

Understanding Urban Transformation in Amorium from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages

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Abstract The excavation of Amorium already from the late 1980s and until today has been pioneering a hands-on approach to the study of urban evolution by exploring a major early medieval and middle Byzantine provincial capital that after the 7th century and until the 11th played a paramount role in the forefront of Byzantine history. Especially the ‘prehistory’ of the excavation of Amorium is shown to have been an early episode in the famous Kazhdan-Ostrogorsky debate on the survival of Byzantine cities into the Middle Ages. At the same time, the paper presents how this tradition endures in the new phase of the Amorium Project by continuing on the basic principles set and expanding on new questions as the articulation of built civic space and the later medieval transition from Byzantine to Seljuk and Ottoman.

Keywords Byzantine archaeology. Urban archaeology. Survival of cities. Transitional period. Amorium. Asia Minor. Anatolia.

Summary 1 Amorium and the Historiography of Byzantine Urban Studies. – 2 The New Directions of Amorium Excavation. – 3 Church B in the Upper City. – 4 The Inner Fortress in the Upper City. – 5 The Renewed Excavation at the ‘Large Building’. – 6 Concluding Remarks.

1 Amorium and the Historiography of Byzantine Urban Studies

Talking about Amorium is always a challenging subject, even for the people who have been working for many years at the site, documenting its rich archaeology and studying its tumultuous Byzantine history. This paper on Amorium was part of the original programme of the 24th International Congress of Byzantine Studies that was scheduled to be held in Istanbul in the summer of 2021. It was included among the papers about other Byzantine sites and regions of Asia Minor intended to represent some of the breakthroughs in Anatolian medieval archaeology.

It is certainly a different situation now that the discussion about the Byzantine urban archaeology of Amorium is presented in the Congress at Venice and Padua, far distant from Asia Minor with its rich Byzantine past that echoed for centuries even after the termination of an actual Byzantine presence. At the same time, it is evidence of the present-day vigour in the field of Byzantine archaeology, contributing to the discussion about cities and urban settlements. To this discussion, fieldwork at Amorium has been providing us with an overarching framework of understanding and a methodology of practice that can actually be helpful to bridge the distant areas of the vast empire (Tsivikis, forthcoming). The last-minute complications and the change of venue for the 24th ICBS meant also the unfortunate distancing from Istanbul and modern-day Turkey, an area where archaeological practice has been extremely productive during the past decades, especially with regard to the exploration of the Byzantine remains of Anatolia, one of the main heartlands of Byzantium.

Indeed, the archaeological work conducted at Amorium is intertwined with the urban evolution of Byzantine settlements in the Middle Ages. In some ways the evolution of the excavation project itself echoes views on Byzantine urban archaeology and a methodological transition of archaeological interest from Late Antique to Medieval remains. Thus, we will start by tracing some of the main historical points in the evolution of the excavation itself.

Although knowledge of the location of Amorium goes back to the first half of the eighteenth century, the first point of interest can be traced in the prehistory of the excavation of Amorium (Lightfoot 2012, 469-71). The influential director of the Istanbul Archaeological Museum, Nezih Fıratlı, was the first archaeologist actually to open a trench at the site of Amorium; that was in 1959, although his main interest was in the possible discovery of Hittite and Phrygian antiquities (Lightfoot 2012, 470). A few years later in 1962 the visit of Cyril Mango, then professor at Oxford University, marked the beginning of a radically different understanding of the visible ruins and the still buried remains of Amorium (Lightfoot 2012, 470).

The result of this visit was a short unpublished typewritten unofficial report by Cyril Mango bearing the date 13 August 1962, and the title *Report on Amorium*. The concluding remarks of this report hold great importance for the history of the Amorium excavations. In this we read:

I believe that Amorium would be much more interesting to excavate than St. Polyeuctes [sic], and cheaper too. The point is that here we have an entire Byzantine town (boundaries still visible), a town that did not lose its importance in the 7th century as most other towns did, but actually gained in importance during the 'dark period'. This will give a solution to the Kazhdan-Ostrogorsky controversy of what happened to the Byzantine town in the 7th century. In short, Amorium is the most exciting Byzantine site I have ever seen so far, and it is situated in the midst of a highly exciting region bristling with other Byzantine remains. (Mango, *C. Report on Amorium*. 13 August 1962. Amorium Excavations Archive)

Indeed, Mango seems to have been a proponent of the prospect of an excavation project of Amorium as a more promising project than the later famous St. Polyeuktos/Saraçhane excavation in Istanbul. This is a quite interesting observation since he was one of the main persons responsible for the identification of the great Constantinopolitan monument (Mango, Ševčenko 1961). In Mango's short note the main argument – besides the constant for all field projects' budgetary concern – was that Amorium was a unique site to excavate as it remained an urban settlement from the seventh century on, and even more during the Transitional period it became a major urban centre of the diminished Byzantine state. This, in his opinion, would offer a solution to the famous post-war debate about the survival of Byzantine cities during the 'Dark Ages', phrased originally in a debate between Alexander Kazhdan (1954) and Georg Ostrogorsky (1959). In this way, we see that the question about the transformation – as is the current terminology of Byzantine urban studies – of Byzantine cities was engrained in the ancestral DNA of the archaeological exploration of the city of Amorium.

Cyril Mango's report, however, did not manage to spur an archaeological project at Amorium and the excavation of the church of St. Polyeuktos in Istanbul by Martin Harrison became the focus of a very important Byzantine archaeology initiative for some years to come (Harrison 1986; 1989b). We had to wait until the late 1980s after the conclusion of the St. Polyeuktos excavation, study of the material and major publications and after Martin Harrison's move to become Professor of Roman Archaeology at Oxford in 1985 for the Anatolian city of Amorium to attract once more archaeological interest. Cyril Mango's role was again paramount and it seemed that this time he could

offer the needed push to Harrison and the institutions involved for the excavation that, according to his own words, “intended to throw light on urban life in the [...] Byzantine Dark Age” and thus offer answers to the question of the survival of Byzantine cities (Schachner, Parpulov 2011, 33).

Unfortunately, the project initiated by Martin Harrison in 1987 with a preliminary survey season was short-lived, as he himself passed away in 1992 after five excavation seasons at Amorium (Harrison, Christie 1993; Lightfoot 2012, 471). The brief period of research and the early problems of understanding the complex stratigraphy did not lead to spectacular results, as was expected, and apart from annual reports little was published that discussed and detailed the urban character of Late Roman, Early Byzantine, Byzantine Early Medieval and Middle Byzantine Amorium.

The next period of Amorium excavations started in 1993 under the direction of Christopher Lightfoot. The next fifteen years of work offered for the first time the much-sought information on the evolution and survival of the city through systematic and stratigraphical excavation across the settlement and regular publications, highlighted in the five volumes in a series entitled *Amorium Reports*.

In addition to the publication of crucial archaeological data attesting on the material culture coming from the continuous life of the city through the difficult period of the seventh until the eleventh centuries, several overview synthetic studies have appeared, reformulating the idea of the survival of Byzantine cities and adaptation to a new urban development model (Lightfoot 1998b; 2012; 2017; Ivison 2007). Soon, in the relative wider discussion of Byzantine urbanism, Amorium became one of the main examples offering substantial material evidence that could shed light on aspects little known during the Byzantine Early Medieval period (Brubaker, Haldon 2010, 531-63; Curta 2016; Tsivikis 2020, 329-31; Zavagno 2021, 43-68).

In general, it would not be wrong to say that the aims of the project team between 1993 and 2009 focused on finding changes in the city’s urban fabric and understanding and dating the physical evidence of the continuous Byzantine urban habitation. A well-defined stratigraphy of the evolution of the city was developed based on archaeological finds from Early Byzantine (fourth-sixth century), to Byzantine Early Medieval (seventh to mid-ninth century) and finally to Middle Byzantine (mid-ninth to late eleventh century). It was also possible to connect major historical events that had a clear and definite consequence on the fortunes of the city of Amorium with the archaeological record. Firstly, the collapse of the Eastern provinces in the seventh century and the establishment of a military and civic administration centre at Amorium with the creation of the *thema of Anatolikoi* (Haldon 2016, 266-71) also brought about the reorganisation of Amorium as a provincial or thematic urban centre (Lightfoot

1998a; Ivison 2007). Secondly, the discovery of a consistent destruction layer of burnt buildings and violently-killed individuals across the lower city of Amorium and its correlation with the events of the siege and sack of the city by the Arab armies of the Abbasid Caliph al-Mu'tašim in the late summer of 838 offered to the archaeologists a wealth of data on the city between the seventh and ninth centuries (Ivison 2012; Lightfoot 2017). Lastly, the collapse of most of Byzantine Anatolia soon after the battle of Manzikert in 1071 meant also for Amorium the end of Byzantine occupation and of the city as a Byzantine settlement (Lightfoot 2017). An important question was also the size of the city in the different Byzantine periods and whether there was a reduction of the inhabited area and the size of the town. Contrary to what was still often discussed at the time, it was shown that Amorium in the seventh to ninth centuries occupied all the walled area of the city to the limits of the Early Byzantine settlement (Lightfoot 2017).

This reality was acknowledged just a few years ago at the 23rd International Byzantine Studies Conference in Belgrade at the plenary session entitled *The Byzantine City and the Archaeology of the Third Millennium* where the importance of the results of the Amorium excavations to the relevant discussion was highlighted (Crow 2016, 65; Zanini 2016, 130).

2 The New Directions of Amorium Excavation

This brings us eventually to today. What has happened in the past decade in the archaeology of Amorium and in what way can our views on the transformation and survival of Byzantine cities be supplemented by new finds and additional data?

The first significant change is that Amorium Project has moved to a new era as it has become a Turkish-led project. In 2013, a transitional year, the Amorium excavations were carried out under the direction of the local Afyonkarahisar Museum authorities with the scientific advisory of Prof. Dr. Zeliha Demirel-Gökalp from Anadolu University, with the approval of the T.C. Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Since 2014, the excavations have been carried out under the direction of Prof. Dr. Zeliha Demirel-Gökalp with the generous support of the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and Anadolu University and the Turkish Historical Society. The new project has become a hub for the training of a younger generation of Turkish archaeologists in the complex Byzantine archaeology of Anatolia, while remaining at the same time a hub for wider collaboration with researchers and institutions from both inside and outside Turkey. This has been an important move, exhibiting also the commitment of Turkish archaeology to the critical questions of transition

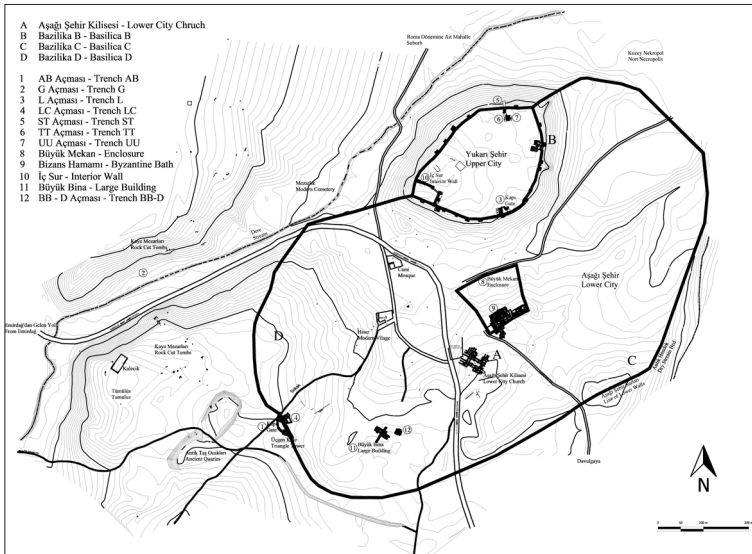


Figure 1 Topographical plan of the city of Amorium (© Amorium Project)

between Antiquity and the Middle Ages, and expanding also to encompass the questions of the next transitional period, that from Byzantine to Seljuk and Ottoman.

The main goal of the new team working at Amorium since 2013, continuing in many ways where work was left at, has been to examine the settlement in the city between the Roman, Byzantine, Seljuk, and Ottoman periods, and to identify new excavation locations that will provide answers to the question of the transformation, change, and development of the city through all these periods. For this reason, archaeological excavations have been carried out in three areas in the city since 2013. The newly-opened archaeological trenches are located in different areas across the city of Amorium. Two of them are in the fortified Upper City, the first in its northeast quadrant at the site of Church B, the other at its southwest quadrant at the location of a secondary Inner Fortification Wall. The third trench is in the southwest area of the Lower City at the site of the so-called Large Building [fig. 1].



Figure 2 Aerial photograph of Church B trench in the Upper City of Amorium (© Amorium Project)

3 Church B in the Upper City

Church B, located in the northeast of the Upper City, is one of the four large churches that have been identified inside the walled city of Amorium. Excavation at Church B started in 2013, but its location had been identified a long time before during the survey in 1987. According to the preliminary results, the church was the largest church in the city being a basilica with three aisles extending in an east-west direction and culminating with a large seven-sided apse to the east [fig. 2]. The first phase of the building should be dated to the fifth or sixth century. Excavations carried out in the building between 2013 and 2019 have shown that Church B lost its function during or just before the Middle Byzantine Period, and was divided into spaces of different sizes and for various uses, although occasional finds point

also to some continuing religious use in a limited area.¹ Signs of fire, destruction, and even deliberate destruction can be observed in the archaeological record, although there is still no certain explanation for the reasons of this change. The coins found in the excavations of the building do not provide evidence for the Early Byzantine Period of the church, as out of the 20 finds so far recorded only five date to the earlier period but all of them are surface finds. However, other rich finds from Church B trenches found at approximately the same elevations (ceramics, architectural elements, and metal fragments) point to the Early Byzantine Period and offer an idea of the initial church. Terracotta objects possibly connected with the liturgy such as a terracotta holy bread seal, one of the first found in Amorium (Demirel-Gökalp, forthcoming), and an inscribed sherd with a graffito, bearing the text of the Lord's Prayer, rare in Asia Minor (Tsivikis 2022), might point to this early activity in the church.

Middle Byzantine activity in Church B is better attested in the archaeological record with at least 15 coins found in various areas at similar occupation layers that can be dated to the period between Theophilos (829-842) and Romanos IV (1068-1071). Parts of the church lost their original function in the Middle Byzantine Period and were used as storage areas. This is evident from a *pithos* found *in situ*, traces of three more removed from their original location, and plentiful sherds of storage and cooking pots dating to the Middle Byzantine Period found inside the spaces created inside the body of the basilica. The partition of space initiated in the Middle Byzantine period, continued also in a later period, as the same space was probably used as a residence between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries during the Anatolian Beyliks and Early Ottoman periods, and even a ceramic workshop may have functioned inside it at this time, as is shown by ceramic kiln materials unearthed there.

4 The Inner Fortress in the Upper City

Close to Church B lies another area that is currently being studied in the context of the evolution of the settlement in the city of Amorium and especially the area inside the Upper City. This is the area of the Inner Upper City Wall, that formed a smaller well-fortified stronghold inside the Upper City [fig. 3]. Amorium consisted of two fortified urban cores, the Lower City and the Upper City. The Inner Wall area is located at the point where the Lower and Upper City walls meet

¹ Demirel-Gökalp 2015, 653; Demirel-Gökalp et al. 2017, 453; Demirel-Gökalp, Erel, Yılmazyaşar 2018, 561; Demirel-Gökalp et al. 2019, 715; Demirel-Gökalp et al. 2020, 569; Tsivikis 2021.



Figure 3 Aerial photograph of the Upper City Citadel trench of Amorium (© Amorium Project)

in the south-west corner of the Upper City. The Inner Wall addition formed a horizontal L shape and abutted the preexisting wall segments and created a roughly rectangular new fortified space with walls as strong as the main city walls. This was not only a space separated from the rest of the Upper City area, but was also very important in terms of being the third and final line of defence for the city.

Although it is not possible to give a precise date due to the lack of epigraphic evidence recording the construction of the city walls, limited historical information and the results of the archaeological excavations carried out in the city indicate that the Lower City walls, built of large and well-shaped limestone blocks, were a creation of the late fifth or early sixth century (Iverson 2007, 30; Tsivikis 2021, 199-202). The excavation also recorded building initiatives that can be dated in the seventh-eighth centuries and then in the late ninth century representing the clear creation of the Upper City walled space (Harrison, Christie 1993; Tsivikis 2021, 199-202). Unlike the Lower City walls, it was determined that a large number of spolia materials from the Roman Period were used in the Upper City walls (Harrison 1990, 215; Harrison 1991b, 219). The Inner Wall addition seems to be a later addition to the preexisting fortifications, thus belonging to a third or fourth building initiative in the Amorium fortifications.

Although archaeological research on the Upper City mound began simultaneously with the Lower City, our understanding of the architectural features of the wall system surrounding the mound and the architectural features of the Inner Wall in the southwest quadrant, as well as their formation and change processes, are quite limited.

This limitation is also seen in the historical chronology of the Upper City, its relationship with the Lower City, and the diversity of buildings. In this context, we will attempt here to present new perspectives on the city walls of Amorium based on the archaeological work carried out in the Inner Wall area between 2014 and 2021 and the data reflected in the textual sources and other publications about the city wall system.

No substantial traces of Hellenistic or Roman fortifications have been found in Amorium, with the exception of some small evidence (Gill et al. 2002, 12). The earliest Greek reference to the defences of the city is by the eleventh-century Byzantine historian Kedrenos (Georgius Cedrenus, *Compendium historiarum* [ed. Bekker 1838, 615]).² The historian reports that Emperor Zeno was responsible for the erection of the walls of Amorium, which points to the years AD 474-91.³ The hagiographical text of the Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon (BHG, *Bibliotheca hagiographica graeca* 1748) recounts that the people of Amorium met the saint outside the city walls during his late sixth-century visit, informing us about the existence of the Lower City walls at the end of the sixth century and that some residents had houses outside the city walls (Iverson 2007, 29; Lightfoot 1998b, 60; Tsivikis 2021, 195). Although limited, important data on the fortification system of Amorium also appears in the works of Arab geographers. One of these geographers, Hurdazbih, states that al-Mu'taşim "burned down" Ankara and conquered Amorium (Ammûriye), and that Amorium was in the Natalus Region, which means 'east' and is the largest of the "Roman regions" and had 44 bastions (İbn Hurdazbih 2008, 88, 92). Al-Tabari is extremely important among the sources

² However, there is also an Islamic source stating that the city was rebuilt by Emperor Anastasius (491-518), Belke, Restle 1984, 123.

³ Although the excavations related to the Lower City walls were carried out in a limited area, the data obtained were the source of some important inferences. During the studies carried out in trenches AB and LC, the presence of the gate of the city wall that delimits the south side of the city and the Triangular Tower was determined (Harrison 1989a; Harrison 1991b, 220-3.; Lightfoot 1998b, 60; Iverson 2007, 36). The main building material encountered in the entrance gate, fortification walls and triangular tower shows Late Antique features, and dendrochronological analysis of a charred wooden beam found during the excavation indicates the year 487 (Kuniholm 1995). These findings seemingly confirm the dating to Zeno's reign for the Lower City walls, as reported by Kedrenos (Lightfoot 1998b, 61). Except for the limited area, archaeological studies on the Lower City fortification system have not yet been carried out. With reference to the survey and aerial photographs, it is understood that the Lower City walls are approximately three kilometres long, and the fortification walls built parallel to the elevations surrounding the city and the spaces between them are included in the defence system as a moat. Archaeological excavations were carried out in the Lower City, the Lower City Church (Church A), whose first construction phase is dated to the fifth-sixth centuries, and the bath structure, whose first construction phase is also dated to the sixth century, are evaluated as construction activities contemporary with Lower City wall (Iverson 2007, 36-7).

on the city's defence system and the structure of the walls, as it contains details of the 838 siege, in which the most severe destruction took place in the history of Amorium (Bosworth 1991, 115-19). One of the remarkable points in al-Tabari's narrative is the information that Aetios⁴ was in his "tower" with the soldiers and people around him. It is tempting to think that the Upper City walls could be identified with the "tower" of Aetios in the account of al-Tabari. According to this narration, after the Arab army entered the city, a group of Byzantine soldiers went to defend the church, but the church and those inside it were burned alive, and the rest of the population was slaughtered. Aetios was in his "tower" with his soldiers at this time, according to al-Tabari (Bosworth 1991, 115-19). Although it is necessary to approach such information with reservation, it can be a source of inference that the major fighting events of the siege and the sack of the town took place mostly in the Lower City, as in the scene described at the church.

It is significant that the archaeological data found in the excavation of various trenches in the Lower City confirms destruction across the city during this war event (Iverson 2012; Lightfoot 2017, 335-6; Tsivikis forthcoming) and that no such layer of fire and destruction was found so far in the excavations in the Upper City (Lightfoot 2017, 335; Yılmazyaşar, Demirel-Gökalp 2021). If the presumed location of Aetios "tower" was somewhere in the Upper city, it would be interesting to wonder whether some special fortification existed inside the ninth-century acropolis resembling the newly excavated Inner Fortress or some predecessor. Indeed, some parts of this fortification like the oval tower excavated in 2021 in the southwest corner, at the junction between the Lower City walls and the Upper City fortification, it was determined that the building stones were exposed to intense fire, although no destruction layer was detected. In addition, caltrops and arrowheads found there indicate a struggle in front of the tower.

The first assessment of the Upper City fortifications was offered early on by Martin Harrison and his team, as a result of the first year of survey at Amorium. According to this study, 30 of the estimated total 44 towers were recorded, the existence of a moat has been hypothesised in front of the Lower City wall especially the east part and at least five city gates was hypothesised: two leading into the Lower City and three into the Upper City (Harrison 1988, 177, 179; Harrison 1989a, 193; Gill et al. 2002, 11-13). If we focus on the line of fortifications at the west of the acropolis where the Lower City walls meet with the Inner Wall, today a total of 20 towers have been localised.

⁴ Information about Aetios is limited to the historians' accounts of the siege and capture of Amorium. He is mentioned as an aristocrat, general of the Anatolia theme, and one of the officers caught defending the city of Amorium (Kolia-Dermitzaki 2002, 141).

Although an early and limited perspective has emerged regarding the Lower City and Upper City walls based on textual and field data, more extensive excavation is needed on the city wall system for a more complete picture. On the southern slope of the mound of the acropolis, the remains of a civil complex possibly belonging to the early Roman period, built with large ashlar blocks (Iverson 2007, 41), reveal that the area was used heavily during the earlier periods and before the construction of the fortification that isolated the acropolis mound from the rest of the city. The construction of Church B, the Upper City Basilica (Demirel Gökalp et al. 2019, 715; Tsivikis 2021, 208-10), which has been proposed to have been built in the fifth or sixth centuries is proof that the Upper City and the Lower City experienced a process of urban change that was approximately simultaneous. Regarding the fortifications, however, the Roman funerary steles and other spolia (Harrison 1991a, 253; Lightfoot 1998b, 63; Iverson 2007, 41-3), which were much used in segments of the Upper City fortifications unlike the uniform building style of the Lower City fortifications, reveal that this process had at least two distinct episodes.

Until today, the construction process of a city wall surrounding the Upper City has been evaluated mainly in the context of the transformations in the military and defence system of the Byzantine Empire after the seventh century and their reflection on Amorium as one of the main strategic hubs of the thematic system in Anatolia. It has been proposed repeatedly that the formation of the Upper City walls between the seventh and ninth centuries, much like the examples of Ankara, Sardis, and Ayasoluk hill at Ephesus, especially in terms of the widespread use of spolia (Lightfoot 1998b, 64-5; Iverson 2007, 41-3). This part of the wall was heavily destroyed after the 838 events and a new Middle Byzantine fortification was rebuilt for the acropolis mound in the late ninth or early tenth centuries after the place laid in ruins for some decades (Lightfoot 1998b, 66; Iverson 2000, 13-18, 20). In this later period the Upper City became the focus of the settlement of Amorium where the most intensive habitation occurred, while the Lower City with its non-functional fortifications exhibited rather a picture of scattered clusters of occupation. The newly-constructed or repaired fortifications of the Upper City with the additional Inner Citadel offered the settlement of Amorium and the thematic army of the Anatolikon that was still stationed there the needed protection against new enemies like the Emir of Tarsus who raided the city in 931 (Lightfoot, Lightfoot 2007, 59) or the growing insecurity of the late eleventh century.

The question of change and transformation in the city of Amorium, one of the most strategic centres of the Anatolian defence system throughout Byzantine Early Medieval and Middle Byzantine times, remains among the main objectives of the current Amorium excavation project. Additionally, nuancing the proposed chronologies and

establishing when exactly these interventions took place would eradicate any uncertainties as to when the Upper City walls were built and how they evolved. Unfortunately, we lack for the Upper City sources like Kedrenos, who remains our main historical reference about the Lower City walls.

Crucial archaeological data might be provided by the recent excavation of the Inner Wall and the Inner Fortress that the wall created. This Inner Fortress structure, which is a part of the later defence system of Amorium, is here discussed regarding its dating and intended use. The observation that the Inner Wall abuts on the Upper City walls both at its west and south ends offers a clear indication that it is a later addition. It was a building initiative that intended to the actual creation of the Inner Fortress, although the similarity of materials and technique characteristics between the two wall constructions suggests that there was not a long historical interval between the two phases.

The creation of inner keeps or limited space interior citadels in preexisting fortifications is a typical Middle Byzantine characteristic found in many Byzantine cities in the South Balkans and Asia Minor (Foss, Winfield 1986; Kontogiannis 2022) and continues even later as is evident by the twelfth-century Heptapyrgion in Thessaloniki (Koniordos 1997) or the early Ottoman Yedikule in Istanbul (Ahunbay 1997). However, the continuation of archaeological work in the citadel of Amorium is needed in order to determine the dating and use of this building complex at Amorium.

As yet, too, the archaeological explorations carried out in the city to date could not establish with any substantial architectural remains a connection between the last phase of the Byzantine city, which we know as dating to the end of the eleventh century, and the early Turkish period, that is, the Seljuk settlement (Lightfoot 2000; Tsivikis 2011). Inside the Inner Fortress of Amorium considerable architectural remains and a wealth of small finds related to the Turkish-Islamic settlement in the city have been uncovered. A number of finds prove that an active settlement of the Seljuk, Beylik Principalities, and Ottoman Periods was housed inside the Citadel. A settlement starting from the second half of the thirteenth century and continuing until the eighteenth century can be clearly traced in this archaeological data. It is possible that the settlement in question starting from the Seljuk Period was influenced later by the military and political relations of Germiyan, Karaman, and Ottoman Principalities, especially at the beginning of the fourteenth century when the settlement lay on the border of the different principalities. During and after the period of Murad II, Amorium remained only as a small village, perhaps called Hisarcık ('little fortress'), under the Ottoman Empire (Sümer 2001, 458; Yılmazyaşar, Demirel-Gökalp 2021, 523, 531). It is from the reign of Murad II also that the earliest Ottoman

coin found in Amorium excavations dates (Katsari, Lightfoot, Özme 2012, 176, no. 723).

5 The Renewed Excavation at the ‘Large Building’

The third area of archaeological activity in Amorium since 2013 lies inside the southwest part of the fortifications of the Lower City at the site of the Large Building trench. The Large Building trench was one of the first areas excavated by Martin Harrison when the Amorium Project started but work there only took place in 1988 and 1989 (Harrison 1989a; 1990b). In 2009, and 21 years after the original excavation at the Large Building, a new initiative was undertaken (Lightfoot, Tsivikis, Foley 2011, 49-50) and from 2013 onward this became the excavation of an entirely new sector of the city [fig. 4] (Demirel-Gökalp et al. 2016, 202; 2017, 454-5; 2019, 716-17; 2020, 570-1).

A Rectangular Building was unearthed at the site that must have been part of a major and imposing structure in Late Roman and Early Byzantine Amorium [fig. 5]. Its heavily-robbed condition today and its partial excavation do not allow us to hypothesise much more about its first and original phase of use. It is almost certain that the uncovered building is only the foundation or substructure of whatever rose much higher on this western promontory of the city of Amorium. Albeit in ruined form, the Rectangular Building stood to a considerable height until the medieval period and around it a neighbourhood of the town developed in two distinct phases.

The second phase was characterised by plentiful Byzantine Early Medieval material, from the seventh to the middle of the ninth century, when a large domestic unit was established to the east of the Early Byzantine massive building, within which a rich layer of destruction was found with materials that can be dated to the fall and destruction of the city in 838. This domestic area consists of a ground floor or semi-subterranean rooms that served as depots for foodstuff, complete with more than 12 sealed *pithoi*. The layer of destruction yielded a number of small finds, including metal objects associated with recording and weighing, a large quantity of pottery with some intact vessels, and also dozens of offensive weapons and at least one human individual who had died a violent death and was left inside the storage rooms.

The third phase belongs to the Middle Byzantine evolution of the city of Amorium from the late ninth until the late eleventh century. During this period, the Byzantine Early Medieval unit with the *pithoi* was buried under the destruction layer and subsequent levelling and terracing. Parts of the ruined Rectangular Building would still have been visible to a considerable height and in its immediate surrounding area mainly industrial activities were taking place, much of it



Figure 4 Aerial photograph of the Large Building complex, old (LB) and new (LB/RB) trenches, in the southwestern Lower City of Amorium (© Amorium Project)



Figure 5 Aerial photograph of the Large Building new south trench (LB/RB) in the Lower City of Amorium (© Amorium Project)

probably connected with recycling material from the entire Large Building complex.

The evolution of this neighbourhood in the western part of the Lower City of Amorium during the three distinct phases (Early Byzantine, Byzantine Early Medieval, and Middle Byzantine) follows an interesting and reoccurring pattern. The Early Byzantine period sees a major investment in public construction in the area, which is perhaps connected also with its strategic position, as this location raises to the same elevation as the mound of the Upper City. The insecurity of the Byzantine Early Medieval phase with the frequent Arabic offensives against the city possibly made the area near the walls less desirable. In the same period the Upper City gets proper fortifications and developed into a fortified acropolis. The older Large Building complex was abandoned already, and a new substantial unit was built in this area during the eighth and ninth century, one connected with storing considerable amounts of agricultural surplus. In its last phase during the Middle Byzantine Period after the mid-ninth century, the area seems to be a marginal location within the destroyed city walls, where the main activity was connected with the recycling of older building material for the use of new constructions across the city, mostly fortifications and ecclesiastical buildings.

6 Concluding Remarks

In the continued archaeological activity at Byzantine Amorium from 2013 onward we can see breakthroughs and new evidence of the evolution of the city and its continuous transformation from the early days of the Eastern Roman Empire until the heydays of the Ottoman Empire.

The excavation of the Large Building in the western Lower City affirms the already proposed pattern of continuous use of urban space from the fourth to the eleventh centuries inside the fortifications. The Byzantine Early Medieval change that occurred in the seventh and eighth centuries is more one of different but still intensive use of space with houses, storage areas, and productive facilities occupying or substituting public buildings, but still following loosely the existing city grid. The Middle Byzantine change occurring in the later ninth and tenth centuries meant a radically-altered site with much looser organisation focusing on recycling and with scarce evidence for residential use.

On the other hand, inside the Upper City of Amorium a different story is being recorded. In the case of the Church B we see the complete and radical change of an Early Byzantine ecclesiastical building after the eighth or ninth century. This change occurred to such an extent that today although almost 40% of the area of the original

large basilica has been excavated it is still difficult to discern its initial architectural plan. From the Byzantine Early Medieval period in Church B a long period of constant reuse and adaptation of space begins, a process that continues well into the Turkish periods of the acropolis in a parallel horizontal stratigraphy that makes it very difficult to differentiate domestic or other units that had been inserted in the remains of the old basilica.

This later transition from Byzantine to Seljuk, Beylik, and Ottoman from the eleventh century onwards is better portrayed in the remains of the newly excavated Inner Fortress in the southwest of the Upper City. Here a distinctively medieval Byzantine fortification system becomes the focus of the settlement in the post-Byzantine era. A completely new arrangement inside the citadel created by the Turkish inhabitants of Amorium reveals the strongly military character of the settlement as an army outpost in the middle of the newly-conquered and deeply-disputed lands of western Central Anatolia.

Beyond the significance of the evidence, unearthed and published as part of the systematic excavation of Amorium, for our understanding of Byzantine cities, of equal importance is the continuation of work at the site for the future of Byzantine, Medieval, and Islamic archaeology in Turkey. The Amorium Project is solid evidence of the prominence that these periods have in the archaeology of Anatolia and the commitment by national and international scholars and institutions alike for the continuation of the exploration of the material remains of this complex and multi-level past.

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