulter 2007, *The transition to Late Antiquity*, p. 5

⁴⁵see chapter 4.3 Legislation.

⁴⁶Cameron 1993, p. 9 and 52

⁴⁷Poulter 2007, *The transition to Late Antiquity*, 11

Also some private documents from the Late Roman period are left. They are almost exclusively notarial instruments.

CHAPTER 4

GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION

4.1 The Emperor and the Empire

Since Augustus, the Roman state was ruled by an emperor. Diocletian changed this principle in the late 3th century. He divided the Empire in two halves and appointed the general Maximian as his co-emperor, or Augustus, in the western part. He felt that even this adjustment was not enough to deal with both civic and military problems, and, with Maximian's consent, Diocletian appointed two Caesars, one responsible to each Augustus. This Tetrarchy ended when Constantine declared himself sole Augustus. He left the Empire to the rule of his three sons, Constantine II, Constantius II and Constans.

During the Tetrarchy the seat of the senate was still in Rome, but Rome was no longer the administrative center of the empire. The Augusti and the Caesares all had their own capital and moved from one to another. They chose cities which were closer to the frontiers as their headquarters for the defence against bordering rivals. Rome was not one of these Tetrarchic Capitals, but it continued to be the capital of the entire Empire under its own prefect, the *praefectus urbi*.

The division of the Empire into four parts did not lead to the actual split of the Empire, but it was mainly meant as a division of military power. The primary task of the Augusti was to take the high command in war and consequently the Augusti themselves were found on the battlefield. The administration was delegated to each Tetrarch's praetorian prefect (*the praefectus praetorio*), who supervised several *vicarii*. A *vicarius*, an office introduced by Diocletian, was the governor in charge of a civil *diocese*, the new administrative division of the Empire. During the early Tetrarchy the Empire was divided in almost a hundred provinces. These provinces were grouped in twelve dioceses¹.

Next to the praetorian prefect, the *magister officiorum* was the most powerful civilian official. This position can be traced to the rule of Constantine I, but may have been established by Diocletian. The *magister officiorum* commanded the *agentes in rebus*, i.e. imperial courier service and secret service; he had the authority over the public postal system and the supervision of the imperial arsenals, he was the commander of the palace guard and in later periods he coordinated foreign affairs².

This was only an administrative division, neither a prefect nor a *vicarius* nor a *magister officiorum* held any military powers. From the late 4th century, the military divisions were led by five to ten generals called *magistri militum*, masters of the soldiers. Each *magister militum* supervised territorial commanders called *duces*. In later periods, the *magistri militum* had much influence on their Augustus and had in some cases even the actual power³.

The Tetrarchy also caused the end of the Principate and the beginning of the Dominate⁴. It made an end to the fictive appearance of the power of the senate. Under the Republic and the

¹Cameron 1998, p. 166-172; Cameron 2000 pp. 170-181; Bowman 2005, pp. 180-181, Naerebout 1995, pp. 353, 385

²Cameron 1998, pp. 165-166, 170, 173, Cameron 2000 pp. 172-173

³Cameron 1998, pp. 213-219, 428-430; Cameron 2000, pp. 288-293, Naerebout 1995 pp. 385-386

⁴the Principate is the period in which the emperor was called the *princeps*, the first of the senate. In theory, the Roman Republic continued, but the actual power was in hands of the *princeps*. The Dominate was the period in which the emperor was called *dominus*, master. In theory and in practise, all power was in hands of the dominus.

Principate, only the senate and legislative assemblies could pass laws, that remained in effect indefinitely. After Diocletian, the Augusti were the only ones who could do that. Any decree of an Augustus remained in force even after that particular emperor had left office. In this way neither a magistrate, nor the senate, could restrain the emperor. Besides, all magistrates disappeared, except that of the consul, the praetor and the quaestor.

Diocletian had reorganized the Empire completely. During the Tetrarchy the number of bureaucrats increased enormously. The many governors and the division of the empire in smaller dioceses and provinces made it easier to collect taxes and supplies. Diocletian was also very active in legal affairs. During his reign, jurists of the imperial government started to publish books of precedents and collected all the rescripts that had been issued from the reign of Hadrian to the reign of Diocletian. Their work were the basis of later codices.

The Tetrarchy lasted only for almost 30 years and after 224 the Empire was again ruled by one Augustus, Constantine I. But although the power division was lost, Diocletian's civil and military divisions of the empire remained in effect and his constitution survived even after the split of the empire, until the reforms of Justinian in the 6th century.

Diocletian was the first emperor of the Dominate period. Instead of being the first among equals, the Augustus was sole ruler and had absolute power. The emperor took a more sacral position and even adopted the divine status as *divus*⁵. A new style of ceremony was developed, emphasizing the distinction of the emperor from all other persons. The emperors of the Dominate unabashedly showed their status and authority. The court ceremonial expanded more and more and achieved its peak during the reign of Justinian. Of course when Christianity became state religion, the emperors were no longer seen as divine, but admitted that he was ruler on earth in the name of God. The display of their status was still accompanied with great splendor. The succession to the crown was still not hereditary. To assure the succession of relatives the intended successor was already proclaimed co-emperor during the life of the reigning emperor.

After the split of the Empire, the authority of one of the two emperors was acknowledged by the whole Empire, as well in the eastern part as in the western part. The laws and edicts of the emperor of one part of the Empire were also valid in the other part of the Empire. To the people in the 4th and the 5th century there was still one Empire. On the death of either emperor the imperial authority of the surviving colleague was extended to the whole Empire until a new emperor was elected. It was the responsibility of the remaining emperor to nominate a new colleague. It could happen that a newly chosen emperor was not recognized at the other half of the Empire, but the principle remained in force. Even after the fall of the western Empire, the barbarian kings of the west saw the emperor of the East as their superior and accepted the laws of the eastern Empire⁶.

4.2 Aristocracy

In 212 Caracalla had given Roman citizenship to all free men living in the Roman Empire. The important difference made between Romans and others disappeared and the social structure was completely changed.

In Rome and Constantinople, the senators formed the most privileged group of aristocrats. As said above, all magistrates disappeared, except that of consul, praetor and quaestor. The consul could only preside over the senate, and the praetor and quaestor could only manage public games, although the praetor did retain some limited juridical authority. Senators did

⁵ *divus* is the Latin word for god.

⁶ Cameron 1998, pp. 138-183, 352-354; Cameron 2000, pp. 135-206; Bowman 2005, pp. 131, 170-183

maintain juridical and fiscal advantages. Because of these benefits some aristocrats attempted to become senators in order to escape the difficult conditions that were imposed on them by the Tetrarchy⁷.

In other cities the local landowning elite controlled the local urban government and established the economical foundation of the urban administration. These local aristocracy, the *curiales*⁸, were also responsible for the collections of tax payments. The reforms of the tax-system of the Tetrarchy subdivided the empire in smaller divisions, which made the control of the tax collection easier. The *curiales* were expected to make up any shortfall in the local tax collection. They experienced the pressure of taxation and also the ruinous cost of presenting spectacular public entertainments in the traditional *cursus honorum*⁹. The *curiales* tried to escape their obligations by becoming clergy or accepting an imperial office. Others probably retired to their villas in the country in order to escape the collective duty of paying the local urban taxes¹⁰.

The developments caused great differentiation within the aristocracy. Only a very small society of powerful and wealthy aristocrats controlled urban politics; they were the servants and representatives of a distant emperor. Those who had access to the imperial administration in Constantinople gained more power than those who had not. The role of the imperial administration in city affairs had shown a tendency to increase, a trend that was naturally enhanced as revenues became harder to collect through the urban elite. The imposition of tax officials in provincial cities was a logical step, just as the repeated legislation that forbade *curiales* to escape their responsibilities. Bureaucracy increased and consequently the channels of access to the emperor decreased more and more. This led to the loss of significance of the curial class¹¹.

Another reason for the impoverishment of the curial class could be the promotion of the most prosperous members to the imperial administration. Their place was taken by less well-off landowners who could not bear the weight of the taxation. In some cities where the elite were not able to yield enough financial resources, the resources were forthcoming from other directions, like the church or the bishop. The church gradually took over the role of the curial class. By the 5th century, the Church even seems to have emerged as the most important factor in maintaining some form of local government. In the later period of Late Antiquity, cities were controlled by the church, restricted groups of *potentiores* and perhaps the military establishment¹².

Maintenance of the curial order also depended on the continued availability of the traditional educational system. The old-style classical education remained available, if sometimes in diluted form. The training was still firmly based on the classical authors. Training in classical rhetoric was essential to the functioning of the political and social structure. It was regarded as a crucial qualification for the imperial bureaucracy and indeed for any secular office. But the classical education came under attack from imperial legislation against pagans and heretics as teachers, and was no doubt undermined by the gradual process of Christianization¹³.

⁷Cameron 1998, pp. 184-210

⁸the term *curiales* is derived from *curia*. In the imperial period a curia was any building where local government held office.

⁹cours of honours

¹⁰Cameron 1998, pp. 196-197, 203-209, also see chapter 7

¹¹Naerebout 1995 pp. 268-369, 375-377

¹²Cameron 1998, pp. 262-267, 373-388, 392-403

¹³Cameron 1993, pp. 166-171; Cameron 1998, pp.184-210, 354-356; Cameron 2000, pp. 164-206; Poulter 2007, *The transition to Late Antiquity*, pp.15-17

4.3 Legislation

Under Diocletian legislation was reorganized. All the rescripts that were issued from the reign of Hadrian to Diocletian were collected and listed. From this period are the *Codex Gregorianus and Hermogenianus*. These codes were published in the names of the compiler's names, but in later periods it was published in name of the emperor¹⁴.

During the reign of Diocletian the number of edicts and rescripts increased prominently. This was also the result of his constitutional reforms. Under the principate, the senate was the only body that was able to issue a law and the emperor was bound by the laws. Under the Tetrarchy though, the emperor assumed full powers of legislation and he didn't need the approval of the senate. This didn't mean that the emperor did not take this duty seriously; he still considered himself bound by the laws. The emperor was seen as the guardian of the laws which protected against the oppression of nobles and officials. Beside the emperor, the *praefectus praetorio* was also allowed to issue edicts.

Constantine was one of the succeeding emperors who issued many laws and edicts. With his new legislation he tried to solve agrarian problems. He made the peasants compulsory tenants. They were attached to the soil, and their children after them. Legally, they continued belonging to the free class, but virtually they were unfree. Constantine's laws prevented them from leaving their farms, and treated those who ran away as fugitive slaves. Constantine also removed the existing legislation which laid down penalties for members of the upper class who did not marry. Celibacy became a serious option even for the rich, when it could have profound and disturbing effects on inheritance and distribution of wealth.

Constantine was the first emperor converted to Christianity and, since the reign of Constantine, we see that the church had its influence on the state legislation, even more and more when Christianity became state religion. Christians were encouraged by imperial legislation to attack pagan temples and statues, and occasionally the violence was carried out by soldiers at imperial command. Soon the Church organized its own regulation. Councils were held to discuss and settle matters of Church doctrine and practice. In accordance with the model of the secular legal associations, the canons of the ecclesiastic councils concerned ecclesiastic issues and regulated the conduct of the clergy and of the secular as concerned matters of belief.

Theodosius II appointed a committee in 429 to codify all of the laws from the reign of Constantine up to his own reign. Until 438, scholars collected more than 2,500 constitutions issued during this period. The flood of imperial pronouncements was getting so great, that no lawyer could master them all. The aim of the work was to systemize the complex mass of law and to reduce the number of laws. A code was created, which was called the *Codex Theodosianus*¹⁵.

Before the Tetrarchy Roman law was mostly private law, law of or between citizens. The administration and especially the tax system had been strengthened, which caused more need for public laws. The new laws were very much a business for the ordinary inhabitants. By issuing these laws The state tried to ensure the regularity of tax income and supply from all subjects.

But the makers of law were remote from the ordinary inhabitants of the Empire. The central bureaucracy was inclined to spread its authority by means of the local officials, who were nearer to the citizens. Various post and professions were made subject to legal burdens on hereditary basis. But these posts became very unpopular and a new sequence of laws was necessary to defend the membership of the town councils.

¹⁴Cameron 1998, pp. 682-684

¹⁵Cameron 1998, pp. 182-184, Cameron 2000, p. 244-253

The *Codex Theodosionus* did not stop the flood of new laws. The eastern and western emperors agreed to communicate their legislative designs for simultaneous publication in both empires, and these were to be known as the *Novellae Constitutiones*.

The *Codex Theodosianus* brought some clarity, but in the Late Roman period the state of law was still chaotic. Like Theodosius before him, Justinian tried to make these immense materials more accessible and more workable. In 528 he appointed a commission to work on the *Codex Justinianus*, a codification of imperial constitutions from the reign of Hadrian onward. The commission had to take the codex's predecessors, the *Codex Theodosianus*, the *Codex Gregorianus* and the *codex Hermogenianus* together with all the *Novellae* issued in the eastern Empire. From this collection they took all the constitutions that were still in operation. Everything that was out of date, repetitive or contradictory was removed. The remaining constitutions were simplified and put in chronological order by subject provided with the name of the author and of the recipient and with the date and place. The codex was followed by the *Digesta*, or *Pandectae*, that interpreted and updated past legal decisions. A third book, the *Institutiones*, was added. This was a textbook for students of law. *The Institutiones* was almost entirely based on the *Institutiones* of Gaius from the 2nd century. These three works together are known as the *Corpus Juris Civilis*¹⁶.

The reforms did not bring a halt to the great number of new laws. These were published under the name *Novellae* and were, for the first time, written in Greek. The effect of the *Novellae* was that many of the provisions of the codex already were obsolete. Still, the *Corpus Juris Civilis* forms the basis of later European law systems¹⁷.

4.4 Greece and the Balkans

Under the Tetrarchy the Empire was divided in more than hundred provinces. Greece was divided in the provinces Rhodope, Macedonia, Epirus Nova, Epirus Vetus, Thessalia, Achaea, Crete, and the islands. The islands, were part of the diocese Asia and Rhodope was part of the diocese Thracia, while the other Greek provinces belonged to the diocese Moesia.

In the 5th century Moesia was further divided in to two new dioceses, that of Dacia and of Macedonia. The first lay in the north and consisted of the provinces Dacia Mediterranea, Moesia Inferior, Dardania, Praevalitana and Dacia Ripensis. The capital of the diocese was Serdica, modern Sofia. The diocese of Macedonia lay in the south of Dacia and was formed by the provinces Macedonia Prima, Macedonia Salutaris, Thessalia, Epirus vetus, Epirus nova, Achaea, and Crete. The capital of Macedonia was Thessaloniki. Together with the Diocese of Pannonia these two dioceses formed the *praefectura praetorio per Illyricum*. The islands and Thracia were part of the *praefectura praetorio Orientis*. Initially, the capital of the prefecture was Smirmium, which was also the capital of the diocese of Pannonia. Already in 379, Galerius moved the capital to Thessaloniki.

The early government of Illyricum during the 4th century was turbulent, as it was abolished, re-established and divided several times. Under Constantine, the territories of the later prefecture were part of the prefecture of Italy. Constantius II grouped the dioceses Macedonia, Dacia and Pannonia together as a praetorian prefecture in 357. In 361, though, the prefecture was abolished by emperor Julian to be incorporated again in 375-379 under Gratian. From that period the diocese of Pannonia was added to the prefecture of Italy as the diocese of Illyricum, while Macedonia and Dacia were governed directly by Theodosius I from Thessaloniki. After a few years also these dioceses were incorporated in the prefecture of Italy.

¹⁶Cameron 2000, pp. 67, 244-253

¹⁷Cameron 2000, pp. 238-259; Bowman 2205, pp. 184-211

After the split of the two parts of the Empire, Illyricum, consisting of the dioceses of Macedonia and Dacia, was a prefecture of the eastern Empire. Thessaloniki remained the capital and was used as a second residence of the emperors, who frequently visited the city. The western Empire continued to claim the territories and quarreled with the East until 437, when emperor Valentinian III recognized the authority of prefecture by the eastern Empire. It is possible that Sirmium then replaced Thessaloniki as the seat of the prefecture of Illyricum. But the Huns captured Sirmium in 441 already, so if this is true, it was so only for a small period of time¹⁸.

In 540's there was a new attempt to replace the capital by Justinian. He favored his newly found city of Justiniana Prima, which lay near his birthplace Tauresium. Although Justiniana Prima gained the title of capital of the prefecture, Thessaloniki did not lose much of its administrative functions¹⁹.

Because of its strategic position near the Danubian frontier with the Huns, Ostrogoths and Slavs, the prefecture of Illyricum was of great interest for the emperor and the seat of the prefecture of Illyricum was of great political significance.

The reforms of the Tetrarchy had its influence on the division of the Greek territory in dioceses and provinces, but increased intervention of the state also effected the administrative structure of the cities. The aristocracy of the Greek cities felt the same burdens of the tax-system as elsewhere in the Empire. Those who were able to get an office in the imperial administrative system on the level of the prefecture, diocese or province, now held power. The governors of the provinces of Greece were called *consulares* or *correctores* or *praesides*, only the governor of one province, Achaia, bore the old title of proconsul. The governor had judicial as well as administrative powers. He also had the duty of supervising the collection of taxes. The administrative officials were in charge of the local government, but usually the church was also one of the main power, and in some cities even a *dux* was in control.

When Christianity became the state religion, a 'new' Christian culture developed, being couched into the framework of the philosophies, symbolism and customs of the ancient Greek world. It is therefore not strange that Christianity prospered in the Greek region. On the other hand, Greece was the center of the pagan religions. Especially in Athens with its Academy, many people were still pagan. Constantine had already forbidden the pagan sacrifice and Theodosius introduced severe punishments for people who disagreed with the official version of Christianity. Pagan temples had their treasures confiscated and these treasures were largely given to the Christian churches instead. Sometimes the pagan temples were converted into a Christian church, like the Hephaisteion on the Athenian agora. For the aristocracy becoming a member of the clergy was a possible career, for the bishops and their entourage were gaining ever more influence. Still pagan philosophy was being practised until the end of Late Antiquity. The philosophers of Athens continued to be pagan and were strongly hostile against Christianity. But as Christianity was the state religion paganism was forbidden by law. It was not until the reign of Justinian that the Academy of Athens was closed and that pagans were forbidden to teach philosophy or law²⁰.

Because of the many wars at the end of the Late Roman period, the Empire was not able to be in control in all territories. More and more barbarian tribes invaded the Balkans and Greece and settled permanently. These settlements are called 'sklaviniai' and dominated many districts. The Empire claimed a political sovereignty over the whole region, but it was rarely able to make this effective. The sklaviniai, however, did not control the entire inland region. There were probably many areas in which the indigenous population and the traditional patterns of

¹⁸Cameron 2000, pp. 710-711

¹⁹Cameron 2000, pp. 718-719

²⁰Cameron 2000, pp. 724-726

local social structure and political organization may have survived and where imperial authority may have been recognized²¹.

²¹Cameron 2000, pp. 701-730; Naerebout 1995, p. 435

Part II

Case Studies

CHAPTER 5

THE CITY IN LATE ANTIQUITY

5.1 4 urban centers in Greece

5.1.1 Argos

2nd and 3rd century

After the Roman destruction and conquest of Corinth in 146 BC, Argos rose in importance and became the center of the Achaean League¹. Argos traded on the prestige of its legends to win Roman favor, especially from Hadrian who funded a 30 km long aquaduct.

At the same time, a patriotic elite paid for the celebrations of the Nemean and Heraian games and new public works. Like in the Classical period, the agora remained the center of the city and was surrounded by public and monumental constructions like baths and villas decorated with mosaics. Especially in the 2nd century, important monumental structures were built. In this period the temple terrain of Koros was refurbished and the Serapeion-Asklepieion was constructed².

4th and 5th century

The excavations show in some places interruptions that can be dated at the end of the 3rd century, but the layers of destructions can usually be dated in the 3rd and the beginning of the 4th century. This is also the period in which we can place the invasions of the Goths and the economical crisis that ran across the Greek continent.

After these invasions, the center of the city was moved more to the east. The changes are primarily apparent in the shift of the functions of the numerous public constructions. The building activity evolved in a new direction³.

Some new constructions appear, like the monumental gate to the agora, the baths near the agora, that replaced the palaestra, and the hypogeum on the Parodos Danaou, which probably sheltered a mystery cult⁴.

But the existing public monuments and buildings are losing their formal function which they had in the Classical and Early Roman period. The Aphrodision, for example, was probably not functioning anymore as a sanctuary before the end of the 4th century, when the anti-pagan period under Theodosius started. It was reused by private, modest dwellings. The Odeion and the portico of the agora endured the same faith and also housed new dwellings⁵.

Other public constructions, like the baths B, were reused for workshops. We find more of these workshops and installations for small industry elsewhere. A foundry was established near the portico of the agora and an oven was found on the plateia Kypseli⁶.

This phenomenon is not necessarily a sign of impoverishment. Beside the modest dwellings and workshops that used already existing structures, newly built structures appeared. Most

¹The Achaean League was a confederation of Greek poleis on the northern and central Peloponnese established in the 3rd century BC.

²Pariente 1998, p. 335

³Pariente 1998, p. 334 and 397-398

⁴Pariente 1998, p. 335

⁵Pariente 1998, p. 398

⁶Pariente 1998, p. 398; Kardulias 2005, p. 113

striking is the construction of numerous basilicas and chapels from the beginning of the 5th until the 6th century. From now on ecclesiastical construction became the key monumental form. The majority of the basilicas were built east of the agora, but we also find them in the periphery of the city, like the basilica that was housed in the ruins of the temple of the Pythian Apollo⁷.

Other prestigious structures are then numerous private and luxurious villas decorated with mosaics. They were built at the end of the 4th and the 5th century for the wealthier citizens of Argos⁸. The mosaics were clearly the work of highly skilled artisans and were common at this time in Argos, as well as in Corinth, Sparta, and Patras. The similarity in style of mosaic pavements throughout the Peloponnese may reflect the work of the same workshop⁹.

6th and 7th century

Somewhere towards the mid 6th century we see a decline in the building activity and the occupation of the site. New constructions from this period are rare, but there are ample examples of repair and modification of existing structures. People did not build new houses, but occupied already existing structures. Only at the lower slope of the Larissa and at the site of the Aphrodision and the Odeion, the area of the monumental buildings from the Classical and Hellenistic period, constructions seem to be, in most cases temporarily, abandoned¹⁰.

The repair, modification and abundance also involved a layer of destruction. The excavators believe that the earthquake of 552 is the cause of this destruction. But in some places the destruction seems to be caused by incense. Probably events other than the earthquake may have aggravated the situation. The earthquake of 552 was followed by several plagues and the invasions of the Slavs¹¹.

From the mid 6th century the occupation of the site is decreasing. In the same period rural structures are increasing. This demonstrates that the population is not diminishing¹².

Occupation of the site in the 7th century is proved by the imported pottery from this period, although the finds are less numerous than those of the 6th century. The pottery is in most cases imported from North Africa and Asia Minor. This proves that there was still trade with these regions¹³. After the mid 7th century there are no clues anymore for the import of pottery. This does not mean that the site was deserted¹⁴. Some pottery was found from the 7th century, but this is Slavic pottery. The pottery can have been used by the Slavic people who settled in Argos, or by Greeks who lived in Argos after the invasions of the Slavs and who were in contact with the Slavs who settled in Greece¹⁵.

There are some traces of human activity in Argos in the 7th century, but elements that allow us to study the character of the site are rare. The traces that were found at the excavations, are usually chaotic and difficult to date, although they certainly can be dated after the destruction layer that is associated with the invasions of the Slavs¹⁶. It is possible that occupiers had different kinds of dwellings. They might have used existing structures or they might have lived

⁷Pariente 1998, p. 335; Kardulias 2005, p. 113

⁸Pariente 1998, p. 335 and 399

⁹Kardulias 2005, p. 111

¹⁰Pariente 1998, p. 378

¹¹Pariente 1998, p. 134; Kardulias 2005, p. 40

¹²Pariente 1998, p. 378

¹³Pariente 1998, p. 401; Kardulias 2005, p. 111

¹⁴Pariente 1998, p. 401

¹⁵Pariente 1998, p. 401-2; Kardulias 2005, p. 40

¹⁶Pariente 1998, p. 401

in dwellings made from perishable material like huts that leave no or little traces¹⁷.

It seems as though the events of the 6th century heralded the end of the ancient city of Argos. Still, Abadaie-Reynal¹⁸ gives us 3 reasons to be careful with our conclusion. Firstly, the appearance of ancient city is changing, when in the 4th century the function of the public monuments and buildings are shifting. Secondly, the decline of the building activity already seems to have started before the invasions of Slavs, probably towards the mid 6th century. And thirdly, the invasions of the Slavs did not cause a desertion of the site. The site was occupied during the 7th century, although in a different form.

5.1.2 Athens

The coming of the Romans did not bring much change to Athens. Roman Athens continued the patterns of the Hellenistic city¹⁹. The Romans admired the cultural and educational achievements of Athens in the past. Politicians, military leaders and men of letters came to study at the famous center of education and philosophy²⁰. Large, impressive monuments continued to be built. They were paid by wealthy individuals or Roman emperors, who replaced the Hellenistic dynasts as benefactors. The new monuments reflect this educational and cultural role of Athens in the Roman world: odeia, libraries, gymnasia, and lecture halls predominate²¹.

The 2nd century represents a high point for Athens, in terms of stability, wealth, and prestige, especially under the philhellene emperor Hadrian, who made many benefactions to the city²². During his reign, new temples and altars were erected, while existing temples and shrines, like the ones on the Acropolis, were repaired and enriched with new offerings.

The agora continued to flourish as the focal point of the active intellectual life of the city²³, but it took on more and more the character of a museum and a cultural center than of a political center. However, Roman Athens maintained some of the agora's ancient political routines, as in the tholos²⁴.

The 2nd and 3rd century represent the last great period of prosperity for the ancient center of Athens, when the agora reached its fullest development. A decline is discernible in the 2nd half of the 3rd century, though the city as a whole continued to prosper off and on²⁵.

3th century

Barbarian raids in Greece are attested as early as the 2nd century AD. By the 250's, invaders had reached northern Greece. The old circuit wall of Athens was repaired during the reign of Valerian. Athens itself was devastated during a raid by the Herulians in 267. They destroyed the lower city of Athens. The archaeological evidence of the destruction is impressive. It can be seen most clearly in the agora, where many buildings were affected²⁶. Evidence of the sack cover the excavated area in the form of burnt fragments, collapsed walls, piles of broken roof tiles, and other debris. Some structures such as the tholos and the royal stoa survived, along with the institutions they housed. Also the temple of Hephaistos suffered comparatively little

¹⁷Pariente 1998, p. 402

¹⁸Pariente 1998, p. 397

¹⁹Camp 2001, p. 184

²⁰Camp 1986, p. 183

²¹Camp 2001, p. 184

²²benefactions of Hadrian: olympieion, arch, Library, basilica, aqueduct, bath, was initiated at Eleusis, Camp 2001, p. 196-213

²³Camp 1986, p. 196

²⁴Mee 2001, p. 66

²⁵Camp 1986, p. 197

²⁶Camp 2001, p. 223

in the raid. But most buildings, especially the odeion and the great Hellenistic stoas, were totally ruined²⁷. In the district of the Kerameikos, the storehouse and the workshops south of the sacred gate were destroyed²⁸. Less clear is the degree of damage to the northwest part of the agora and the great temples of the Acropolis²⁹. A disastrous fire, probably best attributed to this attack of the Herulians, destroyed the cult statue, cella, and roof of the Parthenon.

The old civic center never fully recovered from the attack of the Herulians and the destruction completely altered the character of the city³⁰. The old, extensive Themistoklean circuit wall made little sense, because it was too large to maintain or garrison it. Therefore, a new city wall was constructed. It was built entirely of re-used material. Much of the material came from the shattered buildings of the agora. Other buildings, such as the stoa of Attalos and the Library of Hadrian, were incorporated in the new city wall. This meant that the the agora was now situated outside the city wall and was no longer the center of the city. The new city wall dramatically reduced the size of the city and certain civic institutions, such as the ephebic system, came to an end³¹.

The Herulian attack also prompted the construction of the so-called Beule gate, a fortified gate structure with towers, in front of the Propylaia of the Acropolis. The Acropolis was from that date used as a fortress until 1833.

4th century

Much of the archaeological evidence for the late Roman city lies unexplored to the east, hidden under the modern buildings of the Plaka. We have only indirect evidence from peripheral areas as the agora and the Kerameikos, both lying outside the new city wall³². The 4th century was a period of relative decline and large-scale abandonment of the agora. Much of the area seems to have been given over to industrial activity³³. In the Kerameikos area, potters reinstalled kilns south of the sacred gate and also in the ruins of the storehouse.

Higher up, on the north slope of the Areopagos and on the south slope of the Acropolis, several large luxurious villas were built in the 4th century. These are large, well-appointed establishments, with marble peristyle, private baths, mosaic floors, and collections of earlier sculpture³⁴. In addition to the large houses, several Athenian baths show signs of construction or renovation³⁵. This building activity indicate that the city was far from dead. The old agora was neglected, but energies just seems to have been directed to other areas in the city within the walls, unexcavated at the present time³⁶.

Evidence that Athens was still a lively place comes from literary sources: the philosophical and rhetorical schools continued to flourish and to draw scholars and students from all the Mediterranean³⁷. Although Christianity became the official state religion, Athens remained a center of paganism.

There is also good evidence that the Attic lamp industry is flourishing in the 4th century. The lamps were exported to other regions, mostly found in caves of Pan.

²⁷Camp 1986, p. 197

²⁸Knigge 1991, p. 46

²⁹Camp 2001, p. 223

³⁰Camp 2001, p. 223

³¹Thompson 1962, p. 29- 31

³²Camp 2001, p. 226

³³Camp 1986:198

³⁴Camp 2001, p. 227; Camp 1986, p. 198

³⁵Camp 2001, p. 229

³⁶Camp 1986: 198

³⁷Camp 2001, p. 226

In 396, Alaric and his Visigoths appeared outside the walls of Athens. Alaric advanced upon Attica and devastated the countryside. Thebes was saved only because of his haste to get to Athens. Not enough work has been done within the city wall to tell something about the effect of Alaric's visit. Outside the wall, in the area of the agora and the Kerameikos, there are distinct signs of unfriendly presence. Several buildings that survived the Herulians, show signs of damage from this period. The Areopagos houses within the city wall continued to be occupied with no clear evidence of ill effects from Alaric's visit. It is possible that the Goths were held outside the city walls, where they caused considerable damage³⁸.

5th century

A revival can be dated to the first half of the 5th century, following the departure of Alaric. On the agora, some of the old buildings were reconstructed, such as the Hellenistic metroon and the tholos. A new huge complex covered the Odeion of Agrippa. Its identification and function are uncertain. It has the appearance of an elaborate villa, and perhaps it served as an official residence³⁹. Its monumental entrance was adorned with a facade now known as the Port of the Giants.

For educated Romans, Neo-Platonic philosophy was the chief rival to Christianity at that time and Athens became the most popular place to practice this philosophy. That is why evidence of Christianity only appears of a late date in Athens. We find the first substantive architectural evidence of Christianity within the confines of the old library, dated to 5th century, just before the attempt of Theodosius II to shut down pagan sanctuaries in 435⁴⁰. The long three-aisled basilica church makes its appearance in Athens later in the 5th century. The first was constructed in southeast Athens, along the banks of the Ilissos river. The conversion of pagan temples to Christian use seems to be a late phenomenon in Athens, usually dated to 6th and 7th century.

The edicts of Theodosius also had effect on the Acropolis. It meant the final blow for the Acropolis as a place of pagan worship. The statue of Athena was moved, but the Christianization of the temples on the acropolis followed later.

6th and 7th century

The reign of Justinian was another step further away from ancient Athens. He issued a decree that forbade any pagan to teach philosophy in Athens in 529. By closing the Academy, Athens lost its position as cultural and educational center⁴¹.

In this period we must place the mutilation of one of the large houses on the Areopagos, called the Omega House. The house, with sixteen rooms around two courtyards, was, probably, previously used as a private philosophical school⁴². In the 6th century, several sculptures in the house were mutilated and a fine mosaic floor panel, presumably carrying some offensively pagan scene, was torn up and replaced with marble slabs. Other sculptures were thrown down two wells in the house. The final occupants were apparently Christians, who furnished their house with lamps decorated with crosses and a sigma table, used for ritual dining⁴³.

³⁸Camp 2001, p. 231-2; Camp 1986, p. 198-9

³⁹Camp 2001, p. 232; Camp 1986, p. 200

⁴⁰Camp 2001, p. 233

⁴¹Camp 2001, p. 237; Camp 1986, p. 202/3

⁴²They charged fees for teaching and represented the aristocracy of the late Roman city. Private houses became actual schools

⁴³Camp 2001, p. 238; Camp 1986, p. 208-211

Soon, the old temples and sanctuaries were converted to Christian use. The Parthenon was converted during the reign of Justinian into a church dedicated to St Sophia, but afterwards it became a church of the Virgin Mary. Another basilica was built on the ruins of the shrine of Asklepios. The other ancient sanctuaries, The Hephaisteion and the Erechteion, were not converted until perhaps the 7th century⁴⁴.

The archaeological evidence of the 6th century demonstrates a shift in Athens from paganism to Christianity. In the same period we see that a physical decline of the city was hastened by another invasion, an invasion of the Slavs in 582-3. The buildings that survived or were rebuilt after the attack of Herulians and Alaric, were demolished: all buildings in the old agora of the 5th century, including the large houses of the areopagos, went out of use, just like the area of the Kerameikos: the sacred gate, with the Eridanos and the sacred way, and the Dipylon Gate disappeared under the earth⁴⁵.

The public buildings on the agora show some slight signs of life in the 7th century. Some refurbishing and reconstruction was made after the middle of the century, but the buildings were abandoned soon thereafter. A possible explanation is a visit to the city by emperor Constans II. He spent the winter of 662-3 in Athens, which must have required some modest revival of the city. After this period Athens saw long centuries of decline⁴⁶. There is only scant evidence of squatters in the ruins of the agora from the 7th century until the 10th century⁴⁷. Athens emerged as a new town with numerous small churches in the 11th and 12th century⁴⁸.

5.1.3 Thessaloniki

Rome and Macedonia clashed at the turn of 3rd to the 2nd c BC. The last king Perseus fled to the well-fortified city of Thessaloniki. The year 148 BC marked the end of the Macedonian kingdom. From that year, Macedonia was incorporated into the Roman territory. Most cities of the province were normally subjected cities, called *civitates stipendiariae*⁴⁹. They were obliged to pay tribute to Rome. Thessaloniki, on the contrary, was one of the few free cities (called *civitates liberae*)⁵⁰ and was exempted from this obligation⁵¹.

The development of Thessaloniki was linked with the *Via Egnatia*. The *Via Egnatia* was constructed while Gnaeus Egnatius was governor of the province about 120 BC. The *Via Egnatia* was used by the Roman army, and by senators and emperors on their journeys to the eastern provinces. The *Via Egnatia* gave the advantage of communications with all areas served by it, and the Thessaloniki became the link between east and west. Besides, Thessaloniki was the safest and largest port in the Aegean. This highly advantaged geopolitical situation played an important role in the rise of the city, as well as its adept handling of its relations with the central and provincial authorities⁵². This resulted in the benefactions from the emperor and other high ranked individuals. The presence of the emperors in Thessaloniki can be found in the honorific inscriptions and the statues erected in their honor. The local aristocracy made efforts to place Thessaloniki on a wider stage within the Empire, for example through the membership of the

⁴⁴Camp 2001, p. 238

⁴⁵Camp 2001, p. 238; Camp 1986, p. 212/3, Knigge 1991, p. 46

⁴⁶Camp 1986, p. 214

⁴⁷Camp 2001, p. 238

⁴⁸Camp 2001, p. 238

⁴⁹*civitates stipendiariae* literally means 'cities that have to pay tribute'

⁵⁰*civitates liberae* literally means 'free cities'. Among those free cities were also Amphipolis and probably Skotousa near Serres

⁵¹Grammenos 2003, p. 68-70

⁵²Grammenos 2003, p. 70 and p. 79

*Amphictyony*⁵³, and the participation to the Attic Panhellenion⁵⁴.

Thessaloniki developed in the 1st century AD not only into an important commercial and economic center, it also evolved into a significant cultural center with a rich cultural life and a mixed community, open to new intellectual and artistic currents. Wealth flowed into the city, which was continually embellished with resplendent buildings over the following centuries⁵⁵.

2nd and 3th century

In the 2nd and 3rd century Thessaloniki was at a height as the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia and it developed into the most populous city of the province, while other cities were gradually losing their prosperity and entering on decline during the 3rd century. The revival of the importance of the Via Egnatia probably played a role in these developments. During the Pax Romana the road had declined in significance as a military road had declined, but the 3rd century was a period of political instability and increasing military operations on the eastern borders of the province⁵⁶.

The leading role of Thessaloniki is marked by honorary titles and distinctions awarded it by the military emperors in the middle of the 3rd century. Thessaloniki also won the title of *neokoros* in this century, a title indicating a city with a temple of the emperor in which the cult was practiced at provincial level. The city was elevated to the status of metropolis, the seat of the imperial high priest. About the middle of the 3rd century Thessaloniki was even designated *tetrakis neokoros*, a city with four temples dedicated to the imperial cult⁵⁷.

Thessaloniki was threatened in the 3rd century by Goths and Herulians who overran the Balkan peninsula, plundered the countryside and laid siege to the city in 254 and in 268. It avoided capture thanks to its extended fortification walls and the saving intervention of the ancestral god Kabeiros. Despite these events Thessaloniki retained its population and, to some extent, its economic well-being, especially under the Severi. Many of its buildings were repaired and new ones were built, gladiatorial games and hunts were organized. Private residences were adorned with high-quality opus sectile and mosaics, fine sculptures stood in public spaces, resplendent grave monuments were erected⁵⁸. New urban villas with complex ground plans and multiple functions were built near the forum in the center, and in the east of the city, in *insulae* that had not been built up during earlier centuries⁵⁹. An ambitious building programme caused the extension of the forum with imposing buildings, like the Odeion and a library⁶⁰. A large number of bathhouses of imperial date have been found scattered throughout imperial Thessaloniki. One of the largest was the one beneath the later Early Christian church of Ayios Demetrios⁶¹.

As said above, the imperial cult played an important role in Thessaloniki. Maybe related to this, was the worship of both Fulvus and Antinous. Antinous was Hadrian's favorite, who was deified after he was drowned into the Nile. Fulvus was probably the son of Marcus Aurelius or Antoninus Pius, who died prematurely and was deified. It was a local cult that is not attested elsewhere⁶². In the 3rd century we also see a revival of the cult of Alexander the Great and a

⁵³The *Amphictyony* was the council of cities that took care of the Oracle of Delphi

⁵⁴Grammenos 2003, p. 85

⁵⁵Grammenos 2003, p. 80-84

⁵⁶Grammenos 2003, p. 85 and p. 143-161

⁵⁷Grammenos 2003, p.100

⁵⁸Grammenos 2003, p. 162

⁵⁹Grammenos 2003, p. 159-160

⁶⁰Grammenos 2003, p. 146-149

⁶¹Grammenos 2003, p. 155

⁶²Grammenos 2003, p. 108-109 and p. 160

real Alexander mania developed at the time of the Severan dynasty, especially with members of the dynasty⁶³. The attention given to these cults, makes clear that Thessaloniki had good relations with the central and provincial authorities.

4th century

At the turn of 3rd to the 4th century Thessaloniki reached another height of its prosperity and glory. The Tetrarchy was created and the Caesar of the East, Galerius chose Thessaloniki as the seat of his administration. It experienced a new flowering and acquired great prestige and glory through the building activity of Galerius. In 299 he returned in triumph from a war against the Persians and decided to build an enormous palace complex in the east part of the city, to which the administrative center was transferred. The ambitious building programme included a triumphal arch, narrating his military achievements against the Persians and noting the harmony amongst the rulers of the Tetrarchy, a circular building, the Rotunda, which was a temple to the gods of the Tetrarchy, the main palace facing the sea, to secure direct access to the port, and the hippodrome, built in contact with the palace⁶⁴.

The residence of Galerius in Thessaloniki and the elevation of the city to the status of one of the capitals of the Roman world led directly to the rise of a new bourgeois class of civil servants and military officers who accompanied the emperor and took up residence in the city. The new bourgeois class were not of local aristocracy and did therefore did not own property in the city. They looked for new, unbuilt areas mainly in north and east. From the 4th century we find opulent urban villas here, a new type of residence, characterized by a triclinium, that differed from ones previously known and was to predominate throughout the early Christian period⁶⁵.

Galerius chose Thessaloniki as his seat, because of its location near the frontier where barbarian tribes threatened the Empire. It is probable that the imperial weapon factory which was found in the city, dates to the period of Galerius. The personnel were formed by Romans who carried out part of their military service. These Romans formed a sizeable element in the population and must have made their presence also felt in the social life of the city⁶⁶.

We know that in the time of Galerius Thessaloniki had a Christian community. It was Galerius who sentenced Demetrios to death, because he celebrated a mass in the basement of a bathhouse near the great forum. The martyr later became the patron saint of the city⁶⁷.

After Galerius died, visits to Thessaloniki by emperors, who stayed at his palace, seem to have become increasingly frequent at this period. When Constantine visited the city on his campaign against Licinius, he repaired the walls and created a large port at their south-west end⁶⁸. His decision to found the second capital at Byzantium deprived Thessaloniki of its leading role. Nevertheless, it remained the largest political and economic center in the Balkans throughout the 4th century.

Emperor Julian sought support for his philhellene policy in Thessaloniki and reinforced the walls en tried to convert the odeion in the Roman forum into a theater holding 2500 spectators⁶⁹. After the death of Julian, the north of the Balkans and Greece was threatened by the Goths. Emperor Theodosius came to Thessaloniki and reorganized army. He used the city as the base from which to attack barbarian tribes and he built new fortification walls. Theodosius's further

⁶³Grammenos 2003, p. 107 and p. 160-162

⁶⁴Grammenos 2003, p. 162-168

⁶⁵Grammenos 2003, p. 168-169

⁶⁶Grammenos 2003, p. 90

⁶⁷Grammenos 2003, p. 157-159 and p. 167-168

⁶⁸Grammenos 2003, p. 169

⁶⁹Grammenos 2003, p. 147 and p. 170

building policy was largely determined by his religious, Christian, beliefs. The Rotunda, built by Galerius as a temple to the gods of the Tetrarchy, was converted into a church. Public areas directly associated with ancient institutions were left abandoned. The ancient agora became a source of building material and used for extraction of clay, also the odeion stripped of its revetment. The stoa in front of the entrance of the odeion was converted into a workshop⁷⁰.

Thessaloniki continued to be a strong center of paganism down to the time of Theodosius. He was particularly known for his anti-pagan policy. Thessaloniki as a lively center of paganism offered strong resistance, but the imposition of the new religion by law under Theodosius, meant that non-Christians were persecuted and pagan religion was made illegal. Theodosius ordered the slaughter of about 7000 people on some trivial pretext, thereby exterminating a large part of the pagan population of Thessaloniki. The new religion would rapidly become predominant⁷¹.

5th and 6th century

The next centuries were marked by the continuous threat of barbarian tribes. In the 5th century the Huns were at first welcomed by the imperial authorities, but who then established themselves as a political power in Pannonia⁷² and posed a dangerous threat after Attila assumed supreme command in 434. Each year the Huns crossed the Danube to pillage the Balkan provinces. In 447, they raided Macedonia and Thessaly as far as Thermopylae. Only the death of Attila in 453 signalled the end of the Hunnic threat. However, the Goths, settled in Pannonia as foederati, and proceeded to attack Illyricum, carrying out raids in Macedonia and attacking Thessaloniki under the command of Theodoric. In 488 he left and moved on to Italy in 488⁷³.

Towards the end of the fifth century, the Bulgarians started raiding south of the Danube; in 517 they attacked Macedonia and then Thessaly. Cotrigurs invaded both the Chalcidice, getting as far as Constantinople, and Greece, as far as the isthmus of Corinth. In 550, Slavs were in Macedonia and threatened Thessaloniki and, in 551, they pillaged Illyricum. In 559, Slavs and Cotrigurs plundered Macedonia and Greece. Avars and Slavs continued their invasions. Between 580 and 587-8, they settled in Macedonia and Greece, besieging Thessaloniki in 586⁷⁴.

In addition to all these invasions, there was an outbreak of plague in 542 which continued sporadically thereafter. Also, earthquakes proved devastating, like those of 518-20 which hit Macedonia, especially Thessaloniki and its hinterland⁷⁵.

These threats also had its influence on the physical appearance of the city, as the fortifications of the city were reinforced in the fifth century. These new structure could resist all these successions of barbarian hordes.

In the 5th century the structures of the forum all show signs of abandonment or conversion for less important use as workshop, again involving the digging of large pits to extract the clay. Only the shops to the south of the cryptoporticus continued in use. After the 5th century the odeion was converted to contain rainwater. The cryptoporticus was had been converted into a cistern for the same purpose⁷⁶.

But in the last period of Late Antiquity many new churches were built in Thessaloniki, like the church of Ayios Dimitrios. It was erected over the site of the Roman baths where the saint was martyred and where the earliest place of his worship once stood in the 4th century. The church was refurbished in the 7th century. The great church of the Theotokos (Mother of God)

⁷⁰Grammenos 2003, p. 170-172

⁷¹Grammenos 2003, p. 171

⁷²Pannonia was one of the dioceses of the Empire, see map

⁷³Poulter 2007, *The transition to Late Antiquity*, p. 312; Cameron 2000, p. 41-42, and p. 530-531

⁷⁴Poulter 2007, *The transition to Late Antiquity*, p. 312; Cameron 2000, p. 83, p. 105, p. 482, and p. 721

⁷⁵Poulter 2007, *The transition to Late Antiquity*, p. 312

⁷⁶Grammenos 2003, p. 147

was erected in the decade 450-460. It is better known today as the church of the Acheiropoietos. The chapel of Hosios David is an Early Christian cruciform building of the late 5th or early 6th century⁷⁷.

7th century and later

The construction of numerous churches continued in the following centuries. Thessaloniki was still the chief city of the ecclesiastical province and it housed the metropolitan church, the Ayia Sophia, which was built in the 7th century on the site of a large Early Christian basilica with three aisles.

By the seventh century, Slav settlement in the Balkan peninsula was continuing on a massive scale and the Slavs attacked Thessaloniki. However, they failed to capture the city. It was only in 904 that the city was captured by the Saracens, after which the walls were strengthened to resist the danger presented by the Bulgarians⁷⁸.

The city was severely damaged after the catastrophic earthquake of 620, which resulted in the destruction of the Roman Forum and several other public buildings. The shops to the south of the cryptoporticus, however, were partly used down to the 13th-14th century⁷⁹.

Despite the barbarian threat, the Byzantine power over Thessaloniki recovered during the 10th century and this meant a new golden age of peace and prosperity. The economic expansion of the city continued through the twelfth century as the strong rule of the Komnenoi emperors expanded Byzantine control into Serbia and Hungary, far to the north. Later it came in Venetian hands until it was captured by the Ottomans. It became one of the most main cities of the Ottoman Empire.

5.1.4 Corinthia

The city of Corinth was the ancient center of the region Corinthia. Corinth also depended on the two harbor towns, Lechaion and Cenchreae, while its festivals and the Isthmian games were celebrated at sanctuary of Poseidon at Isthmia, which later converted into a fortress. Subsidiary towns, villas and sanctuaries were spread all over the territory Corinthia. Excavation has been done at the site of the city center of Corinth, but also at Isthmia. The site of Isthmia lost its function of sanctuary, but continued to play an important role for Corinthia in Late Antiquity. Firstly I will discuss the case of the city center of Corinth, but thereafter I will pay attention to the site of Isthmia and finally to other sites in Corinthia as well.

Corinth

In the 2nd century BC Corinth, was a leader among the Greek cities in their opposition to the Romans. As a result, the city of Corinth was sacked by the Roman consul Lucius Mummius in 146 BC, who killed all the men and sent all the women and slaves into slavery. It is said that the city was abandoned until Julius Caesar founded a new Roman colony on the site of the former Greek city, Colonia Laus Iulia Corinthiensis. The archaeological record seems to indicate that there was only a partial and selective physical destruction of the buildings and structures of the city⁸⁰.

Corinth experienced a veritable re-foundation under Augustus. Many of Corinth's public buildings were constructed or re-stored, the Isthmian games were returned to Corinthian control

⁷⁷Cameron 2000, p. 917, p. 957

⁷⁸Cameron 2000, p. 730

⁷⁹Grammenos 2003, p. 147

⁸⁰Engels 1990, p. 16-18; Kardulias 2005, p. 37

and the city probably became the capital of the new province Achaia⁸¹. During the 2nd and 3rd century several emperors and wealthy individuals took an interest in the improvement of the city, its suburb and ports. In the 2nd century the emperor Hadrian showed his interest in Corinth by building an aquaduct, while Herodes Atticus embellished the Corinthian agora and the sanctuary of the Isthmian Poseidon⁸². The evidence of pottery indicate that activity nearly doubled in the 2nd century when all of the buildings east of the east theater street were in use and when the theater itself was remodeled⁸³. Corinth grew to become the largest city in the 2nd century AD in Greece. It was both an intellectual and cultural center, as well as a vital link in the communication network of the eastern Mediterranean⁸⁴.

The city's population in the period after the re-foundation mostly consisted of Roman and Italian immigrants from the elite class, the freedmen class, urban plebs and veterans⁸⁵. This can be evidenced from the epigraphical evidence, but also from Corinth's lamps and pottery. The makers' names were stamped on Corinthian lamps. The majority are Italian names transcribed into the Greek alphabet. This indicates that not only the city's elite was of Italian origin, which we learn from inscriptions, but also the working-class entrepreneurs. It also indicates that much of the market for the lamps, was Greek speaking. It is also evidence for Greeks in Roman Corinth, who were gradually becoming the majority of the population. For the pottery industry we see the same process. In the period 50-150 AD, Latin names in Latin alphabet changed to Greek names in Greek alphabet, indicating a change in the makers and in the market⁸⁶.

the late 3rd and 4th century

Corinth seems to have prospered during the 3rd century and suffered little from the barbarian invasions⁸⁷. It is certain that the city remained heavily monumentalized during this period, and there may have even been some important monumental construction. This stability carried over into the 4th century⁸⁸.

The 4th century was a time of imperial reorganization, but Corinth managed to maintain its important and prestigious position. During the Diocletian reorganization, Corinth remained the capital of the province of Achaia, part of the Illyrian prefecture, and in the diocese of Moesia. Constantine's reorganization shifted Illyricum to the diocese of Macedonia, but the governor of the province continued to reside in Corinth. Throughout the 4th century Corinth was subject to the praetorian prefect of Italia. This changed at the end of the 4th century when Illyricum was made a diocese with its own praetorian prefect. At this point Corinth and Achaia became administratively part of the eastern Empire⁸⁹. When Corinth and Achaia were a member of a western imperial diocese, they were subsidiary to the Church of Rome. At the end of the 4th century Corinth became administratively part of the eastern Empire, but was still ecclesiastically tied to Rome. Corinth maintained its position as a capital and the home of the metropolitan bishop through the 6th century as well as under the Byzantine Empire⁹⁰. In

⁸¹Engels 1990, p. 19; Kardulias 2005, p. 111

⁸²Papahatzis 2001, p. 20

⁸³Williams 2003, p. 325, fig. 19.1

⁸⁴Engels 1990, p. 8

⁸⁵Engels 1990, p. 8 and p. 16

⁸⁶Engels 1990, p. 35

⁸⁷pottery evidence indicates that decreasing activity can be seen in the early 4th century and it trails off almost completely after the abandonment and partial demolition of the theater. Williams 2003, p. 325, fig 19.1

⁸⁸Rothaus 2000, p. 16; Engels 1990, p.21

⁸⁹Kardulias 2005, p. 112; Rothaus 2000, p. 12

⁹⁰Rothaus 2000, p. 12

the 4th century the authority of Corinth was enhanced when the city state of Argos was added to its territory. The Corinthians abused their power by levying unlawful taxes on the Argives, in part to fund the wild beast hunts in their theater⁹¹.

The aristocracy of Corinth were quite wealthy, important, and active on the imperial level. We know from Libanios that there were prominent Corinthian families in the 4th and 5th century who were active in imperial government, but were also open in their paganism⁹². The citizens of Corinth were always strongly oriented towards Rome, but this changed when the city developed its commercial and cultural ties with the eastern Mediterranean and when the center of power ultimately moved from Rome to Constantinople. The shift is can be seen in stylistic tastes of the Corinthian elites. This new alignment is reflected in the sculptural production of the city from the 4th to the 6th century⁹³.

late 4th to early 6th centuries

Problems arose at the end of the 4th century with a series of seismic calamities. Based on various historical sources (including Ammianus Marcellinus, Eunapios, Libanios, and Zosimos) and evaluation of the archaeological data, several earthquakes can be dated to the late 4th or very early 5th century. At the same time, in 395, Alaric invaded Greece, and damage by Alaric can not be ruled out in Corinth. There was a massive destruction of Corinth's buildings in the late 4th century. The Julian basilica shows the clearest evidence of earthquake damage: the walls fell from the east to the west and material from the upper floor collapsed into the lower. The Great Bath on the Lechaion road likewise suffered damage that should be attributed to an earthquake or earthquakes at some point in the late 4th century: marble blocks of the faade fell from the structure. An attempt to repair the structure was made, but soon abandoned. The West Shops also show evidence of damage that probably should be attributed to earthquakes. Two of the capitals fell and broke, presumably, but not certainly, in the late 4th century. They subsequently were clamped together and restored in place. Also damage in the South shops is dated to this period. Pieces of marble revetment and seats from a latrine were found admits destruction debris that had collapsed into the drain. Numismatic evidence give a terminus post quem of 379-395 for this destruction. The so-called sanctuary of Isis was clearly destroyed by an earthquake. The structures built on a promontory collapsed and were submerged. Ceramic evidence has provided a date around 400 for this seismic event. More serious damage that can be dated no more precisely than the late 4th century is evident at the South Basilica, the Odeion, the Demeter and Kore sanctuary, the Southwest Forum, the Temple Hill, the area east of the theater, the North Market, the Central Shops, the Gymnasium area, and the Theater. There is also damage at the Mosaic House and the Anaploga Villa that seems to be late enough in the 4th century to be associated with the seismic activity near 400⁹⁴.

The evidence suggests that Corinth not only survived the difficult period of the 4th and 5th centuries, but even prospered. A significant amount of reconstruction occurred in the early 5th century, in the same period when the Fortress at Isthmia and the Hexamilion were constructed. New city walls were constructed and the Forum was redesigned. The Central shops were razed and in their place a staircase, running the length of the Forum, was installed and the Bema was converted into a fountain house. This staircase, rather than dividing the Forum, provided greater access and more open space. At approximately the same time, the Captive Faade, the monumental gateway, and the and the Propylaia were rebuilt. Also several structures along the

⁹¹Engels 1990, p. 21

⁹²Rothaus 2000, p. 13 and p. 15

⁹³Williams 2003, p. 369 and p. 379

⁹⁴Williams 1974, p. 7-9; Rothaus 2000, p. 16-20; Engels 1990, p. 21, Kardulias 2005, p. 111

Lechaion road were modified or constructed during this period. The Hemicycle, an enigmatic semi-circular building on the west side of the Lechaion road, was constructed with reused material and replaced several shops. Behind the Hemicycle, to the west, is a building with a small open court. A large red sigma table, dating to the 5th or 6th century, was found in the remains of this complex. Opposite the Hemicycle, among other structures, were a bath and a latrine that functioned at least through the 5th century and conceivably much later. Another bath in the South stoa functioned into the 6th century as did the Great bath at the Lechaion Road. Early in the 6th century the Peirene Fountain, a major feature at the north end of the Forum, was also renovated⁹⁵.

The Forum seems to have continued as a market place and administrative center through the 6th century. In the rest of the city, some buildings fell into disrepair, other functioned as they had previously, and also new structures were added. The appearance of the center changed, but Corinth continued to be the social, political, economic and religious center of the area. Especially the appearance of Corinth as religious city had changed. The pagan temples that were ravaged by the earthquakes and normal deterioration, were not restored, while imperial and local funds subsidized the construction of great Christian churches in and around Corinth. Although, that the practice of pagan rites continued at various locales⁹⁶.

the late 6th century and later

By the mid 6th century, the city center had completely shed all vestiges of its original role. Two events may have brought this transformation about: a devastating earthquake, perhaps in 522, and the great plague of 542. Not everything was completely destroyed, for belt buckles and coins demonstrate that the Kraneion basilica, the basilica of Haghios Kodratos, and parts of the Lechaion harbor basilica, a possible mortuary chapels in the Asklepieion, and a church on Acrocorinth continued to be used well into the 7th century. Bath buildings from this period can also be identified. A small bath dates to the last quarter of the 6th century, although already in the early 7th century the building seems to have been used for domestic purposes, perhaps related to the large dump of amphoras and domestic pottery found 30m to the southwest. A bath west of the Odeion can be recognized as 6th century structure⁹⁷.

After the 6th century graves started to appear in great numbers in the area of the Forum. The area north of the Peribolos of Apollo underwent extensive modification around the same time, perhaps the 6th century. The nature of the modification is unclear, but this structure may be residential. The introduction of residences so close to the forum may foreshadow a changing pattern in urbanization and conception of civic space. It seems that the Forum was abandoned as a place of business⁹⁸.

Near the end of the 6th century, southern Greece witnessed the invasion of Slavic groups. Their advent was a disruptive event. Also Corinth was attacked. However, this episode did not mark the end of the civic center. Corinth, like other cities, resumed its previous functions within a short time. Through most of the 6th century, Corinth remained the largest population center of the region, and as capital of the province of Achaia, was the key administrative hub. Corinth even remained a viable economic and population center into the Early Byzantine era⁹⁹. But some things did change. In the Forum and along the Late Roman city wall, burials were uncovered from the 7th century. The skeletal remains has been identified as remains of Avars,

⁹⁵Kardulias 2005, p. 112; Rothaus 2000, p. 21-25

⁹⁶Kardulias 2005, p. 112; Rothaus 2000, p. 21 and p. 136

⁹⁷Williams 2003, p. 385-399

⁹⁸Rothaus 2000, p. 26

⁹⁹Kardulias 2005, p. 110-111

Bulgars or Slavs. A Slavic presence or influence in southern Greece in the 7th century does not necessarily reflect military conquest and occupation¹⁰⁰. In the 7th and 8th century the whole area of the Forum was area given over to burials. These graves indicate either that prohibition of burial within the city, evidenced by imperial edicts and extramural funerary churches, had lapsed, or that a new city wall had been constructed which excluded the Forum. The city proper may have been confined to a *kastro*¹⁰¹, part of which can be tentatively traced immediately to the east of the Forum¹⁰².

Isthmia

The site of Isthmia has had a long history. There is clear evidence that the area was occupied from an early date. The Sanctuary of Poseidon and the festival gained considerable renown in antiquity, earning Panhellenic status for the site in the 6th century BC. The sanctuary was situated at a key spot on the Isthmus, in line with the best access route to the Megarid to the north, and the harbors of Schoenos and Cenchreai on the Saronic Gulf to the east. In addition, the Diolkos, a stone pavement built in the 6th or 7th century B.C. to haul ships across the Isthmus, probably passed near the sanctuary on its route between the Corinthian and Saronic Gulfs. Isthmia would thus have witnessed considerable traffic and the Sanctuary evidently benefited as a result. Although it was not a city itself, Isthmia was an extension of an urban culture. As a ceremonial center, it attracted large crowds from various people it and was supported through most of its history by the city of Corinth¹⁰³.

The amount of monumental public architecture reflects a substantial community investment. Corinth, which controlled the Sanctuary and the Games, had to endure the burden, but the rewards for its regulatory role must also have been substantial. Corinthian merchants, farmers, herders, and artisans undoubtedly benefited financially from the influx of spectators, participants, and other visitors. The site did become a major crossroads of Hellenic culture, attracting individuals from the whole Greek world. Its status as a meeting place is perhaps best attested by its use as a forum for major announcements¹⁰⁴.

1st century BC to 4th century AD

The general trend of sustained prosperity and physical expansion of the sanctuary seems to have come to an abrupt halt in the middle of the 2nd century B.C. In 146 BC the Roman general Lucius Mummius sacked Corinth in retaliation for its prominent role in the Achaean League. In 44 BC the city was re-founded as a Roman colony under Julius Caesar. Under Augustus the Isthmian Games were restored to the site and a new phase of construction was initiated. During this period many of the older structures were refurbished and new ones added to the complex¹⁰⁵.

By all indications the sanctuary was a thriving enterprise, with key structures restored and new ones added to meet the growing demands on the site. Its fortunes were clearly tied to those of Corinth, which was a flourishing commercial center at the time. This era of prosperity continued well into the 2nd century AD. At this time, the last great episode of construction in the sanctuary occurred under the auspices of the high priest of Poseidon, Publius Licinius

¹⁰⁰Kardulias 2005, p. 123

¹⁰¹A *kastro* is a fortified site that was situated on the summit of a hill

¹⁰²Williams 2003, p. 385-399

¹⁰³Kardulias 2005, p. 5 and p. 33-35

¹⁰⁴Kardulias 2005, p. 36

¹⁰⁵Engels 1990, p. 16-18; Kardulias 2005, p. 38

Priscus Iuventianus¹⁰⁶.

Three pottery deposits found at Isthmia provide us with evidence for history of Roman Isthmia. The pottery of group II is associated with the sanctuary as a religious site at the end of the 3rd century and are strikingly similar to material associated with the destruction of building east of the theater in Corinth. The group II material points clearly to an event toward the end of the 3rd century that left these buildings abandoned (or almost so). The abandonment could be due to the Herulians reaching the eastern side of the Isthmus in the 3rd quarter of the century. Because Corinth suffered little from the barbarian invasions, this seems not plausible. The destruction of the buildings at Corinth was a natural disaster, such as an earthquake, and this also seems the case for the buildings at Isthmia¹⁰⁷.

The area was not completely abandoned after this event. The quantity of pottery post-dating these deposits is minimal compared to the earlier material, and it suggests that occupation continued in that area in the 4th century, but at a greatly reduced level.

the 4th and early 5th century

The sanctuary had entered a period of decline. The site evidently ceased to function as a sanctuary by the end of the 4th century, with the ancient structures in a state of disrepair. There is more than one valid explanation. It is suggested that Theodosios I officially ended the Isthmian Games in 394, but there is no conclusive evidence for this event. It is more likely that the Games died out due to lack of interest. Also Alaric's devastating raid into Greece in the 390's can have been of influence. It is argued that Alaric's forces sacked the sanctuary¹⁰⁸.

Early in the next century (ca. 410-420), the Hexamilion was constructed, a defensive wall stretching the entire breadth of the Isthmus from the gulf of Corinth to the Saronic gulf. A bastion or small fort anchored either end of this monumental wall, with a large fortress just east of the Sanctuary of Poseidon at Isthmia. The original intent of the fortification obviously was to block invaders. The predominantly ceremonial nature of Isthmia underwent significant alteration and from this time on, the focus of occupation at the site shifted to the large fortress, which housed a major garrison. Military builders dismantled the ancient buildings in the sanctuary and used the blocks for the fortifications. Ceramics were commonly used as chinking in the rubble interior of circuit walls and other structures. The spolia were not enough for the construction of the wall and stone blocks were carved on the spot and the construction was completed with stone from a nearby quarry¹⁰⁹.

The third group of the pottery deposits is related to this period. It seems quite plausible that the pottery deposit could be associated with the builders of the Hexamilion, who would have used the baths as their temporary living quarters during the period of construction of the Hexamilion and perhaps placed supplies for their domestic needs in the 'basement' area¹¹⁰. Several other small structures near the main temple probably also represent shelters for the workers involved in razing the ancient buildings. The Temenos area was eventually buried by overburden and the location of the Temple of Poseidon was forgotten¹¹¹.

The same technique was used at Isthmia as at the Late Roman city wall of Corinth¹¹². The use of rectangular towers in the Hexamilion and the fortress is characteristic of Byzantine

¹⁰⁶Kardulias 2005, p 38

¹⁰⁷Gregory 1993, p.125

¹⁰⁸Kardulias 2005, p. 38

¹⁰⁹Kardulias 2005, p. 1, p. 39, p. 126, and p. 130

¹¹⁰Gregory 1193, p. 128

¹¹¹Kardulias 2005, p. 40

¹¹²This was the *emplekton* technique: regular insetion of a header block after a series of stretcher blocks to create a strong bond between the ashlar facing and the rubble core. Kardulias 2005, p 119

fortifications of the 5th and 6th century¹¹³. Based on this similarities and on the fact that the cost of the Hexamilion certainly exceeded local financial resources, it seems likely that the central government was largely responsible for the construction of the Hexamilion and the fortress¹¹⁴. This project was probably part of a major strategy of defense for the entire northeastern Peloponnese, if not the whole of southern Greece. Kardulias also believes that the construction of these fortifications formed part of an Empire wide strategy of containment¹¹⁵.

5th and 6th century AD

Over the succeeding centuries, the fortress and the Hexamilion were occasionally refurbished in order to meet various military threats. Especially during the reign of Justinian in the 6th century, the fortifications were extensively renovated. This impressive effort involved repairing the Hexamilion, the fortress, and the numerous towers. Procopius clearly indicates that this repair work occurred under the auspices of the imperial government as part of a general plan of defense for all of Greece¹¹⁶.

The evidence from visible walls and geophysics indicates the presence of at least six structures within the fortress. The two large buildings in the south east corner were probably barracks. Structure 5, with its well hewn blocks, may have been part of the command complex. The function of the three other buildings with extant walls is difficult to ascertain. There is a hypothesis for the existence of three other large barracks. This gives a total of ten buildings in the fortress in the 5th and 6th century. There were probably more structures in the compounds, but field data do not permit further speculation¹¹⁷.

It seems probable that the military garrison in the Isthmian Fortress in the 5th and 6th centuries operated under the direction of political leaders in Corinth, as Corinth remained the largest population center of the region, and the capital of the province of Achaia. The military population of the fortress of the Late Roman period was between 1200 and 2000 men, with 1700 a more likely upper limit under most circumstances. The garrison in the Fortress in the 5th century then consisted of at least four, and perhaps as many as eight, *tagmata*¹¹⁸. With four *tagmata* (ca. 1 000 men) to a legion by the Late Roman period, there may have been one or two legions stationed at Isthmia¹¹⁹.

We learn more about the composition of these legions when reading the historian Procopius. He states that soldiers manning the fortifications at Thermopylae prior to Justinian's reign were local farmers who proved to be incapable of controlling the approaching of various invaders. As a result, they were replaced by *comitatenses*¹²⁰. Kardulias believes that this can also be true for the Isthmian fortress. He suggests that in the 5th, 6th, and perhaps in the 7th centuries, when southern Greece faced invasions or raids by barbarian groups, such as Slavs, Avars, and Goths, the fortress was held by *comitatenses* aided by locals. At other times, when barbarian threats were less severe, the fortress and its territory could be defended by locals only¹²¹. In those intervening periods, local farmers may have used the facility as a residential center. The

¹¹³Such towers were also built at Constantinople, Thessaloniki, and Nikopolis

¹¹⁴Kardulias 2005, p. 119

¹¹⁵Kardulias 2005 p. 139-148

¹¹⁶Kardulias 2005, p. 40

¹¹⁷Kardulias 2005, p. 127

¹¹⁸A *tagma* was a military unit in the Late Antiquity and in the Byzantine Period

¹¹⁹Kardulias 2005, p. 99; Gregory 1993, p. 131

¹²⁰The legions were divided into two categories: the *limitanei*, the mobile frontier legions of less quality, and the *comitatenses*, the structured legions who were stationed in the provinces.

¹²¹Kardulias 2005, p. 99

circuit provided an enclosure for herds of animals, and walls of houses¹²².

The fortress could not have existed in isolation. As said above the *comitatenses* were aided by locals to fulfill their needs. The soldiers could provide some of their own food by farming the surrounding fields south of the Hexamilion, keeping domestic animals and bees and gardening inside the fortress, but when a full complement of up to 1,700 men was stationed at Isthmia, such efforts would not have sufficed. Local farmers would have had to provide food. Also the lack of some facilities, such as any recognizable ceramic kiln, suggests the garrison depended on local suppliers for certain items¹²³.

The fortress depended on the local procurement system to provide certain important commodities, but the fortress also provided services for its surrounding territory. The purpose of the fortress to house the garrison that manned the Hexamilion, but also to provide a strong point and area of final refuge. And when the immediate threat receded, the fortress became the site of domestic occupation. The fortress and its garrison exchanged various services with the surrounding population¹²⁴. The fortress also provided some outlets for ritual in the form of the presumed chapel and religious graffiti on walls¹²⁵.

Social differentiation in the fortress can be derived from the variety of prestige items found through surface survey. As Isthmia had always been depending on Corinth, the fortress can be seen as the representatives of the central government, the population of the fortress symbolized the political concerns of the imperial polity. The diversity of artifacts and substantial amounts of imported ceramics in the fortress also indicate strong connections to an international trade network, while building techniques are similar to those in Constantinople, Syria and elsewhere. Like the sanctuary before, the fortress continued to be the focus of settlement and it continued to fulfill the role of service provider, except that the emphasis had become military rather than ceremonial¹²⁶.

the late 6th century and later

The Hexamilion was certainly rebuilt during the reign of Justinian and there is evidence that the fortifications were defended in the latter part of the 6th century. In this period, southern Greece witnessed the invasion of Slavic groups. Their advent was a disruptive event. Corinth was attacked and also destruction levels at Argos indicate a violent incursion. The presence of the Slavs in the Peloponnese suggests that Hexamilion was not successful in holding the Isthmus against them. However, this episode did not mark the end of the civic centers. Corinth and other cities resumed their previous functions within a short time. At Isthmia, the Hexamilion had failed to stop the invaders, but the fortress seems to have held out. Indeed, the enclosure may still have served both as a military facility and as a domicile from the late 6th and well into the 7th centuries¹²⁷.

There was another wave of invasions in the 1st half of the 7th century. Corinthia seems to remain in imperial hands during this period. However, there is a clear decline in construction at Isthmia in this period. But although energy investment drops, substantial use of the site continued. The fortification that was abandoned because of the disinvestment of the imperial government, was now used by squatters. They took up residence in the military installations and the Roman bath. This is evident from the considerable quantities of 'Slavic' pottery

¹²²Kardulias 2005, p. 121

¹²³Kardulias 2005, p. 99-100 and p. 118-121

¹²⁴These services were: defense, demand for food and production of certain materials such as pottery and metal, employment of artisans for construction.

¹²⁵Kardulias 2005, p. 99-118 and p. 128; Gregory 1993, p. 149-160

¹²⁶Kardulias 2005, p. 99-118 and p. 128; Gregory 1993, p. 149-160

¹²⁷Kardulias 2005 p. 40, Gregory 1993, p. 150

found in the fortress and the bath. The pottery reflects a domestic function. The presence of millstones and hearts confirm that the settlement established on the ruins was permanent and sedentary. Its inhabitants were apparently farmers rather than itinerant raiders or nomadic squatters. Especially the millstones suggest that there was a sedentary agricultural community from the late 7th to 8th century¹²⁸.

It is difficult to deduce the ethnic origin of the settlers from the pottery evidence. The assemblage included Byzantine as well as Slavic wares. The settlers could have been Slavs that where in significant contact with the Byzantine society, or these people were Greek-speakers who used the Slavic pottery as ordinary kitchen ware of the period. If they were Slavs, there is no evidence of conquest and their material culture was incorporated into Byzantine material culture¹²⁹.

After this period, there is very little evidence until the 10th century. The fortress probably continued to be used sporadically in one manner or another. In later periods the site was used by groups that periodically occupied the country like the Franks, Venetians and Turks¹³⁰.

other sites in Corinthia

Several surveys have been important for our understanding of the territory of Corinthia. Intensive survey projects were carried out outside the area of the OSU excavations at Isthmia¹³¹, on islands in the eastern Corinthian Gulf (1981-1984), along the Saronic Gulf coast between Isthmia and Cenchreae (1982-1983), on islands in the western Saronic Gulf (1986-1992), and in the southeastern Corinthia with the Saronic Harbors Archaeological Research Project (SHARP, 2007-). But most work has been done in the Eastern Corinthia with the Eastern Korinthia Archaeological Survey (EKAS, 1997-2003)¹³².

The Eastern Korinthia Archaeological Survey (EKAS), is an interdisciplinary regional survey of the eastern territory of Corinth. The survey was carried out between 1997 and 2002, with study seasons following since 2003, and focused on the Corinthian Isthmus between Corinth town, the Sanctuary of Poseidon at Isthmia, and ancient Cenchreai, but survey work was also carried out in portions of the southeastern territory as well. The data indicate that the region between Corinth and Cenchreai was densely occupied throughout antiquity, with peaks in the Late Bronze, Classical, and Late Roman periods. Especially the abundance of the Late Roman material is striking. Much more Late Roman pottery was found than from the periods immediately preceding or following. Moreover, material from the Late Roman period was found in more survey units in the EKAS area than from any other period. The Late Roman pottery dates mostly between the 4th and 7th century and includes, Late Roman amphoras, late forms of African Red slipware and Phocaeen ware¹³³.

The aim of the project was not to find sites, but there were a number of places where the Late Roman and Roman material was especially diverse and abundant, that we can call them sites, of which Akra Sofia and Kromna are the biggest. The site often called 'Kromna', was one of the most important crossroads west of Isthmia, a point of convergence for travelers coming from or going to Isthmia, Cenchreai, the Corinthian Gulf, Corinth Town, or the Argolid. From the Early Roman period, Kromna was rich in places that included private houses and villas, tombs, quarries, and agricultural installations. At Akra Sofia on the coast 2.5 km south and

¹²⁸Gregory 1993, p. 156

¹²⁹Gregory 1993, Kardulias 2005, p. 40-41, p. 105, and p. 118-129

¹³⁰Kardulias 2005, p. 40-41

¹³¹OSU: Ohio State University. OSU started with the excavations at Isthmia in 1987

¹³²Kardulias 2005, p. 114; Pettegrew 2008, p. 249-266

¹³³Kardulias 2005, p. 114; Pettegrew 2008, p. 249-266

east of Isthmia, and situated between the two ports of Schoenos and Cenchreai is a group of seven sites, including a large Early Byzantine villa complex. There seems to have been a series of hamlets or individual houses, with the villa as the focus of economic activity. The area was intensively exploited from the 4th to the 7th centuries, and perhaps well beyond the latter date¹³⁴.

The presence of villas is a significant aspect of the Late Roman landscape of Corinthia. Some of these compounds were rural in location, while others were just outside the city. The villas exhibit considerable affluence in the form of mosaic floors, imported ceramic fine wares, decorative marble, a bath, and sheer size. They are located on or very near good arable land. Some of the sites also have installations for processing olive oil¹³⁵.

The proximity of these villas to the urban centers Corinth, Cenchreai and Isthmia suggests that the residents wished to engage in civic affairs and that they were not independent, self-sufficient entities. Most of their produce was probably marketed in Corinth. Especially the the complex at Akra Sofia, which is closest to Isthmia, seems to have serviced the fortress. The connection between the fortress and the villas benefitted the occupants from both sites. The soldiers of the fortress could provide some of their own food by farming the surrounding fields south of the Hexamilion, keeping domestic animals and bees and gardening inside the fortress, but when a full complement of up to 1,700 men was stationed at Isthmia such efforts would not have sufficed. Local farmers would have had to provide food, while merchants, artisans and workmen offered other necessary products and services such as pottery, metal artifacts, leather and wood materials, and labor for various projects. the Fortress may have served as a refuge for the residents of Akra Sofia and other rural villas in troubled periods¹³⁶.

The landscape of Late Antique Corinthia depended on a surrounding network of roads, towns and countryside. The Isthmus was a territory that most travelers passed through on the way to, from, and around the city, and most important crossroads on the Isthmus surely attracted a variety of settlements and villas, ex-urban markets, industrial spaces, mortuary landscapes, and sacred places. The city of Corinth remained the political, economic and communication center for Corinthia and the Peloponnese throughout Late Antiquity.

5.2 Conclusion

5.2.1 2nd and 3rd century

The arrival of the Romans created destruction and limited growth if not stagnation in town and country. But this was followed by stabilization and prosperity.

In all four cities new monumental structures were built; new temples were constructed and old ones were repaired and enriched; public baths were built. Wealthy citizens embellished the public areas of the cities with their sponsored buildings and monuments. In other areas, they built their villas decorated with mosaics. Also emperors were known to have made benefactions to the Greek cities in form of new public structures. In Argos, Athens and Corinth we see constructions paid by the philhellene emperor Hadrian. In Athens, the flourishing building activity can be seen especially at the agora. The agora of Athens reached its fullest development in the 2nd century AD.

¹³⁴Kardulias 2005, p. 114; Pettegrew 2008, p. 262-263; Rothaus 2000, p. 27-30; Engels 1990, p. 24

¹³⁵Kardulias 2005, p. 112, Rothaus 2000, p. 27-30

¹³⁶Kardulias 2005, p. 99 and p. 112

In the 3rd century the Empire was attacked by Herulians and Goths. All four cities were affected by these attacks, but they did not suffer equally. Athens was hit the most; the Herulians destroyed the lower city. A new wall was constructed which comprised a much smaller area than the old Themistoklean circuit and from this moment the Akropolis was used as a fortress. Not only was the city reduced in size, the new building activity altered the character of the city. This was also the case for Argos, where the new buildings brought about a shift in function. Thessaloniki and Corinth seem to have suffered little from the barbarian invasions. They remained heavily monumentalized and continued their previous building activity.

5.2.2 4th and 5th century

The changing character of the city persisted in the 4th century in all four cities. The changes are best seen in public areas. The agora or the forum of the cities lost its former function as a administration center. In Athens and Argos, we see that the public places were reused for private dwellings and workshops. In Athens, the agora was now even lying outside the city walls, and was no longer the center of the city. At Argos, there was also new building activity near the agora, but the new buildings were not related to the former administrative function of the area. Also at Argos, the center of the city moved to the east. In Thessaloniki, the public areas were just left abandoned. There were no signs at all that new municipal buildings were constructed in the 4th century, nor does any inscription attest the repair of existing buildings.

The changes did not result in a stagnation of the building activity. The 4th century was, especially for Thessaloniki, another height of prosperity. Galerius made Thessaloniki as one of the capitals of the Tetrarchy. The city was adorned with a palace complex and other imperial structures. Thessaloniki was made a capital because of its position near the frontier and the city was used as an important base for the army. Constantine repaired the walls and created a large port. Later Theodosius built new fortification walls. Also Corinth maintained important and prestigious position as the capital of the province of Achaia.

Beside the imperial projects in Thessaloniki, we see that a new bourgeois class built opulent urban villas. Also in Argos and Athens, numerous new luxurious villas decorated with elaborate mosaics appeared.

Greece had to face the invasions of the Goths at the end of the 4th century, which caused considerable damage. But all four cities survived the difficulties. The tendency of the 4th century continued in the 5th century. Wealthy citizens were still building luxurious villas. In Corinth, the forum was redesigned and now above all functioned as a market place. The building activity directed by imperial control had mostly a military character. In this tumultuous period of barbarian invasions, both in Thessaloniki and Corinth new fortification walls were built and near Corinth, at Isthmia, the Hexamilion was constructed.

Also striking in the 5th century, is the appearance of Christianity in the cities. In Thessaloniki, we see the building of churches rather early, but in the other cities more and more churches appear from the 5th century. Athens, for a long time, remained a place where pagan worship was practiced and here the appearance of churches is very late.

The disappearance of monumental public buildings and the appearance of military and Christian construction changed the outer aspects of the cities completely.

5.2.3 6th century and later

Early in the 6th century, Greek cities were hit by several earthquakes and plagues. Things got worse later in the 6th century, when Slavs and Avars invaded the Balkan Peninsula. These tribes even settled in Greece. In all four cities, we see signs of destruction.

New structures are rare; buildings that were destroyed were rebuilt or demolished. Peo-

ple did not build new houses, but occupied already existing structures. In Thessaloniki, the buildings on the forum were abandoned or converted into workshops. This also happened with public buildings in the other three cities. Thessaloniki was under direct influence of the imperial government and here the fortifications were reinforced. Also the Hexamilion was of importance for the imperial government and its fortifications were renovated. In Corinth, the center was still looked after; the Peirene Fountain was renovated and new buildings were added. But many buildings outside the center fell into disrepair.

In all four cities was the construction of new churches continued even more than before, while pagan temples were ravaged, not repaired and sometimes converted into a Christian church. In Athens, the Omega House was mutilated and re-occupied by Christians. The Parthenon was converted into a church and dedicated to St. Sophia.

The fate of Argos and Athens was less fortunate. After the 6th century these cities reduced in size dramatically. The constructions that were damaged were no longer repaired, but left abandoned. In Athens, we see signs of refurbishing and reconstruction of the agora before and during the visit of Constans II in 662-3. The constructions were again abandoned soon after this event. Thessaloniki remained an important capital of the Greek province, but also here we see that buildings are destroyed and abandoned. On the forum only the shops to the south of the cryptoporticus were partly used. In Corinth, something similar happens. It remained the largest population of the region, but the forum is no longer a place of business; instead great numbers of graves were appearing in the area of the forum.

Only Thessaloniki remained a real city. Corinth also remained a viable economic and population center, but the site was, like Argos and Athens, confined to a *kastro*. Outside the *kastro* traces of human activity were rare. But there was probably human activity; the ruins on the areas that were abandoned before were sometimes used by squatters and domestic pottery was found on the site. In Argos, also imported pottery was found, which suggests that there was still trade. People living outside the *kastro* probably were squatters or lived in new kind of dwellings that leave no or little traces. In Argos, Athens, Corinth and at the Hexamilion Slavic pottery was found. This indicates that the people living there were Slavs themselves or that they were trading with Slavs who settled in the area. In Corinth skeletal remains were found from Avars, Bulgars or Slavs.

CHAPTER 6

THE COUNTRYSIDE IN LATE ANTIQUITY, 8 SURVEYS IN GREECE

Traditionally, individual sites were the main focus of archaeological attention and fieldwork was usually seen almost exclusively in terms of the discovery and excavation of sites. However, the developments of archeological techniques have shown archaeologists that the entire landscape is of interest. Through new survey techniques archaeologists have become aware that there is a great range of ‘off-site’ or ‘on-site’ evidence that provides important information about human exploitation of the environment¹.

Excavation may reveal detailed information about the use of a city or site through time and has traditionally been concerned primarily with only one kind of past activity area (the ancient city). Survey provides an entirely different kind of information about an area. Survey reveals a great variety of sites and activity. It is used to locate settlements and to discover the hierarchy of settlement. What was the size of the site? When was it occupied? Survey also tells us more about how past cultures used the natural geology around them. Did they farm it? Did they have heavy industry or areas of production²?

The most frequently used survey technique is the surface survey, primarily because no special or expensive equipment is necessary. It involves combing an area to search for features or artifacts visible on the surface. Surface survey can not detect sites or features that are completely buried under earth, or overgrown with vegetation. This works best on either ploughed ground or surfaces with little vegetation. By examining the data from the artifacts and features, by studying the distribution of surviving features, and recording and possibly collecting artifacts from the surface archaeologists gain better knowledge about a site’s location, type and date³.

Ceramics are by far the most ubiquitous type of artefact in Mediterranean survey. Well-baked clay breaks down slowly through time and people used vessels in every period. Especially in Greece, people left spectacular domestic and monumental remains. Also Roman people all over the Empire showed their presence with large quantities of pottery, and tile, brick and mortar. Besides, the people in Antiquity transported two of the most important products of the Mediterranean, oil and wine, in amphorae. Ceramics survive well in the soil, and can often be attributed to a specific period and a specific region of production. The study of these remains by pottery experts can also indicate past activities⁴.

Survey is important in that it provides an entirely different kind of information about an area. The advantages of surface survey are that features and artifacts can be studied all in situ without the invasive destruction of the area, and that no special or expensive equipment is generally necessary. In Greece, where especially ceramic remains are both abundant and often readily datable, surface survey is very good tool for charting the distribution and even the size of settlement in periods. However, there quite some disadvantages.

The degree of accuracy of the survey depends very much on how the survey is carried out. Surveyors have to look for potsherds and other artifacts as well as record the geology of the site. Many hours careful observation will be necessary. An important provision for the accuracy

¹Renfrew 2000, p. 71 and p. 178-182

²Renfrew 2000, p. 178-182

³Renfrew 2000, p. 72-92

⁴Renfrew 2000, p. 56

is to take note of the visibility. The types of debris on the surface and the crop planted that year affect the surface. Either ploughed ground or surfaces with little vegetation give the best results. On ploughed surfaces, as the soil is turned regularly artifacts will move to the top. Visibility is related to land use and the nature of the area. The percentage of ground visible is usually estimated and varies from field to field.

Besides these visibility difficulties, a debate is taking place in archaeology about how far surface traces do in fact reflect distributions below the ground. The relationship between surface and subsurface evidence is undoubtedly complex and varies from site to site. Many factors that contribute to the artifacts' journey to the surface includes the depth of the site, the slant or slope of the site, erosion, and human and animal disturbance⁵.

Another problem can be the lack of well datable pottery. Survey only makes sense when pottery can be identified and when there is a good chronology of the pottery. Especially fine ware is being studied; therefore we have mostly chronologies of fine ware. But surveys in particular deal with coarse ware, which is studied only very little. Besides, pottery of everyday use did not change much, wherefore making a chronology is difficult. In some chronologies the different periods are not of a similar length, which gives a distorted representation. And chronologies not always use the same terminology. Pottery dated around 300 AD can be labeled in the different chronologies as Late Roman, Early Christian, Early Byzantine, and Late Antique.

Surface survey is also less successful for periods, when material objects are much scarcer. For the Classical and Hellenistic period there are ample pottery finds, but the people of the early Byzantine period seem to have owned so few material they have often disappeared entirely from the archaeological map. Also the visibility and recognisability of the pottery changes from period to period; Late Roman pottery is easier to recognize than pottery from the Early and Middle Roman period. Another problem is the fact that the way pottery is used, changes from period to period. A different use of pottery means a different level of production and consumption. In the Classical and Hellenistic period social dinners were very important and therefore we find more drinking pottery, but for the Roman period we find many storage and transport vessels. A change of activities does not have to result in a decrease or increase of activity.

There are still vast areas where systematic survey has never been carried out. Surveys that have been carried out differ enormously in the sophistication of the work and in the consequent quality of the results. But the methods of field survey are developing very fast and have a very great impact. Still, we have to be careful with making conclusion from the obtained data.

6.1 The Boeotia Survey

In 1978 John Bintliff and Anthony Snodgrass started a regional archaeological study in the ancient province of Boeotia in Central Greece. The aim of the study was to reconstruct the history of human settlement and land use in this province. Apart from studying more than 50 square kilometers of the agricultural countryside, the project analyzed three ancient cities Thespieae, Haliartos and Hyettos, and a village-town at Askra. The project continued until 1991.

Bintliff proceeded his study in Boeotia in 2000 with a new project. He was assisted by Bozidar Slapsak, a Professor of Roman Archaeology in the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. This ongoing survey project is known as the Leiden-Ljubljana Ancient Cities of Boeotia Project. Bintliff and Slapsak have investigated the city of Tanagra and are currently surveying the town

⁵Renfrew 2000, p. 92

of Koroneia.

The survey at Tanagra shows vigorous activity in the town in the Early and Late Roman period. Intensive land use in its surrounding countryside was also demonstrated during the survey. In the late Roman period, repairs were made to the entire circuit wall of the 4th century BC. Besides, the whole urban plan reveals changes to the classical Greek grid. Baths and small and giant churches were erected over older public and private blocks. The surrounding countryside in early to late Roman times was inhabited by mostly rich land-owners. They seem to be building a large settlement, that was probably fortified in Late Antiquity. The settlement may perhaps have acted not only as satellite village to late Roman Tanagra but even at a certain point replaced it as the district population focus, with its greater defensibility and smaller circuit⁶.

Askra had been a large settlement in the Classical period, but by the Early Roman period it had shrunk drastically. In the Late Roman period, though, Askra experienced a great revival. Over the following centuries, the village metamorphosed into a middle Byzantine village, which by the 10th century had acquired a Slav name and a bishop. The population seems to have been replaced by incoming Slavs, or the indigenous population merged with the Slavs. As well at Tanagra as at Askra, traces of the plague of the 6th century and the military crisis are observed, but the sites also show peasant survival and adaption through early medieval times⁷.

Thespieae was a large city in the Classical period, but shrank to less than half its size by the Early Roman period. In Later Roman times, Thespieae experienced a spectacular recovery in the number and size of sites in its hinterland, although the town itself remained shrunken. In the 4th century a small kastro made of spolia was erected. Outside the kastro was an extramural town incorporating several churches. An extensive Middle Byzantine village was overlying this extramural Late Roman town⁸.

In the Late Hellenistic to Early Roman period there was a severe depopulation of the town and of sites in the countryside. Rural sites shrank or changed to non-residential agricultural use. In the Early Imperial period the rural sites underwent a slight recovery, which leapt thus forward in the Late Roman period. In this period villas, hamlets and villa-hamlets filled the landscape⁹.

The survey evidence of Hyettos indicates that by the Early Roman period the city had only half the size or even less of the Classical settlement. It retained this reduced size in the Late Roman period. In the Early Byzantine period Hyettos was no longer the main residential zone, but a group of five rural sites to the north.¹⁰

6.2 The Southern Argolid

In 1979 an intensive archaeological and environmental survey was initiated in the Southern Argolid by the Argolid Exploration Project directed by M.H. Jameson and Tj. H. van Andel. Previous explorations and reconnaissance survey in 1972 by TW Jacobsen, MH Jameson and JA Dengate had already revealed the presence of numerous sites.

The project was one of the first surveys to record a florescence of small rural sites, especially in the marginal agricultural areas, in the Classical and Early Hellenistic period. The number of sites increased during the 5th and 4th centuries BC and reached a peak in the late 4th

⁶Bintliff 2007, *The transition to Late Antiquity*, p. 664-676

⁷Bintliff 2007, *The transition to Late Antiquity*, p. 664-676

⁸Bintliff 2007, *The transition to Late Antiquity*, p. 664-676; Bintliff 1999, p. 51

⁹Bintliff 2007, *The transition to Late Antiquity*, p. 664-676

¹⁰Kardulias 2005, p. 116

to the mid 3th century. After this period there was a sharp decline in the number of sites. There was some rural activity in the Early Roman period, but only in the Late Roman period the countryside was re-occupied. Especially in the 5th and 6th centuries the number of sites increased dramatically and various large villages and many rural estates were scattered across the landscape. In the course of the 7th century there was a decline with only occupation of some of the sites from the preceding period, but most of the many Late Roman sites was abandoned.¹¹

6.3 The Methana Peninsula

The peninsula of Methana was explored by a British team in the 1980's. There was an increase of sites number in the Early Hellenistic period. The location of probable farmsteads suggests that the marginal agricultural land was more intensively exploited. In the 3th century BC 2 of the 3 major settlements were abandoned and the number of smaller, rural sites was reduced. In the Late Hellenistic and Early Roman period only the city of Methana itself and a handful of smaller sites was occupied. From the 1st century BC there was a slow increase of the number of sites that lasted through the Mid Roman period. From the 4th century the number of sites increased even more, although the sites were small. The distribution of the small Roman sites suggests intensive agriculture on independent farms rather than large estates. Especially olive and wine cultivation seem to have been important in the region. The area flourished during the 5th and 6th centuries with large number of sites and Christian basilicas in Methana.

The most common Roman fine ware is African Red Slip, followed by Phocaeen, and Cypriot Red Slip. These types indicate that Methana maintained strong trade connections with North Africa, Anatolia, and Cyprus throughout Late Antiquity. In the 7th century it seems that the earlier site hierarchy remained, although on reduced scale. The sites are characterized mostly by Phocaeen, but African Red Slip and Cypriot Ware were also present¹².

6.4 The Berbati-Limnes Survey

Immediately east of ancient Mycenae lies the Berbati Valley. The valley was surveyed for the first time in 1988 during a Swedish-American project. The area of the Berbati Vally has a history similar to the Southern Argolid. In the Classical and Early Hellenistic Period there was a high site density, especially on the lower slopes and on the bottom of the valley. In the Late Hellenistic and Early Roman period, the area experienced a decline. Again, the Late Roman period was a period of florescence. The sites are mostly farmsteads in close proximity to good agricultural land and abundant water. The lack of fine ware and transport vessels suggests that the Late Roman sites were isolated and self-sufficient. During the 8th and 9th centuries the Berbati Vally seems to have been abandoned¹³.

6.5 The Keos Survey

In 1983 and 1984 a collaborative British, American and Greek survey was undertaken on the island Keos in the hinterland of the Classical polis Koressos and the Bronze Age settlement

¹¹Kardulias 2005, p. 114; Alcock 1993, p. 40

¹²Kardulias 2005, p. 114; Alcock 1993, p. 42

¹³Kardulias 2005, p. 115; Alcock 1993, p. 43

of Ayia Irini. In the Classical period the hinterland was characterized by widely spread sites, mostly identified as family farmsteads. In the Hellenistic and Early Roman period the material becomes more rare. The Late Roman period experienced a growth of quantity and distribution of finds. The level of rural activity was significantly higher in this period. The finds are mostly attributed to small farmstead or installations. In the 7th century the population of the area dropped¹⁴.

6.6 The Minnesota Messenia Expedition and The Pylos Regional Archaeological Project

In the 1970's the University of Minnesota started one of the first regional surveys projects in Greece, the Minnesota Messenia Expedition. It focused on the Bronze Age, but provided some evidence for later periods. For the period of the Spartan domination, the survey documented relatively few sites. This is divergent from the other regions in Greece. One of the main goals of the Pylos Regional Archaeological Project was to identify the missing Archaic and Classical sites. Also the Pylos Regional Archaeological Project found only very few sites of this period.

The Hellenistic period saw a florescence of settlement and other signs of activity. The data suggest that in this period there was more intensive cultivation and exploitation of the countryside. Several of the sites appear to be long-lived nucleated settlements, best described as villages or hamlets. Many of the sites appear to endure in the Roman periods. Especially in the Late Roman period, Messenia was a prosperous region. In the 5th century some elaborate rural villas appeared in the landscape, often quite ornate, with baths, mosaic floors, and imported pottery and marble. The fertility of the soil and the closeness to Italy were factors contributing to this prosperity¹⁵.

6.7 The Laconia Survey

In the 1980's a British and Dutch team carried out the Laconia Survey, in the region of ancient Sparta. The region was heavily occupied during the Classical and Early Hellenistic periods. The types of sites varied widely from humble to elaborate dwellings. In the Early to Late Hellenistic period, the number of sites dropped significantly. A slight increase can be seen in the Early Roman period there was, although most of the villages and farmsteads of the Classical period remained uninhabited. It is striking that in the Laconia region a significant drop in material occurs in the 3rd to 4th centuries and continues into the Late Roman period. Many sites were abandoned in the 4th century, while Sparta remains an urban center. It is suggested that lack of Late Roman ceramics indicates the absence of secondary settlements and a weak trading link between the city and its hinterland¹⁶.

6.8 The Nemea Valley Archaeological Project

The Nemea Valley is one of the three valleys belonging to the region of Corinthia. From 1984 to 1989 an American and Greek project carried out an survey in the Nemea Valley. Many sites were dated in the Archaic to Hellenistic periods. Most of them were identified as farmsteads.

¹⁴Kardulias 2005, p. 115; Alcock 1993, p. 47, p. 55 and p. 57

¹⁵Kardulias 2005 p. 115; Alcock 1993, p. 46; Davis 2008, p. 159-160

¹⁶Kardulias 2005, p. 116; Alcock 1993, p. 46

Material from the Late Hellenistic and Early Roman period is more scarce, except on the larger sites. Only few Roman fine wares and transport vessels were found. It seems that, like the Laconia region, the Roman residents relied more on their own products and there was not much trade. In the Late Roman period, Roman pottery is more widely distributed than in earlier periods¹⁷.

6.9 Conclusion

6.9.1 Early Roman and Early Imperial period

Most survey projects show evidence for a decline in the Early Roman period. Material from this period is very scarce. Sites are shrinking and it seems as though the countryside is depopulated. There was some rural activity, but it was mostly non-residential. In the Early Imperial period the rural sites underwent a slight recovery, but still most of the villages and farmsteads of the Classical period remained uninhabited.

6.9.2 Mid Roman and Late Roman period

This changed in the later Roman period. The slight recovery that was noticeable in the Earlier Imperial period leapt forward in the Late Roman period. The countryside seemed to be reoccupied. Most surveys show an significant increase of the number of sites. Only at Hyettos and in Laconia no growth is noticeable. After the decline in the Early Roman period, Hyettos retained its reduced size in the Late Roman period. In Laconia, there is even a drop in material. It is suggested that the lack of Late Roman ceramics indicates the absence of secondary settlements and a weak trading link between the city and its hinterland.

For all other areas this was a prosperous period. The landscape was filled with villas, hamlets and villa-hamlets. We see a high rural activity in most of the areas. The distribution of the small Roman sites suggests intensive agriculture on independent farms. In the later period, rural estates appear next to elaborate rural villas. Some sites, like Thespieae, transformed into a *kastro*. The large number of sites were, like the towns, embellished with Christian basilicas.

6.9.3 Early Byzantine period

The surveys show an apparent decline in the late 6th and 7th century, not only in the number of sites, but also in the size of the sites. In most areas only a couple of sites survived on a reduced scale. The Berbati area was abandoned. Only few sites, like Askra and Thespieae developed as a Byzantine village. At Askra, evidence was found for the presence of Slavs, who seemed to have replaced or merged with the indigenous population.

¹⁷Kardulias 2005, p. 116; Alcock 1993, p. 44 and p. 57

Part III

Conclusion

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7.1 The City in the Late Roman Empire

7.1.1 The Early Empire

A classical city consisted of an urban center together with a rural territory which was administered from it. The villages and towns in that territory were subject to government from the city center, and together with the city they formed one unit, the city state. A classical city was characterized by institutions of self-government, monumental building, games, and a highly literate upper class. The arrival of the Romans at first created destruction and limited growth if not stagnation in town and country. But it was followed by more stabilization and prosperity. Since their incorporation into the Roman Empire there was a constant imperial interest in Greece and the Balkan. This had encouraged the urban development of the region.

When the Romans took over, they gave the control to the wealthy inhabitants. This meant that the local senate, the city councils (called *curia*, or *boul*) and the councillors (*decuriones*, or *bouleutai*) governed the cities in name of the Roman Empire. In return of this power they were required to run the administration of city and territory. In addition, they were responsible for law and order. Not at least, they had to ensure that the obligations imposed by the imperial government were fulfilled, above all paying of the taxes, which were to be collected by the *decuriones*. Because the administration of the Empire depended on cities, roman occupation was followed by urbanization in many areas.

By the end of the 2nd century membership to curial class was hereditary. The ability of the *decuriones* and *curiales* to meet the requirements of the Empire also depended on the acceptance of their authority by their fellow citizens. To win their approval the curial class held great religious festivals, banquets, spectacles and competitions and adorned the city with spectacular public buildings. This can be seen in the numerous new monumental and public buildings that were erected in the public areas in the four cities during this period. In other areas the presence of the wealthy curial class is noticeable from the villas which were richly decorated with mosaics. This kind organization of the city and its territory caused cohesion of the city's social order and pride of the city by its inhabitants, which made the city a useful basis for the Empire.

Because cities were an important component in the organization of the Empire, it was not only the curial class that put afford in the appovement of cities; Emperors also made benefactions to the Greek cities. Especially Hadrian was known for the many building projects in Greece. Greece and the Balkan were also benefitted because they were near the frontier. The Roman government encouraged transport of natural products over long distances on a huge scale, in the first place to feed the population of Rome (and later Constantinople), but also to supply the frontier armies. At the same time imperial taxation and expenditure of the taxes had the effect of transferring and redistributing large amounts of money, creating new centers of purchasing power, stimulating the provision of goods and services for purchase. This all contributed to the welfare of cities, not only in Greece.

In the 3rd century this process reversed due to the crisis. The Goths and Herulians invaded the Empire in the first half of the century, until they were finally defeated in 269 by a weakened Roman army. The barbarian raids in these periods caused serious disruption and in some cases even destruction of cities. Argos, Athens, Thessaloniki and Corinth survived, but were all

affected by the attacks. The center of Athens was reduced much in size. Even after 269 cities were attacked and destroyed. The developments of the 3rd century resulted in the abatement of order and in financial problems.

7.1.2 The 4th and 5th century and the effects of the Tetrarchy

The crisis enforced adjustments that changed this situation. Diocletian introduced a new organization of the Empire, known as the Tetrarchy¹. To restore the order of the Empire, it was divided in 4 prefectures. The prefectures were subdivided in dioceses, which on their turn were again divided in provinces. Each city was now under control of the governor of its province. In this way a provincial city had no direct access to the imperial government. Due to the financial problems a more ensured income of taxes was needed. The provincial governor had to scrutinize the collection of taxes by the decuriones and a uniform taxation system was introduced. The strict control of the local authorities by the imperial government led to the lost of the liberties of the curial class.

Not only was the taxation uniformed and controlled more strictly, the height of the taxes also increased considerably. In former times the fulfilment of the unpaid duties of local administration brought along great honor and the members of the curial class were willingly to presume them. But the reformation made these duties as an almost intolerable burden. Now the curiales had not only to fulfill the duty of the local government, take care of the collection of the taxes, and all the ordinary services which urban councils were charged with, but they also had to function as imperial officials. They had to collect the land-taxes of the urban district, and they were made responsible for the full amount of taxation. In case of shortage of revenues the decuriones themselves had to complete the deficiency with their own capital.

The city councils faced financial difficulties; many found it difficult to keep their councils up to strength with enough curiales of adequate income². Of course the most powerful councillors did not mind their colleagues' departure, for it meant that they could concentrate power in their own hands. They did not keep their less fortunate colleagues to their duties. But even the more wealthy curiales eventually could not bear the financial burdens. They were no longer able to show their wealth and power with the provision of public buildings, banquets, spectacles and competitions. The round of festivals expressing civic solidarity was reduced by shortage of money. Regardless, the curial class left the city. The burdens laid upon the curiales became even heavier as their numbers diminished.

These changes can be seen in the outer features of the cities. The city remained an important means for administration and collecting taxation. Cities remained heavily monumentalized and continued their previous building activity, although it gradually lost its characteristic features. The changes are best seen in public areas. The agora or forum of the cities lost its former function as administration center and new buildings were not related to the former administrative function of the area. There were no signs at all that new municipal buildings were constructed in the 4th century, nor does any inscription attest the repair of existing buildings by the local authorities.

The reforms of the Tetrarchy may well have brought about a decline of the curial class. The local bodies are still functioning, although apparently they lost great deal of status. There was no reason anymore to compete for this status and thus no need to show their wealth in the construction of monumental public buildings or in the organization of festivals. That is why we don't find inscriptions issued by the curial class anymore. However, the cities showed an obstinate tendency to survive. A system of administration that had almost run itself now

¹see chapter 2.1 and 4.1

²Cameron p. 166

required a great deal of bureaucratic supervision. There was a significant change in personnel who are taking decisions about how an individual city should be governed. The city was no longer ruled by the curial class; the power came in the hands of the imperial officials. For the new imperial bureaucracy remained the city an important base; the city was still the center of literary culture and education. The newly formed upper class kept its main residence in the city. In all four cities we see that they numerous new luxurious villas decorated with elaborate mosaics.

However, some inscriptions do record building. The character of the new monumental buildings within the cities suggests that they were constructed by imperial directive and when building inscriptions attest the individuals that carried out the work, they are regularly praesides, duces, or emperors. The cities where imperial government was building were the cities important in the imperial organization. We see that Thessaloniki as capital of a prefecture was adorned with a palace complex and other imperial structures. Also Corinth as the capital of the province Achaia was under direct imperial interest.

The cities that held the interest of the imperial government also were of military importance. The Greek cities suffered much of the invasions in the late 4th century. Therefore, the building activity directed by imperial control had mostly a military character. Thessaloniki was near the frontier and Corinth was the gateway to the Peloponnese. In this tumultuous period of barbarian invasions both in Thessaloniki and Corinth new fortification walls were built and near Corinth, at Isthmia, the Hexamilion was constructed. With the Vandals attacking Greece militarization of the region was even more necessary. Sometimes towns themselves were used as military bases in the 4th and 5th century. The cities must have profited from the proximity of a military market for agricultural and industrial goods. The presence and comparative wealth of military commanders, whose names are occasionally mentioned by the erection of inscriptions, suggest that they may well have formed an important element in urban community. The presence of a military commander could take away the pressure felt by the curiales to take office, but cities could also be subject to the exaction of the local military commander or a high imperial official.

Besides the presence of the army and the imperial officials we see the appearance of Christianity in the Greek cities. The conversion of Constantine and the promotion of Christianity to state religion by Theodosius caused the expansion and the triumph of Christianity in the 3rd and 4th centuries. Christianization had a gradual but very profound impact on all aspects of culture, on the governance and the appearance of cities, and on the forms of public entertainment and education. The well-to-do families converted to Christianity under pressure of the government. Christianity became important, this was especially evident in the cities, where the church was.

The growth of the Church brought the accumulation of its wealth and influence. The capital of the Church and the individual bishops was first of all put in the construction of numerous churches and chapels. The wealth of the Church was also used for establishments of charity institutions and the foundation of monasteries³. Not only gave the presence of the Church employment to lay-workers in ecclesiastical enterprises, but also to different grades of clerics.

The influence of the Church and of its clergy, in particular the bishop, experienced an immense growth. That a bishop might have such power did not mean that he automatically

³It is presumed that monasteries were situated in deserted landscape, as fleeing into the farther desert is a topos in monastic literature. But they settled not far away from settled areas on which they depended for food and sustenance. They are sometimes associated with holy men, who gained more and more popularity and prevalence. Holy men were often to be found in or near cities, they attracted attention from the wealthy elite or even the emperors. Building of the monasteries implied a major investment and had a considerable effect on the local economy (Cameron p. 73-73)

became an integral part of the city's government. In fact up to the end of the 4th century at least, the Church and its bishops stood outside the machinery and ceremony of civic government; the Church opposed the pagan origin of the governmental organization. But in the 4th century the curial class was still forced to keep to their duties. The curial class suffered gradually more under the increasing financial burdens of their duties, while the Church gathered more and more wealth. The Church at first replaced the curiales as builders of monument buildings and as benefactors of the city. As the number of curiales diminished to take up office, the Church and its clerics gradually took over their role in the affairs of cities and countryside alike, and in negotiations with the provincial governor. They were able to find wealthy landowners who would pick up the neglected role of a leading elite class.

The position of the Church was protected by the Christian emperors, in particular Constantine and Theodosius. Bishops only held position by the protection of the imperial government. Emperors did not hesitate to involve themselves in religious affairs. These could frequently be turbulent. Anti-pagan legislation provoked Christians to besiege and destroy pagan temples. Occasionally the violence was carried out by soldiers at imperial command⁴. But also many incidents involving violence between rival groups of Christians could be a disruptive influence. The emperors have played a major role during the great Church Councils. In later periods, it also could be the other way around and was the emperor much influenced by the opinion of the Church. Over the years the bishop must have become the most powerful individual in many cities. He was elected with the consent of the citizen body. In contrary to a secular civic functionary, the bishop he held the office for life. As the church grew in wealth, the bishop came to control greater financial resources than the wealthiest of all other inhabitants. His wealth enabled him to fulfil his claim to be guardian of the weak and in this way he was the guardian of the city as well. The bishop settled disputes between members of his community more quickly than any public official and without any charge. He profited of the religious character of his office during negotiations on behalf of individuals with imperial officials. As the bishop became the most import inhabitant, his city had acquired a new function, that of the residence of the bishop.

The impact of the presence and the influence of the Church on the city became increasingly conspicuous in the structure of the town. It can be seen in the outburst of the construction of church buildings. Once persecution ended, the way was opened for the development of ecclesiastical architecture. During 4th century major churches were dedicated in important city centers. Existing building were turned into churches, or Christians used the architectural styles that already existed, especially the three aisled basilica, which was to become one of the dominant forms of church architecture for many centuries. The larger and more prestigious of these churches rivalled pagan public buildings in size and splendour⁵. This building of monumental churches only became general towards the end of the 4th century and the beginning of the 5th century. Bishops often were great builders, and so they provided work to masons, carpenters, and craftsmen. Constantine was a great church builder and later emperors followed his example. Another indication of the influence of Christianity was the change of the different kinds of inscriptions. The number of epigraphic monuments that commemorated members of the curial class, or record the decisions of civic institutions, was dramatically reduced both absolutely and proportionally. However, the proportion of funerary inscription increased substantially. The inscriptions had a Christian character and a significant proportion commemorated clerics⁶. In the 5th century, when civic inscription came to an end, an increasing number of building inscriptions overwhelmingly commemorated the building of churches or the donation of church

⁴Cameron p. 64 and p. 143

⁵Cameron p. 58

⁶p. 170

furnishings.

By stimulating church building on the one hand and by influencing social practices on the other, Christianity had a great influence on many aspects of urban life. Christianity played a major role in the move away from civic life of classical antiquity. The great temples slowly and gradually went out of use and were often converted into churches, while games and theater were prohibited⁷. The city was no longer the center of the classical cultural tradition of the curial elite, who depended on the continued availability of the traditional educational system. This too came under attack from imperial legislation against pagans and heretics as teachers, and was no doubt undermined by the gradual process of Christianization. The new elite was just as enthusiastic about icons, saints and holy men as the ordinary people and it depended for its authority on the bishop.

7.1.3 The 6th and 7th century

In the 6th century the cities of the Balkan peninsula had to deal with several earthquakes and plagues and were disturbed by invading barbarians. In the 5th century the western Empire was already lost to the Vandals, Goths and Burgundians. In the 6th century East was troubled by the Slavs and Avars. In all four cities we see a signs of destruction during this period. The buildings that were destroyed were rebuilt or demolished. New building was rare. The buildings that were newly built were military structures or churches.

The 6th century is characterized by the reign of Justinian. His ambition was to restore the former Empire. The Balkan peninsula played an important role in his plans. The army was amplified and the frontier was fortified more intensely. In the towns in the direct hinterland of the frontiers new defense works were built, sometime using city walls or neglected defense walls to built new fortifications. The provision for the needs of the army continued to be organized through cities during the whole Late Antiquity. At this period military garrisons appear to have been common in cities. Since Diocletian military and administrative power were separated, but Justinian united them in the function of the military commanders to moderate the organization and administration of the army. This resulted in the increasing influence of the local military commanders and by urban garrisons on towns. The cities more and more functioned as centers of military administration. Both Thessaloniki and Corinth were cities where a garrison was placed and they were an important military center. Here we see that fortifications were rebuilt or renewed and other new buildings appeared.

Justinian restored the frontiers and even reconquered some of the territory lost to the western barbarian kings. The urban revival was of short duration. The successors of Justinian were not able to stop the new invasions of the Balkan provinces and concentrated on the more eastern parts of the empire. Soon the reconquered parts were lost again. More and more barbarian tribes invaded the Balkans and Greece and settled permanently. These settlements are called *sklaviniai* and dominated many districts. The indigenous population searched for places of refuge. Inhabited centers contracted and regrouped around a defensible acropolis, called a *kastro*, or were abandoned in favor for such positions elsewhere. This is the case for Argos, Athens and Corinth. The remaining population of Corinth finally retreated to the fortified height of the Acrocorinth.

In cities of the 6th century that were not controlled by a military leader, administration was given from the hands of the imperial officials into that of the Church. The most honorable offices were given to the wealthy elite, that also donated generously to the Church, or to clergy and even monasteries were given duties. The office was more and more localized. This form of government was much difficult to control by agents of the central administration than the

⁷Cameron 1993, p. 165; Naerebout 1995, p. 432

old city councils had been. These changes affected the relations between city and empire. It is likely that many cities enjoyed greater independence on the 6th century. Independence was greater in proportion to a city's distance from the centers of imperial power. In these cities the Church seems to have emerged as the most important factor in maintaining some form of local government. Because of the Church's role in the urban organization, Christianity became a city-centered religion. Many Roman cities survived precisely because they were the residence of a bishop, which ensured the urban organization.

In all four cities was the construction of new churches continued even more than before, while pagan temples were ravaged, not repaired and sometimes converted into a Christian church. The larger churches in the 6th century were built by the more high ranked persons, like the emperors and the bishops. Justinian ordered the construction of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. These elaborate buildings reflected their power. Also in the smaller cities the greatest expenditure appears to have been invested in the construction and decoration of churches, which occupied the most important sites in the center of the cities and along the principal roads.

A limited number of wealthy families built their houses either along the main streets or in a separate quarter on the periphery of the city. They presumably played their role in the administration of their communities, but seem not to have been anxious to proclaim their status. Only a small number of less wealthy artisans and shopkeepers lived within the fortifications, none are likely to have played an active role in government. The houses of the rich people maintained, but were eventually divided into smaller rooms for multiple dwelling, often with mud brick floors over or instead of the splendid mosaic which are so characteristic of the fine houses. Poorer dwellings or the accommodation of small traders or artisans frequently were built over existing public space, such as the late antique forum or palaestra.

Although cities were smaller and less spectacular to look at and they housed a much narrower range of urban activities, it does not mean that we must cease to regard them as cities. They continued to fulfill a large number of functions which can only be seen as urban. Cities remained administrative centers and emperors continued to reside in cities. Imperial officials like provincial governors continued to have their headquarters there, even though their power had diminished. Tax collection was still organized through cities. Cities were still seen as important, as they were garrisoned and the conduct of wars centered on the defense and capture of cities. But they were no longer the classical urban center, functioned as centers of secular administration for an attached rural territory.

Most cities were reduced in size dramatically and the center was confined to a *kastro*. It seems that the majority of the population was excluded from these fortified enclosures. The church, restricted groups of notables and perhaps the military establishment occupied cities. The city functioned simply as a center for ecclesiastical and military administration. Outside the walls there were sometimes signs of habitations. This suggests that cities were encircled by extramural settlement. People living outside the *kastro* probably lived in modest dwellings that leave no or little traces.

As said above more and more barbarian tribes invaded the Balkans and Greece and settled permanently in *sklaviniiai* and dominated many districts. The Empire claimed a political sovereignty over the whole region, but it was rarely able to make this effective. But in Argos, Athens, Corinth and at the Hexamilion Slavic pottery was found. This indicates that the people living were Slavs themselves or that they were trading with Slavs who settled in the area. The Slavs and the indigenous population lived next to each other without much problems. There were probably many areas in which the indigenous population and the traditional patterns of local social structure and political organization may have survived and where imperial authority may have been recognized.

In the 7th century, however, the Empire was attacked by the Arabs. The government was not able to be in control in all territories. The cities that did survive were the cities who were able to remain in contact with the imperial government in Constantinople, like Thessaloniki, the seat of the praefectus praetorio, or cities accessible by sea. But even here urban decline is noticeable.

7.2 The Countryside in the Late Roman Empire

A long time, the interest of historici and archaeologists was focused on cities, because the maintenance of culture, government and fiscality depended on cities. The cities of the Roman Empire have left us impressive buildings and almost all written sources are found in an urban context. Better and less known authors were living in the cities and all accounts of the countryside came from the sophisticated urban elite⁸. That is why in most parts of the Empire, archaeological interest has focused away from villages, either towards towns or luxurious and isolated rural dwellings of the rich.

Although most of the written sources from the Late Roman period only give us information on urban life, the vast majority of the population worked and lived in the countryside. Agricultural production contributed the basis of most of the Empire's wealth. Cities, rather than being primary centers of production themselves, continued to depend on their rural hinterland for their economic well being. The agricultural surpluses were needed to sustain the craftsmen, the aristocrats, the state and all the other sophistications that we associate with the Roman Empire. These were only produced by enormous numbers of people working the land. The prosperity of towns and country rose and fell together. As cities provided markets for surrounding countryside, the areas immediately surrounding a city or urban center were among the richest, most intensively cultivated parts of the countryside.

In addition, the army played more and more an important role as the Empire was being attacked at several frontiers. Roman troops relied on the countryside for most of their supplies. Much food, clothing, and equipment came from the taxes of the province where soldiers were stationed⁹. Military units also bought supplies from local farmers and craftsmen. The wellbeing of the countryside was thus important for the wellbeing of the army and the cities. Therefore it was under the strict attention of the government.

When we look at the changes of the city in Late Antiquity, it is also necessary to look at its hinterland and the relation between city and countryside. It is only possible to gain a sensible comprehension of the changing society, if research has been done on both aspects. Over the last 30 to 40 years, our picture of the Roman and Late Roman countryside has been greatly enhanced, and in some areas transformed by archaeology. The early scholars researching the Late Roman Empire were able to largely ignore archaeological evidence when

⁸Late antiquity: a guide to the postclassical world, Door Glen Warren Bowersock, Peter Robert Lamont Brown, Oleg Grabar, p. 282: a few agricultural literary works are preserved from our period, which were later translated also into Greek, Syriac, Persian, and Arabic. the 4th c Vindanius Anatolius of Beirut compiled a treatise in Greek that drew on the works of earlier Greek, Latin, and Phoenician authors. for Palladius late 4th c compendium in Latin while Isodore of Serville in his *Etymologiae* the compilation in Greek by Cassianus Basus, completed around 600

⁹The Cambridge ancient history vol XIII, p. 277: Although we do not know precisely how or when the *annona militaris* became a state tax since it originated in the late 2nd c as a levy or requisition of corn for the use of the army- by the 4th c it was the principal instrument by which the state raised revenue. The name of the tax underlines the fact that taxation was largely devoted to army pay and that it came for the most part from the profits of the land

discussing rural life¹⁰. They depended on written texts. As said above, during the Empire all written accounts of the countryside came from the sophisticated urban elite who performed no manual labor. The information from ancient writers about the countryside already isn't that substantial, because the best preserved texts were not at all interested in the rural life, but in warfare and the political power policy in the capitals of the Empire. Accordingly, ancient texts tell much about the aristocrats and the state, but are notably silent about many of the products that archaeologists discover. Law codes provide some vital information on the ties that bound together the rural population. It is impossible to tell how generally and successfully such prescriptions from above were applied in practice on the ground¹¹.

Archaeological research of the countryside needs a different approach than that of a city, because they provided different kinds of remains. The remains of the countryside are less prominent than the elaborate building structures of the Roman city. Archaeology has contributed to our understanding of the ancient landscape partly through excavation of individual sites. But archaeologists have become aware that there is a great range of "off-site" or "on-site" evidence, from scatters of artifacts to features such as plow-marks and field boundaries, that provides important information about human exploitation of the environment. Study of entire landscapes are more and more based on regional surveys of standing remains, and through practice of field-walking, which involves systematic plotting and dating of lost settlement sites by recovery on the surface of pottery and other datable items. Surveys of this kind have filled out the map of the Roman world with thousands of villages and scattered rural settlements, whereas before only larger and more spectacular sites were generally known to scholarship. Surface survey not only can tell us more about the dispersment of settlements and the size of a settlement in different periods, but the different kinds of pottery also indicate the different activities on the site/footnote See chapter 6, besides the many advantages of surface survey used for landscape archaeology, there are many disadvantages.

7.2.1 The Early Empire

In the Classical en Early Hellenistic period the data show an uniform picture for Greece. Much activity can be seen in the rural landscape. Many scattered sites were found, which were mostly rural farmsteads. The social and economic circumstances of that period encouraged people to own private lands in the countryside¹². The ideal was still autarky¹³. That is also why the ceramic finds of the sites were especially related with food-consumption. Very few transport amphorae were found, because the farms were not orientated to commercial food-production. Cash crops were mostly cultivated for local markets.

Most surveys show evidence for a decline in the Early Roman period. Material from this period is very scarce. As is said before, the arrival of the Romans seems to have caused destruction and stagnation in growth not only in towns, but also in the countryside. The number of sites dropped and the surviving sites shrunk; there are only few signs for agriculture and other rural activity. It seems as though the countryside is depopulated. This decline

¹⁰Jones 1964

¹¹Late antiquity: a guide to the postclassical world, Door Glen Warren Bowersock, Peter Robert Lamont Brown, Oleg Grabar, p 398: Literary texts, written by and for urban elite, usually do not pay much attention to the countryside and its inhabitants, and often reproduce classical topoi. The legal documents are mostly interested in taxation. Inscriptions and papyri come from viewpoints of the propertied classes and are largely the voice of urban populations and interests. The mosaic pavements of rural villas, far from reflecting the surrounding countryside, usually offer to the landowner a reassuring image of his own wealth or ideal setting for his favorite leisure.

¹²Alcock 1993, p. 54, Naerebout 1995, p. 368

¹³the word autarky comes from the Greek word αὐτάρχεια which means self-sufficiency

endured until the second half of the 3rd century. From then the number of sites mostly remains unchanged, although some areas underwent a slight recovery (Boeotia, Lakonia and Methana).

It is suggested that the decline for the Early Imperial period is overstated, because there was a growth of alternatives for pottery, like glass and sustainable metals. These materials survive hardly and are more suitable for re-using. Still, the glass tableware types probably accounted only for a small part of the domestic ware and metal was only used by the elites¹⁴. The decrease of finds for the Early Imperial period can also be explained by the fact that Early Roman and Middle Roman pottery is less recognizable than of the previous or following periods. Another problem is the absence of gridding, so we don't know if the Early and Middle Roman finds were dispersed or clustered, which would mean that it were small permanent farmsteads. The finds themselves often indicate a non-permanent use of the site. Temporary land use suggests that land plots were cultivated by labor coming from villages and towns. Land plots would no longer be in hands of private persons but in hands of bigger estates.

Despite the problems of recognition and the change in land use and ownership the data still indicate that the level of rural activity has decreased considerably and that there was an impoverishment of the social life of the workers, who used the Early and Middle Roman sites, either permanent or temporarily. Not only seems the countryside depopulated in the archaeological evidence, also texts mention that the landscape was deserted. The crisis of the 3rd century only aggravated the situation. Greece and the Balkans were invaded by the The Goths and the Herulians in the first half of the century¹⁵. The barbarian raids destroyed arable lands and caused serious disruption in the countryside. People left the countryside, because they could not pay the rent and defray the heavy taxes. They gave up their farms and other means of livelihood. Fields were left untilled for lack of laborers. The conditions of the 3rd century thus also seem to have brought about an agrarian crisis.

7.2.2 The 4th and 5th century and the effects of the Tetrarchy

Diocletian and Constantine had to seek solutions not only of political but also of more difficult economic problems. Diocletian introduced a new tax system to improve the collection of taxes. He also required that each tenant should be registered (*adscriptus*) for purposes of the capitation tax, which then restricted his movement to prevent tax evasion¹⁶. Taxes were the main income for the Empire to maintain the large army. Also the emperors themselves, who were seated in favored residences near the frontier, needed a regular income from the taxes, since some frontier regions were not by nature rich. In the 4th century it was channeled to new imperial residence, Constantinople¹⁷.

It was Constantine, actually, who created new circumstances with his legislation for the people working in the agrarian sector. He made the *coloni*¹⁸ compulsory tenants. They were attached to the soil, and their children after them. They continued to be legally free; they had many of the rights of freemen, such as that of acquiring property. But virtually they were unfree. Laws prevented them from leaving their farms, and treated those who ran away as fugitive slaves. At the same time also rustic slaves were tied to the land, for legislation forbade masters to sell slaves employed on the land except along with the land on which they

¹⁴Alcock 1993, p. 52

¹⁵Cambridge ancient history vol 13 p. 278

¹⁶Cambridge ancient history vol 13 p.289, The reforms of Diocletian were made to control the collection of taxes better, but it is far from certain that the level of taxation itself increased, as many scholars have assumed (The Mediterranean world in late antiquity, AD 395-600; Cameron 1993, p. 82)

¹⁷Cambridge ancient history vol 14, p. 377

¹⁸*colonus* was the Latin word used for tenant

worked¹⁹. After Constantine the situation of the coloni didn't change much. In the 4th, 5th and 6th century successive emperors legislated to keep the coloni on the estates in which they are registered²⁰.

There are several explanations given why the labor rights and mobility of coloni were reduced. The first one is that the Empire needed the revenues from the countryside, but that there was a shortage of manpower to work the fields. This was either as a result of population decline due to losses in war, plague and famine, or because people fled from the countryside that was threatened with barbarian invasions and the fields were left abandoned²¹. Another explanation is that legislation tied (or at least tried to tie) coloni, in order to facilitate the process of raising both the land-tax and the poll-tax. The tax coming from coloni could only be collected if the whereabouts were known²². In any case, the restriction of the coloni especially benefitted the rich landowners, who now held even more power over their tenants. But how arduous was the fate of the coloni and how effective were these laws, when they are constantly repeated²³? Besides, we have no information to tell us what proportion of all agricultural labour were coloni, and the detail of how a master-colonus relationship worked out on the ground. Cambridge Ancient History vol 14 p.343. Archaeology may tell us more about how the countryside was organized and looked like in the Late Roman period.

We have seen in chapter 6 that after a decline in the Hellenistic and Early Roman period, there was a slight recovery that was noticeable in the Earlier Imperial period, that leapt forward in the Late Roman period²⁴. The 4th century inaugurated a period of remarkable rural expansion; most surveys show a significant increase of the number of sites²⁵. The highest number of sites and the greatest geographical spread of settlement are recorded in the 5th and 6th century²⁶.

But as said before, we must be very careful saying there was actually a rural explosion. Late Roman pottery is denser, more ubiquitous and extensive, and more abundant overall in comparison with the Early Roman period²⁷. The enormous difference between these two periods is that the large number of coarse wares was found from the Late Roman period. When we compare the frequency of fine ware between the two periods, the Early and Late Roman period are more equal²⁸. The change in production most of all means a change of activity, not necessarily an increase or decrease of activity.

The increase of the number of sites was caused by the re-occupation of classical sites, that were abandoned in the Hellenistic and Early Roman period. But in which way was the countryside changed from the earlier periods? How did the countryside look like? Were these re-occupied sites the same kind of sites as in the Classical periods? Were they farmsteads or big rural estates? Were they permanently or temporarily used? It seems that the condition of the countryside could vary from region to region. As we have seen in chapter 6, the countryside around Tanagra was inhabited by mostly rich land-owners; that of Thespieae was filled with villas, hamlets and villa-hamlets; in Methana the small sites suggest independent farms

¹⁹Cameron 1998, p. 288-289; Naerebout 1995, p. 369, 375

²⁰Sirks 2003, pp. 258-259; The Mediterranean world in late antiquity, AD 395-600. Edited by Averil Cameron, p. 81

²¹Cambridge Ancient History vol 13 p.261 and p.282

²²Cambridge Ancient History vol 14, p. 343

²³The Mediterranean world in late antiquity, AD 395-600. Edited by Averil Cameron p. 81

²⁴Bowden 2004, pp. 18-19

²⁵Of course this varied from one region to another; at Hyettos and in Laconia no growth is noticeable, but the overall picture is that of enormous recovery

²⁶Cambridge Ancient History vol 14 p.321

²⁷see chapter 6

²⁸Archaeology and history in Roman, medieval and post-medieval Greece, p. 255

rather than large estates; the surveyors of the Berbati-Limes survey suggest that there was one great estate exploiting the countryside, with at its heart is villa surrounded by worker accommodations, industrial areas and a cemetery for the labor force; at Keos the finds are mostly attributed to small farmsteads or installations; In Messenia elaborate rural villas appeared; the countryside of Korinthia was filled with farmsteads, villas, and ex-urban installations, but also dotted with isolated country houses evenly spaced across the landscape.

In Greece, we see villages and numerous, small sites. Only a few rich villas were found and also few sites were identified as estate centers. The estate centers that were found, lack the signs of a villa. This indicates that the rich landowners did not reside regularly on their estates but often lived in distant cities²⁹. Their lands were tilled by tenants (*coloni*) or wage-laborers, in some cases supervised by managers. The existence of the numerous small sites also suggests that the intensive use of the countryside in the Late Roman period involved not only rich landowners, but also many free peasants, either smallholders or tenants(*coloni*).

The legislation in the Late Roman period refer to the importance of the presence of enough *coloni* at the countryside. This can be in accord with the archaeological evidence. The rich landowner seem to obtain more scattered lands in the countryside, while he himself resided in the city or town. The use of tenants in place of centrally organized farms was encouraged. At the same time, this meant that supervision by the owner himself was more difficult. With the legislation of the Late Roman period labor force was bound to the same land and contractual rights were limited. This benefited the rich landowner enormously³⁰.

But on most of the small Late Roman sites in Greece the majority of finds consists of storage and transport amphorae, while they are poor in food preparation and food consumption vessels. The transport amphorae had a standard shape. This supports the hypothesis that most land was owned by a few landowners. The yield were commercial products intended for regional and interregional markets³¹. The lack of domestic vessels suggests that the lands of a rich owner needed only limited permanent labor force, consisting of slaves and managers. The rest of tillers were wage-laborers and tied *coloni*, who lived in the nearest village or town.

Besides the rich landowners and their tied tenants, independent farmers survived in to the Late Roman period. They possessed small pieces of lands in the vicinity of their communities. These lands were less desirable for the rich landowners. Independent farmers, living in the villages and towns, commuted seasonally to the countryside to work on the estates of the rich landowners/footnote Late antiquity: a guide to the postclassical world p. 398.

So, from the 4th century onwards Greece was characterized by economic growth and the emergence of productive rich landowners. The largest accumulations of land must have been in the hands of these rich landowners and imperial rulers employing free tenants, *coloni* and slaves/footnote cambridge ancient history vol 13 p. 304 and vol 14 p. 337, A Greek countryside: the southern Argolid from prehistory to the present day, p. 403. The question that need to be asked is what was the cause of the emergence of the emergence of the rich landowners.

In the Late Roman period the empire were constantly confronted with barbarian invasions. From the Tetrarchy the army was re-organized and enlarged. The large armies needed to be supplied with food and material. It is suggested that the largest accumulations were in the hands of the imperial rulers/footnote Cambridge ancient history vol 14 p. 337 especially for this purpose. Also the greater cities needed vast amounts of food. Constantinople was added to the list of these cities, when it was established as the pre-eminent eastern imperial residence. After the loss of the Western Empire the focus of consumption was more and more directed to the east. Greece was in the 4th to the 6th century the fertile heart of the Empire. The

²⁹Cambridge ancient history vol 14, p. 328; Bowden 2004, pp. 18-19

³⁰Cambridge ancient history vol 13 p.291

³¹Poulter 2007, *The transition to Late Antiquity*, p. 24

commercial estates in Greece benefitted from the opportunity to serve these needs/footnote Cambridge ancient history vol 14 p. 368 en 377.

Estates could differ considerably in their physical characteristics and form. The differences were contributed by the difference in topographical logistics. They had to deal with their location as efficiently as possible. In addition, war did not only mean that the countryside could benefit from the presence of the army, but it also brought about the threat of barbarian invasions. One feature of settlement in the countryside, which affected most of the Late Roman world, was an increase in the number of fortified sites/footnote Recent research on the late antique countryside p. 555, Late antiquity: a guide to the postclassical world p. 398, Cambridge ancient history vol 14, p. 335.

In contrast to the cities, the countryside is seen as the last stronghold of paganism in the Late Roman period/footnote Late antiquity: a guide to the postclassical world p. 398. But the power of the Church increased more and more and the number of estates owned by the Church also increased/footnote Cambridge ancient history vol 14 p. 337. Its presence was noticeable by the construction of churches across the countryside.

7.2.3 The 6th and 7th century

The florescence seems to have lasted into the 6th century. We have seen in chapter 6 that Boeotia, Argolid and Methana flourished during the 5th and 6th century. It seems that in the 5th and the 6th century there was the greatest spread of settlement and the highest population density³²(Liebeschuetz p. 284). We see rural estates next to rural villae, farmsteads, villages and churches. More sites than before were fortified. Although the majority seem to have been only very lightly defended or not defended at all, more farmsteads were surrounded by a ditch-and-bank; villas were built with towers and a surrounding wall; settlements were built around strongly fortified refuge-towers. Procopius also left a long list of (largely unknown) fortresses built or restored by Justinian in the Balkans³³. Justinian had renewed the interest in the western half of the Empire and was planning to restore the ancient Roman Empire. Greece and the Balkans played an important role in his campaign as it was exactly in the center between Italy and Constantinople. Besides, Greece was still important for its export-production both for the east as for the west.

After the reign of Justinian Italy fell in the hands of the Lombards and the Danube frontier faced the attacks of the Avars and the Slavs. The Slavs even came as far as the Peloponnese. The eastern Empire was also involved in a war with the Persians at the eastern frontier. The government became less concerned with other frontiers. Besides, not only these events left its marks not on the cities and the countryside of Greece and the Balkans, the eastern Empire was hit by a plague in 541/2, which spread to the West and recurred through the 6th and 7th centuries³⁴.

After the marked prosperity of the 5th and 6th century, the countryside of Greece experienced a sudden and rapid decline³⁵. The number of the sites decreased; the surviving sites reduced dramatically in scale; the population seemed to drop considerably. The archaeological evidence suggests that the countryside was almost totally abandoned and the abandonment of land was also frequently mentioned in texts³⁶.

The sudden decline in the late 6th century can be contributed to the diminishing imperial

³²(

³³Cambridge Ancient History Vol 14, p. 335

³⁴Liebeschuetz, decline and fall of the Roman City, p. 286; Late antiquity: a guide to the postclassical world p. 280; Cambridge ancient history vol 14 p. 322

³⁵Liebeschuetz, decline and fall of the Roman City, p. 286; Cambridge ancient history vol 14 p. 360

³⁶Deserted lands were mentioned in ancient texts as *agri deserti*

interest, thereby the ending of state spending and the invasions of the Avars and Slavs. Greece and the Balkans lost their role as the production and export center of the Late Roman world. Specialization and long distance exchange disappeared³⁷. This led to the decline of the economy of the area. Besides, the invading Avars and Slavs drove away the indigenous population of the countryside to more secure places, like the *kastro*'s.

Of course, the scarcity of archaeological material for the 7th century show that there was a caesura with the previous period. However, it is unlikely that the countryside was really abandoned. The people from the countryside who fled to the *kastro*'s constituted only a small part of the population. Most of the population probably were still living in the countryside. In addition, the invading Slavs resettled the land of the former Greek-speaking inhabitants, who they had driven out. The Slavic tribes were nomads and they lived in houses often made of perishable materials. They probably have left little or no archaeological evidence. Apparently, also the indigenous people have left little traces. In periods of economical decline fine tableware is disappearing or becoming very scarce. Also coins are less abundant. These materials are very important for dating, but for this period they are difficult to find and to identify. People living in the countryside in the 7th century are easily missed during field-survey or even in excavation. The post-Roman society was still a basically agrarian society.

In the 9th and 10th century a recurrence of pottery and a growth of the number of sites is noticeable. This could mean that there was a continuation between the 6th/7th century and this period. Besides, the material of the Byzantine sites will mask the materials of the Roman and the Late Roman period. Not only is the material of the 7th century difficult to identify, it also be underrepresented in the survey collection.

³⁷Camebridge ancient history vol 14 p. 361

APPENDIX A
APPENDIX 1

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