

# Settlement Change in Byzantine Galatia: An Assessment of Finds from the General Survey of Central Anatolia

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## ABSTRACT

*Since 1986, extensive surveys have been conducted annually by Japanese Institute of Anatolian Archaeology. The surveys cover a large area of central Turkey, within the provinces of Kırşehir, Ankara, Konya, and Aksaray, and to date, around a thousand sites have been recorded. Material collected from these sites forms a major resource of archaeological information for studying long-term settlement patterns in this region. In this study, sites dating from the Late Roman and Byzantine periods are assessed to investigate the nature and extent of settlement change at this time, and to consider how such trends inform understanding of the later phases of occupation at Kaman-Kalehöyük.*

## INTRODUCTION

Surface artefact surveys are an important method of assessing long-term settlement across wide regions, and combined with historical and environmental data, surface finds allow for specific phases of settlement change to be appraised. In central Anatolia, a significant shift in the pattern of settlement occurred from the seventh century AD, when Persian, and later, Arab armies invaded large areas of Byzantine territory in the east Mediterranean, and advanced into Asia Minor. Investigations of the seventh-century settlement shift have, until recently, focused on urban change, the transition from the Greco-Roman city of Late Antiquity to the fortified town of the Byzantine era. However, archaeological surveys and environmental studies are increasingly yielding evidence for rural settlement trends, offering a more consistent view of the landscape as a whole.

This research approaches the question of Roman to Byzantine settlement shift through a preliminary analysis of material collected on the general survey of central Anatolia (CAS). By examining these finds my

aim was first to clarify the chronology of sites, dividing those of the Early Byzantine (c. AD 330-630) and Middle Byzantine (c. AD 630-1100) periods, and second, to consider their location and character, to observe consistencies and differences between the two periods. The main task involved examining assemblages that had been identified in the published survey reports and site database as containing Byzantine material, as well as some which had been listed as Roman and Ottoman. Having determined the approximate date and character of sites, their location, elevation and topography was assessed.

Surveys have the advantage of being able to record multi-period sites across large areas, are relatively inexpensive, and relatively non-destructive. However, there are a number of methodological limitations, not least the problem of identifying material, mostly pottery, from widely-dispersed locations. Sites can be approximately dated on the basis of diagnostic potsherds – rims, bases and handles – but surface pottery is often so fragmentary and degraded that identification through form is not always possible.

Moreover, many ceramics from the late- and post-Roman period are locally produced, with no equivalents from stratified excavations. Added to this general problem of identification is the regionally-specific issue that few settlements of the Byzantine period have been excavated in central Turkey, the closest to the survey region being Tavium to the north, and Pessinus and Amorium to the west.

### EARLY BYZANTINE SITES

Early Byzantine sites are best identified by fine ware pottery, primarily red-slipped wares (RSW) that were mass-produced and widely circulated from the second to early seventh centuries AD (Hayes 1972). Production of RSW occurred at a number of coastal sites around the Mediterranean, but there were also some inland production centres, notably Sagalassos (Poblome 1999), and 'imitations' were made in several other parts of Asia Minor. The presence of RSW at a site indicates some level of Late Roman-Early Byzantine activity, but it is only when sherds from several different vessels are found, or in combination with other recognisably Byzantine material, that occupation can be confidently assigned. Being situated far from the coast and the major RSW production sites, this type of pottery is less common in central Anatolia than it is elsewhere, however it was still present at several sites in the CAS region. As surface finds, RSW often survives only as tiny body sherds which are impossible to match with well-documented forms, and in just a few instances can sherds be given a more precise date than 'Late Roman'.

One rare survival is an intact base and part body of a RSW bowl or dish, in the centre of which has been scratched a cross, collected from Çatal, or Büyükteflek (site 01-33) in Kırşehir province (Fig.1). The vessel is made from fine, orange 'Asia Minor fabric' (5YR 8/8), with few inclusions or voids, and has a fairly thick, darker red slip (2.5YR 5/8), with visible application marks. Its form, with slightly flared foot (diameter: 66mm), sunken belly, and thick body, resembles footed bowls of the sixth century. Another distinctively Early Byzantine sherd is the flat rim (diameter: 120mm) of a thin-walled vessel (fabric: 7.5YR 7/6), collected at Eski



Fig.1 Red Slip Ware bowl from Çatal or Büyükteflek, Kırşehir province



Fig.2 Rim of a dish with incised decoration from Eski Mandıra, Konya province

Mandıra (98-13) in Konya province (Fig.2). The top of the rim is decorated with incised wavy lines, which along with the rim's form and fabric, are similar to dishes excavated at Hierapolis (Pamukkale), identified as locally-produced fine wares dating from the sixth century (Cottica 2000: 50, nos.17-19).

Coin finds are helpful for assessing site chronology in combination with retrieved pottery. Three coins were among the assemblages examined. The earlier two, found at Gölcük (98-72) and Uçurdu (03-11) are small bronze issues of Constantius II, minted in Nicomedia, and dated AD 351-355 (Kent 1981: 479, nos.96-98; 498, nos.104-109). Both of these sites yielded RSW and other Late Roman pottery. The third coin, from Beşli Yeri (02-158) near Kaman, is from the early seventh century, a

follis of Heraclius and Heraclius Constantine, minted in Constantinople, and dated AD 612-614 (Hahn 1981: 223, nos.159a, 159c, 160b).

By far the most common material collected on surveys is coarse ware pottery. With the exception of transport amphorae, which have been well studied and classified, it can be difficult to accurately identify Late Roman coarse wares. Coarse wares can often be assumed to have been locally produced, however they were also transported considerable distances. Other than observing similarities in fabrics from localised sites, a fabric type series is unlikely to be achieved when considering such a large area. There are some features of pottery production that were more common in Early Byzantine times, for instance, coarse wares of this period from the Acropolis at Pessinus were found to have oxidised cores, in contrast to the reduced fabrics of the preceding era (Thoen 2003: 83).

Recognisable forms of Byzantine coarse ware include arch-rimmed cooking pots, flat-rimmed basins and pithoi, flat handles, and external and internal ribbing on the body, but these are not always enough to distinguish an assemblage as being Early Byzantine, as such features continued long into the medieval period. Decoration is one way in which coarse ware pottery can be at least designated Byzantine, although there was also considerable continuity in the surface treatment of cooking and storage vessels, both throughout and after the Byzantine era.

Early Byzantine coarse ware vessels can be broadly divided between cooking and table wares, and thicker-walled pottery for storage and transport vessels, as well as tiles and piping. The decoration on both thin and thick-walled vessels features recurring techniques, particularly methods of incising the surface such as rouletting, combing, stabbing or gouging, and finger impressing. Such decoration allows for pottery to be identified as Byzantine, but only when appearing in combination with fine wares or other chronological indicators can it be assigned to the Early or Middle period.

The assemblage from Uçurdum (03-11) in Ankara province, a flat site near Tuz Gölü, where the coin of Constantine II was found, includes RSW sherds and typically Late Antique coarse wares such as flat rims

with stabbing along them, a coiled handle, and a body sherd with stabbing and incised wavy lines. Uçurdum is close to the Early Byzantine station of Andrapa that lay on the Pilgrim's Road between Ankara and Parnassos (Belke and Restle 1984: 126). Hacınınağıl (92-41), Azak Kalesi (99-28) and Sütce Höyük (00-04) in Konya province, are all sites with typically Early Byzantine cooking and storage vessel sherds of oxidised fabrics and including flat rims with stabbing, body sherds with incised straight and wavy lines, and pithos sherds with applied strips with thumbing, characteristics that resemble coarse wares found in Early Byzantine contexts at Tavium (Gerber 2003) and Pessinus (Devos 2003). As is regularly the case, the Early Byzantine sherds were often alongside Roman and Hellenistic pottery, suggesting long-term habitation throughout classical antiquity.

The function and character of sites is difficult to accurately gauge on the basis of a few surface sherds, but there are often clues about a site's status, from the composition of the assemblage and from the site itself. Large numbers of imported fine ware sherds are likely to signal a well-connected settlement with some level of prosperity, while assemblages consisting of mainly storage and transport vessels may be seen as places of agricultural activity. Some of the CAS sites have architectural remains, such as Yapı (00-34) with its arch-shaped feature, Üçayak Kırşehir (01-18) where there are remains of a Middle Byzantine church with intact wall plaster, and Sütce Höyük (00-04), where the remains of city walls were observed. Although surface potsherds, even considered in their architectural context, only allow for a basic level of site differentiation, the Early Byzantine material suggests a diversity of site functions. The predominance of storage vessels indicates however that the majority of sites had an agricultural purpose.

## MIDDLE BYZANTINE SITES

While RSW pottery can indicate Early Byzantine settlement, Middle Byzantine and later occupation is best detected from the presence of glazed ceramics. Glazed fine wares became prevalent in Anatolia from the middle of the seventh century, when the red wares with red

slip of the Roman period were replaced by white wares coated with white slip and lead glaze. Excavations of Byzantine sites in the east Mediterranean, particularly Saraçhane in Istanbul (Hayes 1992), have allowed for several types of glazed pottery to be dated quite accurately, and recent research has clarified regional chronology and production centres (Vroom 2003; Böhlendorf-Arslan 2004).

Production of glazed ceramics continued long after the end of Byzantine rule, and even into the modern era. Just as there is chronological uncertainty in distinguishing between Roman and Early Byzantine red wares, it is often hard to tell Byzantine from Seljuk and Ottoman glazed ceramics: several sites in the CAS region have glazed pottery, but much of this belongs to the post-Byzantine period. Following the battle of Manzikert in AD 1071, central Anatolia was under Seljuk control, but that is not to say that Byzantine influence in the region ended altogether. Political change did not necessarily have a sudden impact on pottery producing traditions, although the arrival of Seljuks and Ottomans in Anatolia would undoubtedly have affected cultural practices. Other external influences, for example the impact of Normans and Franks from western Europe, should also be taken into account.

Some of the CAS sites display clearly Middle Byzantine elements, such as Elemenlihöyüğü (03-28) in Ankara province (Fig.3). This assemblage includes brown and yellow glazed ware, a sherd of green glazed pottery of white fabric, perhaps Glazed White Ware II (dated ninth to twelfth centuries AD), two pieces of

polychrome sgraffito ware, turquoise glazed white ware sherds, and a sherd with light pink fabric (5YR 7/6) and thin, yellow glaze, that may be an example of the rare Glazed White Ware I, dated to the seventh and eighth century, and usually found in the Aegean region. A sherd of Glazed White Ware I excavated from Kaman-Kalehöyük was identified by Joanita Vroom as being the first of its kind from a central or eastern part of Turkey (Vroom 2006: 164-165), and this may be the second. Alongside these glazed fine wares, mainly from open vessels such as bowls and dishes, were several unglazed, cooking pots with combed decoration.

Another assemblage with a colourful range of glazed ceramics comes from Kışla (99-47), a hilltop site in Konya province, close to Zengicek Kalesi (Belke and Restle 1984: 245). Several sherds of turquoise glazed white ware, yellow and brown glazed pottery on pinkish fabrics with pale yellow slip, and painted, sgraffito wares were collected here (Fig.4). The site also features coarse wares in dark red fabric with typically Byzantine incised decoration. The juxtaposition of these incised coarse wares with glazed fine wares illustrates the degree of continuity in coarse ware pottery production from the Early to Middle Byzantine periods.

Coarse wares are far more common at Middle Byzantine sites than fine wares, and the sites of Elemenlihöyüğü and Kışla are unusually rich. Many medieval sites, especially those in remote locations, were small, poor settlements, where little material culture survives, often only undecorated body sherds that are nearly impossible to date. For this reason, many sites



Fig.3 Surface finds from Elemenlihöyüğü, Ankara province



Fig.4 Surface finds from Kışla, Konya province

that were probably occupied in the medieval period could not be identified as such, and it is only when other chronological indicators are present such as coins, fine wares or architecture, that they can be designated Middle Byzantine. Little can be said about the function and character of such sites, other than those with richer assemblages, which may be exceptional. Many Middle Byzantine sites appear to have been short-lived, had fairly poor material culture, and featured less of the large storage and transport vessels evident from the earlier period.

### SITE LOCATION AND CHARACTER

Having inspected material from over 200 sites, it was possible in most cases to assign them to either the Early or Middle Byzantine periods. Few sites featured pottery from both of these periods, and there was a noticeable difference in the composition of the non-Byzantine elements of the assemblages, with Early Byzantine sites often featuring material from the Roman period, whereas Middle Byzantine and Seljuk-Ottoman material often came from sites with evidence of Bronze and Iron Age habitation, but without Roman material. For the purposes of this research, sites that probably did date from the Byzantine period, but which could not be confidently identified as either Early or Middle, were categorised as uncertain.

In total, 58 sites were identified as Early Byzantine, 35 as Middle Byzantine, and 49 were uncertain, while the rest were either pre- or post-Byzantine. The lower number of Middle Byzantine sites is perhaps explainable by the difficulty in identifying those places which lack diagnostic sherds, but it is also widely acknowledged that the number of settlements did fall during and after the seventh century. Having identified a sample of Early and Middle Byzantine sites, it was then possible to examine more closely the location and topography of these places.

The first aspect of the sites to be considered was their geographical location. Despite the methodological inconsistencies of extensive survey, there were clearly areas with higher numbers of Byzantine sites, most notably a cluster in the southwest of the survey region. Of the 93 Byzantine sites, 37 were in Konya province.

High levels of Late Roman to Byzantine settlement in this region have already been studied as part of the Konya Plain Survey (Baird 2004) which identified 85 Early Byzantine sites, an increase from the Roman period. The foundation of new settlements is seen as indicating population growth, a theory supported by an increase in aggregative site area. This is interpreted as resulting from agricultural intensification and greater investment in irrigation and cultivation, which could also explain the fairly sudden downturn in settlement numbers and size from the seventh century.

The position of sites – whether they were sited on mounds or flat land – was also considered. In discussing the preliminary survey findings, attention was drawn to the different locations of Roman and post-Roman sites (Omura 2002: 61), and in more recent reports, it was suggested that the settlement transition from mounds to flat sites occurred in the Roman period (Omura 2006: 72). This would correspond with the tendency for Romans to occupy flat, lowland sites, while in the later period, settlement shifted to more defensible locations, as would seem to be the case with the medieval re-occupation at Kaman-Kalehöyük. Although there was not a great deal of variation between mound and flat site occupation, there is a preference for flat sites in the earlier period, with 64 per cent on flat sites, while for the Middle Byzantine period the figure is 51 per cent. These statistics should be qualified, however, because the definition of a mound can be rather subjective and does not take into account a site's broader topography. To obtain a more accurate impression of change in the occupation of mound and flat sites it is necessary to consider a longer timespan.

An important factor when considering site locations is their elevation and topography. The average (mean) elevation of all the Early Byzantine sites was 1033.60m above sea level, while the average for the Middle Byzantine sites was 1061.29m. Although this is not a substantial difference, it could be partly explained by the variation in valley level across a large area, from around 900 to 1200m. However, even when sites in a smaller area are considered, the difference remains minimal. Of the 37 Byzantine sites in Konya province, 22 dated from the Early period, and 15 from the later period. The average elevation for the earlier sites is 1001.45m,

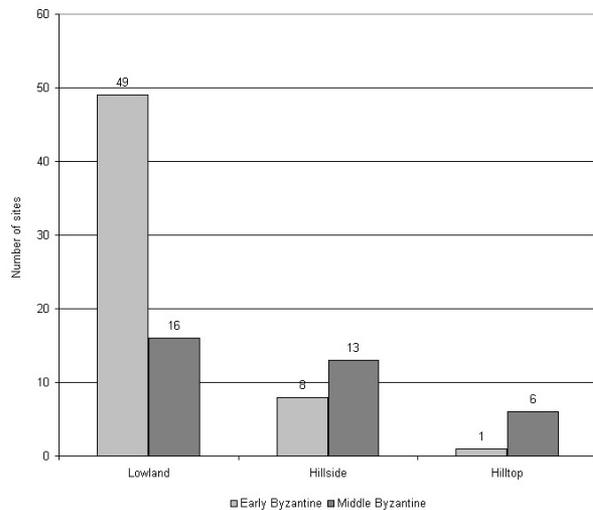


Fig.5 Chart showing the topographical location of Early and Middle Byzantine sites

and for the later period 1027.73, perhaps suggesting a preference for upland settlements in Middle Byzantium, but again, a small difference. More detailed investigation of site elevations in the Lake Tuz basin also found only moderate change in the location of post-Iron Age sites (Kashima 2001).

The modest change in site elevation over time might be explained by the region's already high position on the Anatolian plateau, but when looking at site topography, the location of sites in relation to the surrounding landscape, a more pronounced difference emerges (Fig.5). Sites were divided into lowland (those located on the valley plain), hillside and hilltop. The majority (84 per cent) of Early Byzantine sites were in lowland positions, with 13 per cent on hillsides and only one hilltop site, while of Middle Byzantine sites, 46 per cent were lowland, 37 per cent hillside, and 6 sites were on hilltops. Also noteworthy is that most 'uncertain' sites which had sparse material culture and no fine ware pottery to identify them by, were in mountainous locations, suggesting that they date from the later period, and were temporary or short-lived settlements.

## CONCLUSION

Material from the CAS survey indicates a definite settlement shift from the Early to Middle Byzantine

period: few sites were continuously inhabited from Roman to medieval times. This reflects major social and economic upheaval, perhaps caused by military invasion, that affected patterns of agricultural production, trade and settlement structure. But the changes, at least in site location, are not as pronounced as one might expect, considering the conclusions of previous studies of Byzantine sites in the region (Belke and Restle 1984). A likely reason for this is the practical limitations of extensive survey, especially site selection, and the problem of pottery identification and site chronology, where sites cannot be dated accurately enough for settlements of the seventh to ninth centuries to be distinguished from those of the ninth to eleventh centuries. The real outcome of the seventh-century shift might therefore be overlooked, as the poorer, short-lived sites, which only feature a few sherds of undecorated pottery, cannot be confidently dated, and so most Middle Byzantine sites are likely to date from the later, more prosperous period.

The question of settlement shift in the Early to Middle Byzantine period is particularly relevant for the occupation history of Kaman-Kalehöyük, which after centuries of continuous settlement, was abandoned at some point in the Hellenistic period, and only re-occupied in Middle Byzantine times, a break of almost a thousand years. During the Late Roman period, settlement levels increased greatly across the entire landscape, with previously unoccupied areas of the countryside being settled, and growth in the number and size of villages. So it is interesting to ask why there is little evidence of settlement at Kaman-Kalehöyük at this time. The tendency for long-inhabited höyüks to be abandoned in the Roman era but re-occupied in post-Roman times can be seen at many sites in Anatolia. In the environs of Kaman-Kalehöyük there were several Early and Middle Byzantine sites, agricultural, military and ecclesiastical in nature. Further research should therefore concentrate on a smaller district, to clarify the processes and outcomes of settlement change within a distinct geographical and ecological zone. It should also address how surface artefacts can inform us about the function and character of sites as well as their chronology.

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