

ABSTRACT

**OCCUPATION OF THE 7TH –9TH CENTURIES
BELOW THE ENCLOSURE AT AMORIUM**

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Since 1987 the Amorium Excavations Project has been dedicated to the exploration of the Byzantine city of Amorium (located in the modern Turkish province of Afyonkarahisar), tracing the development of the city from antiquity to the Byzantine and Seljuk eras. Following urban renewal and expansion in the early Byzantine period, Amorium became an important administrative and military centre, serving as the headquarters of the Anatolikon *thema* from the 7th to 9th centuries, a period popularly referred to as the Byzantine ‘Dark Age.’ Amorium was also an important provincial city during the middle Byzantine period, before being abandoned at the end of the 11th century. Today Amorium is largely deserted and, despite modern stone-robbing of standing structures, the buried archaeology is remarkably well-preserved and undisturbed. Amorium therefore presents a rare opportunity to carry out stratigraphical excavations in a thematic capital and major provincial city of the medieval Byzantine period. The most extensive excavations have taken place since 1996 near the centre of the city beneath a fortification of the later 10th century termed the Enclosure. Over 12,000 sq. m. have been excavated at the Enclosure site, revealing a succession of complex but well-preserved phases of occupation covering the 6th to 11th centuries. The best preserved phase is that of the early medieval (or ‘Dark Age’) period of the 7th to early 9th centuries. This paper presents an overview of the occupation at the Enclosure site during this period, which is the subject of a major forthcoming publication. In some respects the Enclosure excavations confirm traditional views of Byzantine urbanism, revealing continuity in the reuse of some structures, and discontinuity in the abandonment and demolition of others. However, at Amorium the latter trend was accompanied by radical redevelopment and the establishment of industrial, and later, commercial and domestic activities at the site. This analysis further suggests that the Enclosure area became more densely occupied over time as its physical appearance and uses changed. The excavations at the Enclosure therefore question the conventional view of universal decline and provide evidence for the adaptation and transformation of ancient cities in order to meet the challenges of the mediaeval world.