A Journey through the History of Mani

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HERITAGE
The imposing *Taygetos* and the myth of the nymph *Taygete*
The Natural Landscape of Mani

The region of Mani:
• 58% mountainous
• Greek Soil Institute: low agricultural potential; very high risk of desertification
Dry agriculture (natural rainfall) and the use of step terraces in Mani (Vatheiα)
Agricultural and other trade products of Mani

- Corn
- Wheat
- Barley
- Olives
- Valonea
- Vermilion
The harvesting of olives from antiquity to the 20th century: an unbroken tradition

Amphora, Greek, 6th c. B.C.

Preveli, Crete, 1911 (photo by Fred Boisssonas)
Stone Age (Paleolithic) Discoveries and Earliest Human Presence at Mani

**Apidima Cave**
- 2 fossilized skulls (*Homo sapiens* praesapiens)
  (300,000-100,000 before present)
- Fossilized skeletal remains of adult female burial (25 years old)
  (30,000 before present) (*Homo sapiens sapiens*)

**Kalamakia Cave**
- Habitation by Neanderthals (80,000-40,000 before present)
  1. Fossilized human remains
  2. Built hearths
  3. Stone tools and artifacts
  4. Animal bones

The Apidima Cave 2 fossilized skull
Stone Age/Paleolithic Discoveries at Mani

Evidence of 25 sites of human habitation by Neanderthals in caves and rock-shelters along the north-western coast of Mani (Middle Paleolithic: 200,000-45,000 before present) (2012 project of surveys and test excavations)

The area of Mani investigated during the 2012 project

A rock-shelter

Faunal remains and stone tools
Stone Age/Neolithic Discoveries at Mani: The Alepotrypa (“Foxhole”) Cave at the Gulf of Diros

**Alepotrypa Cave, Gulf of Diros**
- 300 meters long complex of chambers with lake
- Excavation: 1970-2006 (G. Papathanasopoulos)
- Date: 6,000-3,200 B.C. (one of the richest sites in Europe)
- Uses:
  1. Habitation (animal husbandry; hunting; fishing; pottery and jewelry production)
  1. Burial site
  2. Ceremonial activity
- Exchanges with the Cyclades (obsidian, silver)
The Alepotrypa ("Foxhole") Cave at the Gulf of Diros: A Place for the Living but also a Place for the Dead

**Burial Use of Alepotrypa (cemetery)**
- 4200-3800 B.C.
- Adults
- Children
- Embryos
- 31% with evidence of blunt cranial trauma (competition for land & resources)

Neolithic burial of Embracing Couple
Mani during the Greek Bronze Age (3000-1000 B.C.)

Material Remains
- Mycenaean pottery fragments (2000-1200 B.C.)
- Mycenaean ossuary in Alepotrypa (1300 B.C.)

Textual Evidence
- Homer’s *Iliad* (Messi/Mezapos, Oitylo/Oetylus, Kardamyli, Gerenia, Kotronas/Teuthrone, Passavas/Las)
- Cycle of stories related to Helen’s abduction (Cranae)

*Troy*, the movie: the Greek fleet on the coast of Troy


The island of Cranae
Mani in Antiquity (800 B.C.-300 A.D.)

800 B.C.-300 B.C.
- Mani: Spartan territory (archaeological and historical evidence: Las, Asine, Teuthrone, Psamathous, Tainaron, Hippola)
- Maniots: status of perioikoi (Spartan army; special taxation; no say in the making of Spartan policy) (2nd class citizens)
- Maniot cities: autonomy; religious sanctuaries; no influence on Spartan foreign policy

300, the movie: phalanx of Spartan warriors

The Chigi Vase, 650-640 B.C. (National Etruscan Museum, Rome)
Mani in Antiquity (800 B.C.-300 A.D.): Tainaron

**Tainaron**
- Entrance to Hades (underworld)
- Sanctuary of Poseidon (5th-4th c. B.C.: place of refuge and asylum)
- Necromanteion (oracle of the dead)
- Gathering place for mercenaries (under Spartan control)

Cape Tainaron

Christian church of the Asomati/site of ruined temple of Poseidon (?)

One of the necromanteion entrances
Mani in Antiquity (800 B.C.-300 A.D.): Mani under Roman control (2nd c. B.C.-3rd c. A.D.)

- 146 B.C.: Fall of Corinth
- League of Free Laconians (cities of Mani & other cities of the Malea peninsula)
  1. Declaration of Freedom (15 A.D./Augustus)
  2. Prosperity (favorable conditions)
  3. Expansion of trade (murex shells; *rosso antico*)

![Map of Ancient Rome](image1)

- Tainaron, Roman baths
- Satyr head, Roman
- Murex shells and purple dye
Mani in the Byzantine Empire (330-1249, 1262-1479)

The building program of the new imperial authority:
1. Castles (at least five; representatives’ headquarters & fortified settlements)
   - Tigani (castle: 6th c.; basilica: 7th-12th c.)
2. Places of worship (as early as the 5th c.)
   (basilicas: 1@Alyka, 2@Kyparissos, 1@Paliochora, 1@Tigani)
**Mani in the Byzantine Empire (330-1249, 1262-1479)**

Material remains of the Byzantine era (scarcity of literary references):

1. Settlements
2. Churches
   - Megalithic dry stone masonry (until 11th c.)
   - Common southern Greek tradition of architecture & decoration (from 11th c. on)
3. Castles (especially important after 1262)
   - Zarnata
   - Karyoupoli (headquarters of military commander)

[Images of Mani, Church of St. George, Church of the Archangels, Pyrgos Dirou (11th c.), Church of Episkopi (12th c.), and Castle of Zarnata]
Mani during the time of the Latin Empire of Constantinople (1249-1262)

- 1204: Capture of Byzantium (Constantinople) by the Latins of the Fourth Crusade
- Principality of Achaia (Peloponnese) (12 baronies) (mostly Italian and French knights known as Franks)
- Mani fiercely resisting the new overlords (1249)
- Construction of 3 forts
  1. Lefktro
  2. Maina
  3. Passava: a barony seat; headquarters of local ruler (Jean de Nully)
Mani during the time of the Ottoman Empire (1479-1821)

**Historical Key Points**
- 1453: Conquest of Constantinople
- 1460: Conquest of Peloponnese
- 1460-1479: Maniot resistance in support of Venetian rule
- 1479: Venetians’ defeat
- 1479-1481: Maniot resistance under the leadership of Korkodeilos Kladas
- 1685-1715: brief break of Venetian rule over the Peloponnese

**The policies of Ottoman rule in Mani**
- Difficult terrain; locals in state of military preparedness
- Mani is granted relative autonomy (1776 on: bey title to a local clan leader
- Focus: military control
  - 1) maintenance & arming of castles (Zarnata, Passava, Kelepha, Porto Kayo) (mountain passes; harbor protection)
  - 2) constructing and maintaining a network of roads (*kalderimia*) for infantry forces & trade

Map of Passava castle (produced at the time of Venetian control)
The Towers of Mani as reflections of Maniot Society

- Mani: mainly self-governed region
- Maniot society: organized in clans (patrilineal descent)
- Traditional settlement architecture as a reflection of this feature of society with the tower as its most important element (defense of clan against enemies)
  1) Residences of clan members next to each other in the same area of the settlement
  2) Sharing a common courtyard or adhering to a circulation system that allowed communication between them
The Towers of Mani: South vs. North

South Mani
- The tower is:
  - 1) only for military purposes/ refuge in time of enemy attack (Ottoman Turks; clan competition/vendetta) (1571: earliest reported case of vendetta in the region)
  - Collectively owned by all clan members
  - Construction: Collective project

Interesting fact: until 1834, over 800 towers, mainly in south Mani

North Mani
- Institution of kapetania (kapetanios/leader)
- Residence of kapetanios: distinguishable
- The tower is:
  - 1) part of a large, fortress-like complex
  - 2) owned solely by the family of the kapetanios
  - Main or occasional family residence
Mani in the Greek War for Independence (1821-1829)

Historical Facts
• March 17, 1821: declaration of war, 12000 Maniots, Church of the Archangels, Areopoli
• The Battle at Pyrgos Dirou
  1. One of the most celebrated events in Maniot history
  2. June 23, 1826
  3. 300 Maniate women vs. 3500 Ottoman soldiers ("Amazons of Diro")