

Choosing a case study of your choice drawn from the Bronze Age East Mediterranean (Aegean, Cyprus or the Levant) consider how theoretical perspectives might help archaeologists to interpret one of the following:

- Household Archaeology in rural communities
- Household Archaeology in urban settings
- Ritual and ceremony in palatial contexts

For archaeologists to gain an understanding of household archaeology in an urban setting, certain theoretical perspectives must be examined and analysed thoroughly. In this essay, materiality, social reproduction, agency and other theories will be used to demonstrate that these theoretical perspectives can help us to recognise the importance of household archaeology. To fully show an understanding of this, the proto-palatial Bronze Age Aegean town of Malia, Crete will be used as a case study to showcase how an urban environment can be used to display the ways in which theoretical perspectives can be used in relation understanding past people and their everyday life that is not documented in writing.

Household archaeology can provide archaeologists an insight into the lives of past societies by looking at the aspects of architecture and artefacts. Before delving into the bulk of why using households to interpret Bronze Age Minoan households is useful, it is important to break down the term 'household' and define what is exactly meant by this. Firstly, the term 'house' could be defined as a building, large or small, that is suitable for human habitation whether this be a group of individuals or a 'family' (Rainville 2013). Other terms stem off from this including 'family', which does not necessarily mean that individuals have to be related by blood but is more focused on kinship (Rainville 2013). Lastly, it is also important to what exactly does a house mean to archaeologists who are excavating it. Rainville (2013) continues her discussion and notes that for archaeologists they are "important spatial delineators for studying associated activity areas" (Rainville 2013). By combining all of these definitions together, we can then gain a solid understanding of what a household is. Souvatzi (2014) does this perfectly; she notes that a household is not one single entity, but many. It is a location of action in which a varying amount of agents work together in a system of social relations (Souvati 2014). Both Wilk and Rathje, who can be considered the pioneers of household archaeology, note in their book *Household Archaeology* (Wilk and Rathje 1982) that there are four categories that are necessary to discuss in order to understand how households functions. Firstly, production is a key element that is defined as "human activity that procures resources or increases their value" (Wilk and Rathje 1982:4). An example of this could be the production of food products. Secondly, the distribution of moving resources from the producers to the consumers is an important notion in household archaeology. This can be divided into two categories, 'pooling', which is the distribution within a single household and 'exchange', the act of distributing goods amongst households (Wilk and Rathje 1982). The last two categories are function, which focuses on the idea of transferring rights, roles and land between the generations and reproduction is described as

the “rearing of children” (Wilk and Rathje 1982:9). By discussing and thinking about these different categories, we can then have a greater understanding of how the household works and why it is so important when discussing certain theoretical perspectives and the case study of Malia.

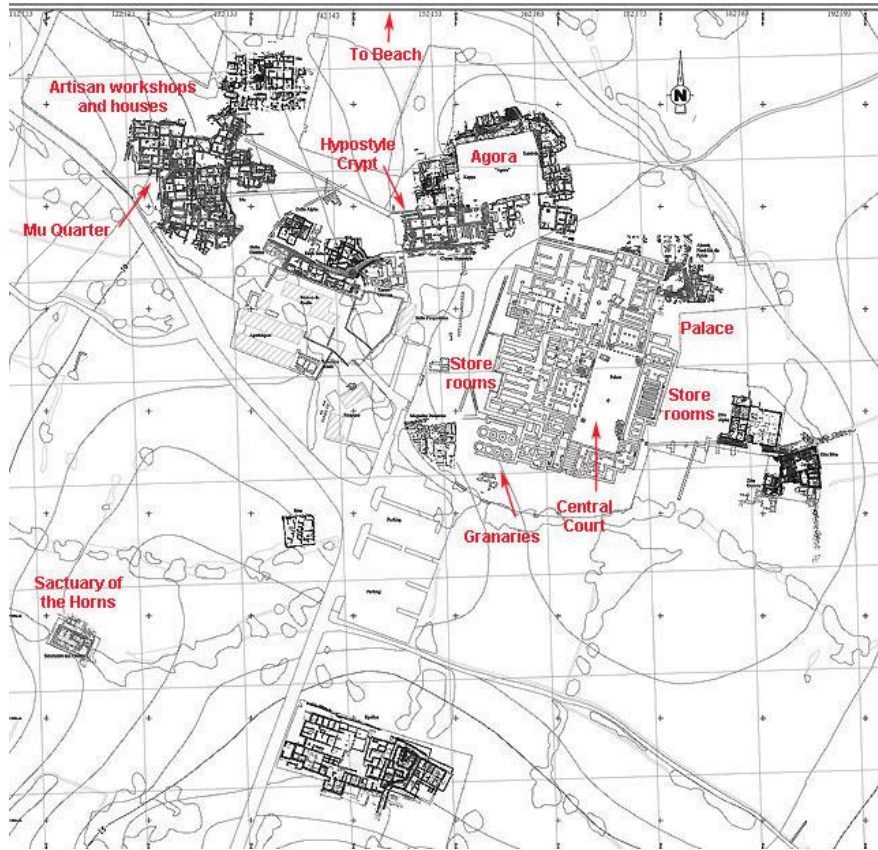


Figure 1 showing map of the town of Malia, after Travellingclassroom.org, n.d.

The city of Malia, which is noted to have been thriving from EM H1-1A (McEnroe 2013) is located in a fertile, coastal valley near to the other Minoan site of Knossos, and in 1915 archaeologist S. Xanthoudides discovered and excavated the site of Malia, but these excavations were then carried on by the French School at Athens from 1920 onwards. (Driessen 2009). By looking at figure 1, it is clear that the whole of Malia was inhabited with not only a ‘palace’ but also other buildings rich with artefacts and architecture that are seen as independent from this ‘palace’ (Poursat 2010) that can help us to gain an understanding household archaeology in urban settings. Although this essay is primarily focused on the town of Malia, it is important to discuss the wording of the term ‘palace’ as it is important to make reference to this building to fully understand how theoretical perspectives and household archaeology are intertwined. The term palace is used commonly by archaeologists who are discussing Bronze Age Cretan palatial sites, but it is noted by Schoep in John C. McEnroe book ‘Architecture of Minoan Crete’ (2013) that the term ‘palace’ carries issues and instead suggested to use the term ‘court-centred building’ (McEnroe 2013). Indeed, it is problematic to use the term palace and must be proceeded with caution. Although this is a sound replacement for the term palace, this essay will use ‘palace’ for

simplicity reasons. Returning to the town of Malia, there are many buildings in this site that hold information about how past societies worked both socially and economically. One building that is seen as vital when discussing household archaeology is Quartier Mu, which is made up of two main buildings, both A and B (Poursat 2013), and is seen as a considerable building with a centralized court (Steel 2013). Quartier Mu was also built in at least two phases and the main focus of production in these buildings would have consisted of textile production and bronze working (Poursat 2013). Another iconic building here in bronze age Malia is the Hypostyle Crypt which can be seen in figure two, which has similar construction elements to Quarter Mu but its actual purpose is seen to be unclear by many archaeologists although most assume it was served as a town council (McEnroe 2013).



Figure 2 showing Hypostyle-Crypt, after McEnroe 2010, ill 6.10.

It would be impossible to discuss Malia without also discussing aspects of urbanism and how this relates to Malia. Brangin (2001) shares the notion that many Minoan towns are very often overshadowed because of archaeologist and academics tendency to focus on the 'palaces' rather than how these towns are structured (Brangin 2001). If we were to look at Rackham's and Moody's levels of Minoan settlements hierarchy; hamlets, villages, small towns and large towns (Brangin 2001) it seems to clear that Malia would be in the latter category based on size, but it should be noted that we cannot establish hierarchy based on size alone. Larger towns are noted to having a central and important administrative or ceremonial building (Brangin 2001), which is clearly seen in Malia in the artisan's quarters and Quartier Mu. Dreissen (2009) noted that there a clear sign of urbanization at Malia; the existence of raised walkways made out of sandstone that lead up to the courts and also that trailed up to the 'streets' to a specific location (Dreissen 2009).

For us as archaeologists to gain a sound understanding of household archaeology in urban environments, it is important to look at and examine certain theoretical perspectives.

Firstly, the concept of materiality is an important one; and can help us to understand the lives of the lost people Malia that we could not attain due to the lack of written text. By looking at objects and artefacts left at Malia, or any archaeological site, we may be able to deduce what these objects were used for and what their life history was. Hodder in 'Entangled: An archaeology of the relationship between humans and things' notes that humans and things depend on each other, and are entangled with each other (Hodder 2012). He quotes that "things as we want them have limited ability to reproduce themselves, so in our dependence on them we become entrapped in the dependence on us" (Hodder 2012:88), and further goes on to discuss the importance of both 'dependence' and 'dependency' (Hodder 2012). Entanglement theory is an important one; by looking at objects that were found in the town of Malia, we can assume that all these artefacts and objects were embedded in the lives of the people of Malia. For humans to have an dependency on objects and those objects in turn depend on humans, we can gain a better understanding of how households were ran in Malia. One theory that hosts the ideas as Hodder is Latour's actor-network that is discussed in his book 'Reassembling the Social: An introduction to Actor-Network-Theory' (Latour 2007). He notes that there is no doubt that both objects and agents are entangled in a network or relationship and quotes "there is hardly any doubt that kettles 'boil' water, knives 'cut' meat..." (Latour 2007). This quote perfectly describes the dependency that both objects and people share as already noted by Hodder's entanglement theory; one cannot exist without the other.

Leading on from this, Kopytoff's concept of the biographies of objects is an important one. Objects have a life history, and in order for archaeologists to gain a sound understanding of those who made these objects, they must look at and analyse an objects life cycle (Steel 2013). Kopytoff (1986) believed that in the production of a commodity was not only a cultural process, but a cognitive one too (Kopytoff 1986). When looking at an object or artefact, it is important to not only focus on the singular moments, but to contemplate about every single stage of that object from the production to the consumption and finally the deposition (Steel 2013). Bu using the idea of object biography, we can use this to interpret certain objects from the town of Malia, specifically those from the Artisans Quarters. These quarters were interpreted as being the workshops and living spaces of the craft workers who would create objects for everyday use (McEnroe 2013). Objects that would have been crafted here include seals, pottery and items of metalwork's which could have possible included weapons or tools. An important thing to note is that McEnroe believes that there was a close association between the Artisans Quarters and the large houses of Quartier Mu, he believed that the objects that were crafted in these various workshop were intended to be used in the larger houses of A and B (McEnroe 2013). We could assume a hierarchical system in the town of Malia by looking at the magazines that were constructed in the workshops, and could say that in exchange for the crafting objects these A and B house could provide agricultural produce (McEnroe 2013). By using Kopytoff's object biography theory, we can assume the life cycle of an object from the Artisans Quarters. Starting from the production at the workshops to the consumption of the supposed people who lived in houses A and B to the deposition which could have potentially been those who lived in the 'palace' of Malia.

One theory that can help us to understand household archaeology in urban environments is hybridity, which is focused on looking at how new social practices and material cultures are created from more than one society (Steel 2013). Steel (2013) quotes that hybridity is not only a mix of cultures, but allows “fluid interpretation of cultural interaction” (Steel 2013:51). It is quite clear to archaeologists and others that there is definitely an element of hybrid activity in the town of Malia, this can be seen with the architecture of Quartier Mu. It should be noted that not only objects and artefacts are used to discuss aspects of materiality in relation, but features of architecture can also be looked at to help us gain an understanding of household archaeology in an urban setting. It was discovered that the walls of Quartier Mu were made from ashlar masonry (Steel 2013), which was not uncommon for the Minoans to use in their buildings, but it is uncommon to have a centralized hearth in this building due to the fact that central hearths were an aspect of Mycenaean culture (Steel 2013). The hearth is a circular clay object that would have been placed in the centre of a room (McEnroe 2013). Steel notes a very interesting idea, that the space of the courtyard allows us to consider that there could have been a mixed population of both Minoan and Mycenaean at Malia (Steel 2013). Indeed this is a plausible theory; the fact that Malia was no doubt a potential trading centre in Crete due to the objects being created here could tell us that both Minoan people and Mycenaean people co-existed here.

Connerton in his book ‘How societies remember’ (1989) discusses the concept of social memory and notes that “all beginnings contain an element of recollection” (Connerton 1991:6). The theory of social memory is an important one; it can help archaeologists to understand the relationship between past peoples and their own identity. Connerton goes on in his book to distinguish between three classes of memory, including personal memory, cognitive memory and habit-memory claims. Personal memory as noted by Peterson (2013) is focused around acts of remembering that “take as their object one’s life history” (Connerton 1989:22). Cognitive memory relates to things we have met, learned of or experienced in the past and finally habit-memory is the ability to reproduce a physical performance (Peterson 2013). Habit-memory is perhaps the most relevant of these, as a potential ritual space was excavated in Malia in the form of a public shrine. McEnroe notes that this a simple building with a hearth in the centre could have been in fact a public shrine; finds including a portable offering table, lamps and animal figurines all suggest that this could in fact be a shrine (McEnroe 2013). A plan of this shrine can be seen in figure 3.

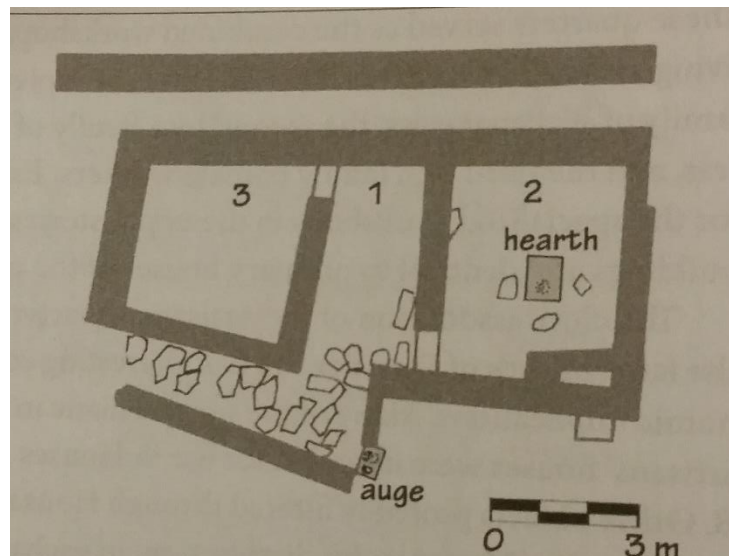


Figure 3 showing illustration of outline of shrine after McEnroe, 2013, ill 6.18.

As well as materiality, social reproduction is another theoretical approach that should be explored in order to gain a sound understanding of how theory can help archaeologists to understand household archaeology in an urban setting. First, Bourdieu's 'Outline of a theory of practice' (Bourdieu & Nice 1977) discuss the idea that we as agents produce and change social rules through the use of Habitus, Capital, Praxis, Field and Doxa (Bourdieu & Nice 1997). Habitus as noted by Burke (2015) to be the norms and values that individuals have that are influenced by ideals such as family, environment or peer groups (Burke 2015). She notes that individual who come from similar or the same backgrounds will have acted socially in a similar environment, which hence forth could lead to these individuals to having a similar habitus (Burke 2015). Capital is noted to have three forms; economic, social and cultural. If we as individuals were able to clear see 'levels' of capital, then this would allow us to mark peoples positions in social spaces (Burke 2015). There are certainly patterns in individuals who share similar positons in society, which they leads to the creation of certain social groups which would have been based on having comparable levels of capital (Burke 2005). However, it is vital to note that having the same or similar positons in social spaces does not equate to those individuals having the same attitudes or life experiences (Burke 2015). Even though individuals may live in the same spaces or interact with other agents, this does not mean that they will have the same ambitions or personality as each other. Finally, field is noted to being the environment for both habitus and capital, but does not necessarily rely on habitus' and capital's help for legitimisation (Burke 2015). We can apply the concept of theory of practice to past societies, including the town of Malia. The Agora in Malia, marked clearly in figure 1 and also shown in figure 1, was a court measuring to 30 x 60 m (Driessen 2009). Although it is undoubtedly unknown the exact use of the Agora, archaeologists can certainly try to decipher what this building was used for. Dreissen (2009) believes that it could have been a meeting place of some sorts due to the fact that it is surrounded by domestic and public buildings, he also states that it could have even been an arena for bull games (Dreissen 2009). By applying Bourdieu's theory of practice, we may be

able to get a clearer picture of the lives of the people of Malia in relation to the Agora. In this case, the 'field' would be the social space of the Agora, because of the supposed meeting room setting this could mean that individuals of different social positions could meet here to discuss things such as currency, family life or their working environments. This directly to the capital, as the three forms of this could not only be discussed by agents, but it could have also been an indicator of their social standing. Lastly, the habitus in this scenario could come from the fact that there could be hierarchical element if the Agora was in fact a meeting place or some sort.

In conclusion, the large town of Malia in Crete is a profound example of showcasing how different theoretical perspectives can help archaeologist to grasp an understanding of how household archaeology in urban sites worked. The theories of materially and social reproduction along with specifics examples of artefacts and architecture around Malia all help us to achieve the goal of understanding the household of those who used to interact socially there.

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