

Consider how theoretical perspectives might help archaeologists to interpret household archaeology in rural communities

Household archaeology is an important anthropological aspect for analysing in social studies. The term household archaeology encompasses many social dimensions; residence, social reproduction, economic production, kinship relations and identity, however, most people see architectural remains dominating the research in explaining household archaeology. Architecture can never really dictate what activities happen in spaces, archaeologists have to focus on the material culture and the archaeological record to understand the specific household they are observing. In today's archaeology, archaeologists struggle with understanding the prospect of household archaeology as they investigate households with a 21<sup>st</sup> century perception and evaluating past behavioural patterns as if they were our own. We should not make assumptions on past behaviours based on our own lives. The term household archaeology was 'first introduced by Wilk and Rathje in 1982' (Souvatzi. 2014:23) and is suggested to be a middle ground between archaeology and other related disciplines. Foster and Parker (2012) have defined household archaeology as 'a development from social archaeology presenting a study of households, based on behaviours and relationships from material culture and spatial patterning at the household level'. This means that to understand households, archaeologists would need to draw upon the material culture and space used. In this essay I will be discussing the theoretical perspectives that might help archaeologists to understand household archaeology. Throughout household archaeology literature the theory of Marxism has been discussed to explain the different households and the structure that it maintains. However trying to understand households through the Marxist theory can only take archaeologists so far. The way in which I will be examining household archaeology will be through human action which will touch upon social reproduction explained by Bourdieu (1977), exploring the theory of practice concentrating on how society reproduces and transforms social rules. As well as social reproduction, materiality can give archaeologists an insight into society and the prospect of people and objects being entangled. Through materiality archaeologists can also explore the actor-network theory put forward by Latour (2007), material culture and social memory and the structured deposits of objects. Ritual performance helps to understand materiality and the spaces within a household. However, space is a complex subject as space does not necessarily have to incorporate one activity. To help explain the theoretical perspectives which can be used in connection with household archaeology I will be using a case study from early Bronze Age Crete, Myrtos Fournou Korifi. Myrtos Fournou Korifi is located 'west of Ierapetra on the south coast' (Branigan. 1988:14) of Crete and had two phases of occupation, EM IIA and EM IIB. According to Warren (1972: 271), the start of phase 1 was around 2900 B.C. and phase two began from 2600 B.C to its destruction at the end of EM II when the house was destroyed by a fire in 2150 B.C. The house at Myrtos was occupied with '100- 120 people' (Whitelaw. 2007:65), even with the poorly preserved rooms due to the destruction this building remains the best evidence for early Minoan households.

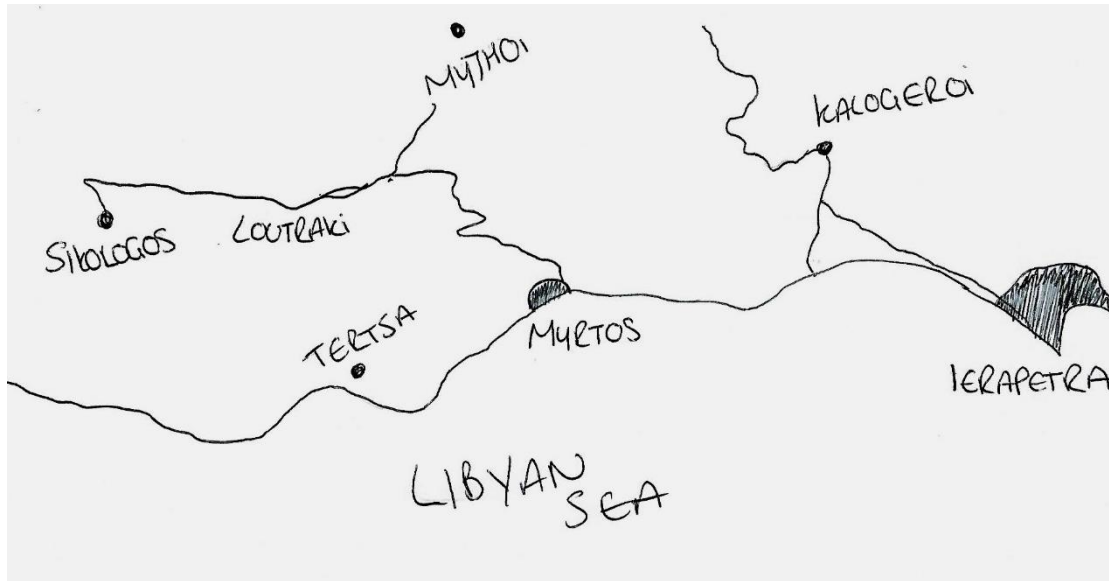


Figure 1. showing a map of Myrtos Fournou Korifi, drawn by Lockwood 2017. Adopted from Nowicki, 2010. Fig. 22.1



Figure 2. showing the site at Myrtos Fournou Korifi, after Warren, 1972. Plate 3

Myrtos Fournou Korifi (henceforth referred to as Fournou Korifi) was excavated by Dr Peter Warren in '1968-1970' (McEnroe. 2013:19). The structure that was found contained approximately 100 rooms containing evidence for specialization of activities in specific areas. Occupying the house at Fournou Korifi were 100-120 individuals however before the 'time of the destruction it was evident that the population had decreased to only 5-6 households containing 25-30 individuals' (Whitelaw. 2007:66). Over the two phases of occupation it is apparent that Fournou Korifi was a co-resident community with no evidence of hierarchy, however, Branigan (1988) has argued that it is clear from the evidence that there is a central authority even if there is not a definite hierarchical structure. On the other hand, according to Whitelaw (1983:332), the settlement was founded by 9 single families with each household representing 4-6 individuals of a nuclear family, forming a community with a social organisation who live communally without a chief or ruler. By analysing the location of the house it is apparent that there is a sense of defensiveness with the house being on top of a hill and the way in which the house was constructed with narrow corridors big enough to allow one person through. The rooms on site are poorly preserved, however, the better preserved rooms throughout the house archaeologists have taken full advantage of in trying to understand space and the relevant activities. This can be interpreted in the other less preserved rooms giving archaeologists a rough understanding of the layout of the house. The term household can change depending on which society archaeologists are observing as they all have a different understanding of community. Wilk and Rathje's (1982:618) discusses that the household is divided into three components; social, material, and behavioural. With these three components, archaeologists can understand the demographic unit involving the numbers of individuals and the relationships within the house, they can also begin to understand the material culture within the architecture including the spaces used and the activities being performed. Additionally, there are four functions within the household that can be analysed to interpret the social or economic activities. The functions include production, distribution, transmission, and reproduction. These four functions allow the community to live for generations in the same way as their ancestors, this then links in with social memory and ritual, two theories which I will touch upon later. As not every household is identical, the buildings can 'perform different functions and therefore differ in their size, organization and developmental cycle' (Wilk and Rathje. 1982:621), this can be seen between the different phases at Fournou Korifi during EM IIA and IIB. Ethnography is another essential tool that archaeologists can use to interpret household archaeology by studying the people and their culture depending on their customs, habits and differences, archaeologists can identify the individuals who inhabited the space by using this tool alongside the other theories I have mentioned.

One of the main theories that was introduced to archaeology just before the term *household archaeology* was introduced was Marxism. Marxism was a 19<sup>th</sup> century ideology in which people believed in a system and lived by certain ideas, even ideas that were unfair and unjust Marxism made normal. Therefore inequality is evident in past societies from a Marxists perspective, relating to the subject of gendered space. Both men and women are important social and economic members of the household but the division of labour can then lead to gendered spaces. For example, bread-making which is one of the most common of food preparations which was endured by women will be completed in one area of the building, compared to a masculine job which would have been completed in another area. In Fournou Korifi it is apparent from the archaeological evidence that the Minoans had different production industries alongside essential everyday jobs. These include wine production, textiles, and pottery production, cooking and collecting water etc. According to Whitelaw (1983:333), rooms showed evidence of independent production and most rooms were multifunctional to accommodate for the specific activities. Within these specific activities there is no definite evidence from the material culture left to show archaeologists that particular jobs were gender orientated. Rather it is a 19<sup>th</sup> century overview of how our own society works criticising gender inequality which is wrong to assume our gender imbalance to fit into past societies. Archaeologists with a Marxist perspective will focus on the economy and production within different societies. According to the Marxist theory modes of production determine social and political relations and the division of labour affects social relations throughout society. Yentsch and Beaudry (2001:221) explain that classical Marxists believed culture change is the outcome of the two interrelated, determinant forces; production and exchange. Throughout the two stages of Fournou Korifi there is little evidence of communication with other societies outside of Myrtos. McEnroe (2013) suggests that there was evidence of a hierarchy in Fournou Korifi and that the site dates back to when trade with the Aegean was expanding. With this McEnroe (2013) took it a step further suggesting that Myrtos was home to a harbour exchanging goods with other societies. If this was the case there would be more evidence of imported goods than archaeologists have found. Warren (1972:267) argues against this explaining the external relations are slight with only two artefacts being imported; the obsidian blade and chisel. Within Fournou Korifi society, production is the main industry that the people survive on as they are not connected to the outside world. As Marxism suggests production can bring about cultural change which is evident through the transition of phases one and two in Fournou Korifi.

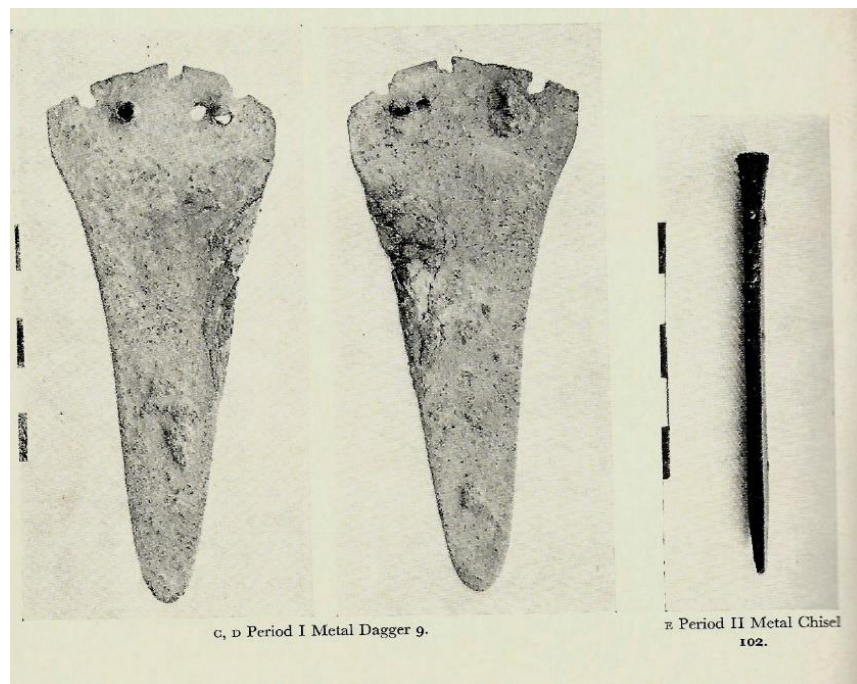


Figure 3. Showing a metal dagger from Period 1 and a metal chisel from Period 2, after Warren, 1972. Plate 74

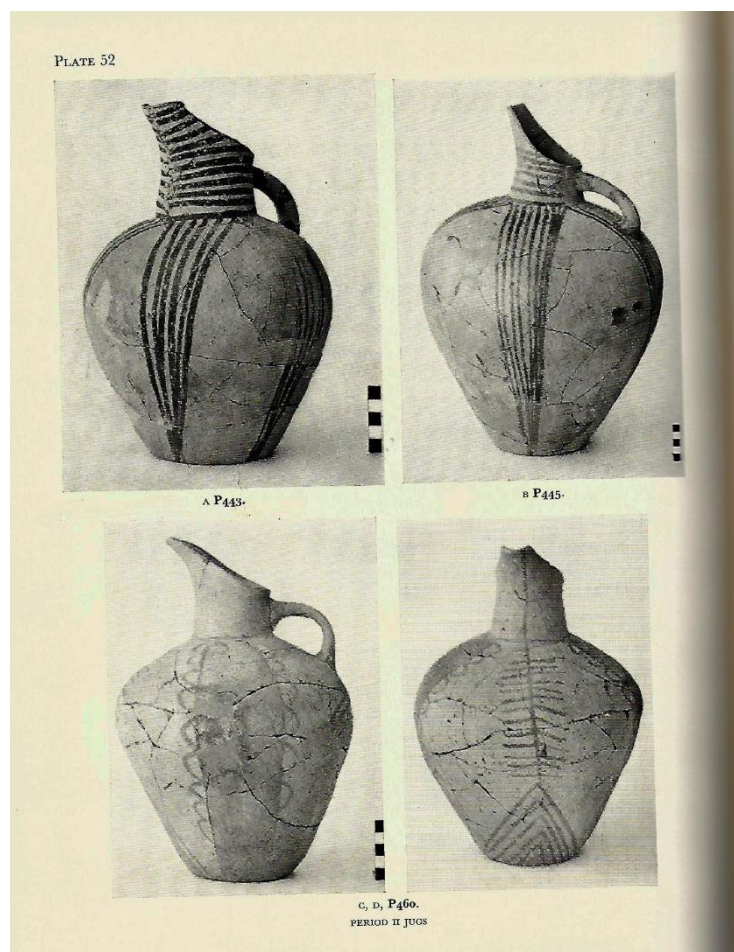


Figure 4. Showing a variety of jugs from Period 2, after Warren, 1972. Plate 52

‘There is little difference in size, techniques, features, and quality of finds among the houses at the site’ (McEnroe. 2013: 22) of Fournou Korifi. To further archaeologists knowledge about Fournou Korifi materiality can provide an important and helpful insight into human action. Material culture is a central tool for mediating the relationships between people with their past and sense of identity. Materiality can show how objects are thoroughly entwined in and shape people’s lives and experiences. Actor-Network theory by Latour (2007) can be seen in the same way, this explores relationships between people and objects and how they are entangled. Harris and Cipolla (2017: 129) stated the whole world for latour is made up of these networks which include multiple different actors, some human some not. For example, water collecting is very important within a community as water is used for a variety of reasons. ‘Trouli valley is likely to be a water source since there is no water on site itself’ (Warren. 1972: 1). Water collecting in EM II is typical of a female job, however, this would have been the time for the women to socialise with one another. The water would have been used in a number of ways, for example washing the wool, cooking, and washing themselves. The water would never be able to get to the site without the women who carry it and the vessels that the water is stored in. This water source has then shaped the communities traditions and women’s lives on a daily basis. Going back to Harris and Cipolla (2017: 72) they explain that all objects have agency referring to the ability to make differences in the world and that relationships between humans and their material surroundings shape and influence one another. The community at Fournou Korifi would have ‘specific activity areas which were often multifunctional; kitchens, workrooms, areas of storage (produce and/or pottery) and also domestic areas’ (Whitelaw 2007:66). These rooms themselves have agency, this is seen through one generation building the house and allocating each room for a specific purpose, this influences others within the production industry. The artefacts also incorporated within these rooms also have agency, for example, the two loom weights that were found within the structure, this would mean economic co-operation between the households creating focal points within the community as well as influencing people’s lives. Within materiality archaeologists will analyse artefacts to understand their object biographies. Object biography was first introduced by Kopytoff in 1986 explaining the life of a commodity. Now archaeologists use this theory on a daily basis to understand the life story of a certain artefact, gaining as much knowledge as possible about the people who used that object. ‘Objects are ascribed with meaning’ (Steel 2013: 190) so we have to look at the production, distribution, and disposition of the object. For example if we look at the pottery found within Fournou Korifi; ‘baking dishes, cooking pots, storage jars, dipper cups and other collection of vessels’ (Whitelaw 2007: 69), archaeologists could make the assumption from the academic evidence that the pottery started out in the potters workshop in ‘room 47’ (Warren 1972: 17). These then would have been distributed around the site to the families who lived there, using them for a variety of reasons. At the end of their life cycle they are either repaired and reused allowing the objects biography to grow and change or the object gets deposited of in the ‘dumping of refuse which accumulated in abandoned rooms and over the edge of the hill’ (Whitelaw 2007: 69), this allowed archaeologists to determine which rooms were more communal then others. Through biographies of an object, object agency, and Bourdieu’s habitus archaeologists can

make a clear connection between the objects and society and how they are incorporated into daily life.

Through Bourdieu's Habitus, the theory of practice allows archaeologists to look at how individuals learn about society and social rules. Bourdieu's theory of practice has 'three central tools which are habitus, capital and field' (Burke. 2016: 9). *Habitus* is the culturally developed rules and patterns of thought and behaviour in a society; *capital* is referred to as the resources used to make the social agents position in its field clear, which Burke (2016: 9) suggests by pinpointing levels of capital allows us to plot individuals positions in social space. Finally '*field* is often seen as merely the context or setting in which habitus and capital interact' (Burke.2016: 9). If we look at the theory of practice in relation to Fournou Korifi the social rules are constituted within gendered roles. As the rural settlement functions without a hierarchy, there is evidence to suggest that every household is in cooperation with each other. Driessen (2012: 13) explains that Minoan iconography depicts women in more public places; spatial positions in outdoor assemblages and processions interacting with each other in conversation and dance. Driessen (2012: 13) also states that women have better positions within society however the men wield all the power. The capital in this sense is related to economic production with the different types of industries. 'A wool industry was practiced, which is significant that 90% of animal bones were those of sheep and goat, this can be shown on a range of zoomorphic vessels, figures and seal stones' (Branigon. 1988. 68). This wool industry is very important to the Minoans as they would have worn clothes made from wool and the storage vessels found could have been used to store the finished wool products to 'keep away from mice and rats, which Cretans still do today' (Atkinson. 2011: 33). Analysing the statement put forward by Driessen (2012: 13) about female iconography but that men wield the power, it seems that men were invisible through the Minoan material culture. Pottery production was another main source of economy within Fournou Korifi and 'a real skill was needed to produce such pots found' (Warren. 1972: 261). According to Whitelaw (1983: 333), there was economic independence in terms of agricultural storage facilities, quern stones, cooking areas within each unit, as well as pottery production which was independent within each household. If this is the case the potter's workshop in 'room 49' (Warren. 1972: 17) could have been a communal area for people to practice and create a variety of vessels and could have been a room where people would have taught the next generation of the skills needed. Alongside the textile industry, pottery production was also very important to the Minoans, 'one storeroom contained more than 40 vessels' (McEnroe. 2013: 20). These storage amphorae would have been used on a daily basis and the community would be dependent on these vessels to store items such as food, wine, textiles, water and other materials.



Figure 5. Showing the Myrtos goddess from Fournou Korifi, after Warren, 1972. Fig 92

The theory of practice relates to social reproduction as all the production industries would have had an impact on the forthcoming generation. These skills and traditions would be passed down from generation to generation and the 'experiences of the present largely depends on their knowledge of the past' (Connerton. 1989: 3). Ritual performance is largely dependent on social reproduction and social memory, which is shown through group traditions. Social memory can be different depending on the society and the influences within that community. Warren (1972: 265) describes that the settlement provided two main sources for religion, the shrine in room 92 which can be seen to similar shrines in Knossos, which contains a low bench and a female figure which is supposedly known as the Myrtos goddess. The Myrtos goddess shown in figure 5 can be seen holding a vessel. Some academics believe that this goddess is the protector of the water supply, others believe that the vessel could be a representation of the pouring of libations. The second part of evidence we have is 'libation tables and bull figures which could have been used for pouring libations' (Warren. 1972: 200). Within Fournou Korifi there is more evidence for incorporating practice than there is inscribing practices. Connerton (1989: 72) explains that incorporating practice is the gestures in the presence of someone else and inscribing practice is the writing and recording of events. Social memory and incorporating practice can be seen in Fournou Korifi through ritual performance. 'Within room 89 a part of a skull was found, evidence suggests a young adult male in his 20's to 30's' (Driessen. 2012: 11). No other bones were found within the excavation so to say that there was a link between the living and dead, and the dead being re-introduced to the living is not certain. What we can relate to is the possibility of the early Minoans having an ancestor cult. Driessen (2010: 109) has stated that human bones can be seen in domestic context throughout the early Minoan

period. Through social memory and social reproduction the practice of ritual performance would still be passed down throughout the generations at Fournou Korifi.

In conclusion, there are a variety of theoretical perspectives that can help archaeologists to understand household archaeology. Throughout this essay, I have touched upon some of the ways archaeologists can interpret household archaeology and how they can gain as much knowledge as possible using these theories. All the theories I have mentioned above all relate and connect to one another, so analysing household archaeology with just one of these theories does prove difficult. By using the site of Myrtos Fournou Korifi in relation to materiality, Actor-Network theory, social reproduction, and theory of practice, I have analysed some aspects of the site giving my own interpretation. Household archaeology is an upcoming approach in archaeology and is more recently been looked into. With the help of other theories and stepping away from the 19<sup>th</sup> century Marxist ideas we can gain a better understanding into how people lived within a community and how people interacted with the outside world.

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