“Life in Abandonment: The Village of Lakka Skoutara, Corinthia”

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Introduction

The prospect of documenting an abandoned modern settlement first attracted teams of the Eastern Korinthia Survey to the valley of Lakka Skoutara in the southeastern Corinthia in 2001. A rural church, surrounded by over a dozen houses of various types and in different states of use, reuse, and abandonment, seemed to offer a perfect laboratory for studying the processes by which settlements of the region entered the archaeological record. The signs of life in the valley and the evident complexities of occupation made Lakka Skoutara an interesting case study for understanding the modern period in its own right.

Over the course of seventeen years, a small team of researchers including Lita Tzortzopoulou-Gregory, Timothy Gregory, and the present authors returned intermittently to the valley to interview its inhabitants, document further the settlement, and re-photograph the houses.¹ Our initial visit to the houses led to a hypothesis that assumed a rather linear understanding of how villages developed. We regarded the settlement at Lakka Skoutara as a village abandoned in the process of nucleation around a church and an active crossroad in the countryside. Our revisits, however, demonstrated that the abandonment of the site did not freeze its development, and revealed a wide range of ongoing formation processes that manifest the broader historical contingencies shaping the landscape. Visits to the settlement over the course of almost two decades documented the changes at Lakka Skoutara through time. By recording the dynamism of the site, we were able to complicate tidy definitions of abandonment sometimes favored by archaeologists that obfuscate the complexities of life and movement in the valley including continuing settlement, building refurbishment, seasonal habitation, olive cultivation, shepherding, hunting, and investment in road infrastructure.

¹ Our visits to the valley span 17 years. We discovered and originally studied the village in 2001, more systematically documented it in 2002, and restudied and photographed it in 2004, 2006, 2009, and 2018. Earlier studies of our work in the area appear in the following papers: Caraher and Diacopoulos 2004; Diacopoulos 2004; Caraher et al. 2009; Pettegrew and Caraher 2012; Pettegrew and Caraher 2016. This paper is based on text originally written in 2009, which we revised for the Archaeological Institute of America conference sessions on abandoned villages in 2016, and again in 2018 after a final visit to the valley.
This contribution spans the busy intersection of scholarship ranging from studies of vernacular Greek architecture from the Medieval and post-Medieval period (Sigalos 2004; Foster 2002) to the study of Modern and Early Modern settlement, and rural site formation processes. In this article, however, our focus will be site formation processes documented over multiple visits, expanding upon similar efforts in Greece pioneered by P. Nick Kardulias, Pricilla Murray, and Claudia Chang in the Southern Argolid (Murray and Chang 1981; Murray and Kardulias 1986; Whitelaw 1991; Murray and Kardulias 2000). Kardulias, Murray, and Chang collected ethnoarchaeological data from contemporary herder sites to understand the structure of discard practices in the countryside through careful study of assemblages. This work, however, served to contextualize the various discard, recycling, and curation practices present in the ancient countryside. Pettegrew (2001) drew upon this research to argue that, in many cases, the dynamic formation processes associated with Classical farmstead could result in relatively faint artifact signatures in the landscape especially after roof tiles were removed, broken pottery discarded, and complete vessels carried off with the departing residents. More recently, Constantinos Papadopoulos drew upon work from elsewhere in the Mediterranean basin in his effort to document abandonment and post-abandonment processes in a Cretan village (Papadopoulos 2013). Recognizing the value of the archaeology of the recent Mediterranean past, Papadopoulos brings together both careful observation and accounts from ethnographic informants to create a more dynamic view of the material culture and formation processes of an abandoned village. The view of abandonment as a dynamic process reminds us that the Greek countryside is not a static landscape, but rather a “contingent countryside” that adapts to the needs of its communities over time (Sutton 2000).

Our work at Lakka Skoutara embraced a similarly diachronic approach to the study of site formation processes. Through photographs and detailed descriptions of the houses and their assemblages conducted during six seasons of documentation (2001, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2009, 2018), plus additional visits without systematic study, we considered evidence for the valley’s inhabitants and visitors both abandoning and repurposing the houses and their assemblages over the last generation. Most importantly, our repeated visits to the valley reveal the numerous and constant short-term processes of habitation, abandonment, and reuse in the rural Corinthia that continuously shape this rural landscape. Documenting the ongoing transformation of the site made it clear that Lakka Skoutara was far more than simply a settlement frozen at the stage of abandonment, but a living place in the Greek countryside.
The Site

Lakka Skoutara is one of a series of fertile upland basins whose fortunes and functions shifted through time in response to a broader changing world (Figure 1). Work by the Saronic Harbors Archaeological Research Project (SHARP; Tartaron et al. 2011) and various earlier extensive surveys (Dixon 2000) of the region have demonstrated the valley’s historical connections both to the Saronic world and the wider northeastern Peloponnesus. Michael Dixon has argued that the neighborhood of Sophiko and Korphos marked the Classical-period boundary between the Corinthia and the Epidauria and saw action during the Peloponnesian War (Dixon 2000, 77; Thuc. 8:10.2-8.11.2). The villages of Korphos and Sophiko preserve Late Roman remains and several Byzantine and Post-Byzantine period monuments in the region including the Early-Middle Byzantine monastic church at Steiri (Orlandos 1935) and a large, possibly Frankish-period fortification atop Mt. Tsalikas overlooking Sophiko (Gregory 1996).

The settlement today is a loose collection of structures that include a church, 6 standing buildings, a dozen abandoned and ruined houses, and a variety of rural installations like cisterns, wells, threshing floors, resin-processing basins, and baking ovens stretched over approximately one hundred hectares (Figure 2). The presence of threshing floors throughout the site and the existence of terracing on the slopes indicate past use of the basin for cereal cultivation. Indeed, the massive piles of stones cleared from the fields stand as reminders of the long-term and systematic effort required to prepare fields in the rocky uplands of the Corinthia for cultivation. At the same time, enormous olive trees and a premodern crusher base of an olive press demonstrate that the basin was bi-cropped in the Medieval to Modern eras (Figure 3), and the presence of younger groves reveals the area has remained important for olive cultivation. The basin is punctuated with a dozen constructed cisterns (Figure 4) for collect rainwater, along with one well (Figure 5). Several houses feature large basins presumably for collecting resin from the pine trees that line the slopes of the valley (Figure 6). A large, ramshackle mandra has gradually taken over the southern edge of the basin and shepherding activities seem to have expanded in this area during the years we have documented the valley. Many houses have corbeled bread ovens. The basin features a relatively recent church dedicated to Ayia Ekaterina which, according to local informants, replaced an earlier church (Figure 7).

In the Early Modern period, mountain paths crisscrossed the rugged Corinthian landscape connecting the basin to other valleys, settlements, monasteries, and trade routes. The eastern edge of the village of Sophiko is just over 3.5 km or less than an hour’s walk away. From Lakka Skoutara to
the coastal village of Korphos, the walk is more difficult and slightly longer (ca 5 km). The route departs the basin from its southeast corner and follows a series of ridges and ravines that enters the village of Korphos near the church of Ayia Anna. There are sections of built path along this route as it follows the edge of a steep ravine on the bank opposite the more substantial built Ottoman-period kalderimi that leads from around Ayia Anna to the fields near the fortification of Are Mbatze (Dixon 2000). To the west of Lakka Skoutara are a series of similar, if smaller basins, with contemporary clusters of buildings. The intersection of the east-west route linking Sophiko to the upland basins east of Lakka Skoutara with the route that descends from Lakka Skoutara to Korphos likely accounted for the cluster of buildings in this basin. The hills around the Lakka are dotted with installations likely associated with the movement of flocks through this area including small apsidal “shepherd’s huts” and mandras.

Today, a bulldozed road links Lakka Skoutara to Sophiko and the coastal town of Korphos. Recent development of vacation homes in the various small embayments on the Saronic coast has led to the widening of the still unpaved road through the Lakka making this upland basin even more connected to modern movement in the Corinthian countryside. Land owners continue to visit the church on occasion and take care of the olive trees in the basin, and a few farmers move into the standing houses during the fall harvest. The only consistent visitors to the valley, however, are a family of shepherds, who use a well in the basin to water their herd of goats, and Mr. Zographos who, for decades now, has driven out daily from Sophiko to maintain his country house, take care of his aging donkey, and escape the bustle of village life (Figure 8). Despite the absence of regular visitors today and the widespread remains of an earlier, more bustling, time, the settlement at Lakka Skoutara continues to undergo changes and interventions owing to its place along a modern road through the region.

**Overview of Method**

In the summer of 2001, a small team from the Eastern Korinthia Archaeological Survey visited Lakka Skoutara to record the numerous abandoned houses, their architecture and associated features, and archaeological assemblages. Our aim was to document the houses and their environment in a way that would permit inferences about the cultural formation processes affecting the landscape, such as construction phases, habitation and discard, abandonment, and post-abandonment uses. Aware of broader scholarly discussions about the interpretation of rural sites (Bintliff and Snodgrass 1988; Osborne 1992; Alcock, Cherry, and Davis 1994), ethnoarchaeological
and modern survey approaches in Greece (Murray and Chang 1981; Murray and Kardulias 1986; Whitelaw 1991; Murray and Kardulias 2000), and the dynamic nature of the Greek village (Sutton 1994; 2000), we intended our study to contribute to an understanding of the character of settlement, the nature of abandonment, and archaeological signatures and meanings of habitation in diachronic landscapes.

We documented several houses in a preliminary way in 2001, which allowed us to refine our methods fully the following year. Our methodology, as it developed, consisted of three distinct components:

1) recording the houses and their assemblages through detailed description and photographs,
2) collecting information on artifact densities around the modern structures through surface survey, and
3) conducting oral interviews with the house owners and inhabitants in nearby Sophiko.

In this paper, we will not delve into the complexities of artifact densities on the surface, and instead focus on the changes that are visible in the houses and their assemblages between 2001 and 2018. We will also draw on a series of interviews conducted between 2002 and 2005 in as much as they relate to the interpretation of the houses.

Our recording procedures included basic descriptive fields (e.g., “Artifactual Material”) as well as interpretive assessments (e.g., “Function and Land Use”). To facilitate the process of description, we assigned numbers to the houses that we later associated with individual home owners through interviews (see Figure 2). We noted the location of each house, its size and dimensions, orientation, and associated features; the artifacts present inside and outside (within 15 meters) of the house in terms of their types, quantities, and conditions; the different phases of habitation, construction styles, and building functions; and the current condition of buildings and area, including ground cover and visibility. In addition to textual descriptions, we also photographed the interior and exterior of the houses over a decade and a half to capture some of the major physical changes to the houses through time.

Following our initial systematic study of the houses in 2002, we returned to the area in subsequent seasons (2004, 2006, 2009, and 2018) to record the cultural processes and patterns of land use altering the houses, their functions, and assemblages (Table 1). As the houses vary in their current function, condition, and position in the valley, we were unable to record every house during every season. Several houses or house foundations (#s 1, 7, 8, 9, and 15) were physically inaccessible to us, either occupied during our visits or bounded by fencing, and were documented only from a
distance. One house (#12) seems to have disappeared sometime after our initial study in 2002, perhaps in connection with the widening of the unpaved road running through the valley. Several other houses (#s 11, 16, and 17) lie high on the northern slopes of the basin, survive only in their wall foundations, and are overgrown with weeds; these we recorded only during our 2002 and 2009 visits. Nonetheless, we still collected information on a dozen houses, including a number with still standing architecture.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>House #</th>
<th>Description of Building</th>
<th>Dimensions (N-S x E-W)</th>
<th>Area (sq. m.)</th>
<th>Orientation (degrees)</th>
<th>Current Condition</th>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>Years of Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>Maintained</td>
<td>Charalambos Sklias</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Long house</td>
<td>6.9 x 11.0</td>
<td>75.9</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>Wall foundations</td>
<td>Nikolaos Gkyllas, Dimitrios Gkyllas</td>
<td>2002, 2004, 2006, 2009, 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Long house</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>Maintained</td>
<td>Giorgos Zographos</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Long house</td>
<td>5.80 x 10.10</td>
<td>58.58</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>Wall foundations</td>
<td>Ioannis Mertikas</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Storehouse</td>
<td>4.20 x 5.90</td>
<td>24.78</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>Maintained</td>
<td>Georgios Mbartzis</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Long house</td>
<td>12.50 x 6.20</td>
<td>77.50</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>Maintained</td>
<td>Athanasios Kalimanis</td>
<td>2002, 2009, 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Long house</td>
<td>11.40 x 5.50</td>
<td>62.70</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Wall foundations</td>
<td>Georgios Kephylis</td>
<td>2002, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Long house</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>Demolished</td>
<td>Georgios Sklias</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Storehouse / House</td>
<td>3.28 x 6.41²</td>
<td>21.03</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Maintained</td>
<td>Ioannis Kalimanis</td>
<td>2002, 2009, 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Long house</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>Maintained</td>
<td>Kyriakos Sklias</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Long house</td>
<td>6.50 x 4.20</td>
<td>27.30</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>Wall foundations</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>2002, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Long house</td>
<td>12.00 x 5.00</td>
<td>60.00</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>Wall foundations</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1
The Architecture and Building Phases of the Houses

Most of the houses at Lakka Skoutara are single-story “long house” types common to the Peloponnese and southern central Greece in the Early Modern era. Sigalos draws attention to the long house type with broad façade, which is predominant in the Greek mainland and especially the Peloponnese during the Ottoman and Early Modern periods (Sigalos 2004: 57, 61-63, 169-176). At Lakka Skoutara, these buildings were typically 9-12 m long and 4-6 m wide with total area between 50 and 70 sq. m (mean: 52.01 m; median 59.40 m), and constructed with fieldstone walls, mud mortar, and tiled roofs (Figure 9). The houses are oriented roughly north-south, with windows and doors on the long east-west walls; the doors are almost always on the east façade. Courtyards defined by low walls appear at some houses immediately outside the main doorway, and are often associated with external installations like cisterns, gardens, chicken coops, and bake ovens (Table 2; see Sigalos 2004, 61-62, for the courtyard as an integral component of the house).

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2 The dimension and area for House #13 is based on 2009 measurements and does not reflect the updates to the building made by 2018.
Table 2

Only four buildings (#s 5, 13, and 16) have noticeably smaller dimensions, which made them somewhat more difficult to categorize. Building #13, for example, constructed of cinder block, was, in our original consideration, built for purposes of storage, rather than residence (cf. Murray and Kardulias 1986, 31). In our most recent visit to the valley in 2018, however, this small cinder block construction had gained an impressive façade, an extension to the east, covered front porch, bake oven, and installations for a future electrical hookup, all set within a yard defined by gravel patches and terraces constructed of cinder block and fieldstone (Figure 10). The rapid changes in building architecture over time demonstrate the challenges of our interpretive categories and the possibilities for rapid change—a shabby storehouse today may become the proudest house tomorrow. That the
original cinder block construction of House #13 was also built over the remains of an earlier long house further complicates archaeological interpretation (Figure 11).

The sizes of all these buildings (including the smaller buildings) are comparable to houses documented elsewhere in central Greece and the Peloponnese. Murray and Kardulias (1986, Table 1, pp. 28-29) provide figures of 9-20 sq. m for storehouses and 50-93 sq. m for houses. Cooper (2002, 37), suggests typical dimensions of 10-12 x 6-8 m for 19th and early 20th century houses in the nomoi of Achaia and Elea, which is the same length as these Corinthian houses but slightly wider than the 4-6 m range. Sigalos (2004, 88-109) notes dimensions for Late Ottoman and Early Modern long houses in towns and villages in Boiotia generally in the range of 11-14 x 5-8 m, although houses are occasionally much longer. Clarke (2000, 112-113) indicates 10 x 6 m houses are common for late 19th-early 20th century houses in the villages of nearby Methana.

The floor plans of the house reflect an agricultural mainland style with interior space arranged linearly into one or two rooms (Table 3) (Sigalos 2004, 59). Several of the houses (#s 4, 6, 11, 16, and 17) collapsed long ago and survive only in low foundation walls (Figure 12). Overgrowth of vegetation makes it difficult to reconstruct floor plans but nonetheless suggests division into one or two rooms. The houses that remain standing and were accessible to us suggest comparable plans, with the long north-south dimension of the house divided into northern and southern rooms by a slight ledge of plastered stone or cement, and/or partition wall constructed of vertical branches covered with mud and whitewashed plaster (Figure 13). The elevated room (usually the northern one) is smaller and contains a fireplace, windows, and niches on the east or west walls, and furniture such as beds, benches, and tables (Figure 14); it comprised the main living and sleeping space for the residents. The larger room typically features a simple earth floor, the house door, and an additional window, and it was used for, among other things, an interior work space, storage, and the housing of animals (Sigalos 2004, 103) (Figure 15); this much is evident in the agricultural implements (e.g., ladder), straw on the floor, and resin-processing basins visible in some of the houses. It is important to note that we had access to few functioning long houses, and the one we did visit repeatedly changed over a 17-year period in respect to furniture, partition walls, and interior objects (House #10 – see below).

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3 House #14 is the only house we documented with a cement floor at the same level throughout.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>House #</th>
<th>Floor Plan</th>
<th>Construction Materials</th>
<th>Roof</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Floor space divided into northern room and southern room: <em>northern room</em> has elevated stone &amp; cement floor and fireplace on north wall; <em>southern room</em> has earth floor. Door on east wall, and windows &amp; wooden niches on east &amp; west wall.</td>
<td>Fieldstone walls (0.57 m), mud mortar, plaster on interior, whitewash; repaired with cinder blocks and concrete capping.</td>
<td>Pitched roof, wooden beams and tresses, tiles; vertical concrete roof support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Floor space divided by mud mortar partition wall into northern and southern rooms: <em>northern room</em> has elevated plastered stone floor (now covered by thin layer of manure), fireplace and low bench on northern wall, windows on east and west walls, Nicholson on west wall; <em>southern room</em> has earth floor (now covered by manure), door on east wall, wooden niches in south and east walls.</td>
<td>Fieldstone walls (0.53 m), mud mortar, plaster on interior; repaired with brick, concrete cinder blocks, and concrete and plaster capping.</td>
<td>Pitched roof, wooden beams and tresses, tiles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>House survives only in wall foundations and overgrown with weeds. Divided into a larger east room and narrower west room. Door on east wall.</td>
<td>Fieldstone walls (0.70 m), mud mortar, chinking with pottery and tile.</td>
<td>Tile fragments indicate tile roof.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Floor space divided into elevated southern and northern rooms: <em>southern room</em> has elevated cement floor and fireplace; <em>northern room</em> has earth floor. Wooden niches in southern wall, windows in eastern wall, door on east wall.</td>
<td>Fieldstone walls (0.60 m), mud mortar, chinking with tile, plaster on interior, whitewash; repaired with cinder blocks and concrete.</td>
<td>Pitched roof, wooden beams and tresses, tiles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>House survives only in wall foundations and now overgrown with weeds - floor plan unclear.</td>
<td>Fieldstone walls (0.75 m), mud mortar.</td>
<td>Tile fragments indicate tile roof.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Floor space divided by mud mortar partition wall into northern and southern rooms: <em>northern room</em> has raised cement floor, fireplace and niche on north wall, window and niche in east wall, window in west wall, and stone bench; <em>southern room</em> has stone and earth floor, concrete basin (1.73 x 2.47 m, 1.70 m deep) for processing resin, and door on west wall.</td>
<td>Fieldstone walls (0.60 m), mud mortar, plaster, whitewash; repaired with concrete.</td>
<td>Tile, pitched (hip).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>House survives only in wall foundations and now overgrown with weeds - floor plan unclear.</td>
<td>Fieldstone walls (0.60 m), mud mortar, plaster, whitewash.</td>
<td>Tile fragments indicate tile roof.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Small cinder block house built over older longhouse; concrete floor throughout; door on southern wall, fireplace on eastern wall, windows in southern and northern walls.</td>
<td>Cinder blocks, concrete, bricks, metal supports.</td>
<td>Pitched, wooden beams, modern tiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Floor space divided by mud mortar partition wall into northern and southern rooms with concrete floor at one level throughout house: <em>northern room</em> has fireplace and niche on northern wall, window and niche on west wall, window on east wall; <em>southern room</em> has doorway and window on east wall, and two concrete basins (2.00 x 2.50 m, 1.50 m deep) for processing resin.</td>
<td>Fieldstone walls (0.60 m), mud mortar, chinking with tile, plaster.</td>
<td>Pitched roof, wooden beams and tresses, tiles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>House survives only in wall foundations and now overgrown with weeds - floor plan unclear. Door on east wall; possible windows on north, east, and west walls.</td>
<td>Fieldstone walls (0.68 m), mud mortar, chinking with tile, plaster, whitewash.</td>
<td>Tile fragments indicate tile roof.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>House survives only in wall foundations and now overgrown with weeds - floor plan unclear. Windows on north and east wall.</td>
<td>Fieldstone walls (0.70 m), mud mortar.</td>
<td>Tile fragments indicate tile roof.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Table 3 |
The houses have low pitched roofs constructed of long beams, a lattice of intertwined branches, and tiles (Figure 16). The most common type of tile covering the typical house in the valley is the buff and (red) brown Lakonian tile, although other types of machined-produced tile such as the glossy red “Marseilles”-type are also occasionally found. Most of the houses have now lost their full set of tiles, but where they remain suggests that 2,000 tiles are common (e.g., House #7); the longest house (#10) makes use of about 2,700 tiles (Figure 17). Although the houses tend to be roofed with the same type of tile, our survey and study demonstrated different tile types at several of the houses that point to successive roofing episodes.

The architecture itself shows building phases that can be dated by construction styles and evident refurbishment (Foster 2002, 130). On the one hand, it is relatively easy to differentiate Early Modern (pre-1950) from Modern construction episodes in the houses since the former make use of a traditional vernacular style of construction common to long-house construction—coursed fieldstone walls about 0.50-0.75 m thick, chinked with small stones and tiles, filled with mud mortar, plastered, and whitewashed—while the latter make use of construction materials like cinder blocks and concrete reinforcements that have been in use in the region only since the 1960s. Cinder blocks, used to reinforce pediments (House #2, 5) and long walls (House #3, 5), or comprising the principal building material altogether (#9 & 13), indicate distinct modification episodes of recent decades (Figure 18); the same is true of brick and concrete capping used in conjunction with older building materials. On the other hand, it is less obvious that the incorporation of fieldstones into a cinder block house would represent an intentional effort to create continuity with the original house of the 1920s, as Mr. Perrass informed us about his own reconstructed home, or that houses preserved today entirely in fieldstone represent refurbishments using traditional styles in recent times. These living realities are sometimes nearly undetectable in the archaeological material itself but come to life in interviews with informants.

The same complexities are evident in examining the relationship between adjacent house remains that could suggest building migration, additions, or phases in accordance with changing household needs and the necessity of occasional reconstruction. We have already commented on the complicated lifecycle of House #13, a cinder block storehouse constructed in recent decades, which underwent a major upgrade and refurbishment between 2009 and 2018, that sits atop the remains of a long house whose fieldstone walls are still visible today. Other buildings demonstrate similar complexities of construction and rebuilding. House #2 reuses the eastern wall of a former house lying immediately to the west which survives only in low foundation walls and a sunken depression.
in the earth (1-2 m deep) that must have been caused by the collapse of the bedrock beneath the former house (Figure 19); the current house clearly is a newer version of its neighbor and recycles the fieldstones into the new building. In other cases, however, the exact relationship of associated structures or the multiplicity of enclosed spaces is less clear. At House #4, for instance, low foundation walls of two rooms to the west of the house could represent, variously, earlier phases of the structure, later extensions to accommodate new members, associated buildings and enclosures, or, as Mr. Perras explained, the divided living space of two brothers who did not get along (Figure 20).

Oral interviews add interesting details about the human experiences of the changing household that take us back as far as the later 19th century. According to one informant, House #3 dates to the 1920s but it was maintained and refurbished in the same place for nearly a century—even if there is nothing obvious in the architecture that distinguishes the earlier from later phases of habitation. Coulton and Foster’s enormous catalogue of village houses for the nomoi of Achaia and Elea (2002) give numerous examples of houses dated by oral testimony or datestones to the 19th century, a pattern that is not uncommon elsewhere (Whitelaw 1991, 417). The longevity of houses in the same location is understandable in terms of property boundaries, the expenditure of energy in an initial investment, and intergenerational family ownership. Forbes has even observed for Methana (2007, 229-230) that inhabitants often thought of a rebuilt house as the same house as the one it replaced.

In other cases, neighboring structures reflect the complex dimensions of intergenerational housing needs that are only clear from oral testimonies. Mr. Zographos’ house (#7), is situated within 20 m of the foundations of the house (#8) of his grandfather, Ioannis Mertikas, who died in 1947 at 103 years old. His own house marks a more recent construction of the family that has outlived that of his grandfather’s home. On the other hand, Mr. Perras’ house (#5), which is also a relatively recent refurbishment (early 1980s) in cinder block, lies immediately over his father’s house built in the 1920s and intentionally incorporates the former structure’s foundations and field stone walls to create continuity. Interestingly, though, the low foundations of nearby House #6 represent not a house preceding his father’s (#5) but one that his father built during the German occupation in the early 1940s to accommodate the new needs of the household who were then living in the valley year-round. The seemingly old foundations of House #6 are much more recent in time than the foundations now incorporated into a structure that uses cinder blocks.
These kinds of intricacies in building lifecycles appear to be common to all the houses in the valley, even if we have neither the archaeological clues nor the stories to decode them. Although the construction of adjacent houses often occurs to accommodate new members (daughters-in-laws and grandchildren) of the extended families, building function can be quite complex. Clarke offers an example (2000, 119, 123) of a large family in Methana purchasing a house in the 1920s immediately adjacent to their own and using it, successively, for storage, a temporary village school, and the residence of the family of son and daughter-in-law, and eventually, grandparents. Sigalos (2004, 62) documents the use of adjacent houses as residences for married children and stables. Our informants referred to older houses in several places that are totally invisible today, the ephemeral building material presumably incorporated into later structures and features. Mr. Zographos, for example, pointed out a place near his grandfather’s house (#8) where he remembered his great-grandfather’s _kalyvi_ (hut) with its dirt roof. Elsewhere, Mr. Perras noted that House #10, belonging to Anthisios Kalimanis, was the ancestor to a house just to the north (now gone) owned by Anthisios’ grandfather Yiorgos. The remains of now vanished houses are often incorporated into later constructions (Clarke 2000, 116-117). The oldest inhabitants of the basin remember seeing some of these houses as children built of mudbrick walls and with mud roofs (see Given 2018 for an example of this type of construction on Cyprus). Mudbrick construction is common to vernacular architecture of the Peloponnese generally (Foster 2002, 139), but is nearly absent at Lakka Skoutara, and the informants’ memory in this respect adds a vital clue to the longevity of this semi-village in the area.

The different construction styles that can be observed at the houses, then, manifest the multiple phases of building, repair, and refurbishment that are always present albeit not always obvious at houses surviving only in foundation or those vanished altogether. In fact, as the following section will explore, the houses are constantly being transformed even within the dynamic landscape of a valley that can often seem abandoned.

**Settlement Lifecycles**

If the agricultural installations and houses themselves reflect episodes of habitation over time, the equipment and artifacts at the houses represent the varied processes of habitation, functional shift, reuses, and abandonment in a landscape tied to the broader global forces transforming the northeastern Peloponnese in the 20th and 21st centuries. Hence, while habitation was typically seasonal in the valley, with land owners residing permanently in Sophiko and visiting
their land during peak agricultural months, we have also learned of times when people inhabited the valley semi-permanently, as, for example, during the turbulent 1940s when World War II and the subsequent Civil War made life in Sophiko difficult. The abandoned landscape that seems to characterize the valley today is itself a product of changes to small-scale agriculture across Greece since the 1960s. The introduction of mechanized agriculture (and small trucks), the decline in cereal cultivation in the northeast Peloponnesus, and the widespread ownership of vehicles undermined agriculture in the valley and certainly undermined more permanent forms of settlement. The last family residing permanently in the valley had moved out by the early 1980s and most of the standing houses have been occupied only for the short duration during the fall olive harvest by villagers who otherwise reside in the larger settlement of Sophiko. On the other hand, Mr. Zographos has continued to drive out to his country house nearly every day from his permanent residence in neighboring Sophiko, while the owners of the other standing buildings continue to maintain, refurbish, and even expand on their residences. Such contingent forms of settlement and land use have left material correlates in the landscape that defy facile definitions of “habitation” and “abandonment.”

The associated artifact assemblages offer glimpses into the functions of the buildings (Table 4. Cp. Murray and Chang 1981; Murray and Kardulias 1986). We would expect that these “farmsteads” should produce a range of artifacts that point to domestic function, including at least the basic furnishings common to Early Modern seasonal houses which typically included basic utilitarian equipment like a bed, chairs, tables, utensils for cooking, eating, and drinking, wine barrels, olive oil containers (Clarke 2000, 110-113, 117, 124). Obviously, such “domestic” assemblages are exceptional, however, and most of the houses in the lakka are missing these furnishings. This was partly a result of our sample as we were unable to access and document several of the functioning houses still in use. One seasonally-occupied house that we were able to consistently study over the years—a house high on the slopes above the eastern end of the valley (House #10)—revealed many small changes of internal objects and features over the 17-year period (see Table 3). Our original documentation recorded a space divided by an internal partition wall into a northern and southern room: a wooden bed frame, overturned table, and some tools (scissors, leather) were found the one room, and farming equipment (ladder), tools (plow, broom), metal and plastic containers, and some construction material (a few tiles, wood); the hay across the southern room indicated animal keeping. In 2009, the same furniture was found in the northern room in a different arrangement, but the tools were gone, while different tools (a long saw) and some new objects (a large metal barrel, plastic
cup) and greater quantity of tiles were found in the southern room. By 2018, the internal partition wall was gone, the interior was completely clean, without furniture or objects except for three wooden blocks, a saw blade in the resin basin, and neatly stacked tiles. Our visits evidently captured glimpses of the normal movement and circulation of agricultural goods especially that must be common to all functioning farms in the valley. Interestingly, very few characteristic domestic items, such as plates, utensils, or food or drinking vessels, were visible at this house.

Collapsing or abandoned houses rarely showed substantial domestic debris. The houses that survive only in their foundations (#s 4, 6, 11, 16, and 17) preserve only light tile scatters and occasional artifacts inside and outside the structure, while most of the assemblages at other houses indicate non-domestic functions. Only two collapsing houses (#s 5 and 14) showed a variety of habitation material including furniture, containers, clothing, tiles, and various assorted metal and plastic artifacts. At Mr. Perras’ house (#5), the material was scattered in the collapse all about the floor of the house, but in House #14 containers and glass bottles were still present on wooden shelves. Both houses fell into disuse but had not been depleted of the household goods, perhaps because the home owners were unable to visit in their older age, or because the children inheriting the properties saw no point to continue their parents’ investment. Mr. Perras himself was 80 years old in 2001 when he showed us around the valley and, although he had not visited his house in some 10 years, became upset when he saw it in ruins (on the emotional power of abandoned lands, cf. Forbes 2007, 326-327).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>House #</th>
<th>2001/2002</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Glass fragments, plastic, manure bags</td>
<td>Now large quantities of tile, wood, cinder block</td>
<td>Now goat bones, plastic water bottle</td>
<td>Roofless and crumbled; cinderblock and tiles still visible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Plastic medicine bottle, 3 burlap sacks filled with wool, a few tile fragments, manure, metal can for gas, cloth, empty burlap bags, cigarette lighter</td>
<td>S. end of roof collapsed; tiles &amp; beams have obscured southern part of house</td>
<td>Roof totally collapsed, inside now covered over with wood beams, tiles, stones, and cinder blocks</td>
<td>Collapse now covers over interior objects; inside, noted brick, cinderblock, some plastic, rubble, tiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tiles (vegetation obscures ground); piles of pruned olive branches</td>
<td>No piles of branches</td>
<td>Piles of pruned olive branches</td>
<td>Unchanged, but tiles still visible in and around structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Dense Scatter: bed spring; kitchen ware (metal cooking pot lid, plastic cups, silverware); cloth (pants, jacket, other); plastic container, glass bottle, metal can; cord; hundreds of tiles</td>
<td>Unchanged</td>
<td>Roof totally collapsed, inside now covered over with large quantity of wood beams, tiles, and cinder blocks</td>
<td>Roof collapse with tiles and rafters covering artifacts; noted plastic plates, resin collectors, and two glass bottles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Overgrown with weeds</td>
<td>Unchanged</td>
<td>Unchanged</td>
<td>Unchanged, but significant vegetation growth within; noticed Corinthian tile on wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Northern Room: wooden bed; large key in wall niche; scissors, metal, and leather in wall niche; overturned table. Southern Room: hay throughout; metal plow, wooden ladder; small metal basin, metal can; broom; plastic cup; wood pile, a few tiles</td>
<td>Northern Room: wooden bed; large key in wall niche; table (not overturned). Southern Room: long saw, plastic container, agricultural chemical barrel, broom, plastic cup, pile of 219 tiles</td>
<td>No clear division of rooms any longer (internal partition wall gone); interior clean: 3 wooden blocks, neatly stacked pile of tiles, saw blad in resin basin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Ladder, plastic chair; bricks, cinder blocks, stacked tiles, wood; metal containers, burlap bag</td>
<td>Unable to access</td>
<td>Provisional discard / storage of construction material in northeast extension: wood, hoses, brick, fieldstone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Northern Room: bedspring, wooden dresser, door on floor; containers &amp; glass bottles on shelves; burnt wood. Southern Room: metal, wooden, and plastic containers, barrels, and cases; cups; metal, wood, numerous tiles.</td>
<td>Unchanged</td>
<td>Tile roof now fully collapsed, tiles cover ground, overgrown with weeds (2006, unchanged in 2009)</td>
<td>Total collapse, with walls standing only 1-2 m above ground; overgrown with thistles and weeds; only tile fall still visible and pink plastic container</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4
Most of the houses produce the sorts of assemblages that we would expect from abandonments in which the objects and equipment were recycled elsewhere. Half of the houses recorded (#s 4, 6, 8, 11, 16, and 17) survive only in their foundations, and very few tiles and sherds were visible. Since these were abandoned long ago during the period when the basin was used regularly, it is probable that the materials were carried off and reused elsewhere before or during abandonment. Domestic objects and equipment were essentially stripped from Houses 2 and 3 before their conversion into animal pens, while some houses (e.g., House #10) still standing and in use today no longer have the most basic household equipment including, for instance, storage vessels, plates, and utensils. It is also possible, however, that vegetation and earth cover some scattered debris on the floors of these buildings; we ourselves observed the burial of post-abandonment debris from collapsing roofs and the growth of new vegetation over a 17-year period (see Table 4).

Assemblages at several of the houses reflect specific shifts in building function following occupation. The domestic assemblages of Houses 2 and 3 were so depleted during and after abandonment that there is nothing inside the houses that specifically suggests habitation. The burlap bags, wool, medicine bottles, glass and plastic containers, and manure, among others, reflect first the conversion of these buildings into animal pens and, now that the roofs have collapsed, open areas for animal grazing (Figure 21). In 2009 and 2018, we observed goats stationed in an animal pen 50 meters to the south grazing among the ruins of House #3 (Figure 22). The reuse of houses as animal pens is not uncommon in the Greek countryside (Forbes 2007, 231-233). The small cinder block house (#13), on the other hand, replaced a long house years ago and seemed to have been clearly built with storage in mind until its more recent expansion with new porch and space revealed a clear domestic character. In 2018, we recorded provisionally discarded material within one of the new rooms of that structure (construction material like bricks, cinder blocks, hoses, stacked tiles and wood); in an earlier year, we had observed equipment useful during the fall olive harvest such as a ladder, plastic chairs, and a burlap bag.

Few of the artifacts found outside the houses contribute to positive assessments about habitation even though the courtyard and surrounding fields would have been principal arenas for domestic activities (Table 5) (Sigalos 2004, 61-63). Most objects found outside houses point especially to construction or agricultural activities. The tractor tires, resin collectors, shotgun shells, pallets, and branch piles present around several buildings point to the relatively recent use of the land for plowing, resin processing, hunting, and olive cultivation. The light scatter of ceramic, metal,
plastic, and glass containers found outside some houses (##s 2, 4, 6, 13) point to storage or consumption of food and liquids (e.g., sardine cans, the Nescafe frappe shaker) and likely reflect seasonal visits to the valley during the olive cultivation, or behaviors completely unrelated to the use of the houses. For example, the laundry detergent and plastic water bottle around house #2 was observed in 2009 and was discarded from the gravel road above and not the house. Some of the plastic water bottles have fallen from olive trees where they had been used to indicate pesticide spray. Other objects such as the sole of a shoe, a comb, a sock, and small mirror are too random to suggest anything other than low intensity activity in the area, and such finds have clear parallels with discard patterns documented in the Southern Argolid (Murray and Chang 1981, Fig. 3; Murray and Kardulias 1986, 33). The fabric of the houses themselves created halos throughout the basin in the form of slumped and collapsed walls and roofs (##s 2 and 3), stacked tiles or wood (## 13), and light scatters of tile and brick (##s 4, 10, 11, 13, 14, and 16). This much is obvious already from the surviving fieldstone walls, but these eventually will dissolve into the landscape and the construction debris will become more important in defining the former habitation (Figure 23).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Light scatter of artifacts: metal cans, wood, glass fragment, plastic bottle, pithos fragment, resin collector, ca. 160 tile fragments</td>
<td>Unchanged, except more tile fragments from roof collapse</td>
<td>New piles of pruned olive branches; plastic water bottle &amp; laundry detergent container near road</td>
<td>Tiles on exterior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cinder blocks, bricks, earth, and tile at SE &amp; NW corners</td>
<td>Unchanged</td>
<td>Collapsed debris (stone, cinder blocks, earth, tile) now on east and west sides</td>
<td>Greater collapse to exterior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Scatter of artifacts: ca 50. tile fragments, 50 potsherds, glass fragments; metal barrel holder, bottles, oil can, sardine can; 12 shotgun shells, sole of a shoe, plastic comb.</td>
<td>Unchanged</td>
<td>New piles of pruned olive branches</td>
<td>Some tiles noted around structure; no olive branches noted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>A few tile fragments, piece of metal</td>
<td>Unchanged</td>
<td>New piles of pruned olive branches</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Metal container</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>Unchanged</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Scatter of tile fragments</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>Tile fragments gone; overturned water trough outside door</td>
<td>None noted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Stacked tiles behind structure. Scattered artifacts: tile and pottery fragments, cement fragments, wood; bottle of plastic cleaning solution; metal cans; sock; small mirror; pruned olive branches</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>Stacked tiles, &amp; barrel behind structure. Scattered artifacts: tile and pottery fragments, cement fragments, wood; metal can; olive branches</td>
<td>Water bottles, pallets, otherwise clean yard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Scattered artifacts: tractor tires; plastic and metal pieces, bricks; containers.</td>
<td>Unchanged</td>
<td>Unchanged</td>
<td>Cigarette pack, plastic cup, and roadside debris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>A few tile fragments, shotgun shells</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>New Nescafe frappe shaker; metal spring; plastic bottle</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5

Overall, the quantity of artifacts noted in and around most of the houses is low. Fewer than half (5 of 11) of the carefully documented houses contained assemblages inside that were substantial;
field stones and a few tile fragments were the principal signature of the other six buildings. Outside
the houses, artifact scatters were typically small, with only occasional moderate-density clusters of
potsherds and trash (#s 4 and 13). As we noted earlier, our area of pedestrian survey incorporated
several houses and showed that tile especially was an important signature of these buildings, while
light scatters of table wares, kitchen wares, and storage vessels were observed in the fields around
the houses. These observations at least allow us to conclude that while artifact clusters (including
especially tile) may sometimes constitute signatures of habitation, lower-density scatters are often all
that is left of former houses in the modern countryside.

Among the most interesting data we collected in our study was a series of observations
about the state of the houses over an 8-year period between 2001/2002 and 2018. While in many of
the houses we noted no discernible changes, the alterations that we did observe were sometimes
significant. As one example, we obtained two quite different snapshots of the objects inside House
#10. In 2002, we observed the large southern room covered with hay, and an overturned table,
plow, small metal basin, ladder, wood pile, and several small objects (scissors, metal, leather, key),
suggesting use for storage and animals; in 2009, the northern and southern rooms were cleaner and
neater (the hay had disappeared) and still included the table and key, but otherwise had a quite
different assemblage: a wood saw, an empty barrel, broom, and a stack of 219 tiles. Both years
suggest that the house was being used mainly for storage of agricultural and domestic implements,
but the artifacts being stored were quite different; the artifacts present parallel the range of
agricultural or pastoral implements documented at “storehouses” in the southern Argolid (Murray
and Kardulias 1986, 31).

Even abandoned houses in the basin show signs of artifact movement. We documented the
stripping of hundreds of whole tiles from the roof beams of House #2 between 2001(Figure 24) and
2002 (Figure 25), an event that resonates with a story told by Mr. Perras about tile stripping. He
described two brothers who together owned an old house and had an irresolvable dispute, which
resulted ultimately in one brother leaving and stripping his half of the roof tiles. The story highlights
the curate behavior common to rural activities at Lakka Skoutara as well as the relational and
personal dimensions behind the observed archaeological patterns. Such kinship disputes that
involved property ownership remain relatively common in 21st century Greek villages (Forbes 2007,
164, 168, 232-234), and clearly shape recycling behaviors that are common at the houses.

Outside the houses, we observed small changes between 2002 and 2018 that indicate the
houses remain centers of active land use. At two of the maintained houses (10 and 13), tiles, a small
mirror, and socks disappeared between 2002 and 2009 while a barrel and water trough appeared. A Nescafe frappe shaker and plastic water bottle at House 16 were newly discarded probably during the October harvest in 2009 while the laundry detergent container above House 2 suggests random discard from the road above. And abandoned and ruined structures were evidently good places to pile pruned olive branches inside and around.

Finally, we observed in this brief span of time the rapid deterioration of the walls and roofs of the abandoned houses themselves. We documented the gradual collapse of tile roofs of several abandoned houses (#s 2, 3, 5, and 14) resulting in the wooden beams and hundreds of tiles falling inside and partially outside the structures. At two of the structures (#3 and 14), the house floors were no longer visible by 2009, and in fact, were largely inaccessible, with roof beams and debris blocking entry; the household items left in the house were buried beneath the bulk of the building itself (Figure 26 and Figure 27). The loss of the roof typically entailed also the rapid deterioration of the walls as exposure to the elements has eroded the mud mortar and fieldstone walls have fallen out.

The lifecycles of settlement, rebuilding, and abandonment, in sum, are highly contingent. The houses and their physical assemblages today reflect only a small part of the complicated formation processes shaped by human factors such as kinship practices, inheritance, interpersonal conflict, mobility, transportation, land use, and agricultural activities. Human behaviors and formation processes can quickly reshuffle the physical artifacts of settlements within the short order of a decade or even a few years, a fact that complicates our definitions of terms such as habitation, abandonment, and even village. The archaeologist of the contemporary world, and the archaeologist of the future must recognize this inherent dynamism in the landscape.

Conclusion

In the preceding paper, we have highlighted how rural agricultural houses and their associated artifacts, features, and environments in this small world reflect the contingency of habitation and abandonment over periods of time ranging from decision-making moments to centuries. Ultimately, these dynamic processes complicate, if not confound, our definitions, categories, and interpretations. Given the tendency for seasonal occupation in the valley, can we say that Lakka Skoutara was ever fully inhabited in the Early Modern era other than during the war years of the 1940s? On the other hand, has it ever really been abandoned? The seasonal return of the
inhabitants of Sophiko for the olive harvest, at least, shows how much life continues even in “abandoned” habitations in the Greek countryside. The maintenance and new investments in standing architecture—even while surrounding buildings fall—show how tangled and uneven real settlement clusters can be.

Our experience documenting the site of Lakka Skoutara has itself demonstrated the very real limitations of our methods for recording the dynamic landscape. While our field methods included many of the standard practices of intensive pedestrian survey, we were regularly reminded how incomplete these methods were for capturing an archaeological landscape that continued to develop even as our fieldwork took place. In a similar way, it has been obvious to us that the several total weeks we have spent at the lakka since 2001 can hardly capture the manifold natural and human processes that reshape it on a day to day level. Even our tendency to visit the valley in June or July can produce an incomplete view of a quiet countryside interrupted only by the sounds of bleating goats, buzzing bees, or the shepherd’s call. Our visit one year in early November during olive season offered a much different experience of the settlement.

Even in early summer 2018, as we were putting the final touches on this article, we had a chance to return to the lakka and make a final record of the contingent countryside. In some respects, the village appeared like the one we had first visited 17 years earlier. Although a couple of buildings had crumbled to the point of partially preserved wall foundations, while one house had disappeared entirely, most of the houses standing in 2001 were still at least partially standing in 2018 and their yards maintained. The valley felt familiar as we walked across plow furrows, through prickly vegetation, collecting sharp Corinthian thistles in our socks. The “hover bees,” basking sheepdog, singing cicadas, and sound of wind blowing through the valley in late May almost felt timeless.

Yet, a closer looked revealed change and aspects of new life. Several buildings and their yards were largely being maintained. On the western end of the valley, about 170 meters north of House #3, a small tiled structure made of cinderblock—a storehouse perhaps—had newly appeared since 2009, as had surrounding piles of building material, plastic piping, and blue tarp (Figure 28). Twenty-five meters northwest of the storehouse was a small mobile concession stand (4 x 3 m.) covered with a tin shed roof of corrugated metal (Figure 29). We noticed 3 bikes inside but wondered who would be riding them where, and whether the concession stand had any specific function here amidst the shepherds. As we walked around, we ran into a hiker, on his way to Korphos. Mr. Kalimanis’ former storehouse (House #13) had received an attractive new porch and
an extension with sockets for electrical hookup. When or how electricity will come to the village is unknown, but new buildings speak to a potential and optimism about the region’s future connectedness and agricultural character that was less visible two decades ago.

We as archaeologists had also changed over the years, and not just in age and bodily wear. As we walked around the valley over rough cobble, with chirping birds and the bells of sheep to the west, we could also make out a new kind of whirring above like the distant sound of buzzing bees. We had brought a drone to the lakka, in partnership with new collaborators, and captured nearly a thousand images over the course of two hours.4 We ourselves did not imagine surveying the valley in this way twenty years ago in the days of the Eastern Korinthia Archaeological Survey, but the arrival of the drones, which themselves reflect global contingencies of technology, have allowed us to see the landscape in a whole new way (Figure 20). The alonia and houses appear crystal sharp from 100-meter altitude and the clear photographs reveal patterns we had not never noticed before with boots on the ground: the frequency of large ash circles from burning olive branches, terraces neatly defined by tires, pockets of dense cobble alternating with rich brownish-red soils, and the sharp lines of field walls (Figure 30).

The settlement of Lakka Skoutara continues to change with each passing year, and these changes transform any traditional view of abandonment at the site. While seasonal habitation at Lakka Skoutara seems to have largely ceased in the 1970s eliminating the original function of the houses, their alonia, and cisterns, the buildings attracted continued activity in the landscape as farmers harvested olives, tended their sheep, and maintained rural storage and retreat. Indeed, these same buildings drew our archaeological attention to the contemporary uses of this rural place. Our return visits, however, have left only the faintest traces at Lakka Skoutara, but the continued use of this area by local residents demonstrates that abandonment does not mark the end of a building or site, but a phase in its continued use.

References

4 The work was carried out in partnership with Professor Albert Sarvis of Harrisburg University of Science and Technology.


Figure 1
Figure 2
Figure 6
Figure 15
Figure 17
Figure 19
Figure 21
Figure 23
Figure 24