

Stable Places and
Changing Perceptions:
Cave Archaeology in Greece

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Introduction

Stable Spaces – Changing Perception: Cave Archaeology In Greece

Fanis Mavridis, Jesper Tae Jensen and Lina Kormazopoulou

Caves: General Characteristics

Caves are natural underground chambers formed by a variety of processes that range from micro-organisms to a combination of chemical and other factors, chiefly tectonic forces and water erosion. The great majority has been formed in limestone landscapes by dissolution. Availability of space and size vary greatly (Figs. 2). Rockshelters are shallow cavities that commonly lack the formation of speleothems and the characteristic conditions of cave environments (Fig. 3). Several living species are endemic to caves since they represent particular ecological niches.

Karstic environments usually present undisturbed records of landform evolution (Strauss 1997, 6), where climatic and past environmental conditions as well as human activities are preserved (Fig. 4). According to Geoff Bailey and Nena Galanidou, the latter typically occur in the form of low resolution palimpsests resulting from low rates of sedimentation and mixing by natural and anthropogenic processes (Bailey and Galanidou 2009, 215).

Caves are considered as important elements of world cultural heritage, having been actively used by man, with significant scientific, historical, archaeological, and anthropological value. However, it is not only their unique value, regarding these aspects, that makes caves particularly important. Even when they do not preserve any human or other traces (e.g. palaeontological), they constitute exceptional natural monuments, sometimes of a rare beauty, and are therefore protected by public or international authorities like UNESCO (see also a relevant introduction by Stavroula Samartzidou-Orkopoulou 2005, 10-13).

An extended list of cave uses varying through time and space can be provided, however, the list would never be full: places for permanent or periodical residence, production or storage, dump places, water sources, mines/quarries, pens or shelters for animals, cult or burial sites, spots for execution, refuges from danger or refuges for outlaws, outcasts and victims of epidemics as well as places for biological, environmental, palaeontological, archaeological, anthropological or other scientific research, touristic destinations etc.

Some of the above mentioned uses of caves, such as refuges or places of exile or isolation, are characteristic of marginal landscapes and, in this sense, caves in some

cases, share common characteristics with other marginal environments, like seascapes.

In the evolving landscape of the Mediterranean area, caves became places tied with the changing ideas of people about their surroundings. Caves were always thought of as being related to the unknown and mysterious, as places beyond the living world. They were usually considered as places of death, shelters of deities or of the divine revelation, even dwellings of monsters and chthonic creatures (see section below: The Archaic and Classical periods in the Greek Mainland). Hades, the place of the dead for the ancient Greeks, was approached through caves (see section below: The Archaic and Classical periods in the Greek Mainland), while the Spartan Kaiadas and the Minoan labyrinth indicate the prominent symbolic and allegoric significance of caves by ancient societies.

All contributions included in this anthology, even if they reflect different theoretical and methodological approaches on the study of caves, clearly suggest that stable parts of the landscape and natural geological formations are very important contexts of human activity, while their specific use and meaning depend on the human perception of landscape and personal experience, regardless of any pre-existing meaning. Such natural formations must be regarded as cultural and historical monuments integrating important aspects of human ideology and culture. A good example of this is met in the Roman culture, where the existing trend of manipulating nature was vividly expressed in the art of transforming natural caves into artificial grottoes (Hermanssen this volume).

Our studies should focus not only on the typical settlement locations but also on different types of sites which can shed light on various aspects of human life through their particular characteristics. Landscapes are never static, they are always in a process through which social realities are being produced and reproduced (Chapman 1997a, 142). Nowadays, landscape notions emphasize their sociosymbolic dimensions; how landscape is perceived, experienced, and contextualized by man (Knapp and Ashmore 1999, 1). Caves, as one among few locales in the landscape where human traces are usually identified, can play a prominent role in the study of various parameters as those mentioned above. It is important to explore their meaning and significance as natural monuments, experienced by people who perceived their world in multiple ways and acted with different intentions.

The Role And Significance Of Caves

Caves are stable topographical elements of landscapes. In any case, it is the changing human perception together with environmental conditions that defines their meaning as sites.

It is difficult to recognize the character of cave occupation, especially with reference to the Stone Age

(see discussion in Stratouli 1998). It is in question, for instance, whether traits generally considered as typical of the Neolithic way of life, such as permanent occupation in lowland areas with fertile lands, may generally apply for a better comprehension and definition of landscape exploitation in the Aegean Final Neolithic; it seems that during this period both highland sites and caves are used for habitation, architectural traces are in several cases ephemeral. Hunting seems to constitute an important economic and social strategy (see for example, Mavridis 2006).

Most interpretations of cave use in the Aegean are characterized by an approach which is related either to their marginal environmental attributes or to their character as places of cult practices, especially in Minoan Crete and during Classical times (see for example, Faure 1964; Tyree 1974; Rutkowski 1986; Rutkowski and Nowicki 1996; Jones 1999).

Cave studies have mainly focused on the establishment of chronosequences and the identification of occupation phases or use. Although this aspect of cave research is of crucial importance for the documentation of the historical context, it should be considered as a mere instrument for further exploration of the significance of these sites. There is no systematic approach to the character of cave uses within a wider perspective of ancient landscapes or to their specific role concerning activities that take place outside the typical habitation/settlement sites. Such approaches need to be detached from functionalist models of human behavior. For instance, in the case of the Final Neolithic, it could be considered inadequate to interpret intensity in the use of caves and generally highland locations only through specialized economic practices (e.g. transhumant economy; see for example, Sherratt 1981; Cherry 1988; Greenfield 1988; Halstead 1996a, 1996b; Douzougli and Zachos 2002; Greenfield and Fowler 2003). Taking into consideration all available evidence, it can be concluded that changes are much more extensive and characterize all aspects of material culture as well as landscape significance, role, and meaning (Mavridis 2006).

Natural locations and landscapes are transformed by man into cultural constructs, shaped by myth and tradition, and, therefore, invested with social meaning and significance. Social relations can be studied through comprehension of the experiential space (Figs. 5,6) in opposition to the Cartesian space (Brück and Goodman 1999, 7-9). In this respect, caves and other natural sites are not different from any other monuments or man built environments (Barnatt and Edmonds 2002). Such an approach of the meaning of space is usually ignored, as the relationship between people and landscape is commonly influenced by positivist views: sites are mapped and measured as mere dots, while other qualities of space remain completely untouched (Tilley 1994; Brück and Goodman 1999, 7-8, see also Ucko and Layton 1999, 2, 108; Kuna 1991, 331). Traditional approaches regard landscape in terms of demography, social

interaction, economic resources, risk, land use, and topography (Brück and Goodman 1999, 7).

The study of sites such as caves is very significant, as it indicates population movement in and between *loci* (Knapp and Ashmore 1999, 2). The following typical example is related to the exploration and study of the Neolithic space: for decades, tell sites have been the focus of Neolithic research, as if they were the only site types used in Neolithic landscapes. All theoretical considerations about Neolithic societies have derived from the study of these “central places”. All economic and social transformations were supposed to be found in tell sites, while in cases of “absences” or “discontinuities” in the cultural sequence of these sites, major gaps were invented, such as the gap between the Mesolithic and the Neolithic. It has not been apparent that space could be differentially perceived in various spatiotemporal contexts. There is no reason why Mesolithic traces had to be concentrated at the basal levels of tell sites. After field studies moved to different types of locations, such as islands or caves, it finally became possible to identify both transitional and earlier related material. Relatively recently, thorough study of other types of sites also began, such as flat settlements, which represent a different space use in comparison to tell settlements (for example, Kotsakis 1999; 2003). The same holds for island archaeology, where biogeographical approaches formed a specific way of understanding and studying seascapes without the presence of any other alternative approach (Mavridis 2007 [2009]; 2008; 2010). By these examples it is suggested that in order to grasp the significance of space both synchronically and diachronically, research needs to broaden its perspective.

It is essential to set the parameters and describe the meaning of a “place” or “locale” as part of a region's wider landscape. Therefore, according to Julian Thomas, it is the human factor that always needs to be contextualized, since the material world is not static but changing and negotiated in the performance of social life (Thomas 1996, 32). There are no universal notions of space (Tilley 1994, 11, also Connerton 1989, 54, 58) and it is the specific context, time, place, and historical conditions that constitute the crucial parameters for understanding the formation of space (Bender 1993, 1). Mountains, the sea, rivers, springs, caves, and other natural formations acquire specific powers and special significance, and their meaning is however neither pre-given nor universal [for the ancient Greek perception of landscape, see Buxton 1994, 90-113 (mountains: 81-96; the sea: 97-104; caves: 104-9; springs: 109-13)].

Particular topographic features (Figs. 7.8) are critical for the establishment of social identities, as natural topography is embedded with meaning and significance. Caves cannot but be considered as such. In order to understand the significance of caves and other natural locations, the study of artifacts deposited in their interior is of crucial importance: locales and artifacts interact. In this way, the presence of specific artifact categories, the relevance between various artifacts, their specific context

and the manner of their deposition, all manifest social action, and provide the specific character of an archaeological context. The contextual relations of finds as well as their fragmentation patterns, preserved parts etc. are generally considered as secondary in the approach of a specific context's meaning. The investigation of such locales' way of creation can provide information not easily approached through other types of sites. It is important to note that, as architecture is a means of structuring relations between people and their environment, in the case of caves, it is the character of deposition and the special features of artifacts that play the analogous role. Particularly since caves are the ambiguous limits between the world of the living and the world of the dead - light and darkness - their specific significance needs to be clarified by actions and accompanied by artifacts with special connotations.

Finally, phenomenological approaches suggest that the specific conditions of perceiving any space can be reconstructed through direct experience (Fig. 9) (Tilley 1994, for caves see Roe 2000).

Changing Perceptions: Caves Through Time StoneAge

Caves and rockshelters have provided some of the most important evidence for the earliest inhabitants of the Aegean at sites such as Petralona Cave in Chalchidiki (for references, see Papadea in this volume), Klithi Rockshelter and Kastritsa Cave in Epirus (Galanidou 1997, for references, see Papadea in this volume), the Theopetra Cave in Thessaly (Kyparissi-Apostolika 2006), the Franchthi Cave in the Argolid (Jacobsen 1976; 1981; Perlès 1999), Kalamakia Cave (Darlas and de Lumley 1999; Darlas 2002) and the Lakonis Cave in Lakonia (Panagopoulou et al. 2002-2004), Kleisoura in the Argolid (Koumouzelis et al. 2001a, b; 2003; Karkanas et al. 2004), and recently the Anonymous Cave of Schisto in Attika, where material dating to the Late Pleistocene/Early Holocene has been attested (Mavridis and Kormazopoulou 2007-2008; Mavridis et al. 2012; Mavridis et al. in this volume). Significant transitional phases such as that of Neanderthals to modern humans and from the Mesolithic to the Neolithic have been attested to some of these above mentioned sites (Harvati, Panagopoulou and Karkanas 2003, for the transition to the Neolithic, see discussion in Kotsakis 2003). The Mesolithic period has also been extensively identified in caves and the general notion about the scarcity of this phase in the Aegean needs to be re-evaluated (see Sampson 1998; 2006; (ed.) 2008b; Galanidou and Perlès 2003; Kyparissi-Apostolika 2003; Perlès 2003; Koumouzelis, Kozłowski and Ginter 2003; Panagopoulou et al. 2005; Runnels et al. 2005, Runnels 2009).

Ethnographic approaches have shown that there is no universal pattern that can be applied in relation to the use of the cave's space before the Neolithic. The variability observed depends on how occupants perceive and experience space, as well as on social composition and identity of the occupants (Galanidou 2000, 243-244).

Even caves which have been used for similar purposes by groups, who share the same habitat and have identical modes of subsistence, are characterized by variability in the use of space (Galanidou 2000, 243-244). A fundamental question of landscape perception by hunter gatherer societies is related to the extent in which it was socialized or brought to the human sphere (Head 1994, 172).

During the Early and Middle Neolithic periods, caves in use, as well as open settlements are usually attested in lowlands near water sources (contrary to later phases, see Mari 2001 for further references). Exceptions to these patterns always exist and indicating that the criteria for using an underground space vary.

Important new evidence has been into existence concerning the significance of caves in the Aegean Late Neolithic I and II. Some scholars believe that there is need for a general reassessment of the role of caves in Neolithic Greece, since it seems that some of them could have hosted ritual events or other kinds of social and symbolic significance (Stratouli 2005, 113).

A symbolic behavior has been recognized in caves such as Skoteini Cave at Tharrounia in Euboea, Sarakenos Cave in Boeotia, and Cave of Cyclops on Gioura in the north Sporades (Katsarou-Tzeveleki and Sampson in this volume). In this case the fine ware pottery was found inside a pond deep into the cave, a depositing spot with symbolic connotations, while the number of figurines found in the Sarakenos Cave, together with other evidence, represent a unique case for the Greek Neolithic period. This can be paralleled in importance only with the finds from the prehistoric settlement of Strofilas on Andros (Televantou 2006).

In the so-called Drakaina Cave in Kefalonia, apart from some exceptional portable items, permanent floors were identified as comprising a context of specific significance (Stratouli 2005, 125-126). Furthermore, at the Leontari Cave (the Lion's Cave) on Hymettos Mountain (Karali, Mavridis and Kormazopoulou 2005; 2006), it is not only the presence of artifacts with special connotations but also deposition and fragmentation patterns that indicate a particular behavior related to the cave.

During the Late Neolithic I and II there are some common characteristics encountered in caves. Their entrances are usually small and hidden (Fig. 10), they are close to water sources and provide the possibility for wide observation of the surrounding areas (Fig. 11). Traces of activities are often visible near caves used during this period, where typical examples are the Skoteini Cave at Tharrounia in Euboea (Sampson 1993) and the Leontari Cave (the Lion's Cave) on Hymettos Mountain, in the wider area of which other caves seem to have been used too. Some constructions have been found inside or are related to the caves such as floors, wells, walls etc. [among many examples, see the Alepotrypa Cave in the Peloponnese (Papathanasopoulos 1996a), the

Kitsos Cave in Attika (Lambert 1981), and the Drakaina Cave in Kefalonia (Stratouli 2005)].

The Late Neolithic I and II is considered as a period during which caves were being extensively used. It has been suggested that in the Peloponnese there was a shift in percentage from 15-20% of cave use in the Early and Middle Neolithic to 56% during the Late Neolithic I and 42% in the Late Neolithic Ib-II periods, while during the Bronze Age I and II phases the relevant values fall to 1 and 2% respectively (Diamant 1974). Concerning the Late Neolithic I and II phases, this phenomenon has been attributed by certain scholars to specialized economic practices (e.g. specialized exploitation of animal products, transhumant economy, see for example, Sampson 1993; Douzougli and Zachos 2002). It seems, however, that this change in settlement patterns is part of a wider transformation in the socioeconomic sphere of these periods. These changes can be observed in the use and meaning of material culture and in the significance of landscape, where a phase of colonization of marginal environments is observed, a further expansion to upland landscapes as well as to seascapes (Mavridis 2006; 2007 [2009]). It is also a period when caves, even in arid or semi arid regions such as Lakonia, were used as parts of wider settlement systems (Kontaxi, Kotjambopoulou and Stravopodi 1989). Some caves are considered as upland, even though they do not lie so far away from the coast (Fig. 12). What seems to be changing then is that, in opposition to earlier phases, the *agrios* becomes important again in relation to the *domus* (for the earlier phases of the Neolithic, see Hodder 1990).

The acceptance by scholars that the so-called Final Neolithic is generally a period characterized by cave use is rather illusory. That is because the term Final Neolithic, ranging from about 4500 to 3200 B.C. includes different phases and traditions. During the 4th millennium cave use is under represented, while it is during the 5th millennium that cave use is mainly attested (Sampson, Facorellis and Maniatis 1999; Mavridis 2006 where detailed discussion and further references concerning terminology, chronology etc., see also Stratouli, Facorellis and Maniatis 1999). Therefore a closer look indicates that only particular phases are characterized by the widespread use of caves and not every single tradition included in the term Final Neolithic.

Apart from the evidence deriving from the excavation of specific sites, this picture seems to be confirmed by the exploration of many caves in Attika, as it is demonstrated by Jere Wickens (1986). It has been identified that increase in cave use begins in the Middle/Late Neolithic, while a more limited use continues into the Early Bronze Age I and evidence is sparse between the Early Bronze Age II and the Late Helladic II; a new increase is identified during the Late Helladic III. There is also a minimal use during the Geometric period, while some continuity is attested between the Archaic and Classical periods (Wickens 1986, 101-2). Therefore, four major periods of increase in cave use are attested: Late

Neolithic I-II, Late Helladic III, Classical and Late Roman (Wickens 1986, 108).

Bronze Age

The use of caves in the Early and Middle Bronze Age is sparse and limited evidence is available at least for Mainland Greece. Pottery dating to the Early, Middle, and Late Bronze Ages derives from the Cave of the Leibethrian Nymphs (Cave of the Nymph Koroneia), as has been demonstrated by Vivi Vasilopoulou (this volume). Pottery of the Early Bronze Age has also been found in the Anonymous Cave of Schisto, Attika (Mavridis and Kormazopoulou 2007-2008; Mavridis et al. in this volume; 2012). Moreover, the excavation of the Cave in Perachora that was used as a long-term ossuary presents a unique case from the Greek Mainland. In the vicinity of the cave lies the well-known settlement of Lake Vouliagmeni; however, such burial caves are known mainly from Crete (Faure 1964, 66-69), while the burials in the Cyclades and Mainland Greece are usually met in artificial cavities (Koumouzelis 1996, 229). Another interesting case under excavation is the Hagia Triada Cave in Karystos, southern Euboea, where burials and Early Bronze Age finds have been identified (Mavridis and Tankosic 2009a; 2009b; 2009c.). Recent surveys and excavations in Lakonia, Messenia and other regions have produced important new evidence from caves used during the Early, Middle and later phases of the Bronze Age (Efstathiou 2009, 5-20).

The Mycenaean period is represented by at least 37 caves bearing traces of use, while new cases are continually brought to light from field explorations of the Ephoreia of Palaeoanthropology and Speleology of Southern Greece.

The Peristeria Cave on Salamis is an almost unique case beyond those from Crete. Burials were associated there with numerous grave offerings (for example weapons) indicating that important people were buried inside the cave (Lolos 2000, 29-32; Vasiliou 2000, 34). Isolated burials are reported from the Cave of Lakes, Kastria, Kalavryta (Sampson 1997, 337-40), while some finds indicate a possible cult activity practiced into some caves such as that of Panormos Cave in the town of Ithaka (Benton 1938/39). Also, a figurine of Ψ-shape comes from the Cave of Nestor at Voidokilia in the Peloponnese, as is the case for the Skoteini Cave at Tharrounia in Euboea (Vasiliou 2000, 34). These Mycenaean finds belong, in most of the cases, to the Late Helladic III period (Katsarou 1993, 314). A periodic cult use has been considered possible for the Corycian Cave (Antre Corycien) in Delphi (Lerat 1984). Another well-known use of caves in the Mycenaean period is attested in the Klepsydra Cave (Klepsydra Spring) on Akropolis, which was mainly used for water (Travlos 1971, 323-331; Iakovidis 1973, 129-131, for the search of water around the area of the Klepsydra during the Bronze Age, see Hurwit 1999, for the Klepsydra in the Classical period, see Camp 2001, 70-71).

A unique occupation from the Late Neolithic to the Mycenaean period is attested at the Vathy Cave on Kalymnos. Unfortunately, documentation is very poor since excavations took place in the early 1920's. However, recent publication of the material will enrich our knowledge about cave use in the Aegean. This cave is situated 12 m ASL (above sea level), and it can only be reached by sea (Fig. 12). In relation to the later phases of the Bronze Age, material dated to the Middle Bronze Age, Late Minoan I as well as to the Mycenaean period, was also identified (Benzi 1993). The transition from the Minoan to the Mycenaean phase is not clear, and it seems that apart from a few sherds, Minoan pottery dates no earlier than the Late Minoan IB, while the Mycenaean use characterizes (as was the case for Mainland Greece) the Late Helladic III phase (Benzi 1993, 281). A cult use is considered possible for the Minoan phase, but no such evidence exists for the Mycenaean period (Benzi 1993, 287). Fine imported Minoan pottery, a stone vase, and three rhyta characterize cult contexts (Benzi 1993, 281), as well as a bronze statue of a typical Minoan worshipper, indicating cult activity, also attested in open air sites influenced by Minoan Crete (Marketou 2000).

Cretan Caves

In Crete, caves have been rather extensively used since the Neolithic period. The character of use of Cretan caves before the Bronze Age is not certain (see L. Platon's contribution), and there is yet no definite evidence for continuity of symbolic use before and after the Bronze Age, even if traces of both these periods have been attested in several cases (see the contribution in this volume by Faro, Platon and Tyree). Burials are also quite common in Cretan caves.

In Crete, the study of caves follows the history of the ideological formation of Greek prehistoric archaeology. As it has been pointed out by Richard Bradley (Bradley 2000), the earliest explorations of Cretan caves aimed at the discovery of valuable objects, the identification of sites mentioned by ancient authors, and especially the location of the tomb of Zeus (for references, see bibliography in the contribution in this volume by Platon, Faro, Tyree, and Stampolidis and Kotsonas). With the progress of research the effort was concentrated on establishing criteria for the identification of cult places (Faure 1964; Tyree 1974; Rutkowski 1986; Rutkowski and Nowicki 1996; Jones 1999). Contributions in this volume by Elissa Zoe Faro, Lefteris Platon, Nikolaos Stampolidis and Antonis Kotsonas and Loeta Tyree give a good account, not only of the history of research, but also of the new evidence added to Minoan archaeology by cave studies.

Cult in Cretan caves lasted from about the end of the 3rd millennium down to the 4th century A.D. with different degree of intensity. Beyond prehistory, a peak in cave use is also attested in the Geometric, Archaic and Roman periods (see Stampolidis and Kotsonas this volume).

The variety of offerings discovered in these caves, some of which are imports from several Mediterranean regions, indicates their importance for Cretan cult practices (Stampolidis and Kotsonas this volume). Apart from the caves associated with the birth of Zeus, another mythical cave is that of Eileithyia (see Platon in this volume with further references). Other caves were dedicated to Demeter, Rea, Pan and the Nymphs, the Nereids, Titans, Cyclops, Kouretes, Dactyloi, Hermes, and Apollo, to mention just a few of the many deities, who received worship in cave sites.

Archaic And Classical Periods In The Greek Mainland

In the Greek Mainland, from the 6th century B.C. onwards, a great number of caves were used for the worship of the chthonian aspect of several deities (Wickens 1986, 177-178; Larson 2001, 227; Sourvinou-Inwood 1988, 116-7).

Due to their natural characteristics many caves were considered as places where one could descend down into the deep void of darkness. In this respect, they represented a perfect natural setting for an entrance or transit area from the world of the living to the mysterious and dangerous Underworld (for other entrances to Hades such as the cavities in the volcanic landscape of Sicily, see Kingsley 1995, 73-4, 134, 138, 240, 252-253, 282; also Peter Kingsley's fascinating and very convincing discussion of how the Sicilian geography influenced the writings of Empedokles and his understanding of Hades).

According to ancient literature, the Underworld with its ruler Hades - sometimes called Pluto - and his queen Persephone, is often accessed through caves. It was into a cave that the Lake Styx was formed and where the gods swore their oaths. As a chthonian deity, Hermes accompanied the dead to the Underworld as their psychopompos, and was also responsible for the offerings of their relatives and making sure that their deceased family member would properly reach the Land of the Dead (Hdt. 5.92; see also Burkert 1983, 196; Simon 1996).

The episode of the descent into the Underworld is called *katabasis* (see Jakobsen 2002, 12, no 17; Empedokles talks of an actual *katabasis*, see Kingsley 1995, 41). Among the numerous relevant instances described in ancient literature, the most famous *katabasis* is, of course, the journey of Orpheus in search of his beloved dead wife, Eurydike. According to some ancient sources, Orpheus' descended to Hades from Tainaron at the south end of Mani Peninsula, Peloponnese (Simon 1996, 82; for other entrances to the underworld, see Giannoulidou 1978). However, this sanctuary was not dedicated to Hades but to his brother Poseidon *chthonios*. During Antiquity this place was considered as one of the most important gateways to Hades and functioned as a necromanteion or a psychopompeion. Other authors claim that Orpheus' *katabasis* took place at Aornos in Thesprotia, where the famous necromanteion of Epheira

is located (for the Trophonius of Leivadia, see Cosmopoulos, ed. 2003).

In Eleusis lies another gateway to the Underworld, the Ploutoneion (Larson 2001, 227). It was built in a small cave near the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore (for a new and much more convincing reading of the church father Asterios, who is our main source for a *katabasis* as a cultic ritual during the Eleusenian Mysteries, see Jakobsen 2002, especially 4-12), thus marking out the exact place where Hades abducted Kore while picking flowers. She would then be made Queen of the Underworld with the name Persephone (For the myth, see *Hom .Hymn Dem*).

Apart from the chthonian gods, the Nymphs, protectors of pregnant women (terracotta statuettes depicting pregnant women were found in the Pitsa Cave near Sykion, famous for the four Archaic painted wooden pinakes that were found in 1934, see Larson 2001, 229; also Vasilopoulou's contribution in this volume), were the most common deities worshipped in caves, often followed by Hermes or Pan, the god of shepherds (Edwards 1985; Larson 2001, 226-58). It was not until the 5th century B.C. that the worship of Pan and the Nymphs (Fig. 13) was widely spread. However, the general assumption that the cult of Pan spread rapidly from Arkadia to Attika during the 5th century B.C. might not be a valid statement anymore, since no cave dedicated to Pan alone in either Arkadia or Attika has ever been found. He is only worshipped together with the Nymphs and they seem to be the main deities of worship (see Parker 1996, 165; Borgeaud 1988, 4, 51, no 54; Zampiti this volume). Many caves dedicated to them have been identified in Attika (Wickens 1986, 171-172), where the cult was introduced after the battle of Marathon in 490 B.C., since it was believed by the Athenians that Pan helped the Greeks win the war over the Persians (Garland 1992, 47-63; Parker's 1996, 163-8; Larson 2001, 97). Pan came from the wild mountains of Arkadia, and this is the main reason why he was worshipped inside caves. The worship of Pan and the Nymphs reached its peak during the 4th century B.C.. This is also reflected in the votive reliefs, where the earliest, the Archandros relief found at the south slope of the Athenian Akropolis, can be dated to 410-400 B.C. (Edwards 1985, 2, 293-303, no 1; Larson 2001, 130, fig. 4.2, also Borgeaud 1988; Feubel 1935; Larson 2001, 258-67).

Moreover, Cyclops are presented in the Odyssey as living in caves without obeying any law, representing thus an early stage in the human history; therefore the cult of their father, Poseidon, is considered an early phenomenon (Simon 1996).

Caves could also be used as burial places for mythological heroes or heroines. The best example is the possible tomb or cenotaph of Iphigeneia at Brauron in an area within the sanctuary of Artemis Brauronia where structures were built in a cave with a small temple at its entrance (Hollingshead 1985, also Wickens 1986, 167; Larson 2001, 227).

Caves were also believed to be the place of origin of mythical kings and heroes. It is characteristic that the Peristeria Cave on Salamis was considered as the sacred place of origin of the first mythical king of the island (Mari 2001, 187), who is depicted as half human and half snake (Mari 2001, 187). Such figures were considered as guardians of important trees, springs, ancient temples, just to name a few site types indicating a whole symbolic code related to the physical aspects of landscape (Mari 2001, 187). Pausanias provides some very interesting information about the meaning of landscape in ancient Greece. Promontories, mountains, caves, trees, lakes, rivers, springs and the sea were assumed to be sacred (Bradley 2000, 20).

All this mythical imagery related to caves is depicted in art with special reference to the gods Zeus and Hermes, who were born and raised in caves, and also to Hades, god of the Underworld. The adventures of Odysseus and his companions, as well as the representations of heroes such as Achilles and Philoktetes are also common themes (for an account of the representation of gods and heroes on Attic red and black figure vases, see Boardman 1980, 252-78; 1985, 257-71, also Sporn in this volume). The Underworld or the mythical figures and gods related to it are not very common (see Boardman 1980, 278, e.g. figs. 198, 225).

In cave shrines of the Classical period terracotta figurine types - male or female, standing or seated, dancers, protomes, small birds, animals, fruits, sphinxes, relief pinakes etc. - as well as decorated and plain pottery of various shapes - such as loutrophoroi, kotylai, pyxides, lekanides, skyphoi, lekythoi, krateriskoi, oinochoae, chalices, amphoras, phialae, arybaloi and craters - are the most widely represented categories of finds (Wickens 1986, 171). Other artifacts including various types of lamps, jewellery, marble reliefs, astragaloi and other small objects are also found in cave shrines. In many cases niches were cut in the cave walls, inside or at front of the caves or at the sides of their entrances used to insert votive offerings and/or inscriptions. Among the most outstanding examples is the cave shrine of Archedamos or Nympholeptos in Vari also called Nympholeptou Vari Cave (the Pan Cave at Vari), Attika, situated at the south end of Hymettos Mountain. The cave is unique for its rock cut decoration with votive reliefs and its rock cut stairs, made during the 5th century B.C.. (Thallon 1903; Weller 1903; Travlos 1988, 446-466; Parker 1996, 165; Larson 2001, 242-243, figs. 5.8-5.9; Schörner and Göette 2004.). The Chrysoispilia Cave on Pholegandros is unmatched for the numerous votive inscriptions of adolescents written on its walls in the form of *graffiti*, dating mainly to the 4th century B.C.. Aspects of a phallic cult have also been identified there (Vasilopoulou 1996, 16-17; Marthari 2005, 303). The existence of an immense number of astragaloi in caves like the Corycian Cave (Antre Corycien) in Delphi and the Cave of the Leibethrian Nymphs (Cave of the Nymph Koroneia) in Boeotia seem to be associated with the art of divination (Amandry 1984). A natural prominence of

bedrock, slightly worked, would serve as an altar in some cases, like the Paliambela Cave, Aetoloakarnania, with ashes stuffed on it during use (Hatziotou and Kormazopoulou forthcoming).

The discussion on the importance of underground spaces in Classical times may be considered rather limited since it is impossible to include here all aspects of cultic practices, beliefs and customs related to caves.

Christian Use Of Caves

Following a long period of poor archaeological evidence from cave contexts, which lasted from the Hellenistic period to the 3rd century A.D., the Late Roman/Early Byzantine phases are characterized by a more intensive cave use, probably the result of considerable population increase in the countryside and changes in the pattern of land use. In the 5th century A.D., some old cave shrines showed clues of revival of their previous antique worship, possibly matching the efforts of the emperor Julian to support the reclining ancient religion. In many other caves the Christian use was introduced by converting old pagan cave shrines into Christian ones [sacred caves on the foot of Akropolis, Lychnospilia on Parnes (the Lamp Cave) in Attika, and caves on Crete, see Wickens 1986; Faure 1964].

During the following Byzantine phases, when monastic life became a widespread trend, many caves were fashioned into shelters for dwelling and prayer of monks and hermits. Such hermitages often grew into whole monasteries (Filosophou Monastery in Arkadia, Monastery of Mega Spileon at Kalavryta, Monastery of Ypapandi, Meteora) or were turned into chapels with fresco decoration on their walls (Daveli Cave, Attika, Hagia Sophia of Mylopotamos, Kythera, Cave of the Revelation, Patmos). In many cases entire areas, usually mountainous, became centers of monastic life, gathering monks from around the Empire (such areas are known in the Peloponnese, Thessaly, Athos, Aetolia etc.) (Lambropoulou 1994). Due to conditions of danger, several caves were reinforced with fortification walls (Monastery of Avgo, Argolid, Hagios Nikolas of Varassova, Aetolia, Hagia Marina in Langada, Messenia). Special local and historical conditions occurring in some parts of the Byzantine world underlie the creation of vast communities of rock cut dwellings or artificial caves, which were used over the centuries either as places of worship and hermitage or as houses or both (Caves of Kappadokia in Turkey, Caves of Matera in southeastern Italy) (G.de Jerfanion 1925; La Scaletta 1966; Rodley 1985).

The ancient symbolism of cave sites as places of birth and death, of interchange between darkness and light, continued into the Christian iconography in a different perspective. In Byzantine art caves are associated with the major scenes of Christ's life, the Nativity, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection in its Byzantine iconographic type, The Descent into Hades. The cave poses its dual meaning in all three scenes: in the Nativity

the star sheds light to the darkness of the cave and the scene itself, whereas the dark background is there as a reminder of the future pain. In the Crucifixion scene the cave, bearing Adam's skull, supports the cross and bears the promise of Resurrection. In the very scene of Resurrection Adam comes to life ascending from the dark mouth of Hades with the help of the risen Christ's hand, marking the passage from darkness and death to light and salvation. In this sense the Christian cave is identified with the symbolic space of Revelation.

Caves were also included in a variety of scenes from the lives of saints, ascetes and hermits living in them. The most prominent being St. John the Theologian, who was inspired in the writing of the Apocalypse in a cave on Patmos now called Cave of the Revelation.

Throughout this period caves never ceased to be used for purely practical reasons. Apart from their use by farmers and shepherds, who visited them for their water sources, housed their flocks or conserved their dairy products in them, caves served as refuges for local populations in times of invasion or war (e.g. Andritsa Cave-refuge, Argolid, Kornos Cave, Cyprus) (Kormazopoulou and Hatzilazarou 2005). Coastal caves were also used as fortified shelters against pirates' raids (caves on the cliffs of the Mani Peninsula, Peloponnese).

By this brief account of cave use in the Aegean and the surrounding areas it is suggested that cave sites were important spots of activity, though only general aspects of their significance have been revealed so far. It is therefore of major importance to comprehend the historical context associated with their use and investigate their broader significance as particular landscapes integrated into human experience.

Conclusion

Scholars need always to be aware of the fact that during prehistory and the later periods an important array of activities took place beyond the typical habitation sites. In this respect, caves represent ideal cases for studying such activities. Furthermore, this is true because of the special character of underground spaces, where specific actions, not attested in other places, might possibly have occurred.

Caves and other natural locations and spots do not exist independently, but are part of a wider system of movement of people in the landscape. The Kalythies Cave in Rhodes, for instance, strongly indicates that it formed part of a wider system of *loci*, since action was spread between different places in the landscape. Animal bones and other finds from this cave indicate that hunting and gathering activities, butchering processes, and temporary burials relate the Kalythies Cave to other locations (Halstead and Jones 1987, 139). Sites are created by varied experiences and perceptions which compose the variability observed in the archaeological record.

Also repeated use is important, not only for open-air settlements (see e.g., tell settlements) but for other spaces as well. Such sites can be considered and studied as monuments. For the Aegean Neolithic, there is now evidence that a specific symbolic behavior is related to the creation of cave space (see for example Katsarou-Tzeveleki and Sampson this volume).

It is difficult to comprehend the use of caves, especially in the Stone Age, since there can be no dichotomy between ritual and secular, while mobile lifestyles use different models of space and time. Movements are therefore dependent on particular cultural values.

This is apparent in the case of Cretan caves and even for later phases, since it is not easy to identify with certainty or distinguish between ritual offerings, domestic assemblages, etc. It is not possible to state why only a few of the thousands of caves existing on the island bear evidence of cult activities (Faro; Platon; Tyree in this volume). It is also a matter of investigation why certain caves, which seem to offer better living conditions, have not been used while others with worse conditions prevailing in them, preserve traces of repeated human activity.

Caves represent cases where levels of analysis such as settlement, household or domestic unit are not easily

applicable. What structures space in these areas is a matter of definition. Functional interpretations have generally failed to demonstrate the specific uses of cave space. This is because space is ordered according to cultural meanings, depending on historical context, while interpretations need to be contextualized and set apart from cross cultural generalizations (Brück and Goodman 1999, 5).

Caves are usually studied without recording the topography of the areas which they make part of, and they are seldom taken into consideration when wider settlement patterns are studied (e.g. surveys).

The establishment of a biographical approach that would emphasize the changing history of these sites, the variation through time which is related to the changing perceptions of people, seems to be an appropriate way of analysis. It is through human action that landscapes are put in order, and forms of material culture are created (Gosden and Head 1994, 114).

Caves should be considered an important element of ancient landscapes. They are one of those *loci* where social action takes place, and symbolic behavior and ideas about the world are expressed. A dynamic analysis needs therefore to be built in order to achieve an understanding of such places (Chapman 1997b, 2).

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Figure 1. Underground spaces (Photos by F. Mavridis).



Figure 2. Underground spaces (Photos by F. Mavridis).



Figure 3. A rock shelter in Aetoloakarnania (Photo by F. Mavridis).



Figure 4. Anthropogenic deposits (Photo by F. Mavridis).

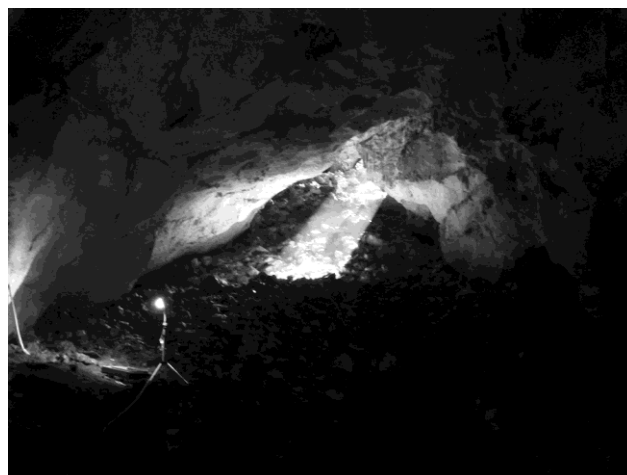


Figure 5. Experiencing underground spaces (Photo by F. Mavridis).



Figure 6. Experiencing underground spaces (Photo by F. Mavridis).



Figure 7. Views of the surrounding area from the mountainous landscape of the Leontari Cave, Hymettos Mountain (Photos by F. Mavridis).



Figure 8. Views of the surrounding area from the mountainous landscape of the Leontari Cave, Hymettos Mountain (Photos by F. Mavridis).



Figure 9. An underground space in Attika (Photo by F. Mavridis).



Figure 10. The entrance of the Leontari Cave, Attika with Late Neolithic I-II traces of use (Photo by F. Mavridis).



Figure 11. A Late Neolithic II site, Varassova Mountain, Aetoloakarnania (Photo by F. Mavridis).



Figure 13. Leontari Cave, Hymettos Mountain. Finds of the Classical phase shrine (Photo by F. Mavridis).



Figure 12. Vathy Cave, Kalymnos (Photo by F. Mavridis).