Exploring the everyday of Frankish Corinth: households under the microscope.

Evi Margaritis, evimargaritis@gmail.com
Wiener Laboratory, ASCSA

This study presents preliminary results of the agricultural choices and everyday life of Frankish Corinth based on the analysis of the plant remains retrieved from a household unit, representing the first targeted study of such nature of the period in Greece (Figure 1). Research on domestic space is shifted from a solely descriptive approach to a more insightful interpretation, targeting the reconstruction of daily life in the Frankish period in order to identify the relationship between domestic organization and social behaviour. Agricultural and cooking activities, two of the key components of daily practice have been identified through agricultural installations, cooking implements, pottery assemblages and hearths. This study aims to stimulate discussion on the interpretation of the use of space, demonstrating the essential interpretative role of techniques such as archaeobotanical analysis but for which the residues of daily life would have been permanently lost.

The deposition of the plant material is socially and culturally defined, since it entered the archaeological record as the result of specific activities. The spatial pattern of the archaeobotanical material within the building under study can be used to reconstruct these activities. This preliminary study focus on three different contexts of the house: its floor, a pit and a well, which was transformed to a rubbish pit, towards the end of its use (Figure 1).

The material from the floor consists of a concentration of whole fig and grape fruits, which most likely represent raisins (Figure 2). The material from the pit consists of barley (Figure 3) and bread wheat cereal grains, grape pips and flax, together with a large number of wild seeds and barley chaff. These last two components reached the house as a result of crop processing, which acts as a filter operating between crop cultivation and utilisation, as it prevents some plant remains involved in agricultural practices from reaching the archaeological site. For instance, early stages of crop processing may remove part of cereals and legumes that are subsequently left in the fields. The different stage of crop processing however can potentially be identified in the archaeobotanical record on the basis of the plant remains found in the samples (Figure 4). The samples from the well are of different composition: they consist of barely grains and chaff, coriander and thyme seeds but also large quantities of olive and thyme leaves. Barley and bread wheat were cultivated by the inhabitants of the house who brought the harvest into the house after its initial processing at the fields, but certainly the last stages of processing before consumption were undertaken into the house, most likely piece meal during the year and according to the houses’ needs. In addition, the presence of thyme and coriander could represent the "artymata" of their cooking.

The plant remains are approached in order not only to identify the use of plants by humans but also to reconstruct the spatial demarcation of food processing, preparation and disposal. The research questions which would be explored on the basis of the study of the plant remains include: the identification the crop repertoire present at Corinth, its spatial distribution and use (human consumption/fodder/fuel) and its changes from the preceding Byzantine era, samples from which will also be studied; in this way it will be possible to identify patterns which relate to social or economic structure; the observation of variations in sample composition (proportion of grain to chaff and weed) which relates directly to processing strategies; Identify husbandry regimes and different environmental contexts through the weeds present in the assemblage.

The study of the archaeobotanical samples of Frankish Corinth is part of a larger project undertaken for the first time in Greece for the historical periods, which investigates the agricultural and social history of the site over an extended period of time, from Geometric to Frankish, principally using site-specific information from the plant remains rather than relying on traditional material or written sources.

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