

Introduction

Through technology humankind has tried to control its natural environment and create more favourable living conditions. The topic of this present work is that section of society that dealt with technology: the artisans and their working places. The practical implementation of technology in every aspect of the everyday life of Thessalonians and Byzantines in general will be presented here through historical testimonies and archaeological finds connected to these artisans and their professional activities in Thessaloniki. These activities, generally speaking, are often under-represented, if not neglected, in the excavation reports. In addition, historians have only occasionally dealt with this topic and mostly not in conjunction with the archaeological evidence. Thessaloniki is no exception, despite its size and importance, and the great number of salvage excavations conducted in it. Work to date has mostly been in the form of micro-studies dealing with a specific time period and a single material, e.g. Hellenistic coroplastic, Roman sculpture, Early Christian glassworking, or Late Byzantine glazed pottery. This can be seen clearly in the bibliography of the present volume. It has not been attempted until now to analyse and describe the general picture presented in the entirety of the archaeological and historical evidence for the total historical period. This is especially so in respect of attempting, at the same time, to illuminate the social status of these professionals and their spatial incorporation in the urban fabric of each period. Even less attempt has been made to investigate diachronically the functioning of this large Mediterranean urban and commercial centre².

The time-frame of this work spans from the founding of Thessaloniki in 316/315 BC to its final conquest by the Ottomans on 29 March 1430. The Ottoman conquest is significant because it marked the decrease in the city's population as many of its Christian inhabitants, both locals and Westerners, fled and the majority of those remaining were sold into slavery. Jewish merchants and artisans were shortly afterwards compelled to move to Constantinople. The city became so deserted that its new overlords were forced to import Thessalonian families from the surrounding region, as well as Yuruks from nearby Giannitsa, in order to re-populate the city. This signalled an interruption in the continuity of everyday life, certainly in the operation of workshops, and possibly also in the

expertise connected with their operation. Indeed, the arrival of a large number of Sephardic Spanish Jews from the late fifteenth century onwards, as well as Ashkenazi Jews from central Europe, altered the city drastically. Its commerce, arts, crafts and trades, even its technology, permanently changed in respect to the preceding periods³.

The geographic context and backdrop for the present volume is the city itself, as delimited by its walls and the areas in direct contact with these to the east and west, where the city's skilled workers were active. The mills located along streams north of the city have also been included as these formed an integral part of the productive activity that met the needs of the city itself. In addition, a gold mine in the hills above the valley to the east of the city that clearly belonged to the Metropolis of Thessaloniki has also been included. The gold from this mine ended up as raw material for the city's workshops.

Artisanal activity in Thessaloniki will be approached through the study of extant archaeological remains and historical records. To that end, all published reports and notes in archaeological and historical journals referring to the excavations conducted in the city or to incidental finds during public works were examined. In addition, thorough research was conducted in the archives of the local Ephorates of the Archaeological Service in order to compile a detailed catalogue of all sites excavated from the beginning of the twentieth century until 2014 in the city and its immediate hinterland providing indications of artisanal activities. Furthermore, personal interviews with colleagues who have served in the Archaeological Service have supplemented the research with extra information and shed light on some vaguely mentioned excavations and defined the exact location of some other plots. Finally, the collections of the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki and the Museum of Byzantine Culture were scrutinised for wasters and other finds indicative of artisanal activities and their find sites located, thus adding some more dots on the map of the workshops in the city. A detailed catalogue of the workshops was made that forms the core and basis of the entire work. In this catalogue, each workshop is presented comprehensively with full bibliographic references. All the data found concerning its form and function as a

2 The sole exception is Dēmētriadēs, *Topographia Thessalonikēs*, concerning the Ottoman period.

3 Dēmētriadēs, *Topographia Thessalonikēs* 23-27, 459-464. – Vryonis Jr., *The Ottoman Conquest* 281-321. – Melville-Jones, *Ottoman Policy* 159-169 esp. 168. – Mazower, *Thessalonikē* 53-59.

workshop, as well as data about previous and subsequent uses at that same point are mentioned, and related drawings and photographs have also been added to these entries. These finds have also been mapped and situated in the city's urban fabric, making visible the various activities by era and region. Naturally, within this context it was absolutely vital to study the space and morphology of the city itself, the locus in which all these individuals lived and worked. The same holds for the monuments, chiefly the walls, the Agora, the *Via Regia* or *Leōphoros* and the other ancient roads preserved down the centuries, all of which defined and continue to define the basic framework of the background against which all these activities took place. Even other monuments such as the Galerian Palace complex and the Christian churches, which defined neighbourhoods and *quartiers*, shaping the micro-framework of the lives and activities of artisans and craftsmen, were sought out and studied in an effort to build a narrative concerning the urban structure, in order to include within it artisanal activities and the various workshops.

Tracing artisanal activities in 2,300-year-old Thessaloniki, as in other cities with a continuous life of so many centuries, is fraught with difficulties. This is true especially concerning artisanal activity in the earliest historical periods of Thessaloniki, which are very obscure and only scarce evidence has been discovered until now. For the very earliest period this identification is almost impossible, at least so far as locating installations or built elements is concerned. Usually the evidence relies on movable archaeological finds, i.e. artefacts, which due to their great numbers or their special character, such as wasters (i.e. deformed and/or unfinished products), present a still indirect yet strong evidence for local artisanal activity. Furthermore, it should be noted that only some of the workshops can be located archaeologically, particularly: a) those related to the processing of organic materials that required extensive use of water and, therefore, had water reservoirs, basins, and systems for inflowing and drainage water, which are often at least partly preserved and thus archaeologically detectible; and b) those related to the processing of inorganic materials for which the use of furnaces was required, remnants of which are also traceable in the excavations.

The fragmentary character of the salvage excavations that unearthed most of the relevant finds, in addition to the constant use of the same space and the consequent disturbances of the archaeological layers, supplemented by the fact that artisanal activities were usually housed in makeshift structures that often left little, if any, traceable remains, makes the identification of such finds extremely difficult, even when far

more recent remains are under consideration. Hence, out of 112 artisanal units that have been identified as such in Thessaloniki, for at least nineteen of them (cat. nos 67, 88-100, 108-112) it was impossible to associate any particular craft with reasonable certainty.

Furthermore, valuable information on these crafts can be found in the written sources, which directly or indirectly illuminate aspects of private and professional life of the citizens of Thessaloniki⁴. These include inscriptions, historiographical, hagiographical, and legal texts, *acta* of the monasteries of Mount Athos. To this end, all volumes of the Acts of the monasteries of Mount Athos and other monastic archives were thoroughly searched. Acts concerning monastery properties in Thessaloniki were identified and information was extracted about the presence of workshops and commercial premises. Furthermore, the overall technical infrastructure and foundation of the buildings referred to were studied and evaluated to see wherever this could add data about the choice of some materials, indicating either the paucity or absence of some, or the widely and easily accessible presence of others.

The historical sources that mention the city and events that took place in the region were a basic source for the more general framework within which information about workshop activity was integrated. Texts by visitors to Thessaloniki illuminated the city's form and functions from additional viewpoints. Legal texts, especially those mentioning the city within the legal framework governing the establishment and operation of various workshop activities, were an important basis for determining what was theoretically in force according to the law, as well as for checking and assessing the archaeological finds themselves, which testify to compliance with, or more often violation of, this legislative framework.

Commentaries on ancient Greek texts written by Byzantine Thessalonians or others that are considered to accurately reflect daily life, contemporary technology, and the sorts of products in circulation in the city were also used. Theological and literary texts which go beyond the scope of literary conventions (*topoi*) and are considered to contain factual insights into city life were also examined, and they significantly enriched topics related to our own subject. The lives of saints who lived in or passed through Thessaloniki and could offer even minimal information about city life were studied; such information included living conditions in the city, existing technology, and the production, distribution, and trade in goods. Furthermore, the correspondences of prelates were excerpted, including that of both local clerics and others who

4 For information from hagiographical sources about trades and crafts in the sixth and seventh centuries, see Magoulias, *Trades and Crafts* 11-35. On the use of inscriptions to shed light to the Early Christian craftsmen, see Mentzou, *Symbolai* passim. – Sodini, *L'artisanat urbain à l'époque paléochrétienne* 71-119, with further bibliography. On the use of written sources in understanding the multifaceted nature of secular and religious artefacts, and Byzantine material culture in general as well as the conditions and limitations they present in this interpretation with a thorough theoretical discussion and further bibliography, see Parani, *On The Personal Life* passim esp. 158-167. See also Parani,

Reconstructing passim esp. 218-289, for the secular artefacts and the reality of Byzantine material culture represented in Byzantine art and their rendering from an archaeological and art-historical point of view. On the significance of written documents to material culture studies generally and more specifically to the understanding of the Middle and Late Byzantine society, see Parani, *Intercultural* passim and esp. 349-353 with further bibliography. On the vessel and its metaphorical use in Middle Byzantine literature and the place of the pot in the Byzantine world, see Gerstel, *The Sacred Vessel* 149-156.

simply mentioned local production of specific products and the commerce in these.

All published and most of the still unpublished inscriptions from the excavations were studied in order to trace all information concerning artisans, their works and their societies and guilds. Finally, the lead seals of church officials and state dignitaries residing in Thessaloniki have been used as well, both as artefacts made in the city and as bearers of historical information by the virtue of the inscriptions stamped on them.

Another consideration was to identify continuity and discontinuity in the operation of the city, and the presence of professionals in sectors who maintained their traditions for centuries throughout Thessaloniki's long history. Finally, there is the diachronicity associated with fluctuations in financial conditions prevailing in the city and its commercial network, and perhaps with the arrival (or not) of new inhabitants having different origins and traditions, and who introduced or enhanced technical expertise and professions.

This book is divided into three major chronological chapters. Firstly, the scant Hellenistic finds along with the more numerous Roman and Early Christian finds are examined in succession, since they present one, albeit wide, ensemble covering Antiquity. Secondly, the Dark Ages and Middle Byzantine (eighth to twelfth centuries) finds are presented. Finally, those from the Latin Kingdom of Thessalonica and the Late Byzantine period (thirteenth to fifteenth centuries) are considered.

Each chapter begins with an outline of the political history of the era in general with a special focus on the events in and around Thessaloniki. A topographical outline of the city follows, presenting how it looked like in that period and the context in which the artisans operated. Further on, information derived from historical sources, in addition to that, excavation finds on each profession or trade that could be documented for that period are presented in detail. Professions are presented in the same order, beginning with those that required the use of fire, followed by those that required the use of substantial quantities of water and closing with those that cannot be traced archaeologically and are only documented indirectly through references in written sources. The archaeological remains of each profession are marked in the large **map** at the end of the book. In addition, separate maps show the find-spots for each profession (**figs 379-386**). Finally, closing remarks are added, discussing briefly the social position of the artisan in Roman and Byzantine society. Finds from Thessaloniki are presented in chronological order with general remarks given on the layout of the workshops and their spatial distribution in the urban plan of the city and its environs.

Following this is a thorough catalogue of the 112 workshops that have been identified through excavation. Work-

shops of the same trade are arranged in a chronological order and trades are presented in the same order that they were exhibited in the chronological chapters, fire-related, water-related and archaeologically invisible ones⁵. Special effort has been made in order to present all information concerning the excavated lot of each catalogue entry, thus making available all clues about what stood and what was happening on the site before, and therefore whether that affected the installation of the workshop there. It is also noted what happened after the destruction of the workshop and the final departure of the artisan from the site. Each entry is documented with the plan of the excavation, where the remains of the workshop have been specially highlighted, and with photographs of the movable and immovable finds connected with that phase and use. Finally, the work is supplemented by a bibliography of the ancient written sources and the modern books and articles that have been used for this research.

5 Further information on the organisation of the catalogue is given in the introduction to the catalogue in this volume.