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Chapter Four
The Stone-Built *Palaiomaniatika* of the Mani Peninsula, Greece

Rebecca M. Seifried

The Mani peninsula, the southernmost projection of the Peloponnese in Greece, is the location of over 170 settlements with preserved stone-built architecture from the premodern era (Figure 1). These remarkable places are known locally as *palaiomaniatika* (old Maniat settlements) or *palaio-chores* (old villages). The settlements are small, comprising between 10 and 50 houses, and they were built and occupied by local residents of the Mani peninsula. The vernacular architecture of the houses is relatively homogenous, constituting the typical one- or two-story rectangular layout (i.e. the "longhouse") that is common throughout rural landscapes in the Peloponnese (Sigalos 2004a, 2004b:66; Stedman 1996:185–186). Roughly half of the settlements are still inhabited today, with the same houses that were built centuries ago serving as the foundations for modern homes and newer buildings constructed in the spaces between to form the nucleated settlement layout that is typical of modern Greek villages. The others are now abandoned, the ruined houses enshrouded by wild olives and shoulder-high thorny shrubs. These deserted villages of Mani are some of the most numerous in Greece, rivaled only by those in the neighboring peninsula of Messenia (Antoniadis-Bibicou 1965:404).

Previous studies suggested that these settlements were established as early as the eighth century AD and at the latest by the thirteenth century (Moschos and Moschou 1982:263; Moschou 2004:33–34), a span of time broadly defined as the Middle Byzantine period, when the power of the Byzantine Empire was at its zenith. Despite the fact that Ottoman rule in the region began in 1463, a substantial change in settlement layout and

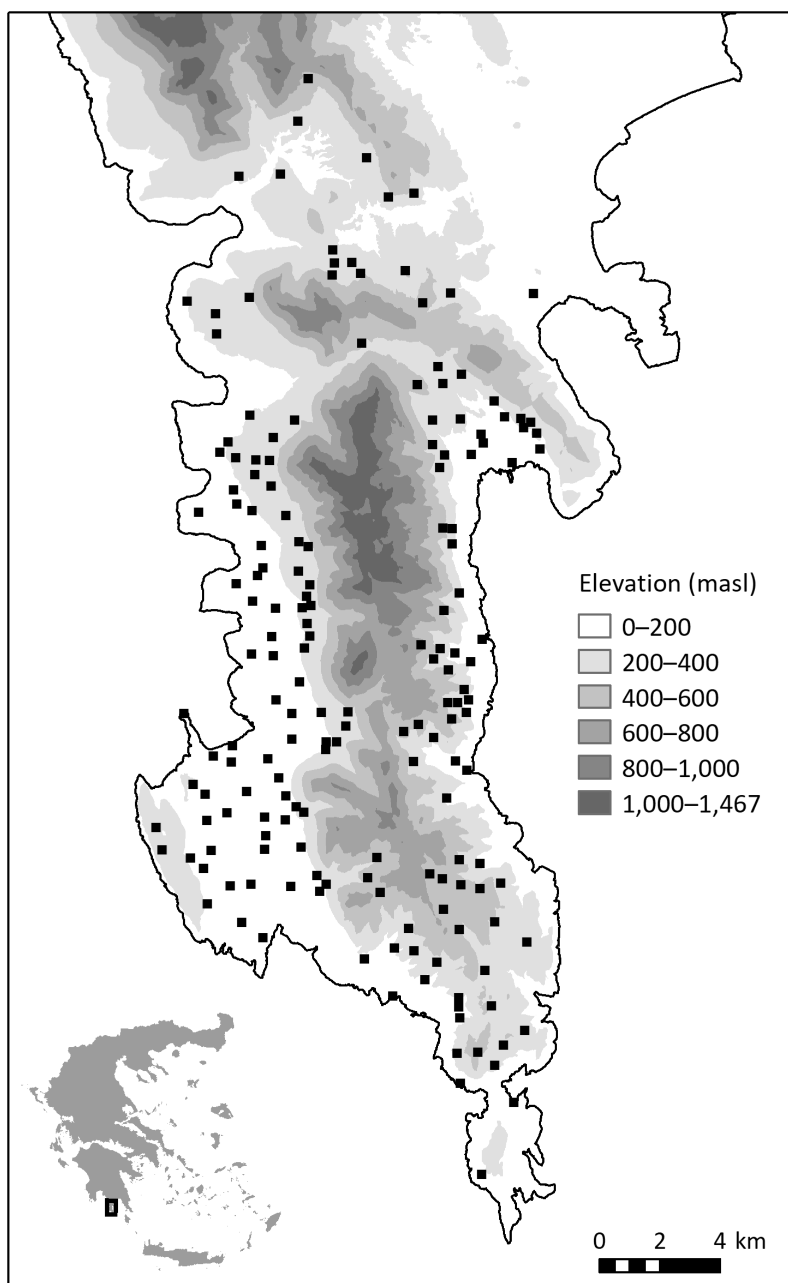

Figure 1. Map of the southern Mani peninsula, Greece, indicating the locations of the *palaiomaniatika* settlements.

architecture is believed to have occurred only after the late seventeenth century (Saïtas 2004:54).[1] New information from historical Ottoman tax registers lends weight to the claim that many of the *palaiomaniatika* continued to be occupied during the period of Ottoman rule. Of all the *palaiomaniatika* known to researchers, one-third can be matched with toponyms from historical records and roughly half are still occupied today, confirming that the vernacular architectural style of the Byzantine period continued well into what is termed, in Greece at least, the "post-medieval period."

However, there are serious limits to what we can say about the *palaiomaniatika* without further evidence from archaeological excavations. As far as I know, no systematic excavations of the *palaiomaniatika* have ever been published. With almost all of the available information coming from art historical and architectural studies, it is impossible to refine the chronology of these settlements and their architecture much further than the currently accepted range of the eighth to seventeenth centuries. This vagueness of chronology hamstrings any efforts to tease apart the process of abandonment in Mani and to understand how it may have played out in the lives of its residents. More broadly, the lack of excavations means that we cannot explore the kinds of research questions about microscale social organization that are possible through the lens of a well-theorized household archaeology (Souvatzi 2008, 2014).

The inattention to Mani's Byzantine and post-Byzantine domestic heritage is part of the broader story of archaeological research in Greece. Historically, the field of Greek Byzantine archaeology has focused exclusively on churches and the art they contain. Over the past 20 years, many scholars have called for a development of a historical archaeology of Greece that focuses on domestic material culture. Writing about the medieval houses documented by the Morea Project, Kostis Kourelis (2003:173) posited that that the Peloponnesian house type—to which the *palaiomaniatika* houses generally belong—may be part of a widespread

[1] The settlements were occupied exclusively by local residents of the Mani peninsula. During the Ottoman period in Mani (1463–1821), Ottoman occupation seems to have been restricted to the fortresses of Passava. Historical sources refer to Passava as a garrisoned fort up until the seventeenth century, when it was captured and destroyed by Venetian forces. According to Komis (2005:319–332), when the Ottomans reconquered the region in 1715, they rebuilt the fortress and an Ottoman village called Tourkovrisi was established nearby with about 700–800 families. Supposedly, the Maniates staged a revolt in 1780, seized the castle, and killed the people living in Tourkovrisi. To my knowledge, this is the only reference to an Ottoman village in the study region.

building tradition, but he cautioned that "conclusions must be reserved for a time when comparative material is published from a sufficient number of Greek medieval villages." In his commentary on a special issue that (like this volume) stemmed from a symposium of the Medieval and Post-Medieval Archaeology interest group of the Archaeological Institute of America, Tim Gregory (2010:303) called for more archaeological work to be carried out in Byzantine and post-Byzantine phases and for scholars of these eras to look "more closely at the methods and approaches developed by historical archaeologists elsewhere in the world." As recently as 2016, Effie Athanassopoulos (2016:38) wrote that the "archaeology of everyday life based on excavations of settlements, agricultural or industrial installations, and marketplaces is still in its infancy." Despite these calls to action, few rural settlements have been targeted by the kind of archaeological scrutiny that is necessary for producing valuable comparative data.

Southern Greece, in particular, has been the subject of many archaeological surveys since the Minnesota Messenia Expedition was launched in the 1960s (for an overview of these projects, see Kourelis 2019:167–174). However, few of the surveys have resulted in systematic excavations of rural houses from the medieval and post-medieval phases. Published examples (Figure 2) include a post-Byzantine house at Nichoria, Messenia (McDonald et al. 1983:427–431), a thirteenth to fifteenth-century house at Lavda, Eleia (Goester and van der Vrie 1998), two fourteenth-century houses within the fortified village at Panakton, Attica (Houses I and IV; Gerstel et al. 2003:155–165, 169–174), and a house within the fortified village at Ayios Vasileios, Corinthia, that may date to between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries (Gregory 2013:292–301). Similar houses were recorded by the Morea Project in the provinces of Achaia and Eleia in the northern Peloponnese (Kourelis 2003, 2005). Much more common are studies of elite houses or houses in urban centers, which generally incorporate more elaborate architectural forms and designs (e.g. Bouras 1983; Cerasi 1998; Sigalos 2004b; Vionis 2009). Even the fascinating case study of Cappadocia is not readily comparable, as the rock-cut houses there "were clearly not peasant homes" and typically comprised multi-room structures frequently organized around a courtyard (Ousterhout 2005:182 and relevant critique in Kourelis 2007; Ousterhout 2017).

This paper adds another voice to the call for a household archaeology of abandoned rural villages in Greece, which have received scant scholarly attention in comparison to both their counterparts elsewhere in the eastern Mediterranean or to their older (prehistoric) and wealthier (urban) neighbors within Greece. In the first part, I lay out the typical characteristics

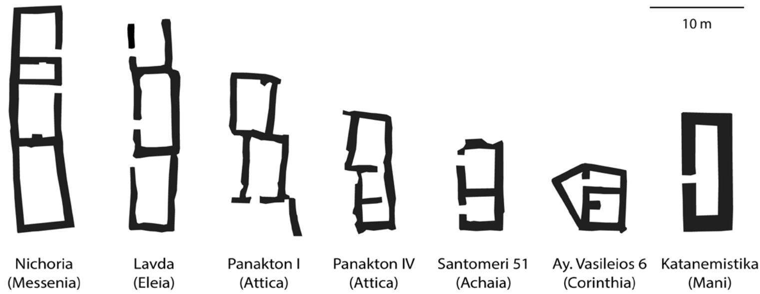

Figure 2. Plans from houses at Nichoria (after McDonald et al. 1983:Figure 14.1), Lavda (after Goester and van der Vrie 1998:Figure 7), Panakton (after Gerstel et al. 2003:Figures 6 and 20), Santomeri (after Kourelis 2003:Figure 284), and Ayios Vasileios (after Gregory 2013:Figure 15), compared with a typical *palaiomaniatiko* house plan from Mani (after Saïtas 1990:Figure 19).

of the houses and settlements of the *palaiomaniatika*, and in the second, I discuss different ideas about when they were established and abandoned. These sections rely on published research from the fields of art history and architecture as well as data from my own field research. The nature of this research means that the discussion is descriptive in nature and provides little real insight into the social functioning of the *palaiomaniatika* or the factors that led many of them being abandoned. Yet, the purpose of the review is to summarize the current state of knowledge and to underscore what exactly we still do not know about these places. In the third part, I present a case study of the abandoned *palaiomaniatiko* village of Koulouvades, showing how targeted archaeological sampling alongside analysis of historical sources can help refine the chronology of these settlements and open avenues for asking meaningful research questions. In the final part, I make a case for why household excavations must be carried out at sites like these—not only in Mani, but also in other rural landscapes across the eastern Mediterranean.

Typical Characteristics of the *Palaiomaniatika*

The term *palaiomaniatika* was introduced by Nikolaos Drandakis and colleagues during their research in the 1970s (e.g. Drandakis et al. 1980:158–159) and featured as the title of Takis Moschos and Leda Moschou's (1981, 1982) articles on the subject. More commonly the settlements are referred to as *palaiochores* (old villages), and the various features within them are known colloquially as *kolospites* or *kolospitakia*

(houses), *kolopyrgoi* (towers), and *koloyisternes* (cisterns; Saïtas 1990:Note 39). Documentation of the architecture and layout of these stone-built settlements has been carried out by several research teams over the past few decades (Argyriades et al. 1972; Etzeoglou 1982, 1988; Moschos and Moschou 1981, 1982; Moschou 1982; Moutsopoulos and Dimitrokallis 1976/1978, 1980; Pawlowski 2020). Maps showing the general locations of the settlements have appeared in publications by Moschos and Moschou (1981:Plates 1a–d) and Yanis Saïtas (2009a:Figure 6.1; see also Saïtas 1983a, 1983b, 2009b, 2011).

Supplementing this research is original field data collected in 2014–2016 for a study on the Byzantine and post-Byzantine settlements in Mani (Seifried 2016). My project sought to document all the settlements with standing architecture in the southern half of the peninsula—an area of about 350 km^2—using a combination of field visits and aerial imagery analysis to record the built structures, including houses, towers, mills, churches, cisterns, and field walls. A total of 215 permanent settlements were recorded. Based on the previous typological work done on the region's vernacular architecture, it was determined that 177 of the settlements contained evidence of occupation during the Byzantine and/or early Ottoman phases. Most of these appear on the earlier maps, but some were previously unknown to the scholarly community.

Of the *palaiomaniatika* settlements documented by my project, half (88) were still occupied. The continued use and modification of the buildings and pathways in these places made it difficult to detect the earliest phases of occupation: older buildings were frequently repointed, sometimes obscuring the stones altogether, or they were modified to create elaborate multi-room residential complexes or tower-houses (Figure 3). Many of the stone pathways that were built to expedite foot and animal traffic (*kalderimia*) have been paved over to allow for automotive travel. At times, the built features were totally destroyed to make way for a new road. But despite all this, the advantage of studying an occupied settlement is that many of the oldest buildings and paths are in excellent states of preservation due to their continued use over many centuries. Their occupants have maintained them, repairing fallen walls and preventing the kind of decay and collapse that has affect abandoned structures.

Abandoned settlements present different challenges for recording. Since the 1930s, Mani has suffered dramatic population loss as people emigrated out of the region and the economic opportunities in the Greek countryside dwindled (Allen 1976; Wagstaff 2000:Figure 2). A large Maniat community was established in Piraeus in the twentieth century as

Figure 3. A *palaiomaniatika* house in Pyrgos Dirou that has been renovated and expanded.

Figure 4. Typical state of preservation of structures in an abandoned *palaiomaniatiko*: (a) house and (b) cistern (Koulouvades).

younger generations migrated to Athens in search of work. Today, the population of a typical Maniat village may increase tenfold during the month of August, when families from all over the globe return to their ancestral village for the summer holiday, but many of the villages are almost entirely unoccupied during the majority of the year. This large-scale population movement means that agricultural activities that once kept the fields clear—including olive and grain cultivation and, especially, animal husbandry—have almost entirely ceased in most parts of Mani. As a result, the vegetation within and around the abandoned *palaiomaniatika* has been allowed to grow unchecked (Figure 4). Furthermore, because these buildings have been allowed to collapse and dismantle themselves naturally, the massive amounts of wall fall often obscure the structures and interior faces of the walls. In areas with several closely spaced houses, it can be very difficult to detect the underlying house plans. Still, from the perspective of an archaeologist, the benefit of abandonment is that it provides a glimpse into an older version of the settlement's layout—certainly not the original form, but one that predates the modern era of cement construction and paved roads.

House Form

Over 600 individual houses were identified in the *palaiomaniatika* during the course of my fieldwork; 406 were able to be measured in some way. Additional built structures were also recorded, most notably churches, cisterns, and defensive installations such as watch huts and towers. All of these features share in the same vernacular architectural style that characterizes the houses. The churches have been dealt with in great detail over the past century, beginning with Ramsay Traquair's (1908/1909) and Arthur H.S. Megaw's (1932/1933) early studies and continuing with Nikolaos Drandakis and a diverse group of Byzantine scholars (e.g. Drandakis 2009; Etzeoglou 1977; Gkioles 1996; Konstantinidi 1998; Menenakou 2007; Mexia 2008/2009). Recent syntheses of this work have looked at the spatial relationships between the churches and the settlements (Seifried 2021; Seifried and Kalaycı 2019). The cisterns and other aspects of the hydraulic landscape have been published separately (Seifried 2020a). The watch huts and towers comprise a small sample size (16 in total) and are discussed in the context of settlement layout below.

There is one key way in which the houses in Mani differ from their rural counterparts elsewhere in the Peloponnese. In both the scholarly literature and in popular usage, the term "megalithic" (or even "cyclopean")

has been used to describe their typical dry-stone construction. Saïtas (1990:19) reported the average block sizes of the quarried limestone as ranging from 30 cm to over 140 cm on each side. Using such large blocks naturally means the walls are extremely thick—sometimes exceeding 150 cm in width. By contrast, the walls of published comparanda measure 60–65 cm at Nichoria (McDonald et al. 1983:427), 70 cm in the northern Peloponnese (Kourelis 2005:124), and 75 cm at Panakton (Gerstel et al. 2003:156). The large dimensions of the building material and thickness of the walls in Mani made the houses extremely durable and contributed to their exceptional preservation—not only from the action of natural deterioration, but also from human modification and reuse of building material in new construction (see Figure 2).

As with other examples of medieval houses, the houses in Mani were built of locally quarried limestone, the most common geological type in the region.[2] They typically were built as standalone structures, oriented east–west if located on a flat plain, or perpendicular to the gradient if on a hillside. At times, additional structures were added to the first in an agglomerative pattern, either along the shorter wall to form a long chain of connected houses or along the longer wall. The latter was especially common on hillsides, when building along the same terrace was more expedient. Otherwise, the houses were unconnected from one another, and walls were rarely built to delineate external courtyards.

The doors were most commonly located on the southern aspect to protect against the northern winter wind (see Kourelis 2003:179) and to allow for maximal entry of light. Few if any windows were built into the walls. The doorways were small—Saïtas (1990:19) reported an average range of 80–110 cm wide and 90–150 cm high—and were topped by a single massive limestone lintel. Measurements taken during my study shows a range in lintel size from 107 to 195 cm in width and 16 to 61 cm in height and depth. In very rare cases, engraved designs were etched into the lintels, including one in the ruined settlement of Lakkos (near Tsopaka), which bears two roughly engraved crosses, and another in the settlement of Kouvouklia (near Glezou), which bears three elaborately carved crosses and two zoomorphic figures (Figure 5). This same house was featured in Haris Calligas' (1974:Figure 9) architectural study of the settlements in Mani.[3]

[2] There are a few micro-regions in Mani, especially in the south, where schist is the predominant geological type. Houses there are built with schist and, as a result, they do not preserve as well as their limestone-built counterparts.

[3] I thank Yanis Saïtas for pointing me to this reference.

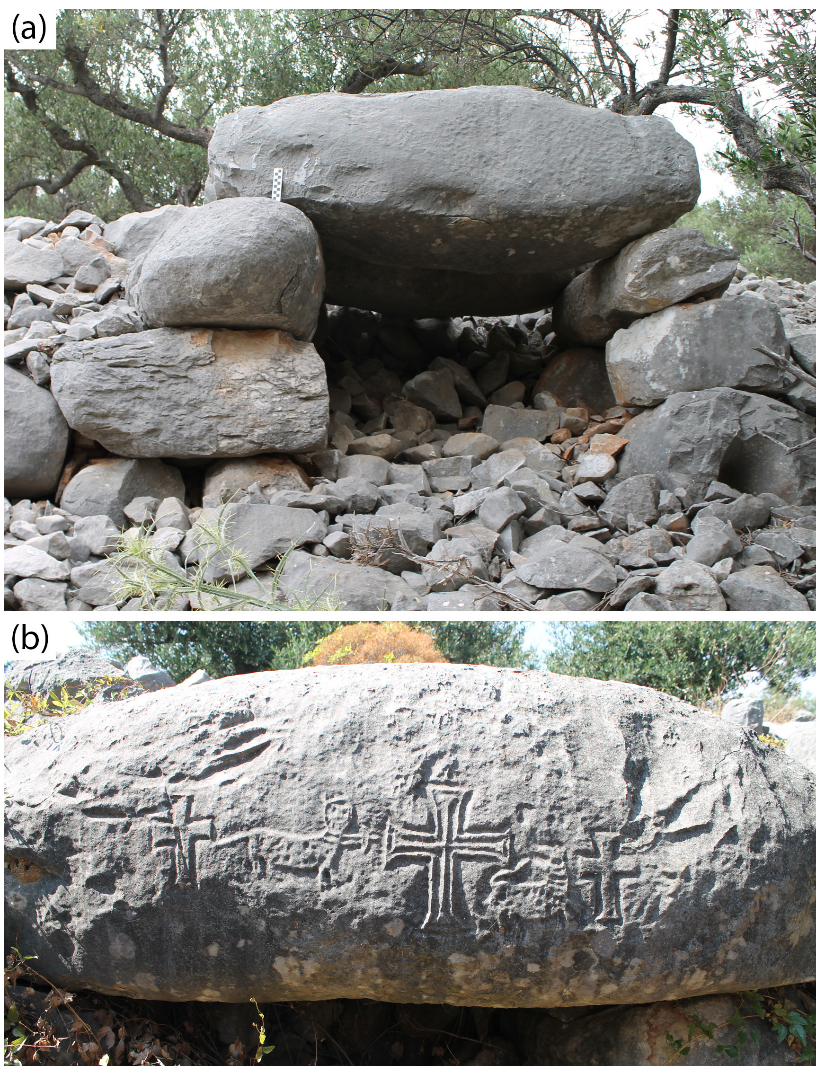

Figure 5. Lintels above doors in *palaiomaniatika* houses: (a) typical entryway with lintel (Koulouvades); (b) lintel with engraved crosses and zoomorphic figures (Kouvouklia).

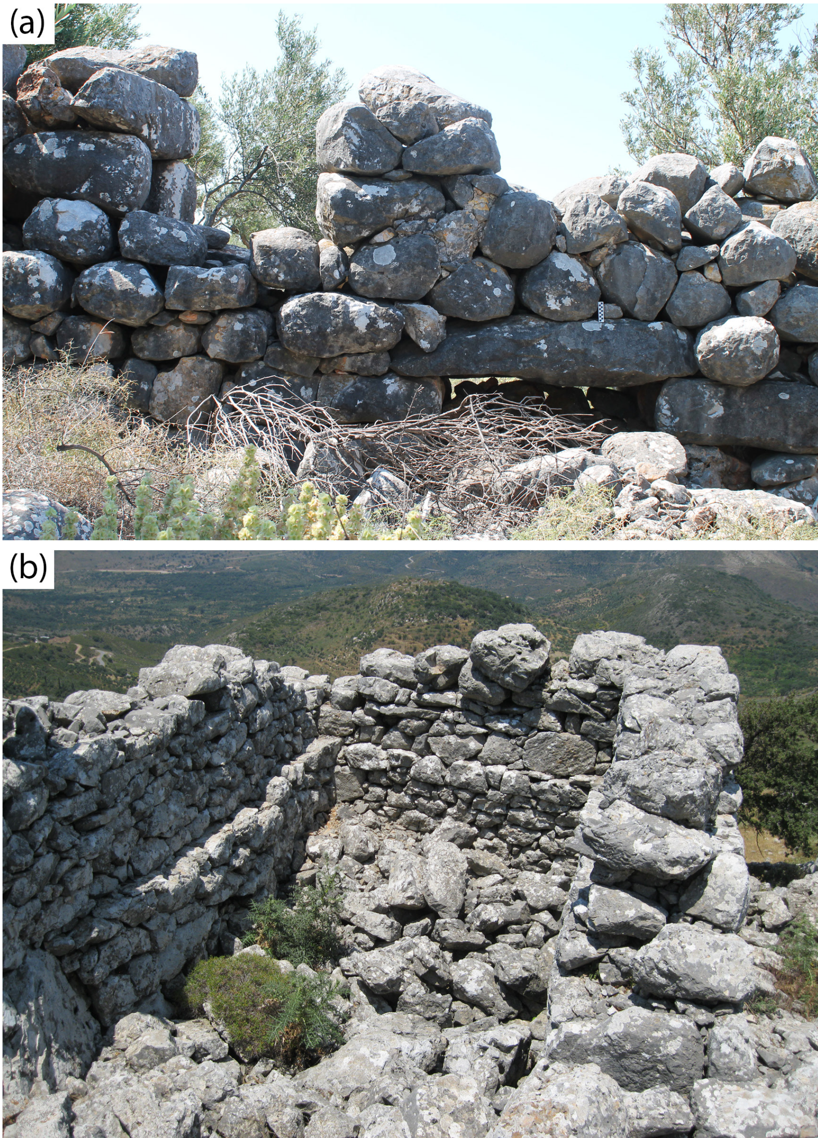

Figure 6. Two-storied houses with: (a) upper and lower doorways both preserved (Soulia); (b) internal ledges built to support a floor (Palaia Tserova).

Although very few houses are preserved beyond a partial ground floor, some evidently had two stories, with a low ground floor used for storage or as a space to keep animals, and a taller second story used as the main residential area (see Saïtas 1990:18; Sigalos 2004b:71–73; Stedman 1996:185). The floors were supported with beams—either of wood (Moschos and Moschou 1982:266) or more likely of stone (Saïtas 1990:19–20)—extending across the narrower width of the structure. The beams could be secured into niches in the walls, or they could simply rest upon a protruding ledge built into the walls. My research documented 36 houses with clear evidence of a second story. Several were so well preserved that they still retained an upper doorway, staggered so that the second-story entrance was not directly above that of the ground floor. The others had niches or ledges built into the walls to support the cross-beams (Figure 6). Finally, in a few rare cases, a small enclosed area was found in the ground floor, delineated by a transverse wall and coated with plaster, possibly for water storage (see Saïtas 1990:18).

Many more houses are now filled with rubble, a perplexing artifact of the postabandonment process (Figure 7). Moschos and Moschou (1982:264) suggested that the rubble fill was the result of years of gradual accumulation as farmers collected the stones from the surrounding fields and deposited them within the walls of abandoned houses. However, it is possible that such fill may also result from wall collapse, particularly if the upper walls were built with rubble that was held together with a simple earthen mortar. Wall collapse could very well have resulted in the pattern documented at so many *palaiomaniatika* settlements.

The ground floor of the houses was probably made of packed earth, as in the examples at Panakton and Nichoria (Gerstel et al. 2003:157; McDonald et al. 1983:427). The roofs were likely formed in a similar fashion to the dividing floor in two-story houses, supported by beams resting in niches or on ledges built into the walls; however, no roofs have been preserved to confirm this hypothesis. Because of the scarcity of timber in the region and the abundance of limestone, Saïtas suggested that these beams were made of stone and that the roof would have been completed with layers of in-filling stones, pebbles, and a mixture of beaten clay earth and manure. Wooden roofs would have been rare (Saïtas 1990:20; Figure 256a).

The external dimensions of the structures averaged 10.3 m in length (SD = 2.2 m, n = 202) and 4.7 m in width (SD = 0.5 m, n = 255; for data, see house_measurements.csv in Seifried 2020b). Internal dimensions averaged 8.4 m in length (SD = 2.3 m, n = 169) and 2.7 m in width

Figure 7. House filled with rubble (Pangia).

(SD = 0.5 m, n = 169). The internal measurements were difficult to assess directly due to the prevalence of rubble fill, so in some cases they were inferred based on the external dimensions and the width of an exposed wall. The average internal area was 22.4 m^2 (SD = 7.7 m^2, n = 169), which reflects contemporary cases from elsewhere in the Peloponnese, such as two rooms in House I (19.8 m^2 and 18.9 m^2) and the three-roomed House IV (26.9 m^2) at Panakton (Gerstel et al. 2003:156, 169). Compared to longhouses of the early modern and modern periods (see Pettegrew and Caraher, this volume), the *palaiomaniatika* were significantly smaller in terms of living area. This has important implications for the availability of workspace provided by the houses, lending support to the assumption that the area immediately outside the house was used as a workspace (Kourelis 2003:175).

The wide range in internal area—by my calculations, the smallest house measured 6.8 m^2 and the largest 44.8 m^2—led Saïtas (1990:17, Figure 13) to propose a three-part classification of small, medium, and large buildings. However, this typology seems to have little interpretive value at this stage, as we do not know exactly why the houses varied in size to such a great extent. It may very well be that the smallest houses were restricted in size because of geographical considerations, as all of those with areas less than 11 m^2 are located in hillside or hilltop settlements. At the other extreme, the largest houses may reflect a very slow expansion of house size over time, as all of the houses over 40 m^2 in area were

recorded in diachronic settlements with early Ottoman phases. But in terms of their overall similarity of design and layout, the houses resemble those documented by the Morea Project, about which Kostis Kourelis (2003:175–176) drew comparisons with the "unitary" or "mixed house" of northern Europe, where undifferentiated activities and co-residence of humans and animals all took place within a single rectangular longhouse.

Settlement Layout

The *palaiomaniatika* were generally made up of 10–50 houses, along with other built features such as cisterns, enclosures, churches, and less frequently, defensive installations. Data gathered during fieldwork suggests that the settlements break naturally into three size categories: small (with approx. 5–20 houses), medium (30–50 houses), and large (60–70 houses), with most falling into the small or medium categories (Figure 8; for data, see house_counts.csv in Seifried 2020b).

Previous scholars have suggested that, as with their modern counterparts, the *palaiomaniatika* were occupied by kin groups: Moschou (2004:36) referred to them as "small population aggregates formed on the basis of patrilineal blood relations," which laid the foundation for the later settlement pattern that arose and continued into modern times. Saïtas (1990:16) suggested that "small neighboring hamlets frequently form[ed] broader groups—units of agricultural, livestock raising communities which exploit[ed] a small productive hinterland." At present it is difficult to know exactly how the inhabitants of neighboring settlements interacted with each other in the Byzantine and early Ottoman periods, with the exception of the important insights gained from painted dedicatory panels in two Byzantine churches in Kipoula and Polemitas (Drandakis 1980, 1982). The panels name individuals from multiple surrounding settlements who helped finance the churches' construction and decoration, thereby testifying to the pooling of resources between settlements in order to build public, ritual spaces. In turn, the churches may have acted as "integrative facilities" (see Adler and Wilshusen 1990) that could be used to reinforce and "enact" community membership (Mac Sweeney 2011; Yaeger 2000). Therefore, in at least two documented cases, neighboring villages may have cooperated in multi-settlement clusters at least in an ideological sphere, to some degree mirroring Saïtas' hypothesis that multiple settlements may have worked together to complete communal agricultural and pastoralist activities.

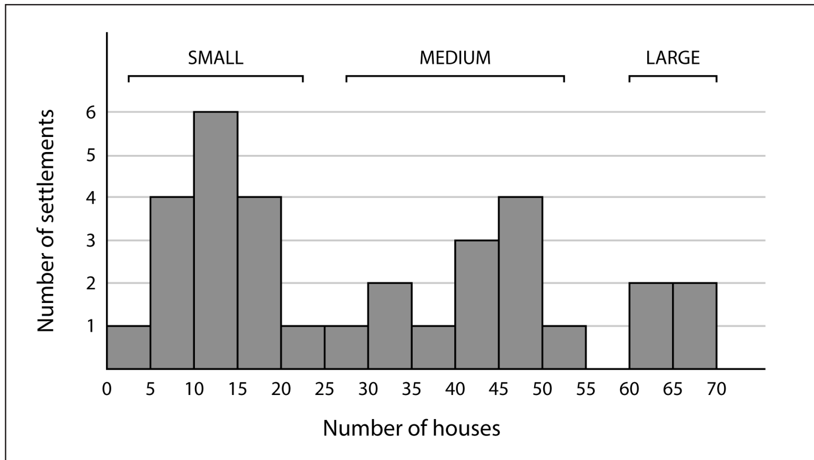

Figure 8. Number of houses recorded at the fully mapped settlements, showing possible clustering into small, medium, and large settlement size categories.

A settlement's size and layout depended to a large extent on its geographical location, with distinctions particularly noticeable between plains, hillsides, and hilltop locations. Plains settlements, which are mainly located in the flat areas along the western side of the peninsula, comprise a loose cluster of built features aligned to the same orientation and evenly dispersed throughout the site (Figure 9). In a few cases, the houses were built in a loose ring around a large central area, which was seemingly empty of built features and could have been used as communal garden plots or as a space for social activities. Cisterns were built throughout the site (with roughly one cistern for every two houses), but there were a few sites where the cisterns were built all together in a single part of the site. The plains settlements were generally undefended, but Saïtas (1990:16) noted that "heavy, dry stone fences" may have served basic defensive purposes around and throughout the sites. There is also at least one case—that of Kouvouklia (the same settlement in which the lintel with a zoomorphic engraving was found)—where a massive, nearly square, tower-like structure was preserved in the center of the site. The exterior of the structure measured 7.5 x 5.5 m, with its wall width ranging from 1.58 to 1.83 m. These dimensions suggest it was once taller and may have served a defensive purpose. Similar tower-like structures with "megalithic" foundations were recorded on the fringes of two other plains settlements: Charia and Ayia Varvara.

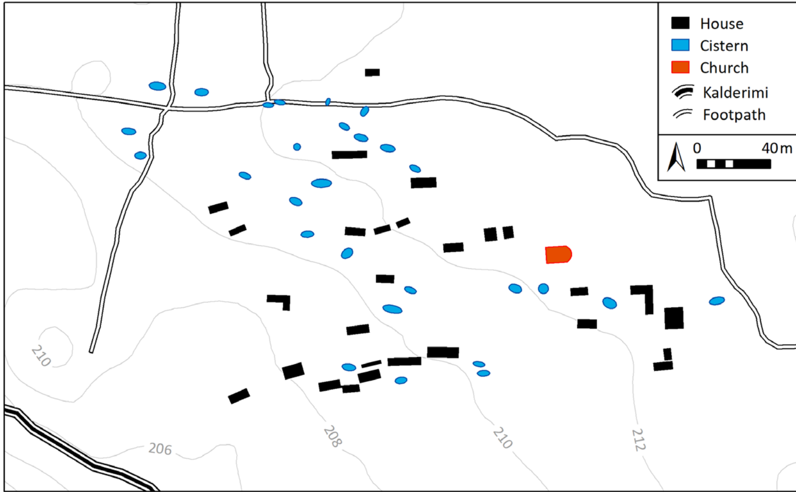

Figure 9. Plan of Koulouvades, showing a typical plains layout.

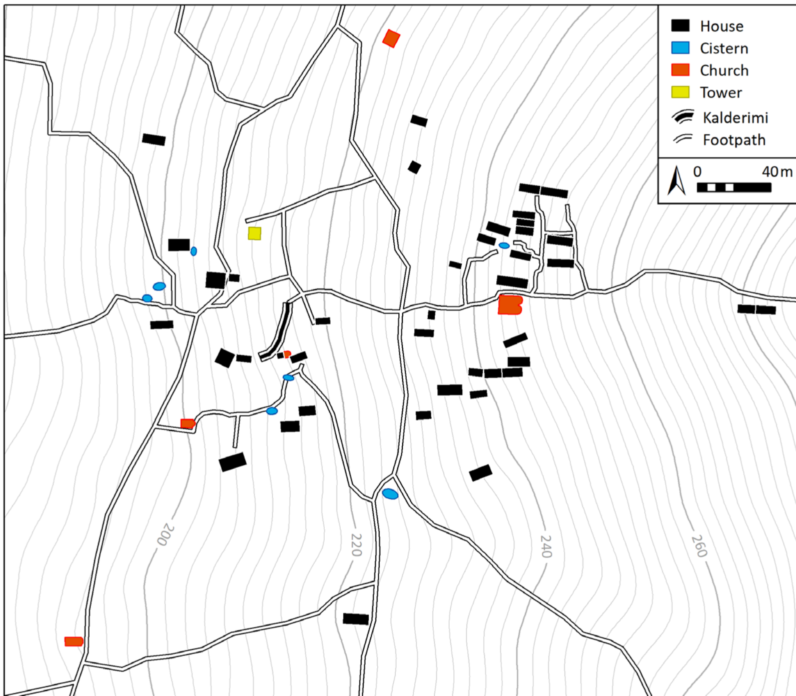

Figure 10. Plan of Briki, showing a typical hillside layout.

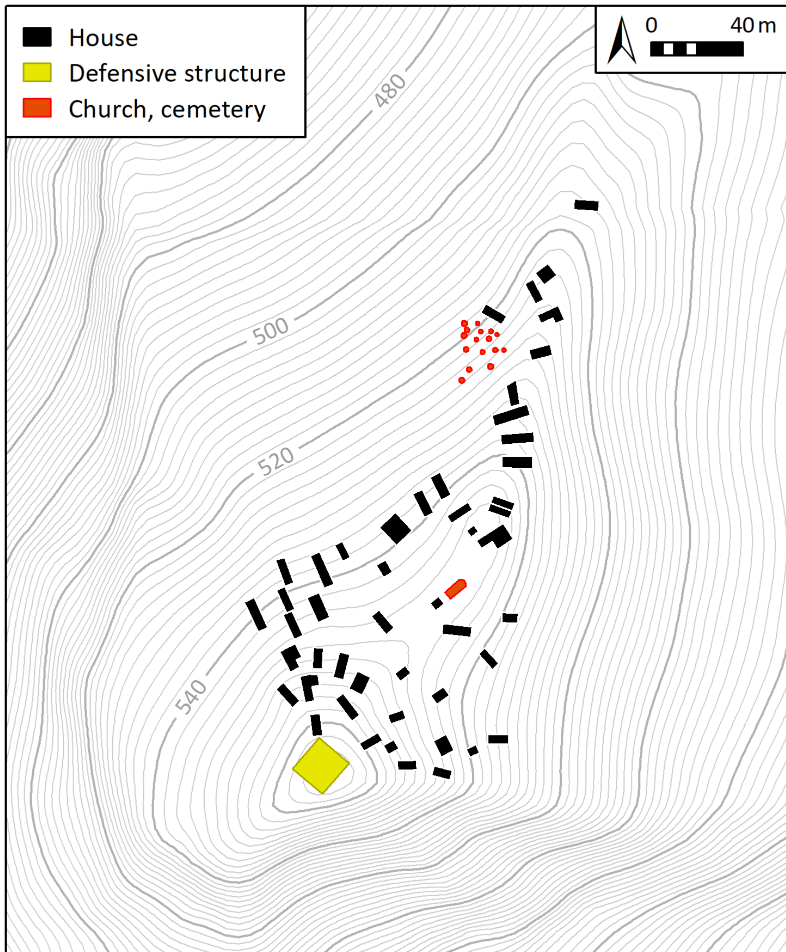

Figure 11. Plan of Palaia Tserova, showing a typical hilltop layout.

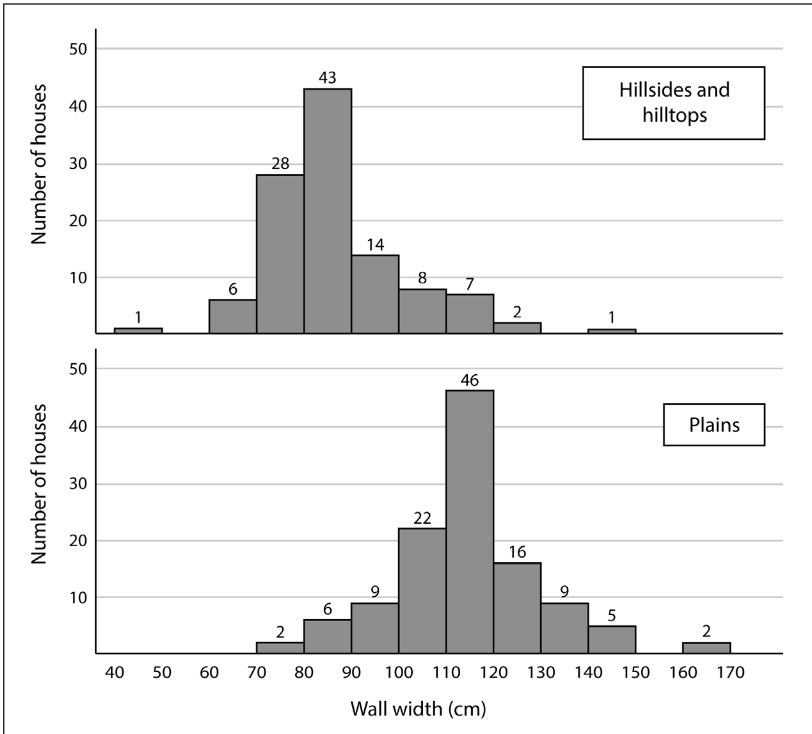

Figure 12. Histogram of house wall widths, showing distinction between hillside/hilltop settlements and plains settlements.

Hillside settlements are located along the lower slopes of the mountains that stretch down the spine of the peninsula (Figure 10). As with the plains sites, those on hillsides also comprised a loose cluster of houses, but in this case aligned perpendicular to the slope of the hill. Houses were frequently built in rows along the same elevation contour. Presumably, the primary benefits of a hillside location were the enhanced view of the surrounding landscape and the natural defensive quality of the sloping land. In some cases, defensive ability was further enhanced by building a wall to connect the downslope faces of a row of houses. It is likely that the hillside location also positioned certain settlements (i.e. those situated in the gullies and small valleys) to take advantage of the seasonal flow of rainwater from the mountains above. Today, perennial springs are known in only a few places within the study region, and water acquisition and storage for the dry summer months would have been critical needs of daily life (Seifried 2020a).[4]

[4] By contrast, the mountains in northern Mani are very well watered, with dozens of natural springs.

The final type of geographical setting is hilltops or ridges, which offered the most defensible positions and the best vistas but also made movement and transportation more difficult and limited access to seasonal water flows from mountain gullies (Figure 11). Hilltop settlements tended to be denser, with houses oriented perpendicularly to the slope and clustered around the highest elevation contours. The houses at the very highest elevation were often larger and more complex, at times with several adjacent and connected rooms (e.g. Kondyli, Skala). In two cases, the peak of the settlement was enclosed with a low encircling wall, forming a small, fortified area, or *kastro* (Palaia Tserova and Loukadika). In most cases, very few to no cisterns were discernible during fieldwork, suggesting that they were either located in unsurveyed territory or were buried or covered by vegetation.

While the *palaiomaniatika* are generally characterized by "megalithic" architecture and correspondingly thick walls, there is a discernible patterning in the thickness of house walls: some settlements tend to have houses with walls around 80–90 cm thick, while other have houses with walls around 110–120 cm thick. An independent samples *t* test was used to compare the mean wall widths between the two groups, and the test showed that there was a significant difference ($p = 0.00$) between wall widths in plains locations (M = 112.9 m) and hillside or hilltop locations (M = 86.8 m). The statistical test shows that wall widths reflect the choice of settlement location, with the thicker-walled houses located in plains settlements and the thinner-walled houses in hillside or hilltop settlements (Figure 12). In short, it seems that wall width is less a reliable chronological indicator than a reflection of the site's geography.

Chronology of the *Palaiomaniatika*

In this section, I lay out the current state of knowledge about the chronology of the *palaiomaniatika*, all of which is derived from art historical and architectural studies. Dating these remarkable settlements based on these features alone is complicated by the fact that the vernacular architectural tradition persisted for so long and changed so slowly over time. As Leda Moschou summarized:

> The construction of houses at all periods … probably belonged to a building tradition that went back to ancient times. The megalithic dry-stone masonry and the way in which the stone blocks were worked are elements to be found in many fortifications and also in some buildings of the Late Hellenistic period. They point to an age-old tradition of specialised techniques for quarrying the hard

> local limestone, and also to advanced tools, tried-and-tested systems for extracting the quarried blocks, and for lifting them into position, and the experience and ability to control the statics of the courses. [Moschou 2004:35]

Thus, while the current consensus is that the *palaiomaniatika* were primarily founded and occupied as early as the eighth century and abandoned sometime after the seventeenth century, additional research is needed to narrow this chronology.

Establishment

N. K. Moutsopoulos and G. Dimitrokallis (1976/1978) were the first to attempt to date the establishment of the *palaiomaniatika*, drawing comparisons with the Neolithic "megalithic" tradition of Western Europe and hypothesizing that Mani's vernacular architecture dated to prehistoric times. This suggestion drew swift criticism from Takis Moschos and Leda Moschou (1982:263), who asserted that the settlements date to the Middle Byzantine period because they are often associated with churches that are securely dated to this time. Of course, using churches as a chronological proxy assumes that they are contemporaneous with the houses, cisterns, and other features comprising the occupied settlement. This assumption is not necessarily incorrect, but without excavations it is impossible to rule out the alternative explanations of settlement development and to determine the experience of any one settlement in particular.

To some extent, the rare examples of excavated medieval longhouses houses do support the accepted eighth to thirteenth-century dating. Two of the excavated samples from the Peloponnese date to the Middle and/or Late Byzantine periods (Lavda and Panakton), and the other two (Nichoria and Ayios Vasileios) may date to the Late Byzantine or early Ottoman periods. There is a general consensus throughout the eastern Mediterranean that a dramatic shift in house form took place between the Late Roman/Early Byzantine period and the Middle Byzantine period, when the typical complex surrounding a courtyard was replaced with a linear house form (Bouras 1983:5). This shift is said to reflect a broader societal change in how people related to each other and interacted with private/public spheres (Sigalos 2004b). Although the model of "courtyard complex to linear house" was initially developed in studies of elite houses and compounds, it may well apply to rural places like Mani.

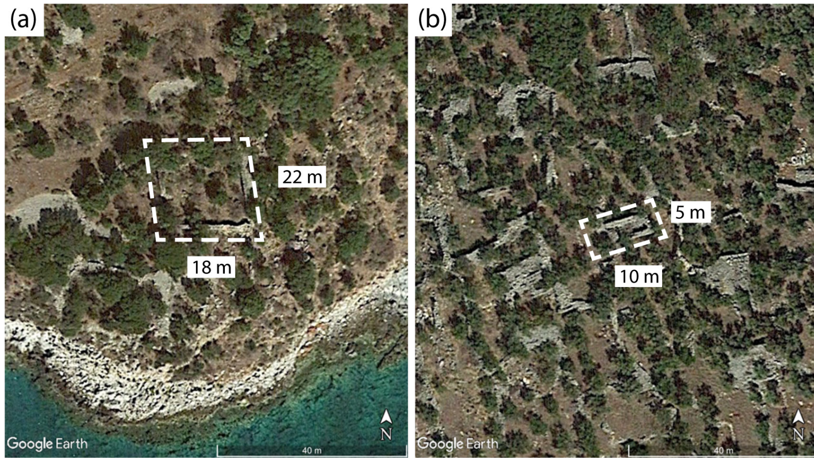

Figure 13. Aerial view comparing (a) the Late Roman compound at Mastakaria and (b) a typical *palaiomaniatiko* settlement. Image courtesy of Google Earth.

The sole intensive archaeological survey to be carried out in Mani, the Diros Project (2011–2013), sheds a glimpse of light onto the differences between Late Roman and Byzantine architecture in this rural landscape. The small survey focused on the bay north of Pyrgos Dirou, spanning an area of just under 2.5 km^2. The surveyors recorded a large walled enclosure on a cliff overlooking the north side of the bay in an area referred to as Mastakaria (Figure 13; Pullen et al. 2018). Based on the surface finds, which included a very high density of roof tiles and ceramic types indicative of domestic occupation and production (including amphorae, kitchen wares, a fragment of a beehive, and small amounts of fine ware), the surveyors dated the site to the fourth to sixth/seventh centuries AD—the Late Roman period. The dry-stone enclosure wall was built of unworked limestone and measured roughly 18 m (east–west) by 22 m (north–south). An entryway, apparently built without a lintel, was preserved in the southeast corner, where the wall stands to a height of about 1.8 m. A second entryway, only about 0.9 m high with the wall continuing above it, was located further along the eastern wall.

Mastakaria is the only example of Late Roman domestic architecture currently documented in the study region, so further examples must be studied before it will be possible to generalize about house forms at this time. However, it does provide two interesting and clear contrasts with the houses in the *palaiomaniatika*. First, large walled complexes like Mastakaria do not appear in the *palaiomaniatika*. Instead, walls used to delineate space tend to be built of loose rubble, and they are usually no more than 1

m high. Second, ceramic roof tile is extremely rare. It seems that houses in the Byzantine and early Ottoman periods were typically roofed with a less expensive material (recall that Saïtas suggested the inhabitants used packed earth or pebbles), and the roofs of older churches are sometimes covered with tiles made of slate or schist. During the course of fieldwork, ceramic roof tile was noted in only three of the *palaiomaniatiko* settlements, all of which also have later Ottoman phases. Together with the information from Mastakaria, this suggests that ceramic roof tile fell into disuse after the Late Roman period and did not come into widespread use again until around the mid seventeenth century. The insights from the Late Roman enclosure in Diros Bay seem to indicate that a shift in rural house form from the Late Roman to Middle Byzantine periods did, in fact, take place in Mani, which in turn support Moschos and Moschou's suggestion that the *palaiomaniatika* date to no earlier than the eighth century.

Abandonment

Historical records from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries provide some insight into the abandonment of the *palaiomaniatika* and the disappearance of the supposedly "medieval" or "megalithic" vernacular architectural tradition. Recently, several *tahrir defterleri* (Ottoman tax registers) from the sixteenth century have come to light that were previously unknown to scholars of Mani's history (for further information about the defterler, see Coşgel 2002; Lowry 1992). It is now clear that Mani was the subject of full tax surveys in the years 1514 (TT80 and TT367) and 1583 (TT603 and TT677).[5] Together, these resources provide the earliest written administrative account of the settlements in Mani,[6] including settlement names and counts of households, estimates of each settlement's agricultural output, names of individual heads of households and fortress

[5] An earlier tahrir defteri (TT10) was compiled for the Peloponnese in the years 1460–1463, immediately following the Ottoman Empire's conquest of the region. TT10 is a phenomenal resource that has been analyzed and utilized by many historians and archaeologists alike (Alexander 1978; Beldiceanu and Beldiceanu-Steinherr 1980; Liakopoulos 2019), but unfortunately, Mani is not included in the document. The most likely explanation for this is that Mani had not been fully conquered by 1463. However, there is also a small possibility that the relevant pages dealing with Mani were lost during the document's rather exciting history and chance rediscovery (Liakopoulos 2019:35–36).

[6] While an earlier document from the year 1366 referenced the towns of Areopoli (Tsimova) and Pyrgos Dirou (Iro), territories given to the *feudarchis* (ruler or fiefowner), Nikola Acciaiuoli (Longnon and Topping 1969:253–254), it mentions no other settlements in the region.

guards, and even later scribal notes commenting on the periodic rebellions in Mani. A full publication of the Mani *defterler* is anticipated, but for now only the most relevant information on settlement names will be discussed (for preliminary information on specific settlement chronologies, see Seifried 2016:Appendix A).

Additional documents are available from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. The seventeenth century was a period of political upheaval in the Peloponnese, with attempted rebellions against the Ottoman Empire in the early part of the century, followed by the region's conquest by the Republic of Venice in 1685. Several relevant Italian documents from this century have been published: a settlement list from the year 1618, which was compiled surreptitiously to assess the military strength of the region (Buchon 1843:241–295; Komis 2005:41–42; Wagstaff 1977), and Venetian documents from 1692, 1695, and 1700, all conducted by Provveditor Generals of the Morea (for 1692 and 1695: Komis 2005:43–47; Moatsos 1976/1978; for 1700: Panagiotopoulos 1987; see also Seifried 2015; Topping 1976/1978). In 1715, the Ottoman Empire reconquered the Peloponnese and promptly conducted another full tax survey, resulting in another extremely detailed register. The portion of this register corresponding to Mani is TT878 and, as with the earlier *defterler*, it only recently came to light (for a similar register from the Messenian peninsula, TT880, see Zarinebaf et al. 2005). Finally, two later documents from 1813 and 1829 provide a glimpse into the settlements in Mani at the very end of Ottoman rule, which ended with the Greek Revolution of 1821–1829 (for 1813: Kremmidas 1984; for 1829: Bory de Saint-Vincent 1834:89–92; Frangakis-Syrett and Wagstaff 1992; Komis 2005:54–55).

Naturally, there are caveats to consider when dealing with historical tax registers, censuses, and other kinds of settlement lists. First and foremost is the issue of power: local residents, especially in rural or peripheral areas, did not always cooperate with tax officials or foreign military personnel. It must be assumed that some number of individuals engaged in tax evasion, whether by underreporting their household production or by fleeing altogether (such as to a seasonal camp in the mountains; Given 2007:139–144; Scott 2009). Second is the issue of access. With limited time and resources, surveyors could not possibly record every single settlement in a given region, and the smallest or least accessible usually went undocumented. Third is the issue of reliability, as not all of the documents described above were recorded by firsthand observers. While the 1514 tax register and the 1618 list appear to follow a geographical procession, suggesting that the recorder visited the region in person, the order of

names in the other lists suggests that their authors did not venture into Mani themselves (Seifried 2016:137–144). All of these factors mean that the settlement lists represent only a portion of the settlements occupied in Mani. We can expect that the smallest or most remote will not have been recorded, and we must also read the names and associated content with a grain of salt, acknowledging that the people who wrote these lists were not locals and did not have expert knowledge of the region.

Still, the historical documents do provide some insight into the occupational history of many of the *palaiomaniatika* in Mani over the course of the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. While some remained occupied, a few disappeared from the records along the way, suggesting that they may have been abandoned. These patterns allow us to categorize the settlements into three major phases of abandonment: (1) before the sixteenth century, (2) during the early Ottoman period (sixteenth to mid seventeenth centuries), and (3) during the Venetian or later Ottoman periods (mid seventeenth to eighteenth centuries).

About 50–60 of the *palaiomaniatika* may have been abandoned before or around the time the Ottoman Empire took control. This is suggested by their absence from the early Ottoman *tahrir defterleri* of 1514 and 1583 and all subsequent records, and the fact that their original names are no longer remembered by local residents. A few of the toponyms in the early *defterler* have yet to be identified, and it is possible that some of these correspond to settlements within this group; this would mean that they were abandoned a bit later, in the early Ottoman period. Interestingly, while most of these settlements remained permanently abandoned, six were reinhabited briefly in the later Ottoman period (by one or two isolated residential complexes) before those later houses, too, were abandoned.

Fourteen of the *palaiomaniatika* seem to have been abandoned during the early Ottoman period (Table 1). These settlements appear in the early Ottoman *tahrir defterleri* or the 1618 list, but in no other records after this. Within this group, 10 remained permanently abandoned, and 4 were temporarily reinhabited in the later Ottoman period—all by one or two isolated residential complexes—before being abandoned once again. Admittedly, some of the toponyms are only tenuously associated with entries in the settlement lists (due to a corruption of names in the 1618 list), but I believe them to be the most likely candidates based on geography and alignment between archaeological remains and recorded

Table 1. Settlements Abandoned During the Early Ottoman Period (1463–1685), with Corresponding Entries in the 1514 and 1618 Settlement Lists.

Modern Toponym	1514 List	1618 List
Aetopholia		Haitofoglia di Cholochitia
Kato Meri	Kato Meri	
Koulouryiani (Koulouvades and Kouvouklia together)	Kalouryiani	
Kozia		Chosea
Mesopangi		Mizopangi
Skourka		Scurca di Cholochitia
Vikolias		Voucholia de Cholochitia
Vlistiko		Viglistico
Korines[a]		Zigarismeni
Kourines[a]		Bragia di Nicliani
Lakkos[a]		Mos Sabatiani
Settlement north of Skourka[a]		Giorgicio-Poulo di Cholochitia
Settlement southeast of Vachos[a]		Panayia di Vacha

[a] Tentative identification based on the order of names in the list, the geographical location of the settlement, and alignment between archaeological remains and recorded houses.

houses. A further 13 settlements were abandoned at this time and then reinhabited in the later Ottoman period, growing to become more substantial settlements that are still occupied today.[7]

Up to 12 of the *palaiomaniatika* may have been abandoned during the Venetian or later Ottoman periods. These settlements appear in records from the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries but not in the later records from 1813 or 1829. These are the most secure examples, as in most cases there are additional historical records testifying to their abandonment and providing detailed explanations for why the residents left. Potentially

[7] These are (in alphabetical order): Ayia Varvara (Phtio), Charouda, Chimara, Erimos, Kaphiona, Keria, Kotraphi, Kyparissos, Ochia, Skaltsotianika, Soloteri, Vamvaka, and a small village (*xemoni*) south of Areopoli (whose name I have not yet learned) that may be a candidate for the 1618 entry for Mavroiagni.

Table 2. Settlements Abandoned During the Venetian (1685–1715) or Later Ottoman (1715–1821) Periods, with Corresponding Entries in the 1692, 1695, 1700, and 1715 Settlement Lists.

Modern Toponym	1692 List	1695 List	1700 List	1715 List
Divola	Drivola	villa Divola	Dittolla	Divala, formerly Kotrona
Kaliazi	Cagliasi	villa Caliesi	Calliasi	Kalyazi
Kondili	Candili, e Lucadia	villa Condili	Candilli	Kondili
Karyoupoli	Cariopoli	Criopoli	Cariopoli	Karyupoli
Tserova	Cottrona, e Cerova	villa Cerova	Cerova	Çerova
Porachia		Poralia		
Stavrikio	Stavri, Stavrichie, e Pangie			
Tigani[a]			Maina alta	

[a] Tentative identification proposed by Komis (2005:377–379).

eight of the *palaiomaniatika* fall into this category (Table 2), and there are an additional four that do not appear in the records but have similar abandonment profiles from an architectural standpoint (Paliochori, located on a ridge above Drymos; and ruined settlements near Skala, Vatheia, and Riganochora).

In summary, the evidence from the historical records indicates that people were still living in the majority of the *palaiomaniatika* well into the Ottoman period. Only around 30% were abandoned by the time the Ottoman Empire took over—and that is a high estimate, considering that the sixteenth-century tax officials inevitably did not record many of the settlements occupied at the time. It is plausible that even more persisted into the first phase of Ottoman rule than this analysis suggests. Over time, some of the *palaiomaniatika* were slowly abandoned, with about 15% abandoned sometime after the first phase of Ottoman rule, and another 8% after the Venetian period or later period of Ottoman rule. Over 40% of the *palaiomaniatika* have been continuously occupied from their founding roughly a millennium ago, and more than a dozen were reoccupied after a long period of abandonment.

Case Study: Koulouvades

It should be clear at this point that we know very little about the social dynamics of life in the *palaiomaniatika*. Broad strokes can be drawn about the evolution of vernacular architecture in Mani over the past millennium, but such a long-term perspective obscures the processes of daily life and abandonment in these villages. In an effort to illustrate the importance of detailed archaeological work for the study of medieval rural settlements, I turn now to the case study of an abandoned *palaiomaniatiko* settlement near the village of Pyrgos Dirou, called Koulouvades. This site has the typical plains layout, and it is a sister settlement to Kouvouklia, which lies less than 1 km to the southeast. The site is well known to locals. A resident of nearby Charia first took me to see it in the summer of 2013. He and another local resident reported that the area is known by two names: Koulouvades and Pano Chorio (Upper Village), and that together with Kouvouklia the two sites are known as Koulouryiani. It is likely that the latter toponym derives from the surname of two of the patrons of the nearby eleventh- to thirteenth-century church of the Taxiarchis in Glezou. The donors' names are inscribed on the marble beams supporting the dome arches: Eustratios Koulouras, Theodoros Koulouras, and Niketikos (Kalopissi-Verti 2003:341–342; Traquair 1908/1909:191–192; for a bibliography of the church, see Mexia 2011:77–79).[8]

The ruined structures in Koulouvades form a triangular shape, with the longest end pointing to the east (see Figure 9 above). Today the area is subdivided into olive groves that are fairly overgrown, and the walls of the abandoned houses have been incorporated into field walls in order to delineate fields or to serve as animal pens. During field research carried out in the summer of 2014, we recorded a total of 28 individual houses, some of which were connected into multi-house complexes. Most of the buildings were filled with rubble, and the walls had been reduced to only the lowest course(s). We also recorded 32 cisterns, the vast majority of which were built in the typical slab-topped style that was used until the end of the seventeenth century (Seifried 2020a). Only one cistern was of the later barrel-vaulted type. The 1-to-1 ratio of cisterns to houses is extremely high compared to other villages recorded during fieldwork, particularly considering that the cisterns are likely to be underrepresented in the final counts because of limited visibility due to vegetation growth

[8] I am grateful to Panagiotis Makris for calling my attention to these inscriptions.

and wall fall. A cluster of cisterns is located in the northwest part of the settlement, with several sharing a single field, while others are distributed in between the houses.

At the northeastern edge of the village is the ruined Byzantine church of Ay. Vlasis (also referred to locally as Ay. Vlasides). Angeliki Mexia (2011:179–180) reports that the church, which is otherwise unpublished, dates to the second half of the twelfth century. It is a small vaulted construction, measuring 6.6 x 4.4 m on the exterior walls. The roof and apse are in stages of collapse, and only a few traces of iconography remain on the interior walls. The church's most remarkable feature is a large marble lintel over the west entrance that is engraved with the typical Byzantine motifs of a cross and birds.

One of the unusual things about Koulouvades is the impressive size of one of the houses (T363F023) and a nearby cistern (T363F030); they are among the largest in all the *palaiomaniatika*, particularly in terms of the size of the stones used in their construction. Both are situated in the northern part of the settlement (Figure 14). The exterior walls of the house are 14.8 m long and 5.8 m wide, with an average wall width of 1.6 m (Figure 15). Because the walls are so massive, the internal living area (29.9 m^2) is only slightly above average. The cistern is located about 45 m west of the house, with no intervening features (Figure 16). Its internal tank is an elongated oval measuring 8.8 m long by 1.5 m wide. Several massive limestone slabs still span the top and would have once supported a roof made of limestone rubble; however, the roof is now almost entirely collapsed. Despite the impressive length of this cistern and especially the beams spanning its roof, its internal storage capacity is only just above the average for all the cisterns measured during field research.

This cistern was one of two chosen for ^{14}C dating. A sample of the hydraulic mortar was removed from the outer layer of the mortar directly below a large limestone slab on its north wall. The sample was found to contain a charcoal inclusion that was suitable for dating via accelerator mass spectrometry (AMS), while the other sample (from a different cistern) contained no dateable material (Figure 17).[9] The uncalibrated radiocarbon date of the charcoal sample is 416 ± 16 BP (DEM-3259/ MAMS-38304; charcoal; $\delta^{13}C$ = -24.6‰). When calibrated using the OxCal v.4.2.3 program (Bronk Ramsey and Lee 2013) and the IntCal13 calibration curve (Reimer et al. 2013), the age range is 1444–1463 cal

[9] The sample was processed by Dr. Yannis Maniatis at the National Center for Scientific Research Demokritos in Athens, Greece. AMS measurement was performed at Klaus-Tschira-Labor für Physikalische Altersbestimmung, Curt-Engelhorn-Zentrum Archaeometrie gGmbH in Mannheim, Germany.

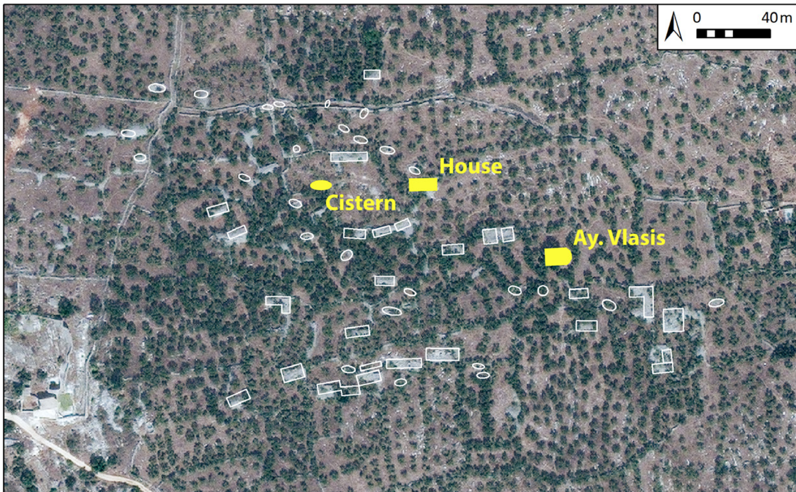

Figure 14. Aerial photo of Koulouvades showing location of the house, cistern, and church discussed in the text.

Figure 15. The large house in Koulouvades, looking southeast.

Figure 16. The large cistern in Koulouvades, looking west.

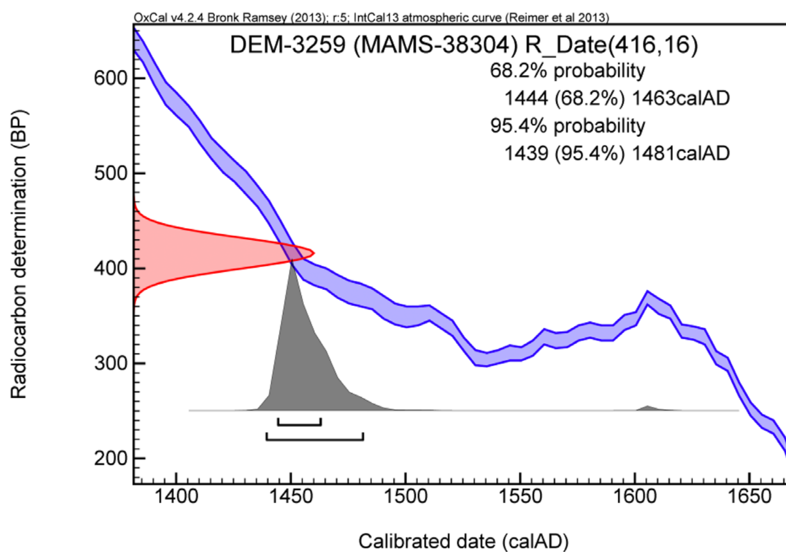

Figure 17. Calibration curve of the ^{14}C sample taken from the outer layer of hydraulic mortar in the large cistern in Koulouvades.

AD (1σ) or 1439–1481 cal AD (2σ). What this tells us is that the cistern's hydraulic mortar was last replenished in the middle of the fifteenth century, around the time that the Ottoman Empire conquered the region that is today the Peloponnese. It seems likely that the cistern went out of use within a generation or two after this event (for studies of domestic cisterns elsewhere in the Peloponnese, see Forbes forthcoming; Germanidou 2018).

The historical records confirm that Koulouvades was still occupied in the early sixteenth century. The village appears in the 1514 register (TT80) as "Kalouryiani, with Vari Matsouka, a *mezraa* in its borders." The latter name is possibly referencing another village 1 km south of Kouvouklia known as Marmatsouka. The designation of *mezraa* suggests that the area was already abandoned at the time of recording and was being used as fields by the people living in the villages of Koulouryiani. The modern village of Marmatsouka is concentrated within the more extensive layout of the original *palaiomaniatiko* and was evidently resettled after a lengthy period of abandonment. Altogether 42 heads of household, 5 bachelors, and 1 widow were recorded as living in Koulouryiani, for a total estimated number of households of around 48. The residents were assessed a tax payment of 4,145 *akçes* (the standard silver currency of the Ottoman Empire). For the sake of illustration, based on the estimated value of the currency around 1490 (Barkan and McCarthy 1975:15, Note 2), 2 akçes could buy about 1 okka (1.28 kg) of lamb. Therefore 4,145 *akçes* could buy roughly 53 lambs weighing in at 50 kg each.

Together, the ^{14}C date taken from a cistern in Koulouvades and the reference in an Ottoman tax register to the wider settlement area of Koulouryiani support a final abandonment date in the sixteenth century. In other words, the village was still functioning as a typical, vibrant rural community at the time of the Ottoman conquest. By the early sixteenth century, the settlement was already in the early stages of abandonment. Field research documented a total of 74 houses between the two settlements (28 in Koulouvades and 46 in Kouvouklia). If we suppose that most—if not all—of these houses were occupied at the settlement's height, and that each house was used by a single household (as registered in the defter), then these numbers would suggest a substantial loss of population already by 1514. The absence of Koulouryiani and its individual villages areas from the subsequent historical records (including the 1583 defter) suggests that its abandonment was probably complete by the latter half of the sixteenth century. Further fieldwork—whether that be test pits, excavation of one or more houses or cisterns, or additional radiocarbon dating—would undoubtedly open up the potential for more detailed inquiry.

Toward a Household Archaeology of Abandoned Rural Villages in Greece

Household archaeology gained traction in the 1980s with the rise of processual archaeology, particularly in Mesoamerica and the American Southwest (e.g. Blanton 1994; Flannery 1976; Netting et al. 1984; Santley and Hirth 1992; Wilk and Ashmore 1988; Wilk and Rathje 1982). Parallel studies by social theorists contributed to the field by exploring the links between built environment and households (Bourdieu 1977, 1990; Foucault 1975; Giddens 1984; Rapoport 1969, 1982). In the decades since household archaeology emerged, it has been fruitfully applied to nearly every part of human history, with particular prominence in studies of the Americas (for recent reviews, see Carballo 2011; Kahn 2016; Nash 2009; Pluckhahn 2010). What these studies show is that a focus on households and the everyday life of ordinary people provides an opportunity to explore social change from a "bottom-up" perspective, as opposed to the "top-down" view of regional approaches. It enables questions about the gendering of space, differential access to resources within a community, household-scale economic activities (including production, distribution, and consumption), the ways in which social units interact with each other, the ways in which household members bargain and negotiate in order to overcome conflicting interests, and how all these processes change over time and with respect to the wider social context.

Architecture features prominently in household archaeology, with the caveat that, just as "pots do not equal people," "houses do not equal households." The definition of households as social entities that may or may not involve cohabitation means that houses cannot be used as proxies for the people that lived within them. Similarly, household archaeologists must be careful not to apply their own conceptualizations about what a household looks like onto the architectural fabric of the settlements they left behind. But with these warnings in mind, the study of domestic architecture does allow us to ask interesting questions about the role that it played in the social processes of households over time. As with other kinds of built structures, houses can "act as sites for the construction of social memory through the repetition of practices, the construction and use of buildings over time, and the transmission of social knowledge, as well as the transmission of the buildings themselves and the objects associated with them" (Souvatzi 2012:183). While rooting people to their fellow residents and to the physical landscape, houses and other built structures are also reinterpreted and contested as new generations come and go. Thus,

household archaeology allows us both literally and figuratively to dig into the idea of "architecture as process" by exploring layers of activity, deconstruction, rebuilding, and ultimately abandonment.

Stella Souvatzi (2008, 2012) has been one of the main proponents of a "social archaeology of households" in Europe, applying this approach to several of the most prominent Neolithic sites in Greece (Nea Nikomedeia, Sesklo, and Dimini). Ancient urban centers have also received a fair amount of attention at the household scale—such as the Athenian Agora, Halieis, and Olynthos, among others (e.g. Ault and Nevett 2005; Nevett et al. 2017)—but seldom with the explicitly anthropological framework that makes Souvatzi's approach so applicable to rural landscapes in the historical periods. Rural people do occasionally feature in historical texts in the form of population counts, estimates of their productive potentials, accounts of legal action, or records of birth, marriage, and death. But rarely do we have access to the kinds of insights into their daily lives that are common for wealthier people: narrative accounts, handwritten letters, biographies, or even mundane information about household contents in wills and other official records. The people who live on the socioeconomic edges of the state simply do not leave behind these kinds of testimony. In this sense, studying a rural medieval village is in many ways like studying a prehistoric one. With historical documents providing (at best) limited insight into the residents' lives, the material remains they left behind become ever more important clues into the functioning of past societies at the household scale.

The fact that only two of the chapters in this volume deal with excavation data indicates how infrequently household archaeology is applied to the medieval and later phases in the eastern Mediterranean; yet the chapters also demonstrate how worthwhile this application can be. Through careful excavations of a house at Çadır Höyük (Cassis and Lauricella, this volume), the team was able to discern four phases of occupation and abandonment, which allowed them to tie the site into a broader understanding of how rural populations adapt to change at a much larger scale. The evidence they unearthed pointed to phases of the house's reuse and renovation, changes in domestic pottery assemblages, an abandonment episode that was both sudden and violent, and a collection of architectural and artifactual evidence that suggests part of the site was reoccupied by a different population. At the site of Anavatos (Vassi, this volume), a large-scale excavation program allowed archaeologists to study the layout of the post-medieval village in its entirety, including its public spaces, religious infrastructure, water supply, neighborhoods, and domestic architecture.

In turn, these data provide countless insights into day-to-day life in Anavatos. For example, the phases of construction point to a prioritization of safety and defense over other human needs, the narrow width of the roads suggests that the residents did not bring mules or donkeys into the village, and the material remains unearthed by the excavations indicate a continued (albeit much reduced) population at the site into the late nineteenth century. Both of these case studies showcase the kinds of questions that we could ask of abandoned rural villages if only we access to household-scale data.

At the same time, there are very real challenges to adopting a household archaeology of rural villages that are historically contingent and unlikely to be easily overcome, particularly for U.S.-based researchers working in Greece. I will outline four challenges that I believe most daunting to this work. Chief among them is the tradition from which Byzantine and post-Byzantine archaeology extends, which focuses specifically on religious architecture. A generation of archaeologists—many of whom are contributors to this volume—have attempted to shift their corners of the field toward a more materially informed approach that centers the quotidian experience of the rural countryside (e.g. Athanassopoulos 2016; Cloke and Athanassopoulos 2020; Erny and Caraher 2020; Kourelis 2018, 2019; Sanders 2014; Tzortzopoulou-Gregory 2010; Tzortzopoulou-Gregory and Gregory 2017; Vionis 2016, 2020). Yet, the focus of the field overall has not changed to the same degree. This is evident, for example, in the rarity of archaeological sessions at the Byzantine Studies Conference, which—when they do occur—are well attended and well received (including Kostis Kourelis' chaired sessions on "Cyprus: Archaeology, Architecture and History" in 2007 and "Archaeology of Byzantine Neighborhoods" in 2015).

Second is the discouragement of junior scholars that results from the way in which some of the foreign institutions allocate excavation and survey permits. In brief, non-Greek scholars are required to apply for archaeological permits via one of the foreign institutions; the process varies in competitiveness depending on the institution. For example, U.S.-based scholars applying through the American School of Classical Studies at Athens (ASCSA) are expected to hold a permanent position as a faculty member in their home country, and the process (if ever successful) can take many years. As the global economic situation has deteriorated over the past decade and short-term, contingent faculty positions become

ever more common, the challenges facing the new generation of scholars have become increasingly difficult barriers to launching new field research programs.

Third is the reluctance of some of the more impactful institutions to welcome scholarship on medieval and post-medieval phases. A notable exception to this is *Hesperia*, the journal of the ASCSA, which frequently publishes studies on Byzantine and later topics. But others have not been so generous. The flagship journal of the Archaeological Institute of America, the *American Journal of Archaeology* (with a higher impact score and arguably more diverse readership than *Hesperia*) will not consider articles dealing with phases after Late Antiquity, even if they focus on sites within Greece whose earlier phases are published elsewhere in the journal. Policies like these serve to reinforce the low prioritization of medieval and post-medieval studies and hamper the effort to bring the field in dialogue with other archaeological and theoretical approaches throughout the world.

Last, but arguably the most important, is the impact that the global economic crisis has had on archaeology in Greece, particularly since austerity measures were first put in place in 2010 under the Papandreou government. While the recession in Greece officially ended in 2018, the effects of the austerity measures will be felt for many years to come. The coronavirus pandemic of 2020 will only add to these catastrophic economic consequences. For example, the Greek Archaeology Service has been reorganized several times, resulting in layoffs for many staff, precarity for others, and cuts in funding to support archaeological sites and continued research. In remote places like Mani, whatever resources do exist within the Greek state are unlikely to be diverted toward studying humble houses like the *palaiomaniatika*. Thus, in my view, the hope that a household archaeology of rural villages can take root in Greece will depend upon support from established institutions, particularly through access to permitting, funding, and publication venues that will push the scholarship into dialogue with the wider field.

Conclusion

In their 1982 article on the *palaiomaniatika*, Moschos and Moschou (1982:263) cautioned against "drawing premature conclusions regarding the chronological classification" of the settlements due to a paucity of archaeological excavation at the time. Unfortunately, despite the passing of more than 40 years since the earliest publication on the topic, no

excavations of a *palaiomaniatika* village have been published. The current understanding is that they first appeared between the eighth and thirteenth centuries. Information from Ottoman historical records confirms that many of the settlements were still occupied into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The lack of a refined chronological understanding of the *palaiomaniatika* is a major problem for broad-scale syntheses, but it also means that we have little knowledge of the day-to-day activities that took place in these settlements. Thus, the *palaiomaniatika* offer an important case study about the limits of architectural and art historical approaches in medieval and post-medieval rural landscapes, where the overarching characteristics of the vernacular architecture are its simplicity and duration through time.

The silver lining to the present state of published research on the *palaiomaniatika* is the vast potential for future study through targeted survey and excavation. With over 170 extant settlements with preserved stone-built architecture, Mani would be a valuable case study for studying rural domestic architecture in the Byzantine and Ottoman periods. Recent methodological and theoretical advances in household archaeology have had a dramatic impact on our understanding of the day-to-day cycles of activity in domestic settings, and these approaches could be used to construct a detailed picture of lived experience in the *palaiomaniatika*. Potential topics that could be explored include the relationship between built space, family composition, and the theorization of "social units," particularly in light of historical census data; patterns of household production, consumption, and exchange; movement of people and goods beyond the settlement; settlement-scale construction programs and planning; variation in building forms and functions; the gendering of space; the role of space in ritual activities and the structuring of social order; socioeconomic differentiation within and between settlements; spatial experience and its duration through time; the roles of power in influencing settlement and house form; and the visibility and the experience of seeing/being seen. These are just a few of the myriad topics that archaeologists and historians alike have been exploring in other regions over the past several decades through household-scale research.

Archaeological investigation is especially vital because of the near-total absence of other forms of documentation. There are simply no written records about the experience of living in a *palaiomaniatika*, aside from the few tantalizing inscriptions in nearby churches that attest to the pooling of resources between settlements and the wealth of certain individuals who could afford to sponsor church constructions. Historians

like Angeliki Laiou (2005) have provided extremely detailed pictures of life in typical Byzantine villages, and Sharon Gerstel's (2015, 2020) recent work—with examples drawn from southern Mani—demonstrates the breadth of insight that can be gained from analyzing religious painting, written sources, and ethnographic data. At the same time, these works underscore the fact that excavations are essential to fully understanding the myriad facets of secular life in rural settings. It is imperative that targeted investigations be carried out to help refine the broad chronological framework of the *palaiomaniatika* and to gain insights into the lived experience of the residents of these enigmatic villages.

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