

The Transformation of an Agricultural Economy

*Forms of rural settlement in Epirus
from the 2nd century BCE to the 4th century CE*

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Volume One: Text

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the transformation of the agricultural economy of Epirus in Roman times, approximately from its conquest in 168/7 BCE and its annexation in the province of Macedonia in 146 BCE, until the 4th century CE. It does so through study of diverse forms of rural settlement in the Epirote countryside, using untapped rescue archaeology to distinguish between different farms, to refine their chronologies, and to assess their agricultural productions. In so doing, the nature of the villa and its temporal spread in a Greek area is also thoroughly examined and clarified. The development of Epirus has in the past often been closely linked to narratives painted by Roman authors of its allegedly devastating destruction and subsequent agricultural exploitation by members of the Roman aristocracy, who called themselves *Synepirotae*. Many rural sites have been interpreted in this light and called "villas", leading scholars to postulate that the villa spread widely in Epirus during the early Roman period. In contrast to this theory, it is argued that, while a few exceptional villas were constructed early on, they did not become popular until the middle and later Imperial periods; instead, in early Roman times dispersed villages and fortified farms, many of which had been inhabited before the Roman period, were more numerous. Consequently, the villa was not always the typical way to manage agricultural resources of substantial scale in this part of the Roman world. The thesis also combines rural rescue archaeology with material culture from cities and written evidence, to reconstruct a new view of societal and economic change in Epirus more broadly. It is shown how significant but gradual changes in the agricultural economy reflected changes in local societies, which were also measured in pace, and highlighted that the individuals making up those changing societies played a more active role in the ways that Epirus became incorporated into the Roman Empire than has previously been believed.

dem Großen Phönix

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Abbreviations

Bailey: Bailey, D.M. 1980. *A Catalogue of the Lamps in the British Museum, vol. 2. Roman lamps ade in Italy*. London

Broneer: Broneer, O. 1930. *Terracotta lamps*. Corinth vol. 4, no. 2. Cambridge, MA.

Conspectus: Ettlinger, E., B. Hedinger, B. Hoffman, P.M. Kenrick, G. Pucci, K. Roth-Rubi, G. Schneider, S. von Schnurbein, C.M. Wells, and S. Zabehlicky-Scheffenegger. 1990. *Conspectus formarum terrae sigillatae Italico modo confectae*. Materialien zur römisch-germanischen Keramik 10. Bonn.

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DERE workshop III 2020: Workshop Discussing Economy in Roman Epirus (06.11.2020), organised by the National Hellenic Research Foundation

Hayes *Agora*: Hayes, J.W. 2008. *Roman pottery: Fine-ware imports*. The Athenian Agora vol. 32. Princeton.

ITS: Italian *terra sigillata*

Loeschke: Loeschcke, S. 1919. *Lampen aus Vindonissa: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte von Vindonissa und des Antiken Beleuchtungswesens*. Zurich

Pliakou and Pascual Berlanga 2019: Paper by Pliakou and Pascual Berlanga entitled “Trade Amphorae from the Late Hellenistic Farmstead of Episkopi, Ioannina” presented at the 4th *IARPotHP Conference* held at the NHRF on 14.11.2019

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Note to the Reader

The effect of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic through travel restrictions and quarantine measures affected my original plans to undertake further fieldwork, particularly in order to draw finds studied for this thesis and scan original archival material produced by rescue excavations. Instead, I have used detailed photographs of finds and photographs of archival photocards that illustrate the information that I wish to convey. In future I plan to draw finds for the publication of the thesis.

Restricted content

The “Figures” section, separated as Appendix A, is under embargo until publication permits will be granted for material therein (e.g. photographs of finds, archival cards), produced by rescue excavations conducted by Ephorates of Antiquities in Greece, which is the property of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture. The only exception to this are thirteen figures essential to the thesis that were incorporated in-text, five of which were created by the author—Figure 15, Figure 16, Figures 193-195—and eight of which are maps kindly made by Dr Hallvard Indgjerd to be used in this thesis—Figure 2, Figure 5, Figure 14, Figure 40, Figure 102, Figure 130, Figure 132, and Figure 190.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

The overwhelming majority of people in ancient societies lived in the countryside. Their livelihood depended in large part on the husbandry of crops and animals, which shaped their lifestyles: how and where people chose to live, their relationships with others, and the organisation of their communities. Yet, very little has been written about ancient societies from the perspective of the people that lived in the countryside, compared to the many works devoted to the lives of city dwellers. In this thesis, I take a step towards redressing this imbalance by beginning my investigations on the communities of Epirus in the Roman period from the archaeology of their rural forms of settlement and from the point of view of their agricultural economy.

This thesis investigates to what extent, how, and when the agricultural economy of Epirus changed as this area became incorporated into the Roman world from about the 2nd century BCE to the 4th century CE. Central to my investigation are questions connected to the nature of ancient economies, and especially whether it is possible to make distinctions through a study of rural settlements between what have come to be broadly understood as the "Greek" and the "Roman" agricultural economies—but which are not divided by a hard-and-fast line.¹ While scholars originally saw ancient economies as “primitive”, such as Moses Finley and Karl Polanyi, more recent researchers, such as Peter Temin, argued for the existence of integrated

¹ Foxhall drew a distinction between Greek and Roman agriculture in the conclusion of her book on *Olive Cultivation in Ancient Greece* (2007, 252-260).

markets especially in Roman times.² Archaeologists and ancient historians investigating the Roman Empire, for instance as part of the *Oxford Roman Economy Project*, have gone in search of and found evidence to support the latter view.³ For instance, there is evidence for agricultural intensification (e.g. rise in rural site numbers and specialised, permanent agricultural installations with considerable equipment), as well as for large-scale trade (e.g. extensive distribution of large quantities of different *amphorae* types) across the Mediterranean during the Roman period.⁴ By contrast the societies and economies of the Classical and Hellenistic periods were of a smaller scale, with Lin Foxhall pointing out that the large estates even of members of *poleis* like Athens in the Classical period tended to be smaller than the large estates of the Roman period;⁵ Foxhall also drew attention to the seemingly more limited number of permanent, specialised equipment for the processing of olives in Classical and Hellenistic Greece, in comparison to the diffusion of such equipment in Roman times.⁶ However, she also argued that large estates also existed in pre-Roman times, and there is increasing evidence for different forms of wealthy farms, some of which were fortified, from different parts of Greece, Asia Minor, the Balkans and North Africa during Classical and Hellenistic times, which were not incomparable to villas.⁷ Consequently, while the size of agricultural output was not the same, the nature agricultural activity may at times not have been so different. More recently, researchers have also negated distinctions about the different structures of "Greek" and "Roman" agricultural economies. For example, Adam Izdebski and his colleagues used pollen data to argue that there is evidence for an expansion of specialised agricultural production

² Polanyi 1968; Finley 1973; Temin 2012.

³ Bowman and Wilson 2009a; 2009b, 3-4.

⁴ Wilson 2009a; Bowman and Wilson 2013b; 2013a.

⁵ Foxhall 2007, 250-257.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 253, and chapter 6 for a discussion of the evidence from different parts of Greece.

⁷ Morris and Papadopoulos 2005; Blomley 2018; Margaritis 2016, 190-198; Rind 2015; Fentress 2001; 2013; Marzano and Métraux 2018b, 18.

indicative of a market expansion and market economy in Greece in the Archaic and Classical periods.⁸ They did so by interpreting the contemporary decline of cereals and rise of olives and vines in the palynological record, drawn from six sites in southern Greece, at a time when there was significant demographic growth, as indicative of specialisation in cash-crops for export that they connected to the rise of *polis* societies.⁹ Wilson in a recent talk also argued using evidence from isolated examples of shipwrecks across the Mediterranean that there is good archaeological evidence for large-scale trade in pre-Roman periods.¹⁰ All of these arguments about the existence of large estates, high volumes of long-distance trade, and market economies not only in Roman but also in pre-Roman times, call into question differences previously proposed about the nature of different ancient economies, and the simple division between "Greek" and "Roman" agricultural economies.

The questioning of a straightforward division has also highlighted that we do not have a good understanding of exactly how and to what degree the economies of parts of Greece in pre-Roman times differed from those of the Roman Empire. It has launched a wave of new research on the economies of ancient Greece—for instance various aspects of which were explored in the seminar series *The Archaeology of the Ancient Greek Economy* held at Oxford in January-March 2020—research which is especially urgent, as the organisers of that series pointed out, because much of the evidence related to them has not yet been collated. Intrigued by this surge in research and the questions that it asked, I began to consider whether we can trace changes in agricultural economies after the Roman conquest in Greek areas, in order to

⁸ Izdebski et al. 2018; 2020a.

⁹ Izdebski et al. 2020a, 2603-2605.

¹⁰ Talk by Andrew Wilson entitled "Long-Distance Trade in the Classical and Early Hellenistic Mediterranean, c. 600-250 BCE", 20.01.2020, as part of the seminar series held at the University of Oxford *The Archaeology of the Ancient Greek Economy*, co-organised by Andrew Wilson and Catherine Morgan.

better understand not only how they compared to those of other areas of the Roman world, but also to ask whether different sorts of agricultural economies existed in Roman-period Greece.

In this thesis I explore the agricultural economies of parts of Epirus at different times: from 168/7 BCE until approximately the mid-1st century BCE (chapters 3-4), in the early Imperial period (chapter 5), and in the second half of the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE (chapter 6), and I compare them. I investigate the extent and pace of agricultural change and how change might have been brought about, asking the following questions. Was there a noticeable transition from agricultural systems and economies used before the Roman conquest to new ones, as scholars have previously argued?¹¹ If so, was this transition quick-paced, or was it more gradual? Was agricultural change, according to a view supported by different scholars, brought about primarily by agents directly connected to Rome like Italian landowners? Did they drastically affect land-ownership and apply "Roman" methods, like villa economies, to a *tabula rasa* following a supposedly dramatic destruction?¹² What were villas, did they spread to Epirus, and, if so, when? In asking these questions, I also examine what and how aspects of agricultural economies might be understood as Roman or as Greek, labels that are far from straightforward, since no singular perspective, identity, or interpretation of either existed in the Roman period.¹³ For instance, are Roman agricultural methods practices that were developed near Rome for exploiting the land or raising stock and which spread from it outwards to provinces? Were those practices exclusively linked to agents close to Rome, like its aristocracy or colonists, and one of the characteristics that made them "Roman"? If so, as the identity of those agents changed over time—for instance colonists no longer exclusively identifying as colonists after a few

¹¹ Bowden 2003, 59, 81; Forsén 2021, 250.

¹² Bowden 2003, 81; 2009, 170; Forsén 2021, 335; Hodges and Hernandez 2020, 302-305.

¹³ See e.g. Mattingly 2004, who argues for the existence of alternative identities in Britain during the Roman period, based on religion, the epigraphic habit, and identifying different communities.

generations—then did their agricultural practices, for instance their farms, also lose their distinctive "Roman-ness"?¹⁴ And did the use of what might be construed as Roman agricultural practices by different people more broadly make those people Roman? How long do practices stay distinctly "Roman", or "Greek" for that matter, rather than just becoming a diversity of methods used to exploit land in the Roman Empire?

My approach is to study the agricultural economies of Epirus from the 2nd century BCE to the 4th century CE primarily by investigating different forms of rural settlement using rescue archaeology. I concentrate on elite forms of rural settlement, meaning rural sites, such as villas, that comprise a collection of structures, which were used to practice agriculture and were inhabited by and most often connected to individuals in the upper echelons of societies.¹⁵ My reason for doing so is that the "villa", and the different sites that have been grouped under this site category in studies on rural landscapes of Greece in Roman times, has been very little understood, and one of the aims of my work is to clarify this ambiguity.¹⁶ Furthermore, centring on elite rural settlements, which have frequently preserved evidence that is more detailed than that of simpler forms of rural sites, makes it possible to have a more detailed discussion about agricultural economies. Nevertheless, this approach might underprivilege the activities of simple farmers, or cast into shadow periods when elite rural settlements were not a popular form for agricultural exploitation. In order to address such potential biases I also incorporate in my study discussion of other simpler forms of rural sites, such as villages and farms, particularly when these forms were prevalent in the landscape. This makes it possible to reconstruct

¹⁴ For changes to the populations of *coloniae* see the chapters in Sweetman 2011a.

¹⁵ For my definition of the villa and discussion of other elite forms of rural settlement see below.

¹⁶ Stewart 2014, 126-127.

agricultural activities beyond those of a limited segment of the population of Epirote communities.

My study of agricultural economies through investigation of different excavated rural sites is useful not only as a means of exploring how agriculture changed in Epirus, but also of how local societies changed as a result of—directly or indirectly—becoming a part of the Roman Empire. To do so, I compare rural domestic and agricultural evidence with that from urban and other contexts in my discussions, thus also offering a synthesis primarily using archaeology on Epirus in the Roman period, which has not been produced until this work. Therefore, this work will be useful for different researchers, both those studying ancient agriculture, and those interested in Greece during Roman times. By using agriculture and rural domestic settings as springboards from which to explore the society and economy of Epirus in the Roman period, I privilege personal rather than public outlooks and identities, which I hope will contribute to a different viewpoint on the processes of transformation experienced in the Roman period.¹⁷ It would not have been possible to do so without the salvage archaeology brought to light by archaeologists in modern Epirus, the application of which makes this study different from other works on Roman-period rural Greece that have relied on survey data.

¹⁷ For the personal elements and identities evidenced in domestic settings see Bowden 2011, 114; Sweetman 2011b. Bowden noted that incorporating such evidence was highly necessary for work on Epirus in Roman times, since most previous work centred on public monuments.

1.1 Why study agricultural economies in Epirus?

Epirus is located opposite Italy and contained by the Ionian Sea and large mountain ranges: the Akarnanian, the Pindos, and the Akroceranian mountains (Figures 1–2). The region stretches south to north from modern-day Greece in the Ambracian Gulf to the Ioannina lake basin into the coastal environs of Butrint near modern-day Sarandë in southwestern Albania (Figure 2); my thesis centres on this region of mainland Epirus, not including the Ionian islands. Travelling across the sea and over the mountains is how Epirote communities came to share cultural similarities with others on the Greek and Italian peninsulas. *Poleis* developed especially along the coast (e.g. Kassope, Phoinike) from the second half of the 4th century BCE (based on the earliest possible date for the construction of the walls of these settlements), according to Domínguez.¹⁸ Others inland (e.g. Vitsa, Liatovouni) indicated another social organisation living *kata komais*, in settlements consisting of huts (e.g. apsidal houses).¹⁹ Different communities from Epirus, mainland Greece, and southern Italy and Sicily met and interacted with each other at the panhellenic sanctuary of Dodona.²⁰ In Hellenistic times certain Epirote groups, namely the Molossian Aiakids, forged bonds with Macedon, and led by Pyrrhus conquered other Epirotes and sought to conquer Rome.²¹ From this point on contact with Italy intensified as the interests of different Epirote groups increasingly mingled with those of the Roman Republic and Empire. Epirus was used as a battlefield (e.g. in the Macedonian and the Civil wars), it was agriculturally exploited by Italian landowners belonging to the aristocracy of late Republican Rome, and it played a role in foundation myths significant to the early Principate (e.g. Aeneas

¹⁸ Domínguez 2015, 118–124.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Pantermalis 2018.

²¹ See Meyer 2013.



Figure 2. Map of the landscape of Epirus, showing natural features and the approximate locations of the regions of Molossia, Thesprotia and Chaonia (Map made by Hallvard Indgjerd, adapting base map of the © European Union, Copernicus Land Monitoring Service 2022, European Environment Agency (EEA))

allegedly stopping at Butrint).²² Close connections with Italy in the Hellenistic period were also manifested materially, for example, in the similarities between Epirote and southern Italian ceramic repertoires (e.g. both producing plates and *skyphoi* with vertical rims).²³ Epigraphically, individuals with Latin names were increasingly found on the Ionian islands and in northwestern Greece (e.g. Lefkas, Ambrakia, and Butrint) from the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE.²⁴ Because of these Italian connections Epirus is well-suited to investigate how agricultural practices might have been transformed as a result of Roman expansion. Its location at the meeting between Macedonian kingdoms in the east and the Roman Republic and Empire in the west, together with its own idiosyncratic development, also make Epirus a cultural crossroads. As a result, there is potential that in Epirus a rich variety of rural sites might have existed, making up a countryside not quite like anything we have seen in other areas of the Roman world.

Rural archaeology saw a good degree of study in Epirus, primarily not through survey as elsewhere in Greece, but through rescue excavation. Salvage archaeology undertaken by Ephorates of Antiquities has played a central role in Epirus, more so than university-led projects. A prime example is the archaeological park of Nikopolis, with Konstantinos Zachos being instrumental in its creation in his capacity as head of the 12th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities for many years (now the Ephorate of Preveza).²⁵ In the last 30 years, because of the construction of modern highways (e.g. Ionia and Egnatia Odos), more rural sites

²² On the alleged stop of Aeneas at Butrint: Virgil, *Aeneid*, 3.349–51; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 13.715–17; Hansen 2011, 85. On agricultural exploitation by Italians: Varro, *De re rustica*, Book 2.

²³ Pliakou 2019, 305.

²⁴ Zoumbaki 2011; 2019, 373–375; Cabanes et al. 2007.

²⁵ E.g. Zachos 2015.

have been revealed.²⁶ Epirote rescue archaeologists investigated them, such as Georgios Riginos who was from 2006–2011 director of the ΑΓ΄ ΕΠΚΑ Πρέβεζας-Άρτας (now the Ephorates of Preveza and of Arta) and from 2013–2014 of the ΛΒ΄ ΕΠΚΑ Θεσπρωτίας (now the Ephorate of Thesprotia). In Ioannina Georgia Pliakou produced a doctoral dissertation on the development of the basin by synthesising legacy evidence with archaeology unearthed during the building of the modern Egnatia Odos in less than a decade after their excavation.²⁷

There is also a long history of studying Roman-period archaeology in Epirus, partly because of its proximity to Italy, which also attracted Italian archaeologists like Luigi Ugolini (who excavated originally at Phoinke and later at Butrint).²⁸ References to Epirus in prominent Latin works, namely Varro’s second book of the *De re rustica* on animal husbandry, revolving around a discussion with Italian landowners who had animal flocks in Epirus, also made agriculture worthwhile to explore. As a result, different rural sites were excavated, from small farms to wealthier farms and even fortified rural structures. The availability of this evidence makes it possible to investigate the agricultural economy of this part of northwest Greece from the new perspective of excavation evidence, rather than survey data.²⁹

No synthesis exists of the archaeology of Epirus in Roman times. William Bowden’s book based on his doctoral dissertation, *Epirus Vetus. The Archaeology of a Late Antique Province*, centred on Epirus during Late Antiquity (ca. 3rd–7th centuries CE).³⁰ Myrto Veikou

²⁶ The conference “Αρχαιολογικές Έρευνες και Μεγάλα Δημόσια Έργα” (8th–9th December 2017), organised by the Directorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities of the Greek Ministry of Culture, was dedicated to finds discovered during the construction of highways, including the Ionian and Egnatia.

²⁷ 2007a.

²⁸ *Albania Antica* volumes I–III (1927; 1932; 1942).

²⁹ Rescue archaeology finds emerged e.g. in the Theophilopoulou 2018, based on the conference “Το Αρχαιολογικό Έργο στη Βορειοδυτική Ελλάδα και τα Νησιά του Ιονίου” (10th–13th December 2014), organised by Ephorates of Antiquities in Epirus and the Ionian island as well as the University of Ioannina.

³⁰ 2003.

explored the Epirote topography in Byzantine times (7th–12th centuries CE).³¹ However, the evidence corresponding to the timeframe of the Roman Empire, and earlier material from the point of the Roman conquest of Epirus in 168/7 BCE, has not been accumulated and viewed from a holistic perspective. Additionally, the archaeology of Epirus has rarely featured in broader discussions on Roman-period Greece, and it is seen as somewhat of an outlier. Susan Alcock, whose seminal *Graecia Capta* was centred on “Roman Achaia”, but in which she made brief references to Epirus, perceived it as a region of Greece so disrupted by the conquest and opportunistic agricultural exploitation by members of the elite of Rome that one almost gets the feeling that Epirus was damaged goods.³² This perspective lingers on in current discourse, and it reflects an overreliance on the literary narrative for a region whose material has not systematically and comparatively been studied. The lack of syntheses on Epirus in Roman times make its study all the more important for our understanding of Greece in this period.

1.2 Problématique

The Greek countryside in Roman times: from settlement patterns to the agricultural economy

Greece, but for exceptions like Athens in the Classical period and the kingdom of Macedon in Hellenistic times, has until recently not attracted the attention of scholars because of its economies.³³ In the Roman period it has been suggested by Alcock that the agricultural

³¹ Veikou 2012.

³² Alcock 1993 (esp. 75) referring to “large-scale infiltration” by “the Roman aristocracy”, also (141–142, 149) repeatedly noting how “hard-hit” Epirus was compared to other Greek areas.

³³ Morris 1994; Archibald 2013.

economy of Greece differed from that of other provinces in that villas allegedly did not spread there.³⁴ She wrote: “The relative absence of rural villas, especially working villas, in the east, if no doubt in part owing to an investigative bias, is provocative, and one clear point of departure from other sectors of the empire.”³⁵ Based on the supposed absence of “more intensive villa-based agriculture” and other factors discussed below, researchers studying the Roman-period agricultural economy more widely have postulated “a lesser degree of growth in the east” compared to other regions, like Italy, North Africa, or Spain.³⁶ A reason given is that sophisticated land-management systems already existed in the Greek east by Hellenistic times, which inhibited the growth of villas.³⁷ This may in fact be an accurate explanation for the early Roman-period agricultural economy in Epirus—to a degree (since some villas already existed in early Roman times)—as I will argue in this thesis, but villas did emerge, and in substantial numbers by the middle and later Imperial periods. In contrast to the perspective that villas did not exist in the eastern Roman Empire, a minority of scholars in the past, like Jeremy Rossiter, had pointed to intriguing examples of country retreats as early and as impressive as Herod’s so-called “Winter palace” located in the Judaeian desert; it had four towers, a lavish communal bathing complex, residential rooms decorated with mosaics and wall-paintings as well as a theatre.³⁸ However, Rossiter suggested that most villas in the east did not date before the 2nd century CE and many to the Late Antique period.³⁹ Ulrich Kahrstedt had also argued for the

³⁴ Alcock 2007, 686. Greece was also excluded from major villa publications, like Percival 1976; Smith 1997.

³⁵ Alcock 2007, 686.

³⁶ Bowman and Wilson 2013, 5. Contra: Alcock 2007, who in fact challenged the view of “less “growth”” (671, 696), but concludes that to investigate the extent of economic transformation “more adventurous and closer grained studies are required, especially those calling upon the growing corpus of archaeological data.”

³⁷ Bowman and Wilson 2013, 5.

³⁸ Rossiter 1989, 102; for palatial country retreats of Herod see Netzer 2001, especially for the more recently excavated one at Jericho, with pools, gardens, and bathing complexes.

³⁹ Rossiter 1989, 102.

existence of large estates specifically in Greece during Roman times.⁴⁰ More recently, more researchers like Maria Papaioannou have taken up minority opinions and began to revise the idea that villas that did not develop in Greece, but little work has been undertaken to define villas in Greek settings, as Daniel Stewart pointed out, or to date them.⁴¹ Furthermore, research on villas in Greece has focused primarily on their function as elite houses, centring on discussion of their architecture and decoration as means of exploring processes of social and cultural change, but not on their function as agricultural producers.⁴² This bias in villa research might owe something to the pictures painted by authors like Polybius (ca. mid-2nd century BCE), Strabo (late 1st century BCE/early 1st century CE), and Plutarch (late 1st/early 2nd century CE), of the desertion of cities, demographic decline, and especially accounts that “the land has ceased to yield fruit”.⁴³ However, as Alcock argued in *Graecia capta*, these ancient viewpoints may have been more reflective of rhetoric than of Greek landscapes in the later Hellenistic and Roman periods.⁴⁴ Therefore, the idea that villas were not productive in Greece, reflected in the statement also made by Alcock for the alleged dearth of “working villas”, could be a view supported by negative evidence, like little work on the archaeology of agricultural production in Greece.⁴⁵ Indeed, as she pointed out investigating the extent of growth or transformation in the economy in Greek areas required “more adventurous and closer grained studies... especially

⁴⁰ Kahrstedt 1950; Rossiter 1989.

⁴¹ Papaioannou 2018; Stewart 2014, 126-127.

⁴² See for instance, Papaioannou 2002; 2016; 2016 who studied villas for their significance to understanding the domestic architecture of Greece in the Roman Empire.

⁴³ Polybius, 36.17.5-9; Strabo *Geography*, 8.8.1; Plutarch *De defectu oraculorum*, 413F-414A. For a discussion of the views of these and other authors and the “paradox” of “Captive Greece” see Alcock 1993, chapter 1.

⁴⁴ Alcock 1993, 24-32.

⁴⁵ Alcock 2007, 686.

those calling upon the growing corpus of archaeological data”, which is what I have set out to accomplish in this thesis for the agricultural economy of Epirus.

Another one of the reasons that scholars previously supported the idea of a degree of economic underactivity in Greece is because study of the countryside has relied heavily on surveys, which indicated a decrease in settlement in the late Hellenistic and early Roman periods (followed by an increase in later Roman times).⁴⁶ This alleged site decrease in parts of Greece appeared to contrast strongly with the early Roman increase in settlement observed elsewhere in the Empire.⁴⁷ While elsewhere the increase signalled agricultural intensification, in Achaia Alcock interpreted the decline as a sign of less intensive cultivation within *Graecia capta*.⁴⁸ She also argued that elite takeover, suggested to her by survey evidence for increasingly more nucleated Roman-period settlement, sometimes equated with the larger sites that were vaguely identified as “villas”, contributed to overall less intensive cultivation.⁴⁹ Alcock postulated that the elite had amassed so much land (a process also leading to a decline of the peasantry) that they could afford under-cultivation and “even downright neglect” of it—in a frame of mind that echoed the now overturned, original perceptions for “latifundists” in Italy.⁵⁰ In her view, these wealthy landlords in Greece (in contrast to those of other parts of the Empire) were less productive and more “acquisitive” (a word evidently echoing Finleyan reconstructions of the

⁴⁶ E.g. Boeotia survey: Bintliff and Snodgrass 1985; southwest Argolid: Jameson et al. 1994; Methana: Mee et al. 1991; Nemea: Wright et al. 1990; Berbati valley: Wells & Runnels 1996; Laconia: Cavanagh et al. 2002; eastern Corinthia: Tartaron et al. 2006.

⁴⁷ Bintliff 2008, 22–25.

⁴⁸ 1993, 71–92, especially 85.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 64–72, 77.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* For the original view of “latifundists’ absorbing the independent peasantry” e.g. Smith, *Rome and Carthage*, 230. An up-to-date summary of revised views can be found in Bowman and Wilson 2013 and Launaro 2015, who discusses the co-existence of large landowners and the free peasantry and/or tenants in early Roman Italy.

ancient economy).⁵¹ So while in other parts of the Roman world the development of larger estates was associated with a rise in productivity, in Greece it was contrastingly interpreted as a sign of a fall in productivity. Alcock's narrative made sense also in light of the "empty" or abandoned countryside described for parts of Greece (incidentally, also for parts of Italy) by some ancient authors, like Strabo and Dio Chrysostom.⁵² However, her reasoning admittedly also relied on misplaced assumption like the supposed neglect of land by landowners in parts of Greece, for which she offered little in the way of direct evidence.⁵³ It also relied on the noted decrease of overall site numbers recorded in surveys. It is, however, also possible that the site decrease might reflect limited identifiable ceramics, due to our limited understanding of pottery used during the later Hellenistic and early Roman periods in Greece (especially locally-made pottery), an issue that is discussed in the Methodology section of this chapter; conversely, later Roman pottery has been more easily identifiable.⁵⁴ Since the evidence utilised came from surface surveys, little was also known about so-called "villas" at the time that Alcock wrote *Graecia capta*, which in some cases later turned out to be villages.⁵⁵ Furthermore, as rescue archaeology advanced villas were understood to be a phenomenon mainly of the 2nd century CE onwards in Achaia and in other Greek areas, casting into doubt identifications of earlier rural sites, and leaving some plot holes in the main narrative.⁵⁶

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 79, 85–87. For the "acquisitive" mentality of ancient landowners argued for by Finley see Finley 1993, 144.

⁵² Strabo *Geography*, 8.8.1; Dio Chrysostom *Euboean Discourse*, Oration 7. For discussion of the extent to which this allegedly "empty" countryside was indeed empty or in part reflective of literary *topoi* see Alcock 1993, chapter 2.

⁵³ Alcock 1993, 85–87.

⁵⁴ Sanders 2004, 165; Pettegrew 2007, 743–744.

⁵⁵ Bintliff 2008, 24.

⁵⁶ Zarmakoupi 2013; Rizakis forthcoming.

Not all regions fit the proposed picture. Stewart argued for regional variation, and for agricultural intensification in some areas, indicated by non-decreases in site scatters.⁵⁷ Colonies like Patras saw an increase in sites during the early Imperial period (64 sites) compared to the Classical and Hellenistic periods (11 and 34 sites, respectively), with subsequent decline in later Roman times.⁵⁸ On the one hand, the different settlement pattern observed near Patras could to a degree also be the result of the different methods used to investigate its immediate hinterland, which was explored by assembling evidence from rescue excavations rather than being based on survey data. On the other hand, it could be possible that countrysides associated with settler communities developed dissimilarly to those of other parts of Greece, where *poleis* had a pre-existing relationship with their *chora*. It will be interesting to consider to what extent it was more probable for colonists to construct farms in previously unoccupied locations, spurring new, distinct settlement patterns and agricultural practices, and comprising different agricultural economies.

The study of the economy in Roman-period Greece began in the National Hellenic Research Foundation, specifically in the Research Centre for Greek and Roman Antiquity (founded in 1977, presently directed by Sophia Zoumbaki). Scholars like Athanasios Rizakis, who spearheaded the centre from 1992, incorporated evidence from excavated rural sites and epigraphy as well as surveys to reconstruct agricultural developments in an economic context.⁵⁹ In 2013 he and Ioannis Touratsoglou engineered the first symposium on sites labelled “villas” focused mainly on rescue work done in central and southern Greece, published in the volume *Villae Rusticae*. Rizakis also studied the relationships of Greek elites with Rome and changes

⁵⁷ Stewart 2013, esp. 95.

⁵⁸ Petropoulos 1994, table 1.

⁵⁹ Rizakis 2013; Rizakis forthcoming.

in land-ownership (e.g. the buying up of land by Italian elites in Macedonia and colonial land expropriations).⁶⁰ Additionally, he encouraged new work, like Zoumbaki's pioneering research on Italian entrepreneurs in Greece, Panagiotis Doukellis' investigations of rural structures and centuriation, and work on the connections between agricultural developments and communities of people, or networks.⁶¹ More recently researchers have begun to study the archaeology of ancient agricultural productions in Greece, like Emlyn Dodd (viticulture) and Kyriakos Loulakoudis, whose desk-based thesis synthesised evidence related to olive oil, wine, cereal, honey, and fish productions associated with rural sites excavated across southern and western Greece.⁶² Research has also contributed to our understanding that different forms of productive rural settlement existed in Greece during the Roman period, including villages, villas, and other sites, which do not all fit in one, simplistic villa category.⁶³ As a result the gap is closing that John Bintliff identified in 1994, when he wrote "we are clearly very poorly informed about the Roman rural economy in Greece and the role of villas, and at least a decade or more behind our colleagues in Italy."⁶⁴ However, the ways in which rural sites differed are still unclear, since no study exists that has systematically used their archaeology to distinguish them.

Work on the ancient economy in Greece advanced from two ends of a tunnel. As Rizakis and his colleagues dug from the Roman side, others were excavating the Greek side. Foxhall published her book on farming and especially olive cultivation associated with *poleis* communities during the Classical period (6th-3rd centuries BCE) in 2007.⁶⁵ Zosia Archibald's *Ancient Economies of the Northern Aegean: Fifth to First Centuries BC* emerged in 2013. In

⁶⁰ Rizakis 1994; 2015b; 2015a. Rizakis 2015b; Rizakis forthcoming.

⁶¹ Zoumbaki 2011; 2012; 2013; Doukellis and Mendoni 1994.

⁶² Dodd 2020; Loulakoudis 2021.

⁶³ Stewart 2014, 126–129.

⁶⁴ Bintliff 1994, 11.

⁶⁵ Foxhall 2007, 1.

2018 Anna Blomley completed her doctoral dissertation on fortified rural structures in the Argolid (400–146 BCE), highlighting their significance not only as military sites but also as wealthy farms. The implications of this work are that it was not only landowners in the Roman period, or during the floruit of different kingdoms in Hellenistic times, but also members of the elite of *poleis* in the Classical period (and earlier) who produced marketable goods. Research is raising new questions about the connections and contrasts between different agricultural economies. Different farms, like fortified farms and villas, have become increasingly associated with these economies—according to Morris and Papadopoulos, for instance, “a tower is now recognised as part of a Greek farm”.⁶⁶ Interestingly, however, fortified farms were re-used in some areas during the Roman period, for instance, in Macedonia, and as I will show also in Epirus.⁶⁷ While the archaeology of different forms of rural settlement can be explored to investigate agricultural change, the extent to which it is possible to connect different farms to so-called “Greek” or “Roman” farming is a question explored in this thesis.

Literature review: Epirus, the conquest and agricultural developments in Roman times

The countryside of Epirus has been seen rather differently to that of Achaia. Whereas in Achaia Alcock highlighted the roles of local landowners, in Epirus she argued—on the basis of ancient literary sources that emphasised a destructive conquest and later agricultural exploitation by members of the Italian elite—was different and exceptional, supposedly one of the few regions

⁶⁶ Morris and Papadopoulos 2006, 162.

⁶⁷ Ketanis 2016; 2017; and especially his forthcoming thesis entitled “Αργουκίες και αγροτική οικονομία στη Μακεδονία κατά τη ρωμαϊκή και υστερρορωμαϊκή περίοδο (2ος αι. π.Χ.–6ος μ.Χ.)” conducted at the University of Thessaly.

in Greece that saw large-scale investment by Italian landowners.⁶⁸ For Bowden “the expansion into Epirus of the Roman senatorial aristocracy”, together with the foundation of colonies and the Nikopolitan *synoikismos* (discussed below), catalysed new land tenure patterns (including “villa sites”) in the early Roman period, which he argued were “maintained until at least the mid-fifth century”.⁶⁹ This resulted for him in a seeming “greater degree of continuity of occupation of rural sites” in Epirus, suggested by survey and excavation evidence at the time, but which had not yet been thoroughly studied; current data as I will argue in this thesis indicates otherwise.⁷⁰ The apparent rural site continuity indicated to Bowden contrasted with undulating rural patterns observed in other parts of Greece.⁷¹ He traced the impetus for this seemingly distinct pattern in Epirus to “the domination of a western Roman aristocracy in the area”.⁷² Because of the accounts of ancient authors, and because of the proximity of Epirus to Italy, it has generally been thought, or assumed, that this region followed a different rural development to that of other Greek areas, one that more closely mirrored to Bowden that of other regions in the Roman world, like Italy, and in which Italian landlords were emphasised.⁷³ However, the extent to which these were the only active landowners in Epirus after its conquest and the potential roles of local landowners have in fact infrequently been investigated, and for this reason I have sought to investigate them more in this thesis.

A stimulus often given for the establishment of estates by Italians in Epirus has been its purportedly catastrophic conquest in 168/7 BCE, long before the early 60s BCE when these estates are attested in literary sources. For Alcock, in contrast to Achaia, which was “treated on

⁶⁸ Alcock 1993, 75. Strabo *Geography*, 7.7.3; Varro *De re rustica*, 2.

⁶⁹ Bowden 2003, 59, 61, 80–81.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 80–81.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

the whole less violently”, making it “more impervious to... large-scale infiltration” (though it too probably experienced chronic warfare, according to Chaniotis), Epirus saw such “infiltration” partly because of “the devastating attack” upon it in 168/7 BCE.⁷⁴ This offensive is known to us almost exclusively through the accounts of ancient authors writing later than the time of the events. According to Livy and Strabo (writing in the later 1st century BCE and earlier 1st century CE, Strabo using an excerpt of Polybius that is now missing), and as stated by Plutarch (writing in the later 1st century CE and earlier 2nd century CE), in 168/7 BCE the general Aemilius Paullus marched into Epirus following his victory at Pydna, allegedly destroying 170 towns (“oppida” or “πόλεις”) and enslaving 150,000 Epirotes.⁷⁵ Generally, these accounts have been taken at face value (though not by Bowden, who questioned the reliance on “limited and problematic textual sources”), and they have contributed to the view that destruction stimulated agricultural exploitation by Italian aristocrats much later on—even to the opinion that the conquest was incentivised by desires to exploit the area, argued by Adam Ziolkowski.⁷⁶ According to Bjorn Forsén, investment by Italians after the conquest that he called “wild “capitalism”” was “enabled by the destruction of 167 B.C...”, which for others had left Epirus more or less a *tabula rasa*.⁷⁷ Yet, Pliny the Elder (writing in the mid-1st century CE) and Appian (first half of the 2nd century CE) in fact placed the 170 towns in Macedonia and in Illyria, respectively.⁷⁸ The degree and nature of the supposed destruction in Epirus has also recently been called into question using archaeological evidence from some local towns by

⁷⁴ Alcock 1993, 75; Chaniotis 2005, 138-140.

⁷⁵ Livy *History of Rome*, 45.34; Strabo *Geography*, 7.7.3; Plutarch *Aem.* 29.3.

⁷⁶ Bowden 2009, 167. Ziolkowski 1986. Contra: Scullard 1945, preferring political motivations for the conquest.

⁷⁷ Forsén 2021, 335; Sarikakis 1964, 105–106.

⁷⁸ Bowden 2009, 167. Pliny *Natural History*, 4.39; Appian III.9.

Riginos and by Pliakou and Vyron Antoniadis.⁷⁹ Given this ambiguity about the extent to which local towns were affected by the conquest, and the prevailing reliance only on pieces of ancient accounts, it is imperative to briefly explore these pieces in their literary context, as well as to investigate some of the archaeological evidence that has been linked to the events of 168/7 BCE. I consider also local attitudes to the conquest, and its possible short- and long-term effects.

According to Livy, the military offensive by Aemilius Paullus was decisive, but some of the action had already take place before his arrival. The author tells us that Anicius Gallus had made his way to Epirus in the preceding year (169 BCE), after defeating and receiving the surrender of king Genthius of Illyria.⁸⁰ All Epirote towns but four surrendered to Anicius Gallus.⁸¹ The four that did not were Passaron (perhaps identifiable with the settlement excavated at Megalo Gardiki), Tekmon (perhaps Kastritsa), Phylake and Horraon located in Molossia, whose leaders at Passaron were Antinous and Theodotus, and who died fighting against Anicius and his troops, as recounted by Livy (Figure 2, and for the possible locations of these towns noted by Livy see Figure 5).⁸² According to Livy, these men had supported Perseus and opposed the Romans, and it was because of them that people had revolted against the Romans.⁸³ Based on his remarks it has generally been thought that Molossia would have been the region hardest hit by the conquest, with Antoniadis for instance noting that of those Epirotes thought to have

⁷⁹ Riginos 2007. Pliakou and Antoniadis presented broadly late Hellenistic-early Roman ceramic evidence in their talk “The Archaeology of “Dead Cities”” (14.11.2019) in Epirus, including from Kassope, Ambrakia, Elea, Megalo Gardiki, Fanoti, Gitana, and Phoinike at the 4th IARPotHP conference.

⁸⁰ Livy, *History of Rome* 45.26.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Livy, *History of Rome* 45.26.5.



Figure 5. Map showing the location of cities and towns in Epirus inhabited both in Hellenistic and early Roman times (Map made by Hallvard Indgjerd, adapting base map of the © European Union, Copernicus Land Monitoring Service 2022, European Environment Agency (EEA))

been enslaved these were “mostly Molossians”.⁸⁴ Contrary to Livy, Polybius—who wrote much closer to the events in question—narrates a slightly different story, indicating that the opposition of certain Molossian leaders to Anicius Gallus was the result of intra-regional competition. In Chaonia to the north and nearer the coast, the leader Charops, who had been educated and had “made many friendships at Rome” according to Polybius, was seeking to use his connections to his advantage during the Third Macedonian War, traducing and accusing other Epirote leaders, like Kephalus from Tekmon, at Rome.⁸⁵ In so doing, according to Polybius, he eventually forced Kephalus’ hand (after the arrest on similar grounds of Aetolian leaders) to join Perseus.⁸⁶ Consequently, the extent of opposition to the Romans, and therefore possibly the magnitude of the fighting in 169 BCE may not have been so large, perhaps even within Molossia. Following the quartering of some of his soldiers in settlements in Epirus for the winter, Anicius left for Scodra.⁸⁷

Aemilius Paullus arrived with his army sometime after the Battle of Pydna (22 June 168 BCE). Upon his arrival in Epirus, Livy describes an organised sacking.⁸⁸ The general summoned members of the local elite asking them to deposit their gold and silver in public areas.⁸⁹ Subsequently, he sent cohorts to different towns to collect the treasure, which totalled an amount corresponding to four hundred *denarii* for cavalry soldiers and two hundred for infantrymen.⁹⁰ Thereafter, Livy says the soldiers tore down (“diruti”) the towns’ walls, but he does not say, unlike Strabo, that Paullus overturned or ruined (“ἀνατρέψαι”) the towns themselves.⁹¹

⁸⁴ Antoniadis and Zachos 2021, 63.

⁸⁵ Polybius *The Histories*, 27.15.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* For a further discussion see also Scullard 1945, 58-60.

⁸⁷ Livy, *History of Rome* 45.26.10.

⁸⁸ Livy, *History of Rome*, 45.34.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*; Strabo *Geography*, 7.7.3.

Different possible reasons have been offered for this looting, which was so extensive according to Livy, such as the successful persuasion to do so by Charops of his friends at Rome argued by Howard Hayes Scullard, because this would also have suited Charops' own agenda to rise over other leaders in Epirus.⁹² Or, for Ziolkowski, this was a means to effectively rid Epirotes of their resources, thus putting Italians in a beneficial position that facilitated their exploitation of the area.⁹³ However, the actual extent of this destruction described by Livy and by Strabo remains elusive.

Evidence for extensive town wall collapses in Epirus has often been ambiguously linked with the attack by the troops of Aemilius Paullus, but without secure stratigraphic evidence to support this, since few walls have been excavated (Figure 3).⁹⁴ At Elea Riginos and others wrote that it would be appealing to link the full collapse of the northern part of the towns' fortifications (in its eastern segment), through which the town was entered, with the events of 168/7 BCE, but no excavated layers have been noted to confirm this (Figure 3).⁹⁵ At the same time, the complete desertion of the town that had been postulated, based on the concentration of finds that had been excavated to the 3rd and first half of the 2nd centuries BCE, is now questionable after the discovery of new finds (e.g. pottery and coin hoards, ca. 148-50 BCE)—and it is important to remember that this like many other towns in Epirus have been only partially excavated.⁹⁶ Furthermore, as Forsén points out, the full collapse of fortifications at different towns was probably caused by later earthquakes and wars (e.g. the Balkan wars at Megalo

⁹² Scullard 1945.

⁹³ Ziolkowski 1986.

⁹⁴ E.g. Riginos 2007, 164 and Riginos et al. 2018, 755 (Elea); Pliakou 2015, 37–41 (Megalo Gardiki); Angeli 2007, 17–18 (Horraon). See also for associations made to the Romans in different scholarship for Megalo Gardiki and Horraon: Forsén 2021, fn. 13.

⁹⁵ Riginos et al. 2018, 755.

⁹⁶ Riginos et al. 2018, 755, 763 ; Forsén 2021, 232, and see fn. 20.

Gardiki).⁹⁷ For antiquity there is little evidence for besiegers thoroughly dismantling walls according to new work by Sylvian Fachard and Edward Harris, contrary to what ancient sources might have us believe; walls, rather, would probably have been breached in key locations, for instance, by destroying curtain walls (e.g. at Thasos).⁹⁸ Therefore, the Romans may well not have razed the walls of any Epirote towns to the ground, but they could instead possibly have destroyed strategic sectors of them, as this was a more economical, but effective strategy. However, there is no definite evidence that has yet been produced for this, or to link the destruction of parts of town walls, for example as suggested indirectly by Roman-period repairs (e.g. at Kastri/Pandosia, Batiai, and Bouchetion located in the wider region of Kassope), specifically with the military activities of 169 and 168/7 BCE, and directly to sieges by the Roman army—the repairs do however evince conflict at those three towns pre-dating the repairs.⁹⁹ If we were to assume the demolishing of parts of town walls in certain instances, for instance at towns like Passaron and Tekmon, besieged by Anicius per Livy, or to link the wall damage in other cases with military offensives in the early 160s BCE, then those towns would indeed have struggled before repairing their walls to withstand another siege, effectively complicating any potential attempts for them to fight back.

What of the fate of the one hundred and fifty thousand persons that according to Strabo were enslaved (“ἐξανδραποδίσασθαι”) and according to Livy were carried off (“abducerentur”)?¹⁰⁰ The numbers are probably exaggerated, since as Jason Wickham pointed

⁹⁷ Fachard and Harris 2021, 231.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁹⁹ Dakaris 1987, 14; 1984, 194, 150–169; 1977, 220–221, 225. Important evidence was very recently excavated in relation to the walls of Kastritsa (perhaps ancient Tekmon), including projectile heads, as well as from the so-called Nekromanteion, but the finds from both sites have not yet been thoroughly studied. For preliminary publications on the finds from Kastritsa see Yiouni et al. 2015, 44–45; 2018, 707–708, and for discussion of those from the Nekromanteion see Forsén 2021, 233–234.

¹⁰⁰ Strabo *Geography*, 7.7.3; Livy *History of Rome*, 45.34.5.

out, Aemilius Paullus, who had at most 20,000 troops, could not have enslaved 150,000 people.¹⁰¹ However, some Epirotes were still enslaved a century later, when Varro wrote the *De re rustica* (published in 37 BCE, but recounting events at least as early as 63 BCE). In Book I he referred to slave families of Epirus as a steady investment, because their family bonds meant they could become attached to the land of an estate; they thus brought “the highest prices”.¹⁰² In Book II slave herders owned by Italian landowners in Epirus are mentioned.¹⁰³ Yet, beyond Varro’s account, and the members of the local elite sent to Rome after 168/7 BCE mentioned by Polybius, to the extent of my knowledge there is not widespread evidence in the primary literature for slaves from Epirus in the Roman Empire.¹⁰⁴ The reality might lie somewhere on the spectrum between the perspectives of Alois Dreizehnter, who suggested the numbers were purely rhetorical (and meant to symbolically convey that this was a large enslavement operation), and that of Walter Scheidel, who has taken the numbers seriously, and presented this as the largest attested enslavement operation in Roman history.¹⁰⁵ But to what degree was it the case, as Scheidel has argued for enslavements during the Roman Republic more broadly, that the cumulative total of numbers attested by ancient authors “understate the actual scale of slave-making”?¹⁰⁶ An alternative perspective is that the magnitude of the number of Epirote people enslaved, like the number of towns destroyed (70), conveyed by Livy and Strabo writing from a perspective that tended to deliberately emphasise the strength of Rome, had been exaggerated to dramatise the effects of the conquest, precisely in order to highlight Roman military prowess. While undoubtedly in the world of the Roman Empire slavery was

¹⁰¹ Wickham 2014, 164-166.

¹⁰² Varro *De re rustica*, 1.17.5: “...Eo enim fiunt firmiores ac coniunctiores fundo. Itaque propter has cognationes Epiroticae familiae sunt illustriores ac cariores.”

¹⁰³ Varro *De re rustica*, 2.10.

¹⁰⁴ Polybius *Histories*, 32.5.6.

¹⁰⁵ Dreizehnter 1978, 53–69; Scheidel 2011, 294-295. For another discussion of these views see Forsén 2021, 230.

¹⁰⁶ Scheidel 2011, 295.

widespread, an intrinsic part of ancient societies, and in certain areas numerous slaves were acquired through conquest, slaves were also acquired by different means, like trade, for instance in Gaul and parts of Greece, like Delos.¹⁰⁷ It is not necessarily the case in my opinion that the numbers associated with conquests that have come down to us by authors with specific agendas (often pro-Roman) can always be taken at face value, or as low estimates, as Scheidel has argued.¹⁰⁸ This would lead to somewhat problematic links, like directly linking the events of 168/7 BCE and the depopulation recounted by ancient authors with the decline in settlement observed through survey in Epirus in the Kokytos valley from the late Classical to the early Roman periods (Figure 4).¹⁰⁹ Such links are partially based on suppositions not clearly supported, and can confusingly shape wider narratives of how Roman conquests are to be understood more broadly.¹¹⁰ In Epirus, other factors, like the Civil Wars or changes to agricultural practices as I will show, might have played an equally or even more important role in affecting settlement in this long time period. The pattern observed in the Kokytos valley is also “without any real parallel elsewhere in Epirus”, so different regions might have been differently affected as a result of being brought under Roman hegemony, not only in the short-term, but also in the long-term.¹¹¹

It had traditionally been thought before new evidence arose from the excavations of multiple towns in Epirus, for instance by Sotirios Dakaris, that the conquest in the early 160s BCE led to the destruction of many of the settlements used in Hellenistic times, including according to him Kassope and Dodona (Figure 5).¹¹² This view also relied on the account of

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 297, 303.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 295.

¹⁰⁹ Forsén 2021, 232, 241.

¹¹⁰ See on these Maschek 2018.

¹¹¹ Forsén 2021, 233.

¹¹² Dakaris 1987, 13-14; 1971, 66-67, 91.

Strabo, who wrote that during his lifetime in the 1st century CE Epirus was an “ἐρημία”, tracing a process of disappearance or desertion of the landscape specifically to the supposedly dramatic upheaval caused by Aemilius Paullus and his troops.¹¹³ Yet, Strabo subsequently went on to describe the geography of Epirus in early Roman times, indicating that even in his day (and possibly earlier) the Epirote landscape was not a desert, nor were its towns forlorn.¹¹⁴ In recent years the archaeology of local towns has indicated that in every region of Epirus towns, in fact, continued to be inhabited in the second half of the 2nd and in the 1st centuries BCE (e.g. Kassope, Gitana, Fanoti, Megalo Gardiki—possibly to be identified with ancient Passaron—and Phoinike), while some remained settled into the 1st century CE (e.g. Dymokastro, Figure 5).¹¹⁵ Even Elea, which had previously been singled out as the only town in the region of Thesprotia to have been immediately abandoned after 168/7 BCE by Riginos and others, has now produced some pottery and two coin hoards dating between the mid-2nd and mid-1st centuries BCE that indicates some form of habitation;¹¹⁶ a Sicilian Punic *amphora* dating to the first half of the 1st century BCE was also found.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, in the Archaeological Museum of Igoumenitsa in Thesprotia late Greco-Italic *amphorae* (ca. 250/225–150/125 BCE) and Lamboglia 2 *amphorae* (ca. 150/125–50/25 BCE) are displayed from Gitana, Elea, and Dymokastro—all major Thesprotian towns. The manner of habitation at different towns after 168/7 BCE may not have been the same. Some have argued for a so-called "shrinking" of towns, with only some buildings

¹¹³ *Geography*, 7.7.3.

¹¹⁴ *Geography*, 7.7.3-7.7.8.

¹¹⁵ Pliakou and Antoniadis 2019, discussing mainly ceramic and some numismatic evidence from Kassope, Ambrakia, Elea, Megalo Gardiki, Fanoti, Gitana, and Phoinike dating from the second half of the 2nd-1st centuries BCE. Lazari et al. 2018, 294, ns. 17 and 18; Lazari et al. 2008, 65–66 (Dymokastro).

¹¹⁶ Riginos et al. 2018, 763; Liampi 2019; Forsén 2021, 232.

¹¹⁷ Pliakou and Antoniadis 2019.

continuing to be inhabited for instance at Megalo Gardiki or at Dymokastro.¹¹⁸ Contrary to these interpretations, at Butrint the construction of many public buildings has been attributed to the 2nd century BCE, which were used also in the 1st century BCE based on their pottery, indicated the efflorescence of the city, attributed to the years after the Roman conquest.¹¹⁹ Comparatively, towns like Megalo Gardiki and Dymokastro could be perceived as being in decline, but it is not clear precisely how this is to be construed, or what is meant by the "shrinking" of towns. Furthermore, the finds that have as of yet been excavated from Elea and other towns in southern Epirus may seem poor in comparison to those from Butrint, but it is significant to note that Elea has seen far less systematic excavations, and parts of the city remain unexcavated. Here I will not delve too deeply into the specific archaeology of these different towns in southern vs northern, or coastal vs inland Epirus, because this is investigated in great detail in my discussion in chapter 3. However, I would like to point out a division has often been painted by scholars, such as Hernandez and Zoumbaki, of the comparative decline of southern or inland areas, like Thesprotia and Molossia, comparatively to northern and coastal ones, like Chaonia, or the area around the Ambracian Gulf.¹²⁰ This is a division I do not exactly agree with, and which could partly be seen to reflect the account of the ancient literature, like Livy who placed the military activities of Anicius Gallus in Molossia, and Polybius, who highlighted the shrewd manoeuvres of Charops in Chaonia with his friends at Rome, both discussed already. Contrasting with such views is evidence for the production of coins and pottery across Epirus. Between ca. 168-148 BCE coins were produced by Phoinike in Chaonia, Pandosia in Thesprotia, Dodona, and jointly

¹¹⁸ Pliakou et al. 2015, 27 (Megalo Gardiki); Lazari et al. 2018, 269 (Dymokastro). For arguments on the contracted settlement of certain towns see also Dakaris 1971, 154–155 and Forsén 2021, 231–232, as well as Kanta-Kitsou 2008, 23–24 (Gitana).

¹¹⁹ Hernandez 2010, 283-306.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*; Zoumbaki 2019, 381.

by Kassope and Molossian towns.¹²¹ After the re-unification of the Epirote league in 148 BCE under Roman hegemony, common coinage was manufactured until at least 50 BCE, or until Augustan times.¹²² Epirote potters were also active in the later 2nd and 1st centuries BCE, at Phoinike, Gitana, Ambrakia, and Kassope (Figure 5).¹²³ Such evidence indicates a good degree of political and economic activity during the last two centuries BCE, which could be interpreted as continuous from before the conquest or indicative of recovery, depending how destructive we envision the conquest to have been, and indeed where. What the archaeology has to tell us about the different settlement trajectories of particular towns and how they were used after 168/7 BCE are topics investigated further in the discussion in chapter 3.

The conquest in the early 160s BCE may not have been as destructive as the primary sources painted it to be, as I have suggested in the last few paragraphs. Evidence for anti-Roman sentiment is scarce in the primary literature, while Charops—presented by Polybius as a mischievous creature but perhaps also a clever diplomat—used connections to Rome to further his goals. His actions, however, led to loss of life, certainly of pro-Macedonian factions and their leaders in Molossia, and even if the region was not so widely affected in the long-term, its leaders Antinous and Theodotus at Passaron and Kephalus at Tekmon fell to Anicius Gallus based on Livy’s testimony—this is something we should not ignore. It is also quite possible that the dearth of evidence for anti-Roman feelings in the ancient literature is due to the fact that the Romans won, history, as we know, is written by the victors. Notwithstanding, evidence to link town wall destructions specifically to the offensives of the Roman army is also limited, with the possible exception of some Roman-period repairs (e.g. at Kastri/Pandosia located near Kassope)

¹²¹ Franke 1961, 31–39, 81–84, 107–110, 111–115. See also Forsén 2021, 235.

¹²² Franke 1961, 218–237; Hoover 2016, no. 180.

¹²³ Gamberini 2016, 157–167 (Phoinike); Pliakou 2019, 304 (Gitana); Katsadima and Karampa 2014, esp. 73–80; Gravani 1996, 225, 241–244; 2000, 485–488; 2004, esp. 586–571; 2009 (Kassope).

indirectly indicative of conflict. The numbers passed down by Livy and a few others of the people enslaved in 168/7 BCE also appear to have been exaggerated, although Epirotes, like the slave herding communities described by Varro, were enslaved by the 60s BCE. A multitude of factors could have led to the enslavement of these herders or others, as well as to the different trajectories taken by different towns, factors directly or indirectly linked to Roman expansion. However, communities and their settlements across Epirus were not obliterated. Consequently, instead of seeing the end of the Third Macedonian War as the end of Epirote history, I would suggest we see it as a vital turning point for local societies, who were now under Roman hegemony, and who—whether they wished this or whether they did not—were in business with Rome.

Italian businessmen or *negatiatores* active in Epirus (at least) in the 1st century BCE are known to us through textual sources. The most prominent was Titus Pomponius Atticus, an equestrian friend and confidant of Cicero, with whom Cicero exchanged an extensive correspondence.¹²⁴ Although it is only Cicero's *Letters to Atticus* that survived they indirectly inform us of Atticus' activities. He had extensive Epirote landholdings acquired as early as 68 BCE, land that he used to graze sheep, cattle, and horses, and to breed shepherding and hunting dogs, doing so by exploiting many herders that were his slaves.¹²⁵ Atticus was one of a larger group of individuals—members of the elite of Rome—with landholdings in Epirus that they used to raise livestock and who are known to us through Varro's writings. Our knowledge of their pastoral activities comes primarily from Book II of the *De re rustica*, that is centred on the

¹²⁴ Atticus took the name Quintus Caecilius Pomponianus Atticus after he was adopted by his maternal uncle, and whose property he also inherited.

¹²⁵ Cicero (Letter 1, I.5.7) congratulated Atticus on his purchase in Epirus in 68 BCE; Varro, *De re rustica*, 2.2, 2.5.12, 2.7.1, 2.9, 2.10. According to Cornelius Nepos (*Life of Atticus*, 14.3), all of Atticus' income "came from his property in Epirus and in Rome".

topic of animal husbandry, expounded through a dialogue set in 67 BCE between five Italian landowners in Epirus—Atticus, L. Cossinius, Qu. Lucienus, Murrius, and Vaccius—whom Varro dubbed the *Synepirotae* (and Tremellius Scrofa, who also participates in the discussion).¹²⁶ Some of the *Synepirotae*, like Atticus, were equestrians, and others, like the cattle-breeder Lucienus, were senators.¹²⁷ We can understand the investments in animal farms in Epirus of these Italians as part of the broader economic activities of Italians in mainland Greece, the Aegean islands, and Asia Minor during the last two centuries BCE, which were greatly varied, including: viticulture, animal husbandry, trade, as well as money lending.¹²⁸ However, it is not necessarily the case, as has been assumed, that the Epirote activities of Italian businessmen went hand-in-hand with the establishment of “large villas in Epirus by the mid-first century BCE”—or even earlier.¹²⁹ This assumption has led to the not always supported interpretation of different rural sites with phases dating somewhere between the 2nd century BCE and the 1st century CE as villas, which have also frequently been linked to the *Synepirotae*. For example, a fortified rural structure at Malathrea near Butrint was originally described by Dhimitër Çondi as a villa that he connected to Atticus, but without any evidence to clearly support such a connection.¹³⁰ In fact, the idea that villas became widespread in Epirus during the last two centuries BCE and the 1st century CE cannot be supported based on the texts

¹²⁶ Varro, *De re rustica*, 2.5.1 for the use of the term *Synepirotae*. He set his dialogue with the *Synepirotae* when he was in “command of the Greek fleets operating between Delos and Sicily”, for which he received the *corona rostrata* in 67 BCE (*De re rustica*, II.introduction.1).

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.5.1.

¹²⁸ For a broader discussion of these economic activities of Italians in the Greek East: Eberle and Le Quéré 2017.

¹²⁹ Forsén 2021, 236.

¹³⁰ Çondi 1984a, 149. For the location of Malathrea see Figure 13. Another example is the complex constructed in a fort at Agios Donatos, understood as a villa dating from the 1st century BCE or even the second half of the 2nd century BCE, which was connected by Bjorn Forsén to Lucius Cossinius (also an equestrian, who bred goats and cattle); in this case, the connection might be supported by the presence of multiple brick-stamps bearing the inscription ‘COS’, and other contextual evidence perhaps linking the site to Italians (Forsén 2019a, ii–iii).

recounting the activities of the *Synepirotae*, because with one possible exception these texts do not clearly refer to the construction of villas.

Roman authors rarely used the term *villa* to refer to a luxurious country house—using it more frequently to refer to a farm house—and they did not use it in this sense in connection to the Epirote activities of Italians.¹³¹ When the term *villa* is used in Book II of the *De re rustica*, for instance, it signifies a farm (or steading, as Hoopper and Ash translated it), which is how Cossinius uses it in his discussion of slave herding communities in Epirus, in order to describe a physical building in which herders and their families live when they are based at the estate (“fundo”).¹³² The only possible textual reference to a villa as a lavish country home constructed by one of the *Synepirotae* in Epirus is connected to Atticus and suggested in letters written to him by Cicero. Cicero in a letter dated May 61 BCE mentions what seems to have been a rustic structure owned by Atticus that had been given the name “Ἀμαλθεῖον”, enquiring after its décor and setting because he wanted to copy it in his villa at Arpinum.¹³³ Atticus’ Ἀμαλθεῖον has been variably interpreted in secondary sources as a temple dedicated to the nymph Ἀμάθεια belonging to an isolated rural sanctuary or to a villa, or as a villa in its entirety, whose decorative scheme Cicero wished to imitate.¹³⁴ As Deniaux argued, it is indeed quite possible that Atticus would have had a villa named after Ἀμάθεια, since the nymph—sometimes represented as a she-goat and who nursed the infant Zeus—was often associated with the idea of plenty, while her animal form brings to mind Atticus’ pastoral pursuits in Epirus.¹³⁵ Furthermore, praise of

¹³¹ Rothe 2018, 42.

¹³² Varro, *De re rustica*, 2.10.1, 2.10.6.

¹³³ *Letters to Atticus*, 1.16.18: “velim ad me scribas cuius modi sit Ἀμαλθεῖον tuum, quo ornatu, qua τοποθεσία, et, quae poemata quasque historias de Ἀμαλθείᾳ habes, ad me mittas. libet mihi facere in Arpinati.” See also 1.16.15, where Cicero notes epigrams in Cicero’s honour that Atticus had placed in the “Amaltheo”.

¹³⁴ Shackleton Bailey translated Ἀμαλθεία (*Letters to Atticus*, 1.16.18) as a Shrine to Amaltheia; Deniaux 1987, 247-248; Zoumbaki 2019, 377. Cicero also mentioned Atticus would have made sacrifices at the Ἀμαλθεῖον (*Letters to Atticus*, 2.20.2).

¹³⁵ Deniaux 1987, 247.

“Atticus’ Amaltheum” and its river Thyamis (as well as nearby plane trees) in Epirus in the context of mention of Cicero’s estate at Arpinum and the river Liris there seems to suggest that the Amaltheum was also a rural estate.¹³⁶ However, this would be the only example of a villa as a luxury country house in the literature pertaining to the activities of Italians in Epirus in this period, which might indicate a wider phenomenon, or it could be an exception. In other cases in the written sources, it is not a rural dwelling that is mentioned in connection to Atticus but property presumably connected to land. For example, in 68 BCE Cicero had congratulated Atticus on his Epirote purchase (“Epiroticam emptionem”);¹³⁷ Nepos only alluded to his property (“possessio”) in Epirus.¹³⁸

Modern scholarship until now has maintained that villas spread widely to Epirus either in association with the *Synepirotae* or with colonists in the early Roman period, but in this thesis I will argue that this was not quite so. Instead, I will propose that a more balanced perspective is needed that also considers local agency for the spread of villas. In my opinion, the emphasis in other work on agents directly connected to Rome stems partially from an overreliance on primary written sources (that do not in fact clearly evince villas), and from a consensus that the presence of Italian landowners and colonists attested in texts would have led to the wide spread of villas, because this has been argued to have happened in other provinces, and is understood as a pattern that scholars have assumed Epirus would have followed.¹³⁹ For instance, Dakaris, Bowden and Forsén attributed the spread that they envisioned villas had in Epirus in the 1st century BCE to the presence attested by the texts of the *Synepirotae*, seeing their activities as

¹³⁶ *De Legibus*, 2.3.7: “Marcus: ‘Est vero ita; sed tamen huic amoenitati, quem ex Quinto saepe audio, Thyamis Epirotes tuus ille nihil, opinor, concesserit.’ Quintus: ‘Est ita ut dicis; cave enim putes Attici nostri Amalthio platanisque illis quicquam esse praeclarius.’”

¹³⁷ Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*, Letter 1, I.5.7.

¹³⁸ Nepos, *Life of Atticus*, 14.3.

¹³⁹ In her synthetic article, for instance, Marzano (2015) argued that villas could spread to provinces through two paths: via colonists or via wealthy landowners who acquired new land there.

part of a wider model of exploitative land-grabbing in provinces by members of the aristocracy of Rome;¹⁴⁰ a model similar to this one had been argued for Sicily in the Roman period, but has more recently come under question, while Jonathan Prag emphasises the local histories of the island.¹⁴¹ Villas also need not have proliferated immediately after the settling in Epirus of colonists from other areas, as Bowden argued they did in connection to Nikopolis and Butrint.¹⁴² Colonisation in the Roman period meant the elevation of a settlement to colonial status and was sometimes accompanied by the arrival of settlers, something which clearly happened at Butrint, and probably also at Nikopolis and at Photike.¹⁴³ Yet, it is important to consider to what extent colonisation caused drastic changes to land-ownership and rural re-structuring, and whether it fuelled together with the establishment of estates by Italians new systems of land-management in the Roman period; this was argued first by Bowden, and later by Hodges and others especially in connection to Butrint.¹⁴⁴ Equally, it is significant to take into account how conquest and incorporation into the Roman Empire might have altered local land-management systems and societies, and whether these continued to exist during the Roman period. As I discussed earlier, the conquest did not cause the desertion of Epirus in the last two centuries BCE. Additionally, it is possible that some local towns, such as Kassope, were still inhabited in the early Imperial period, which contrasts with the view of Konstantina Gravani, who argued that the foundation of Nikopolis, accompanied by a *synoikismos*, caused the final abandonment in Augustan times

¹⁴⁰ Dakaris 1987, 20; Bowden 74, 2003, 80-81; 2011, 101; Forsén 2019, 18. See also Antoniadis and Zachos 2021. Other scholars investigating the spread of villas to Greece more broadly followed their line of thought, suggesting that because of the presence of wealthy Italian landowners villas spread unusually early to Epirus comparatively to other Greek areas (Papaioannou 2018, 334; Zarmakoupi 2013, 756).

¹⁴¹ Coarelli 1981; Prag 2009. See also Wilson 2018.

¹⁴² Bowden 2009, 170-171. See also the views of Palli, Riginos and Lamprou (2017, 3, 7-11) and Antoniadis (2021, 25, 27), who argued villas spread because of “Roman settlers” or “Romans”.

¹⁴³ For Roman colonies see Bispham 2013; Mitchel 2013; Sherwin-White et al. 2014. Colonists at Butrint (Hansen 2011); probably at Nikopolis (Purcell 1987); and perhaps at Photike (Forsén 2019b, 24).

¹⁴⁴ Bowden 2003, 79-81; 2009, 170; 2011, 112. Hodges *et al.* 2016, 283; Hodges and Hernandez 2020, 302-305.

of towns existing before the Roman period.¹⁴⁵ Forms of rural settlement used in Classical and Hellenistic times, such as villages and fortified farms—discussed more in the next section and subsequent chapters—could also have continued to be used in Roman times in order to practice agriculture.

It is not straightforward to distinguish between new and old, or local, systems of land-management, just as it is not uncomplicated to make distinctions between “Greek” or “Roman” agriculture. However, it is possible to assess the extent of agricultural change through investigation of different forms of rural settlement, when and by whom rural sites might have been inhabited, how they changed, and when they ceased to be occupied. It is also very useful to take into consideration the bigger picture of the pace of agricultural change. While Alcock argued that the agricultural systems of Achaia saw a different temporal development to that of other areas of the Roman world, emphasising less change especially in early Roman times, scholars have tended to emphasise the opposite for Epirus. Bowden, for instance, envisioned a dramatic transformation in early Roman times and little change thereafter, because for him land tenure patterns remained rooted in the framework established in the early Roman period, but was this indeed the case?¹⁴⁶ Did villas actually spread to Epirus in the 1st century BCE or the 1st century CE, as has been argued, or did they do so at a later date?¹⁴⁷ How much did the agricultural economy change during the first four centuries CE? Was there a rural decline in the late 3rd century CE, as Papaioannou and Konstantaki suggested?¹⁴⁸ And, most importantly, were villas the only popular form of rural settlement in Epirus during the Roman period? In this thesis

¹⁴⁵ Gravani 2007, who also mentions Augustan ITS at Kassope indicative of continued habitation (specifically pages 106, 116; 1994, 172).

¹⁴⁶ Bowden 2003, 59-60, 81.

¹⁴⁷ Wodtke argued for villas spreading in the 1st century CE in Epirus (2011, 384–386, table 1; 2018, 358).

¹⁴⁸ Papaioannou 2018, 352; Konstantaki 2018, 27–28.

I argue for far greater rural site diversity, and aim to clarify how we can understand different rural sites. To do so, it is required to first explicitly define the villa.

1.3 Methodology

Defining the villa

On my first exploratory trip to Epirus in August 2017 (a little over a year before beginning my fieldwork), I went hunting for villas. I was looking for Roman-period sites like the villa at Strongyli, with elegant living quarters (e.g. decorated with mosaic pavements) indicative of a “villa urbana”, and with buildings dedicated to agricultural production (e.g. oileries) indicative of a “villa rustica” (Figures 6-7).¹⁴⁹ I was following the directions of Roman authors and based on those directions what I thought a villa should look like, and I was surprised to find such sites nestled deep into the Epirote countryside in locations so much like those that Cato and Varro had described.¹⁵⁰ For example, in the green valley of Kerasonas the villa near Agios Georgios was situated at the foot of a mountain, next to a fresh, still bubbling spring, which fed its baths (Figures 8-10), as well as being the source for the Nikopolis aqueduct). Yet, as my research progressed I realised that such villas were just one site type amongst a diversity of rural settlements in the countryside of Epirus during the Roman period. This established my first

¹⁴⁹ Cato, *De Agricultura*, 3.2 (“villam rusticam”); 4.1 (“villam urbanam”); Columella, *De re rustica*, 1.6.1. For this combination of a villa having both a *pars urbana* and a *pars rustica* see also Marzano 2007, chapter 5, referring to further sources.

¹⁵⁰ Cato (*Ibid.*, 1) advised for placement at the foot a mountain, well-watered, and with good accessibility (e.g. near a navigable stream), amongst other locational features. Varro (*De re rustica*, 12) also suggested a placement at the foot of a hill, near wide pastures.

goal: to explicitly define villas in order to differentiate between them and other rural sites that had in the past been squeezed into the villa category, but did not fit into it.

In modern scholarship villas have been defined as country houses that combined luxurious spaces indicative of elite social practices with economic activities, often focused on agriculture (though not exclusive to it) and intended for the market.¹⁵¹ While it is widely recognised that these functions could vary over time and from place to place, it is generally assumed that when we speak of villas we are referring to practices connected with what Rothe called “Roman elite ideology”;¹⁵² but since the meaning of “Roman” for different people, at different times, and in different regions could fluctuate considerably, what is meant by Roman vs Greek or other elite ideologies is ambiguous. It is also not necessarily the case that villas were the only type of rural settlement that combined evidence for elite social practices with market-oriented economic activities, and other rural sites could also have been country houses connected to members of the elite in different parts of the Roman Empire. The ideologies reflected in different rural sites need not have been specifically “Roman”, nor distinctly “Greek”. Both the practices indicated by the archaeology and written sources for villas and those for other types of landed estates are considered in the following paragraphs to clarify how we can distinguish between different elite rural settlements. The term “elite rural settlement” used in this thesis describes a collection of structures in the countryside that were on the one hand inhabited at times by individuals in the upper echelons of societies, who for instance might also have held roles in civic life, and that were on the other hand used to practice agriculture.

¹⁵¹ See for example the definition of Annalisa Marzano (2007, 9) for villas as: “elite mansions, either built in a rural setting or on the coast, which were simultaneously the seat of leisure retreats, hence the elegance and lavishness of their residential parts, and the seat of various kinds of economic activities, in most cases intended for the commercial market.” For the “Variety of Villa Production” see: Marzano 2015a.

¹⁵² Rothe 2018, 42.

For Roman authors writing in Latin between the 2nd century BCE and the early 2nd century CE understanding of the term villa differed, although for agronomists like Cato and Varro *villa* at its core meant a farm.¹⁵³ Cato in *De agri cultura* called simple farms *villae*—although in fact he described farms with extensive agricultural equipment (e.g. wine vats) and also operated by slaves—thus elevating his view of farming, which he saw as a paramount virtue that he traced back to his ancestors and those of his contemporaries.¹⁵⁴ However, as Nicola Terrenato argued building on work at the Auditorium "villa" and the wider contemporary archaeological record of central Italy, rural sites different from Catonian *villae* (translated by Hooper and Ash as “steadings” or “farmsteads”) also existed at the time when Cato was writing; they were more sizeable and more ostentatious than those Cato portrayed, while his version of the villa as a farmstead has in fact been more difficult to trace.¹⁵⁵ For Terrenato, Cato’s simpler *villae* were an appeal through plain farming life to frugality—a value deeply respected in his society—as a means for Cato as an *homo novus* to be accepted by the aristocracy of Rome.¹⁵⁶ But for me and for Marzano they were also an appeal to a simpler way of being connected to the land, which looked back wistfully to olden times when people (or rather, members of the elite) were allegedly plainer and more equal, reflecting the political significance of Cato’s text in a tenuous time for the Republic.¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, this may have been particularly relevant if

¹⁵³ I am referring specifically to the Roman authors Cato (*De agri cultura*, mid-2nd century BCE), Varro (*De re rustica*, ca. 37 BCE), Vitruvius (*De architectura*, ca. 30-20 BCE) and Columella (*De re rustica*, ca. mid-1st century CE), who discuss agricultural and architectural aspects of the villa, as well as to Pliny the Younger, who offered valuable insights (in the *Epistles*, especially Book II, ca. late 1st-early 2nd century CE) about the locations of his villas, their views, and garden design. For the varied meanings of the term villa used by these authors see also the discussions by Marzano (2007, 3) and Rothe (2018, 42-44), and for discussions on Roman authors attitudes to villas more broadly see Marzano (2007, chapters 1 and 3).

¹⁵⁴ Preface.

¹⁵⁵ Terrenato 2001, 24-25; 2012. Though see Mari 2005 (75-97), who discusses “Catonian type” villas, as well as Rizakis 2013 (35-36) doing so in an early Imperial Greek context. See also Di Giuseppe 2005 on the development of villas in the Middle Tiber Valley through investigation of the archaeology.

¹⁵⁶ Terrenato 2012.

¹⁵⁷ Marzano 2007, 3-4.

Cato's contemporaries were indeed losing touch with the concept of simple farm life, and developing the *villa*, originally a farm, into something new and more ostentatious.

A century later Varro in *De re rustica* (published in 37 BCE, when Varro was 81 years old) was more concerned about what a villa really was. In Book III a fictionalised and evidently politically charged debate on the nature of the villa between prominent Romans, such as Quintus Axius, Appius Claudius, and Varro himself, takes place in the Villa publica; it is set in 50 BCE, immediately after the last aedilian election and before Caesar crossed the Rubicon.¹⁵⁸ Sirago argued that Varro in this dialogue idealised *villae* as simple farms (like Cato) here as a means to use farming to advocate for land redistribution in the context of Caesarian and Augustan programmes.¹⁵⁹ However, Varro, unlike Cato, recognised that country abodes regarded as *villae* could also be more luxurious: some villas (the contemporary *villae*), his discussants expound, are ornate, decorated with “citrus wood or gold, or vermilion or azure”, and others (the ancestral *villae*) are simpler—and, crucially, better for Varro—but they are still engaged in cultivation, animal husbandry and/or other agricultural practices, such as fish- and bee-keeping (known as *villaticae pastiones*).¹⁶⁰ Therefore, while in Cato we encounter the meaning of *villa* only as a farm, even if he was consciously omitting discussion of more ostentatious villas, in Varro's text *villae* could take different forms, as farms or as more luxurious country houses, and indeed other non-agricultural manifestations, like the Villa publica, or "House of the People". Varro himself owned a lavish rural villa at Casinum, equipped with an elaborate birdhouse, or *ornithon*, built for his pleasure, but which could also have served to awe his visitors (Figure 13).¹⁶¹ It is the

¹⁵⁸ Varro, *De re rustica*, 3.2.

¹⁵⁹ Sirago 1995. For another reading of the idealisation of farming in Varro's Book III see Green 1997, 431-432, 447.

¹⁶⁰ Varro, *De re rustica*, 3.2.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 3.4; 3.5.

interpretation of a villa as a country house that had both luxurious spaces *and* productive facilities that has been most widely accepted by modern investigators as a villa—that I too follow in this thesis—and which can be found reflected in the archaeology.

Archaeologically, villas can on the one hand be identified by the presence of spaces associated with elaborate social practices, such as facilities for luxurious communal bathing, which were also recreational and became widely adopted by aristocrats in the Roman period.¹⁶² Baths with series of rooms dedicated to cold, warm, and/or hot bathing, often including pools and hypocausts for the heating of floors and walls, were a vital part of life.¹⁶³ They were almost always found incorporated in the *pars urbana* of a villa in central Italy.¹⁶⁴ Landscape architecture, like porticoes that opened outwards and let in the natural environment, was also developed in villas, as exemplified by the expansive portico of the front garden of the "Villa of Poppae" (Torre Annunziata) near the Bay of Naples.¹⁶⁵ Beyond serving to impress, such architecture indicates an appreciation for and enjoyment of natural elements like the sun, which is also found in literature like the *Epistulae* of Pliny the Younger, who wrote that in his Tuscan residence the sun was invited into his villa's portico that was correspondingly long and broad to allow for this to happen.¹⁶⁶ Sophisticated outdoor areas together with carefully designed interior spaces functioned as magnificent stages to entertain visitors, for instance in indoor and outdoor dining rooms, during which upper echelons of society interacted and could form

¹⁶² Rothe 2018, 45-46, 54.

¹⁶³ On the significance of baths, in the context of water culture, in the Roman world, see Rogers 2018, and on the architecture and technology of Roman baths, specifically public ones in central Italy, the recent doctoral thesis of Beaufay (2020).

¹⁶⁴ Marzano 2007, 43.

¹⁶⁵ Zarmakoupi 2018.

¹⁶⁶ Pliny the Younger, *Epistulae*, 5.6.15: *Magna sui parte meridiem spectat aestivumque solem ab hora sexta, hibernum aliquanto maturius quasi invitat, in porticum latam et pro modo longam*. Pliny also discussed the gentle breeze that blew into the portico from the Appenines, and (in 2.17) the views he enjoyed from the pool of his villa's bathing suite. I thank Konogan Beaufay for the latter reference and his useful advice on defining the villa more broadly.

political and business allegiances, something that also happened in baths.¹⁶⁷ Villa architecture became increasingly elaborate, with grander bathing complexes, lounges and dining rooms being constructed, reflecting the need to make bigger statements as wealth was accumulated by members of the elite of the Roman Empire, and as the stakes grew higher.

Villas were also economic units and archaeologically they are, on the other hand, identifiable by facilities dedicated to the efficient processing of resources, like grapes or olives turned into wine or oil in oileries and wineries.¹⁶⁸ Specialisation on cash-crops like these could have maximised the returns of large landowners, for example, because these products were in high demand or because they had higher commercial value.¹⁶⁹ However, a variety of resources were often exploited, as Marzano's work focused on central Italy has shown, from sulphur mining to fish farming, and production depended entirely on identifying profitable resources available in an estate.¹⁷⁰ Another lucrative resource was clay pits (*figlinae*), which were mentioned by Varro to produce tiles or bricks, and that could also be leased to private entrepreneurs.¹⁷¹ The ambition of landowners to fully exploit the resources of their land not simply to sustain their household, but to sell commodities in regional markets or export them have been taken as defining characteristics of the villa as a producer.¹⁷² This method of production required a knowledge of the market, the needs and demands of consumers, and economic planning, which has been linked with members of the elite of the Roman Empire and

¹⁶⁷ Zarmakoupi 2018, 91..

¹⁶⁸ Fentress 2013, 167; Witcher 2016, 8–9. See Marzano 2007, chapter 4 for a discussion of the archaeology of production installations associated with villas in central Italy, and examples in her Catalogue.

¹⁶⁹ Purcell 1995 on Roman elite interest in maximising returns.

¹⁷⁰ Marzano 2015a.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 193–194; Varro, *De re rustica*, 1.2.22–23.

¹⁷² Marzano 2007, 7–9, wherein the reader will find a thorough economic characterisation of villas, which I agree with, reliant on the beliefs that a market economy operated during the Roman period, that the mentality of aristocrats was to a degree profit-oriented.

with their villas.¹⁷³ It is, however, debatable whether we might not find similar economic, as well as social practices, connected to other forms of rural settlement beyond the villa, and associated with attitudes towards agriculture of some aristocrats in Classical and Hellenistic times.

Unlike the ample literature on elite attitudes towards agriculture and rural residences provided by Roman authors, comparably few literary works survive on this topic written in Greek, some of which discuss agriculture but rarely rural residences specifically. While Varro mentions more than fifty authors who wrote works in Greek that treated agriculture, most of these works have in fact been lost.¹⁷⁴ A major exception is the *Oikonomikos* by Xenophon (first half of the 4th century BCE), which is not focused on agriculture but discusses it extensively from the broader perspective of estate management, as well as the botanical works by Theophrastos (second half of the 4th and early 3rd centuries BCE); both these texts have been understood as philosophical treatises, but they can offer valuable glimpses on perspectives towards agriculture before the Roman period.¹⁷⁵ For instance, Theophrastos thoroughly details tree planting, and in Book III of *On the Causes of Plants* for this purpose considers the use of various soils, climates, and cultivation methods, recalling similar practical considerations discussed by Cato, Varro and Columella within their agronomic works.¹⁷⁶ The *Oikonomikos* by Xenophon takes the form of a Socratic dialogue, which opens on the significance of wealth or property (chapters 1-6), and is followed by the main text (chapters 7-21) on the central topic of

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*; Bowman and Wilson 2013a, 6.

¹⁷⁴ Varro, *De re rustica*, 2.7-9. For a discussion on the written sources related to agriculture mainly in Classical as well as in Hellenistic times in Greece see Foxhall 2007, 26-35.

¹⁷⁵ Xenophon, *Oikonomikos*; Theophrastos, *Enquiry into Plants* and *On the Causes of Plants*. Another major source on pre-Roman farming is Hesiod's *Works and Days* (ca. 700 BCE), but it is not discussed here because it pertains to the Archaic periods, being far removed from the time period explored in this thesis, while as a poem it is a very different piece of work to the treatises I discuss.

¹⁷⁶ *On the Causes of Plants*; e.g. considerations on planting olives in Cato's *De agri cultura*, 61.

household or estate management (οἰκονομία), including housekeeping, management of slaves, and most importantly husbandry of crops as well as animals. The topic is presented by Socrates who relates the discussions he had with Ischomachus—καλὸς τε καὶ ἀγαθὸς ἀνὴρ—an Athenian gentleman, and a farmer.¹⁷⁷ What is remarkable is that the frame created by Xenophon in his exposition of farming, which arguably reflected not only his view but also that of some of his contemporaries, strikes many chords with the agronomic treatises of Cato and Varro. In the *Oikonomikos* agriculture (γεωργία) is for instance regarded as the noblest pursuit: “because it seems to turn out the best citizens or most loyal to the community” (who are contrasted with craftspeople as more willing to defend their land).¹⁷⁸ Similarly, in Cato’s Preface the “good husbandman, good farmer” (bonum agricolam bonumque colonum) is praised as the worthiest sort of man and citizen, and the bravest soldier.¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, both Xenophon’s Ischomachus and Varro present their topics supposedly to educate their wives, underlining another common feature of a perceived superiority over women (or ancient mansplaining).¹⁸⁰ The reason that Ischomachus is concerned with teaching estate management (οἰκονομία) to his wife seems to be, as Socrates narrates, because estate management was the ideal means by which to increase one’s estate.¹⁸¹ Consequently, attitudes are more alike in Xenophon, Cato and Varro than one might at first expect, including outlooks on agriculture as a means to increase wealth, also with a view to optimise agricultural productivity through practical considerations, seen in Theophrastus.

¹⁷⁷ *Oikonomikos*, 6.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ Cato, *De agri cultura*, Preface.

¹⁸⁰ Xenophon, *Oikonomikos*, 7; Varro, *De re rustica*, 1.

¹⁸¹ *Oikonomikos*, 6.4-9.

Modern perspectives on ancient attitudes towards land property and the size of estates before the Roman Empire differ. One perspective in relation to Greek *polis* societies is that of the middling citizen-farmer, most recently developed by Ian Morris, who argued that members of the Athenian citizen body were neither very poor nor very rich, but belonged to “a community of *metrioi*, content with little money”.¹⁸² According to him, land was equally distributed amongst citizens (though in fact these citizens consisted exclusively of aristocrats), and estates were small.¹⁸³ Contrary to his view, Robin Osborne and Foxhall, using archaeological and other written evidence for property sizes such as Demosthenes’ and others’ judicial speeches and inscriptions on the Attic *stelae* (recording property confiscated from Alkibiades and other individuals accused of profane behaviour during the Eleusinian Mysteries in 415/4 BCE), showed that estates could be substantial in size, involving agricultural and other economic activities;¹⁸⁴ and they argued that land was therefore centralised in the hands of a few members of the elite, in a more socially stratified Athenian society.¹⁸⁵ For instance, Andokides owned land in Attica and in Cyprus, merchant ships and a large Athenian townhouse, amongst other property.¹⁸⁶ Others also owned land abroad and country houses, like Adeimantos son of Leukolophides, who also had a vineyard in his land in Thasos and a house (ἀγρὸς [ἐν] Θάσῳ ἐν Ἴ—καὶ οἰκ[ία]), with ca. 590 *amphorae* containing approx. 5,098 L of wine (as well as a probable treading floor—λενός).¹⁸⁷ These were clearly rich men. Inscribed leases of land property from Attica, Delos and Mylasa in Asia Minor, accumulated by Sarah Morris and John

¹⁸² Morris 2000, 113. See also Foxhall 2007, 26-35 for a discussion of the modern ideology on the middling farmer, and opposing views.

¹⁸³ Morris 2000, 140. See also Morris 1994; 1996.

¹⁸⁴ Foxhall 2007, chapter 1; e.g. the property of the speaker in Demosthenes 47; example of the property of Adeimantos in the Attic *stelae*: *IG* I³ 422, *IG* I³ 426, *IG* I³ 430. For the Attic *stelae* see also Pritchett 1953.

¹⁸⁵ Osborne 1992; Foxhall 1992.

¹⁸⁶ Andokides 1.

¹⁸⁷ *IG* I³ 426, lines 43-61, and frg. l.col. II.142b, lines 143-150.

Papadopoulos, also provide detailed evidence for country houses, specifically with towers.¹⁸⁸ This evidence is corroborated by some literature, for instance, the speaker in Demosthenes 47, who owned a farmhouse with a tower, in addition to a flock of 50 sheep with a slave shepherd, equipment, domestic slaves, and possibly more agricultural land and a house in Piraeus. Contrary to this evidence for large agricultural estates, the tendency in texts like Demosthenes is for speakers to underplay the size of their own property, which may reflect the importance in the democracy of Athens during the Classical period to appear to be equal.¹⁸⁹ But as Foxhall has suggested, other written as well as archaeological evidence indicates that Athenian aristocrats could own extensive estates, town and country houses, with examples found archaeologically.¹⁹⁰

Excavations of country houses indicated that larger land estates became widespread in the later 5th and 4th centuries BCE, such as the excavation of the Dema House in the Attic countryside (dating from the later 5th century), which was at least seasonally if not permanently inhabited by members of the elite, as indicated by its material culture (e.g. finewares, many with figured decoration, marble and terracotta loutres and a bath).¹⁹¹ In the Hellenistic period farms often also had fortifications, one of whose functions was to defend stored produce.¹⁹² Fortified farms (dubbed by some “proto-villas”) have in recent scholarship on agriculture in the Classical and Hellenistic periods formed a distinct rural site type, encountered in significant numbers in different regions, like the Argolid, Macedonia, the Aegean islands, as well as North Africa and

¹⁸⁸ Morris and Papadopoulos 2005, 166-167. Towers (πύργοι) mentioned as part of leases in Attica: *SEG* 12.100, 74-5; 367/6 B.C.; Delos *IDelos* 287, 154, 165: 250 B.C.; *IDelos* 1417, 92, 155 B.C. (re-paired); Mylasa: Robert 1945, nos. 51a, 11; Blümel 1987, I: no. 223; 2: nos. 814, 815. See also Blomley 2018, n. 261.

¹⁸⁹ Foxhall 2007, 32-35, 54.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ Johns et al. 1962, 85; Foxhall 2004, 255, 261-3, 266.

¹⁹² Morris and Papadopoulos 2005, 162.

Sicily.¹⁹³ However, it is important to recognise, as Blomley highlighted in her thesis centred on rural fortifications in the Argolid, the diversity of sites that might be described by the term.¹⁹⁴ Blomley identified a variety of fortified settlements, meaning sites surrounded by defensive walls with evidence for habitation, including freestanding towers and tower houses (resembling the plan of Greek houses, like the *pastas* house), that were definitely engaged in agriculture—amongst other possible activities.¹⁹⁵ She also connected different fortified settlements to members of the elite, calculating that even simpler fortified farms, with a mudbrick superstructure on a stone base, like Pyrgouli, would have required ca. 2650 *drachmai* to be constructed, a figure that is speculative but close to the cost of an average town house in Athens or Olynthus.¹⁹⁶ And she emphasised that ancient rural fortifications were multi-functional.¹⁹⁷ So while it is true that different forms of fortified farms were a notable feature of the countryside of different regions before and during the Roman Empire, with examples found in Epirus (e.g. the structure at Malathrea, Figures 11-12), to state that a “tower is now recognized as part of a Greek farm, rather than a fort”, is to dismiss their other possible functions and grossly oversimplify rural fortifications.¹⁹⁸ Furthermore, we have to be cautious not to straightforwardly connect all fortified farms to the richest members of society, as even if most may have been owned or linked to the elite, fortifications could also have been constructed communally in some cases. For instance, analysis of the finds of the Vari house (with a tower built of mudbrick on a

¹⁹³ Foxhall 2007, 33-35; Morris and Papadopoulos 2005; Marzano and Métraux 2018b, 18. E.g. in the Argolid see the synthetic doctoral thesis of Blomley 2018. For examples elsewhere, e.g. in Macedonia, the examples of Platania and Komboloi (Margaritis 2016, 190–198); on Aegean islands, the Agia Triadha tower complex on Amorgos (Marangou 2009), and numerous examples on Astypalaia (that I have personally observed); in North Africa and Sicily, on the island of Jerba, dubbed “fortified courtyard villas” (Fentress 2001; 2013), although it is debatable whether these examples are comparable to those in Greece.

¹⁹⁴ Blomley 2018.

¹⁹⁵ Blomley 2018, chapter 7, part 2, 210.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 211-214.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 221-222.

¹⁹⁸ Morris and Papadopoulos 2005, 162.

stone base) in Attica (e.g. a small percentage of fineware cups and other fineware shapes compared to other country houses, only two sherds of figured pots), whose ceramic signature more closely resembled that of a simple farm, indicated this rural house could have belonged to individuals from a different socio-economic background.¹⁹⁹ Equally, wealthy farms existed in the Classical and Hellenistic periods that did not necessarily have defensive walls or towers, like the Dema House.²⁰⁰

Fortified farms have often produced evidence for agricultural equipment, like olive mills or presses and grain mills—equipment requiring significant investment—that can be read as indicative of surplus, market-oriented agricultural production (another possibility is that this equipment could in some cases have been communally owned, and the cost shared by different people).²⁰¹ Some fortified farms also had elite living quarters, such as the tower house at Agia Triadha, which had a small bath with a latrine, indicated by a drain, and possibly a private house shrine, suggested by a statuette (of Artemis?).²⁰² Tower houses sometimes had layouts resembling those of urban houses; for example, the Vari house in Attica was similar to a *pastas* house (or a house with a single colonnade or portico—also known as *pastas*—that mediated entry to different rooms from a courtyard), although one of the rooms of the Vari house had additional storeys forming a tower.²⁰³ Other fortified farms were equipped with extensive subterranean cisterns or storage rooms (e.g. at Agia Triadha; the Nekromanteion), suggesting either their defensive functions, with substantial water reserves making them capable of

¹⁹⁹ Foxhall 2004, 262-267.

²⁰⁰ Jones et al. 1962; Foxhall 2004, 266.

²⁰¹ E.g. olive mills or presses were found at 19 rural fortifications in the Argolid, with both present at the site at Petrothalassa, Kypraiou (Blomley 2018, 203-207); the multi-functional site at the Nekromanteion in Epirus, produced over five hopper-rubber and at least two segmented mills (Peacock 2014, 162).

²⁰² Maragkou 2009.

²⁰³ Jones et al. 1973, pl. 81c; Nevett 1999, 69; 2007, 6.

surviving a siege, or that considerable quantities of goods were produced or stored there.²⁰⁴ How much did fortified farms produce? Some might have produced surplus for regional markets, as suggested by estimated press yields in the Argolid, to be consumed on a local level.²⁰⁵ Others might have been engaged in activities like wine-making for export on a wider level, as Morris and Papadopoulos argued for fortified farms in Lefkada (e.g. the Poros farm) and in Thasos.²⁰⁶ Consequently, fortified farms fit Launaro's definition of a villa as a site intended both for "social display" and "agricultural entrepreneurship", as opposed to a villa being a rural settlement having only one or the other of these two functions.²⁰⁷ If fortified farms similarly were elite rural settlements engaged in commercial agriculture amongst other economic activities, it is not possible to differentiate them from villas using definitions like Launaro's and Marzano's, which are primarily concerned with defining the villa in contrast to other, mainly simpler forms of rural settlement and predominantly in central Italy. Such definitions are less useful when comparing different forms of elite rural settlement in other regions of the Roman world (though it is also important to remember that some rural sites originally understood as connected to the elite might have been connected to aristocrats and others can turn out not to be).

In this thesis I define villas not only by the combination of elite living spaces with market-oriented agricultural production; I also define them more specifically by evidence for luxurious and elaborate spaces indicative of social practices adopted widely by members of the elite of the Roman Empire, namely sumptuous communal baths, landscape architecture, and extravagant interior spaces with mosaics and wall-paintings, also used in staged dining. In general, fortified farms in the Classical and Hellenistic periods did not have extensive bath

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*; Baatz 1999, 153.

²⁰⁵ Blomley 2018, 206-210.

²⁰⁶ Morris and Papadopoulos 2005, 175-180; Morris 2001, 341-342.

²⁰⁷ Launaro 2015, 185.

suites, landscape architecture, or ornate indoor spaces anything like those frequently found in villas, although it is of course possible that such spaces may have been constructed within them during Roman times. My definition of the villa thus focuses on elements of culture and social practices that became widespread during the Roman period, found for example in villas like Grand Lou (La Roquebrussanne, modern-day France), and in parts of my investigation I explore the extent to which they were adopted in different forms of rural settlement in Epirus.²⁰⁸ In the Conclusion of the thesis I return to the question of differences and similarities between villas and fortified farms as a means of understanding diversity and change in agricultural practices. Doing so requires also developing a reliable chronology of rural settlement in Epirus.

Developing a relative chronology: a multi-pronged approach

Rural sites in Epirus have been investigated using different methods. Less than a handful have been systematically excavated and published, namely Agios Donatos in Thesprotia (close to modern-day Paramythia), Diaporit and the Vrina plain "villa" near the so-called Lake Butrint, and Matomara slightly to the north (Figure 14).²⁰⁹ Most rural sites (e.g. Malathrea, Strongyli) were unearthed in rescue work, or in the case of the Nekromanteion as part of the work of the Archaeological Society of Athens, on whose behalf Dakaris directed systematic excavations, but the finds have not yet been systematically published (Figure 14).²¹⁰ Excavators in salvage archaeology paid good attention to stratigraphy, but because of the time constraints and financial pressures of rescue work, they could not always associate layers with a site's construction,

²⁰⁸ Grand Lou: Brun and Congès 1981.

²⁰⁹ Bowden and Përzhita 2014; Gilkes et al. 2020; Forsén 2019b; Bogdani 2012a.

²¹⁰ Condi 1984a; Ntouzougli 1998; Dakaris 1963.



Figure 14. Map of main rural sites discussed in the thesis, systematically excavated (the five rhombi) and excavated in salvage projects (the circles). They are primarily located (from south to north) around the Ambracian Gulf, in the Kokytois valley near modern-day Paramythia, in the Ioannina basin, and in coastal Chaonia (Map made by Hallvard Indgjerd, adapting base map of the © European Union, Copernicus Land Monitoring Service 2022, European Environment Agency (EEA))

different usage or destruction phases, since finds could not be thoroughly studied and related to the stratigraphy. Modern interference also disrupted site sequences (e.g. near Nikopolis, Vaggeli plot and Analipsis B).²¹¹ As a result of these factors, excavators had assigned broad, provisional date ranges that corresponded to the chronological range of the material taken into account (e.g. some diagnostic finds, aspects of the architecture or decoration), but not to the actual chronology of a site.²¹² These provisional date ranges combined with more reliable evidence from the few systematically excavated sites had formed the basis for the chronology of sites that had been interpreted as villas. This chronology before my work for supposed villa sites that is shown in Figure 15 ranged mainly from the 1st century BCE or the 1st century CE to the 3rd or 4th centuries CE, though some “ville fortificate” were constructed even earlier.²¹³ Yet, not all of the material seemed to me to fit neatly into these timelines, which also appeared to have been influenced by the dominant narrative I have already described for the early Roman spread of the villa to Epirus (e.g. the arrival of the *Synepirotae* and colonisation). For instance, the phases of four sites described as villas definitely began in the 2nd century CE and for another two in the 3rd century CE (Figure 15), while mosaics from numerous sites appeared to be Late Antique (e.g. from Strongyli, Figure 17).²¹⁴ It became clear that I would first need to clarify the chronologies of rural sites to subsequently make the archaeology and the texts speak to each other.

My approach has combined widespread and very useful evidence from rescue archaeology, representative of the broader landscape, with targeted study of sites that could

²¹¹ Andreou 1987, 318; Riginos 2012, 355.

²¹² See for example site entries in Konstantaki 2018, 29–34.

²¹³ “Ville fortificate”, which correspond to some rural fortified settlements, like that at Çuka e Aitoit, Malathrea, Çuka, Dober, Metoq, and possibly Matomara, were loosely interpreted as villas in Hellenistic times (when they were first constructed before the mid-2nd century BCE), and more definitively as villas in the Roman period (e.g. Giorgi 2012b, 407–412; Çondi 1984a for Malathrea). I discuss their Hellenistic and Roman states extensively in chapters 3 and 5.

²¹⁴ Kyrkou 2020, 65, 153–156.

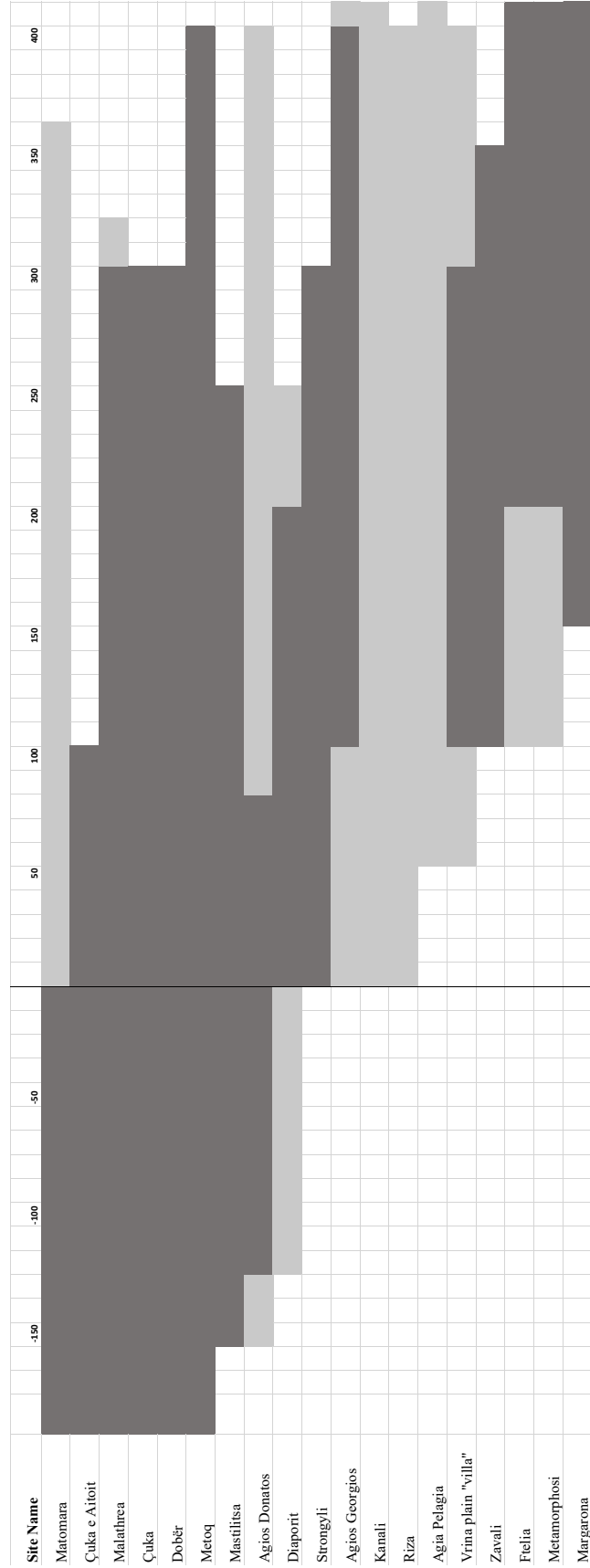


Figure 15. Chronology for supposed villa sites.
 Light grey corresponds to possible occupation and dark grey to definite occupation, suggested before the work undertaken for this thesis.

provide more detailed, stratified evidence, in order to build a new relative chronology for the development of rural settlement in Epirus during the Roman period. Some of the sites on which I focused had already been thoroughly excavated, published and investigated, and they had reliable chronologies that I could use, such as the site at Agios Donatos, whose ceramics had been explored in association with their contexts by Paul Reynolds and others, or the site at Episkopi, whose destruction deposit had been studied by Pliakou and Pascual Berlanga (thus making it possible to establish the date after which the site was abandoned).²¹⁵ For other sites that had been excavated by archaeologists working for Ephorates of Antiquities in Arta, Preveza, Thesprotia, and Ioannina but whose finds were not yet thoroughly studied, I investigated with their permissions archaeological evidence, namely pottery, to create either full or partial chronologies—depending on the availability of the evidence—which I related to the stratigraphy that I reconstructed using archival material. Between October 2018–October 2019 and in September 2020, I visited rural sites, museums, their archives and storage rooms in Epirus, first conducting archival research, studying unpublished excavation reports, journals, excavation photographs, and site plans, which helped me to distinguish layers, and second studying ceramics and other finds, to clarify the development of sites over time. Since no definite chronology existed for any of the proposed villa sites around the Ambracian Gulf, I investigated in closer detail the journals and pottery from Strongyli (whose remains had been excavated and meticulously recorded by Angelika Ntouzougli in 1992–1994, and by Vassiliki Giannaki in 2000), identifying foundation layers in its oil press room, as well as occupation and destruction layers in the main villa residence, which allowed me to build a chronological sequence.²¹⁶ I also investigated material in the fills of collecting vats associated with farms in

²¹⁵ Reynolds and Ikäheimo 2019; Pliakou and Pascual Berlanga 2019.

²¹⁶ See chapter 5. Ntouzougli 1998; Giannaki 2017.

the immediate hinterland of Nikopolis (e.g. Analipsis B; Tarana A);²¹⁷ depending on the part of the fill that the material came from, finds could be used to establish periods when the vats were in use or their closing dates. Finally, for some important sites such as some of the rural fortified settlements in the region of coastal Chaonia I changed my approach. Because since the finds from the excavations of these sites had been only partially published and they had not been specifically related to the stratigraphy (except at Matomara), it would not have been possible to distinguish absolute phases (beyond phases that their excavators broadly described as “Hellenistic” or “Roman”).²¹⁸ I investigated their finds like survey pottery, for instance, identifying and dating material from the site at Malathrea (focusing on it because the finds from this site have been published in greater detail) that I compared to examples explored by others from similar sites, like that at Çuka e Aitoit, in order to distinguish periods in which the evidence concentrated, thus highlighting times when these sites were used or saw heightened activity;²¹⁹ additionally, I used select finds (especially ceramic) to establish *termini post quos* and *termini ante quos* that could refine, for example, when so-called “Hellenistic” phases ended or “Roman” ones began.²²⁰ For these fortified settlements that are explored in chapters 3 and 5, and for villas in the area of the Ambracian Gulf explored in chapter 6 (with the exception of that at Strongyli), it was consequently not possible to produce definite full site chronologies, but it was possible for me to highlight periods when these sites flourished, producing a clearer chronology for the development of rural settlement. My revised chronology for villas in Epirus is presented in

²¹⁷ Some material from these sites and their vats had already been partially studied by Riginos and Sakkas (2018a, 711–713, 716–718). Useful was also the meticulous pottery work of Katsadima, Faklari and Pascual Berlanga on the fill of a vat from the site at Sellades presented during their paper entitled “Σελλάδες: υστερορωμαϊκή κεραμική από μία αγροτική θέση στην περιφέρεια του Αμβρακικού κόλπου” at the *DERE* workshop II 2019b. See also Faklari and Niarou 2013, 483–484).

²¹⁸ Çondi 1984a.

²¹⁹ On finds from Matomara: Aleotti 2012; and from Çuka e Aitoit: Islami 2020.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

Figure 16, and contrary to the chronology before my work shown in Figure 15, it indicates that the acme of villas was perhaps as early as the 2nd century CE in some cases, but predominantly in the 3rd and first half of the 4th centuries CE—not in the early Roman period. It is possible that my intensive work on Strongyli in the area of the Ambracian Gulf and focus on Malathrea in coastal Chaonia, led me to highlight more strongly evidence from other sites that was contemporary to phases I identified from these sites. Other periods might have existed when other sites, whose individual finds I did not have the opportunity to study, for example like the fortified settlements at Çuka or Metoq, were in use, or even flourished, and it will be interesting to compare studies of their finds with my results. Irrespective of this, I am confident that my work has highlighted real periods of acme for certain sites, like villas, which are significant because they had not been identified in previous research, and because they do not easily sit in preconceived narratives based mainly on the ancient literary sources, highlighting the need to revise those narratives.

Since it would not have been possible to undertake this work across the entirety of Epirus, I focused on micro-regions with a high density of evidence, specifically the area around the Ambracian Gulf, the Kokytos valley in Thesprotia, the Ioannina basin, and the coastal plains of Chaonia (Figure 14). I used my studies on these micro-regions to work towards the larger picture, also drawing on relevant evidence discovered in other areas. This approach has made the thesis less vulnerable to gaps in the record in less-studied regions. The sites that are shown in Figure 14 are those that I used to conduct my study on the Epirote agricultural economy during the Roman period, and which are included in the Site Catalogue in Volume Two. The reader is encouraged to turn to site entries (referred in-text to by their number, e.g. no. 1) for

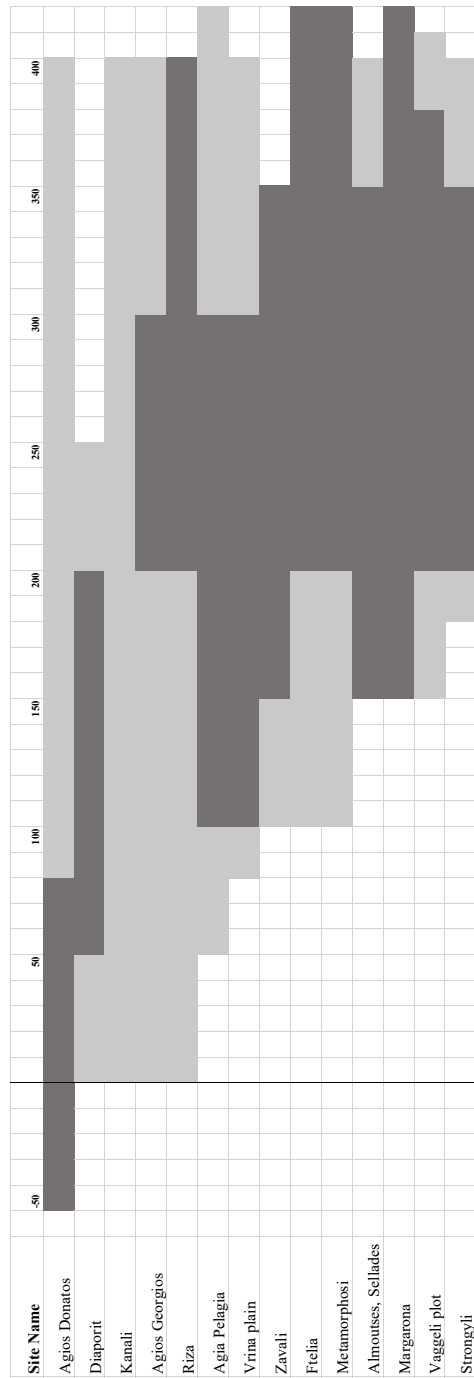


Figure 16. My chronology for villas in Epirus.
 Light grey corresponds to possible occupation and dark grey to definite occupation.

information on how different sites have been investigated and excavated, and for an account of the finds from each site used to construct the chronologies discussed in the thesis.

Working with pottery in an area of Greece during Roman times presented some interesting challenges that it would be productive for future research to point out. One has to do with our limited understanding of the transition from what are generally categorised as "Hellenistic" to "Roman" ceramics.²²¹ Ceramic shapes and some decorations that were popular in the second half of the 4th, 3rd and first half of the 2nd centuries BCE when they were produced in towns in Epirus, for example relief bowls or *skyphoi* made in Kassope, continued to be produced;²²² in the second half of the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE they were made in local workshops not only at Kassope (e.g. relief bowls decorated with lotus leaves), but also at Gitana (e.g. relief bowls with long leaves coming to a point alternating with acanthus leaves), Phoinike, and possibly elsewhere that maintained their activity.²²³ In fact, local workshops of potters that had been active in Epirote towns more broadly continue to manufacture pots in the second half of the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE, also at Ambrakia, while at Phoinike this activity definitely lasted into the early 1st century CE.²²⁴ In some cases these potters also made vessels that resembled examples fashionably more widely, for instance red-slipped plates or dishes from Kassope, also known as red regional *sigillata*, some of which bore similarities with forms of ESA or Campana A (e.g. plates with vertical rims);²²⁵ indeed their imitation was so successful that these local products were in the past often mistaken for imports.²²⁶ These intricate

²²¹ Rizakis and Touratsoglou (2021, 737–740), discussing this issue for Macedonia.

²²² Gravani 1996 (Kassope), 263–271. See also Gravani 2001

²²³ Gravani 1996, 225, 241–244; 2000, 485–488; Pliakou 2019, 304 (Gitana); Gamberini 2016 (Phoinike), e.g. nos. 466, 467, 480, 481.

²²⁴ Katsadima and Karampa 2014, esp. 73–80 (Ambrakia); Gamberini 2016, 171–173.

²²⁵ Gravani 2004, esp. 586–571; 2009; Reynolds and Ikäheimo 2019, n. 21. See also Gamberini 2016, 98–99, for examples of various different forms of plates produced in the 1st century BCE and early 1st century CE at Phoinike.

²²⁶ Reynolds 2019, 16, 368–370.

developments in local pottery production unfolded as Epirus politically became a part of the Roman Empire, possibly as early as 168/7 BCE and more securely by 146 BCE, when it was annexed as part of the province of Macedonia. Imports of finewares produced by workshops in other regions like Italy, such as grey finewares—though also made at Patras—and Italian *terra sigillata* also do not appear to have rushed in during the 1st century BCE, nor with the foundation of Nikopolis in the Augustan period.²²⁷ In fact, while it has been generally thought that ITS found in Epirus (e.g. the towns at Kassope, Megalo Gardiki) dated to the Augustan period, more detailed studies showed that Italian *terra sigillata* did not reach even well-connected towns like Butrint—or those of other Greek areas for that matter, except perhaps Corinth—until the later Augustan or Tiberian period at the earliest and more definitely around the middle and second half of the 1st century CE.²²⁸ In Epirus it is possible that in some sites ITS was directly imported, like at Agios Donatos, where the quantities (max. 86 vessels) are gargantuan for a rural site—nearing those from the forum of Butrint (105 vessels)—and where close connections to Italy are also indicated in different ways discussed in chapters 3 and 5 (e.g. reproduction of wall-paintings of the Second Pompeian Style).²²⁹ In other cases ITS could have arrived as secondary imports, bought off of merchant vessels that carried ITS and visited Epirote ports to engage primarily in other sorts of trade discussed in chapter 4, for example to procure animals grown in Epirus or other sorts of animal and agricultural products. The importance of the developments observed in the production and consumption of finewares in Epirus is that they show that incorporation into the Empire did not cause a sudden transformation of material culture in the

²²⁷ E.g. Reynolds and Ikäheimo 2019, 323–324 (at Agios Donatos).

²²⁸ Reynolds 2019, 368–369 (Butrint); Slane 2004, 32 (Corinth). See also Reynolds' notes on the early Roman pottery of Dyrrachium in Gutteridge et al. 2003.

²²⁹ Reynolds and Ikäheimo 2019, 328–329.

region. Indeed, as I will later on the pace of change indicated by material markers in the archaeological record was measured especially in the last two centuries BCE.

The intricacies of change in the fineware assemblages of Epirus—and in other spheres of material culture discussed in subsequent chapters—indicate that we have at least two different chronologies to consider, one based on artefacts, which changed slowly as Epirus became part of the Roman Empire, and one that is historical or political based on geopolitical changes, like the conquest of Epirus in 168/7 BCE, its annexation in 146 BCE and its incorporation into the Empire in different administrative ways thereafter. While there has been a conflict in the past between use of these two distinct chronologies, it is possible to take a third route—as I do in this thesis—and recognise that both existed and that they have their own temporality.²³⁰ Yet, it is also confusing to distinguish ceramic forms using terms like “Hellenistic” or “Roman”, which are not easily distinguishable, especially since different pottery workshops in Epirus drew on Italian ones for inspiration. So I aim to avoid using broad, and indeed vague, cultural labels like “Hellenistic” or “Roman”. When I refer to the Roman period in Epirus I mean the second of the two chronologies, that is the period after 168/7 BCE.

What is more, the continuity of pottery production at local towns, which has previously gone unappreciated or was thought to have stopped by the mid-1st century BCE (for instance by Gravani who closely related ceramic to historical developments, like the foundation of Nikopolis after 31 BCE), has bearing on the chronologies of these towns, as does evidence of the pots they produced at rural and other sites.²³¹ Evidence for Italian *terra sigillata*, thin-walled ware, and barbotine pottery at towns like Kassope, and ITS at Megalo Gardiki, also suggests that their habitation extended to the early Imperial period, although the extent of habitation is

²³⁰ I am incredibly grateful to Dominik Maschek for drawing my attention to this.

²³¹ Gravani 2009; 2004.

not known. It is also not uniformly apparent in which cases exactly the ITS that has been found might actually date to Augustan times, or if it might have been later; I discuss this also in relation to pottery from farms around Nikopolis in chapter 5. It is, however, clear that even if we make room for the import from outside Greece of some tableware in the last two centuries BCE (e.g. grey finewares), local or regional finewares appear to have dominated the Epirote market, whose consumers also showed an interest in Italian pots which in some cases were locally imitated and produced.²³²

Another point of note is that dating ceramic forms to the later 2nd *or* to the earlier 1st centuries BCE is exceedingly difficult, partly because very few closed deposits of the later 2nd or earlier 1st centuries BCE have been excavated and studied, so there is a dearth of available sequences to distinguish their ceramic repertoires; partly though it may also be the case that these periods are not so easily distinguishable based on ceramics, because pottery may not have drastically changed during this time.²³³ Serendipitously, leading research has been undertaken precisely on this little-understood period in Epirus by Paul Reynolds, who has worked on deposits dating from the late 2nd century BCE to the 1st century CE like the early deposit from the cellar (ca. 120–80/70 BCE) and the tower of Agios Donatos (as well as on a substantial layer with finds dating from the late 1st century BCE to 30–80/90 CE), and produced meticulous publications.²³⁴ His work has been invaluable for my own, helping to shed light on the chronology of rural developments. Before turning to these developments, however, and in order to contextualise them, first, let us turn to the natural environment.

²³² Reynolds and Ikäheimo 2019, 323–324. On the close relationship between potters at Phoinike and in Theprotia more widely with potters in Italy see Gamberini 2016; Pliakou 2019.

²³³ Forsén and Reynolds 2011, 263–264.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*; Reynolds and Ikäheimo 2019.

Chapter 2. Reconstructing the ancient Epirote environment

“On the coast of Epirus is... the very celebrated Ambracian Gulf, whose inlet, half a mile wide, admits an extensive sheet of water, 37 Roman miles long and 15 Roman miles broad.”²³⁵

Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, Book IV, 4

Translation by Harris Rackham (1942), adapted

According to Pliny the Ambracian Gulf in Roman times measured ~54.76 km from east to west and ~22.20 km from north to south, covering an area that was about one third longer and more than twice the gulf’s width today (when it measures ~35 km east to west and only ~10 km north to south). Was Pliny guessing at the size of a body of water with which he was not entirely familiar, or is it possible that his calculations were not all that wild?

The idea that the ancient environment may not have been the same as our present-day surroundings has gained momentum particularly as we experience environmental changes that seem unprecedented.²³⁶ Reconstructing past landscape changes is useful for understanding how the Epirote geography shifted over the Roman period, because environmental factors conditioned human actions, particularly land-use, and sometimes human actions led to environmental changes. The goal of this chapter is to use modern geological, palynological, climatological, archaeobotanical, and archaeological evidence, alongside ancient written

²³⁵ “in Epiri ora... maximeque nobilitatus Ambracius sinus, D passuum faucibus spatiosum aequor accipiens, longitudinis xxxvii latitudinis xv.”

²³⁶ A paradigmatic, holistic reconstruction of the ancient environment of the Argolid was undertaken by Blomley 2018 for her study of Classical-Hellenistic fortifications, which inspired my own in Epirus.

sources, to work towards an understanding of the Epirote environment and what it could produce from around the 2nd century BCE–4th century CE, while considering longer-term factors affecting its mutations.

Environmental researchers have typically taken *longue durée* approaches, tracing landscape changes over millennia rather than centuries. This makes it difficult to disentangle whether human or environmental factors came first during the seven centuries on which this thesis focuses. Increasingly, however, studies aimed at correlating environmental with human change in antiquity and work with a higher chronological resolution have been completed.²³⁷ Those who study the history of Epirus are particularly lucky in this respect, because its variegated micro-climates and high topographic variability have made areas, like Lake Butrint and Lake Pamvotis in Ioannina, hot-spots for environmental research. This makes it possible for me to use this environmental work to underscore major differences between the contemporary and Roman-period landscapes and describe the forces that might have caused them.²³⁸

2.1 Landscape changes: factors from the centre to the surface of the Earth

An overarching factor determining what ancient Mediterranean landscapes looked like has been relative sea-level change, caused by various factors, including eustatic sea-level rise (due to the melting of the ice), tectonics and sedimentation.²³⁹ Recent research has especially highlighted

²³⁷ E.g. Jing and Rapp 2003; Morellón et al. 2016a .

²³⁸ Lawson et al. 2004, 1620–1622.

²³⁹ Jing and Rapp 2003, 192, with further sources.

the significance of regionally specific factors, like seismicity and tsunamis, in contributing to considerable differences in relative sea-level changes even in areas close to each other.²⁴⁰

Tectonics have played an especially major role in shaping the Epirote geography. Because Epirus is located at the meeting of different plates, e.g. the Adriatic micro-plate and the Eurasian plate, this creates very high seismicity, especially along its western coast, for example, in the environs of Butrint and the Ambracian Gulf.²⁴¹ Taking the Ambracian embayment as a case in point, because of continuous tectonic subsidence since the Pliocene-Pleistocene (contrasting with the uplift affecting the Preveza peninsula), the Ionian Sea flooded the gulf.²⁴² Despite a ceasing or slowing of eustatic sea-level rise from the end of the 5th millennium onwards, relative sea-level continued to climb because of this subsidence (compare Figure 18 and Figure 19).²⁴³ As a result, around the middle of the 3rd millennium the gulf's northern shoreline was 12 km north of its current position, remaining close to it for the Greek and Roman periods—even as river sedimentation began to counteract the infilling from the Ionian, converting areas to the north into a brackish swamp by the 5th century CE (Figures 18-20).²⁴⁴

The geological reconstruction of the gulf's development supports the image that Pliny described, of a far larger Ambracian Gulf during the Roman period, though his measurements may not have been entirely correct. The sea would have reached the foothills of the mountains in the north, the gulf possibly being as broad (if not broader) from north to south than Pliny suggested.²⁴⁵ However, the mountains in the west would have prevented the gulf from stretching

²⁴⁰ Vött 2007, 915.

²⁴¹ Bescoby 2013; Besonen et al. 2003, 161.

²⁴² Jing and Rapp 2003, 161, 192–195.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁵ Jing and Rapp 2003, 192.

more than a few additional kilometres from east to west.²⁴⁶ This has implications for the ancient locations of villas, most of which were not land-locked as they are today, but were *villae maritimae*, like Strongyli, built on a promontory of the island then formed by present-day Mt Mavromvouni (site 16 in Figure 19).

Given the tectonic activity affecting certain Epirote regions, it is worth considering whether earthquakes (and associated tsunamis), might have caused extensive destruction in Roman times.²⁴⁷ Considerable collapse layers dated to Late Antiquity have been attributed to earthquake damage, such as that of the tower at Agios Donatos (Thesprotia) and across buildings in Butrint and in its vicinity (e.g. the Triconch Palace, Vrina Plain suburb, and Diaporit villa).²⁴⁸ Archaeologists have connected these collapse layers to specific events, such as an elusive quake widely-thought to have occurred in 358 CE, whose epicentre Basil Papazachos and Catherine Papazochou noted was Argyrokastro, but Spyros Pavlides and Riccardo Caputo argued in their seismological study might instead have been Butrint, but which I could not trace down to a primary source.²⁴⁹ Another oft-referenced event was an earthquake of 365 CE, possibly centred on Crete but with which evidence in other regions has questionably been linked.²⁵⁰ This earthquake is mentioned by ancient authors who focus on its extensively destructive effects and the generation of a tsunami that was, for instance, described by

²⁴⁶ Katsadima, Faklari and Pascual Berlanga, based on Katsadima's work, argued this, envisioning the sea extending to ancient Ambrakia (in their presentation in the *DERE* workshop II 2019b).

²⁴⁷ On tsunamis: Vött et al. 2007; Vött et al. 2009.

²⁴⁸ Forsén and Suha 2019, 314. Bescoby 2013, 25–28.

²⁴⁹ Papazachos and Papazachou 1997, 181; Pavlides et al. 2001, 314; Pavlides and Caputo 2004, 163; Greenslade 2013, 136. An earthquake dating to 358 CE that affected Asia, Macedonia, and Pontus, especially the city of Nicomedia, was described by Ammianus (17.7.1-8), who emphasises its destructive power, but it is in fact improbable that this was one and the same earthquake in all these different areas, which may instead have experienced different ones occurring around the same time. For a full account of the primary sources connected to this event, which do not refer to Argyrokastro or Butrint as far as I am aware, see Guidoboni et al. 1994, 259.

²⁵⁰ For a full discussion of this event see Guidoboni et al. 1994, 267-274. Also Stiros 2001; 2010, 62 for a contextual discussion of the earthquake of 365 CE, who argues this was actually multiple events.

Ammianus who recounted how the sea retracted, supposedly exposing sea creatures and stranding ships, before it “the growling waters” rushed back;²⁵¹ later authors like Zosimos and Georgios Monachos connected it to Crete (though also with the Peloponnese, Achaia, Boeotia, and Epirus, among others), where at Gortyn collapse evidence from public buildings was linked to it, and it has been assumed that it might also have affected Epirus.²⁵² It is in fact problematic to link collapse layers attributed to earthquake damage with a chronology usually spanning numerous years, decades or longer, with a specific earthquake event whose full extent is not definitively known; it is even more troublesome to use that one event to date a collapse layer. If an earthquake in 365 CE was centred on Crete, for example, it could not according to the recent work of Stathis Stiros, have caused damage farther than 200–500 km from its epicentre (depending on whether it had a short-period or long-period wave).²⁵³ In some cases it also possible that other factors caused structures to crumble, like fires. Therefore, instead of straightforwardly linking possible evidence for earthquake damage with one specific event recounted by ancient authors, it would be less problematic to accept the effects of an earthquake as one possible cause for collapse amongst others. Additionally, recent work of seismologists has shown that certain periods, like the 4th to 6th centuries CE, were marked by high seismicity characterised by the clustering of earthquakes close together.²⁵⁴ In 365 CE it was probably a series of earthquakes that occurred not only in Crete but also affecting Cyprus, Libya, Sicily and probably other places in that year or in the 360s more broadly, as Stiros argued using textual, numismatic and epigraphic evidence referring to earthquakes in the 350s-360s CE.²⁵⁵ He

²⁵¹ Ammianus 26.10.15-19.

²⁵² Zosimos, 4.18.2; Georgios Monachos 560. Di Vita 2021 (on the evidence from Gortyn). Greenslade 2013, 136.

²⁵³ Stiros 2001.

²⁵⁴ Stiros 2001.

²⁵⁵ Stiros 2010, 61-62.

contends that the high frequency of earthquakes probably led ancient authors to regard these as one, universal earthquake event (as described by Hieron: “terrae motu totius orbis”).²⁵⁶ Therefore, instead of linking destruction layers in the Mediterranean possibly datable to the third quarter of the 4th century CE with one event, it is more sensible to connect them, as Wilson and Fentress argued for collapses attributable to earthquakes in Sicily and Tripolitania (dated to the ca. mid-4th century), with one of multiple events that seem to have caused the Mediterranean to tremble around that time.²⁵⁷

Extensive collapse evidence at Butrint seems to date to the mid-later 4th century CE (e.g. late 4th-century CE wall collapse from the Vrina Plain *domus*), some of which might have been caused by earthquakes.²⁵⁸ Notably, an earthquake is thought to have caused the pavement of the forum to tilt $\sim 1.7^\circ$ (the pavement and slits covered by destruction debris, the latest pottery dating to the mid-late 4th century CE), and possibly caused cracks in the theatre.²⁵⁹ In other cases, extensive collapse layers that were later, dating from the mid-5th to the later 6th centuries CE (e.g. from the Triconch Palace and Vrina Plain *domus*—both had been re-occupied—and from Diaporit), overlapping from 480–520 CE, have been linked to earthquakes.²⁶⁰ Recent excavations around a collapsed pier of the aqueduct at Butrint uncovered a layer of clayey silt accumulated around the base of the pier (while it still functioned), which contained late 4th–/early 5th century finds.²⁶¹ The aqueduct hence still operated at that time, and was not put out of use by an earthquake in the mid-late 4th century CE as had been thought, but according to Simon Greenslade it could have toppled by a later earthquake affecting Butrint in the late 5th–/early 6th

²⁵⁶ Hieron. V. Hil. 29.1.

²⁵⁷ Fentress and Wilson 2021.

²⁵⁸ Greenslade and Hodges 2019, 368.

²⁵⁹ Hernandez and Çondi 2008, 289–290; Bescoby 2013, 27; Pavlides and Caputo 2004, 163.

²⁶⁰ Bescoby 2013, 28.

²⁶¹ Greenslade 2019, 146.

century CE.²⁶² At Agios Donatos the tower collapse that was also suggested to have been induced by an earthquake has broadly been dated from the mid-3rd to the early 5th centuries CE.²⁶³ From the Strongyli villa I investigated a thick destruction layer containing rubble and overturned pieces of a mosaic floor, which I argue in chapter 6 had collapsed from an upper storey, based on the similarity of their deposition to a mosaic which had probably subsided from the second storey of House of the Grand Oecus at Utica (Figures 22-24).²⁶⁴ Using pottery (especially ARS dishes) in this layer, I also date this destruction leading to the villa's abandonment to shortly after the mid-4th century CE. Consequently, there is archaeological evidence indicating that the second half of the 4th century CE may have been a period of high seismicity in Epirus, as in other areas. Another period of high seismicity could have been the late 5th-/early 6th centuries CE, possibly contributing to the collapse of structures like the pier of the Butrint aqueduct, although we cannot rule out that in some cases other factors might have contributed to structural collapses. Earthquakes would have caused massive amounts of soil to slip down hillsides and be carried by rivers into the sea.

This brings us to the most significant factor engendering the transformation of the ancient Epirote landscapes: sedimentation. In the Glykis Limen (modern Phanari Bay) at the mouth of the Acheron and Kokytos rivers in Thesprotia, river infill has dramatically diminished the size of the bay during the last 4,000 years (compare Figures 25-28).²⁶⁵ The far larger gulf was located at the mouth of a delta distributary in Roman times (west of Acherousia Lake), which existed at least up to the second half of the 2nd-early 4th centuries CE (based on a

²⁶² *Ibid*; Bescoby 2013, 28.

²⁶³ Forsén and Suha 2019, 301–303; Reynolds and Ikäheimo 2019, 332–335.

²⁶⁴ Fentress and Wilson 2021.

²⁶⁵ Besonen et al. 2003, 216–225.

radiocarbon date of 160–320 CE, Figure 26, especially the bottom shown in the figure).²⁶⁶ It was from this river flowing into it that Glykis Limen (“λιμένα τὸν γλυκὺν”), meaning sweet, received its ancient name.²⁶⁷ Subsequently, the gulf began to silt up and turn to marshlands. The significant effect of alluvial processes in causing Glykis Limen to shrink to its present-day paltry substitute explains how Octavian anchored his fleet (250 ships) there before Actium in 31 BCE.²⁶⁸

Soil has encroached on the sea in numerous areas of littoral Epirus, at the mouth of major rivers, namely, the Arachthos and the Louros emptying into the Ambracian Gulf, the Acheron joined by the Kokytos, and the Kalamas (possibly corresponding to the ancient Thyamis) in modern-day Greece, as well as the Pavllë and Bistricë rivers in modern-day Albania (Figure 2). These rivers carried mountain-loads of sediment and emptied it into gulfs, which were gradually transformed into lagoons, marshes, estuaries and coastal plains.²⁶⁹ The corollary is that Epirus in the Roman period had larger inland gulfs, e.g. the Ambracian Gulf, as well as more numerous, well-sheltered harbours, e.g. Glykis Limen.

While alluvial deposition has transformed ancient coastal areas, the picture is more complicated, with sedimentation rates peaking at different times in different areas, and because of many different factors. For instance, the “Nikopolis isthmus”, a lowland dissecting the Preveza peninsula presently 2.3 km long and 250–1000 m wide, has been gradually elevated in the last 5000 years by ~5–10 m, as soil eroded from its hillsides, causing the shoreline to migrate seawards.²⁷⁰ In the second half of the 2nd millennium BCE the shore had moved to ~1 km inland

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 234.

²⁶⁷ Cassius Dio, 50.12.2.

²⁶⁸ Cassius Dio 50.12.2 (writing in the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE).

²⁶⁹ Jing and Rapp 2003, 191–198; Lane et al. 2020, 39–45.

²⁷⁰ Jing and Rapp 2003, 162, 173.

(compared to the present-day shore), and it was less than 400 m inland from the current shore in the late Medieval period (Figure 29).²⁷¹ In Roman times the current Mazoma lagoon was a well-sheltered harbour and it was closer to Nikopolis, which also had at least one more harbour at Vathy, where similar processes have been underway (diminishing the size of the bay even more since Roman times)—Nikopolis was a veritable port town (Figures 30-31).²⁷² The erosion affecting the “Nikopolis isthmus” was caused by waterways, tectonic movement (like the uplift affecting the peninsula), climatic fluctuations, and, finally, human activity.²⁷³

The retreat of the sea eastwards in the “Nikopolis isthmus” enabled the habitation of the Preveza peninsula. Settlement in the Roman period on either side of it was linked through the laying out of a grid that connected monuments in the extra-urban sanctuary located on the hill to the north, like the stadium (which the Actium victory monument abutted to the east), with the city (Figure 29).²⁷⁴ Nikopolis was “constructed on a virgin site, a *tabula rasa*”, and surveys in the Agios Thomas peninsula showed “little evidence of Classical and Hellenistic settlement,” making it possible that landscape changes facilitated the settlement and extensive cultivation of the area in the Roman period, which contributed to further sedimentation.²⁷⁵

Around Butrint fluvial sedimentation, in addition to landslips caused by earthquakes in the Late Bronze Age, played a significant role in enabling the utilisation of the Vrina plain, as well as parts of Phoinike’s Vurgu plain (Figure 32).²⁷⁶ Following the mass deposition of up to ~17 cm of sediment in ~60 years (or more) around 1515–1450 BCE (with a radiocarbon date of 3470 BP ± 87 years), the Pavllë and Bistricë rivers progressively emptied sediment into the

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 169.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 162–173 (Nikopolis Isthmus, including Mazoma lagoon), 174–177 (Ormos Vathy).

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁴ E.g. Doukellis 1988 (for the centuriation).

²⁷⁵ Bowden 2007a, 135; Wiseman 2001, 56.

²⁷⁶ Morellón et al. 2016a, 146, 149.

embayment, which was originally open to the Ionian Sea, and began to turn into an increasingly inaccessible lagoonal lake (Figure 33).²⁷⁷ In the northern area of the current Vrina plain sediment packed on, based on a stratigraphic sequence of cores, turning marshes into an alluvial floodplain and further narrowing the strait, known today as the Vivari channel (Figure 33).²⁷⁸ This might have enabled the expansion of occupation from the Butrint headland onto the plain by Roman times, as scholars have previously suggested (Figure 34).²⁷⁹ Impetus to reclaim marshland by colonists might have fuelled land-reclamation projects, which could have tapped into the existing watery environment and conveyed it into drainage and irrigation channels.²⁸⁰ However, it is also possible settlement extended across either side of the channel even earlier, perhaps as early as the 2nd century BCE, when the tribe of the *Prasaiboi* inhabiting the countryside of this region were able to (re)found Butrint as their own city.²⁸¹ Yet, as Butrint developed, Phoinike's access to the Ionian through Lake Butrint became more limited. Seagoing vessels would probably not have been able to navigate the Vivari strait past Butrint's harbour after the construction of the road bridge in early Roman times (Figure 34).²⁸² Strabo called the harbour "Pelodes" meaning muddy, possibly suggesting that the transformation of the gulf into a lagoonal environment was by then complete.²⁸³

Human impact on the environment seems to have accelerated sedimentation, though it is not always possible to distinguish human from natural effects. But at Butrint a convincing case connected to land-use in the Roman period has been made. The multi-proxy analysis of a 12 m-long sediment core, aided by seven radiocarbon dates and ¹³⁷Cs dating, has made it

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.* Lane et al. 2020, 45.

²⁷⁸ Lane et al. 2020, 45.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*; Hodges et al. 2016, 282; Hernandez and Hodges 2020, 304.

²⁸⁰ Bescoby 2019.

²⁸¹ Daubner 2019 (on the *Prasaiboi* and their foundation of Butrint).

²⁸² Wilson 2013, 78.

²⁸³ 7.7.7: "Βουθρωτὸν ἐπὶ τῷ στόματι τοῦ Πηλώδους καλουμένου λιμένος".

possible to reconstruct environmental change in the last 4,500 years.²⁸⁴ Soil quantities entering Lake Butrint peaked after the Roman period, with a maximum ca. 550 CE, or a little later (higher Ti/Ca, Figure 35).²⁸⁵ Hodges and Hernandez connected this peak with “intensification and clearances coinciding with the creation of the Vrina Plain suburb outside Butrint and an associated centuriated landscape” after the colony was founded in the early Roman period.²⁸⁶ Deforestation connected to such activities is another possible factor, while climatic factors might also have played an important role.²⁸⁷ A wetter climate was indicated by the decreasing salinity of the water throughout the first millennium CE (lower Ca and Sr, Figure 35); alders (*Alnus*), that thrive in wetlands, also increased.²⁸⁸ A wetter environment could have meant more rain, which in the area of Lake Butrint (that today receives 1,500 mm annual rainfall) would not only have favoured cultivation, but might also have contributed to increasing sedimentation rates around the middle of the millennium.²⁸⁹

Humans contributed to deforestation by exploiting forests for timber, and by clearing land for agriculture or for animal grazing. A palaeoenvironmental analysis of a long core (I-284) from Lake Pamvotis by Ian Lawson and his colleagues highlighted two major deforestations in the last 5,500 years; these would have corresponded to forests in the mountainous Ioannina catchment, presumably the mountains immediately surrounding it, but probably also to the wider Pindos range.²⁹⁰ The second deforestation occurred during the first five centuries CE (section I-284-2 of the core), and was indicated concurrently by increasing soil deposition, shallowing of the lake suggested by increasing quantities of molluscs, and a

²⁸⁴ Morellón et al. 2016a.

²⁸⁵ Morellón et al. 2016a, 149; Hounslow and Chepstow-Lusty 2004.

²⁸⁶ Hodges and Hernandez 2020, 304.

²⁸⁷ Morellón et al. 2016b, 9.

²⁸⁸ Morellón et al. 2016a, 146–147.

²⁸⁹ Vasileiadis et al. 2008, 18.

²⁹⁰ Lawson et al. 2004, 1620; Tzedakis et al. 2002, 2047.

decrease in arboreal pollen (AP, Figure 36).²⁹¹ Cereals, weeds (e.g. *Umbelliferae*, otherwise known as the carrot, celery and parsley family), and species in the olive family (*Oleaceae*) like *Phillyrea* and the olive itself (*Olea*), were also increasingly deposited into the lake during the same time period, pointing to intensified agriculture.²⁹² The evergreen oak (*Quercus*), possibly in the form of trees and/or shrubs, which had grown in pre-Roman times, probably because of an increase in pastoralism—its leaves, “tough, bitter, and prickly” are less willingly consumed, even by goats—did not decline in the Roman period; its presence alongside *Phillyrea* is in fact characteristic of heavily grazed areas.²⁹³ The deciduous oak (*Quercus deciduous*), in contrast, dramatically declined from the 1st to 5th centuries CE, corresponding to pollen finds for it in the section I-284-2 of the core sequence (Figure 37). It is possible this was the result of its exploitation in Roman times. The oak was characteristic of the Epirote environment in the days of Cicero, who wrote to Atticus from Antium in early April 59 BCE about Terentia’s forest that “All I can say is that only the oak of Dodona is lacking to make us feel that we own Epirus itself”.²⁹⁴ A decrease in tree taxa during the first five centuries CE was also recorded in data from Lake Gramoutsis to the north of Ioannina deep in the Pindos mountains, albeit this data being of a chronologically less high resolution than that from Lake Ioannina explored by Lawson and his team.²⁹⁵ Consequently, deforestation of the Pindos in Epirus during the Roman period may well have occurred, more widely than the immediate Ioannina catchment.

The ability of humans to exploit the Epirote landscape depended on their ease of communications, and this was reliant on waterways. Due to the wetter climate in the first

²⁹¹ Lawson et al. 2004, 1616.

²⁹² *Ibid.*

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁴ *Letters to Atticus*, letter 24 (II.4), 5–6.

²⁹⁵ Willis 1992, fig. 6, figure at the top.

millennium CE, indicated by analyses in Lake Butrint pointing to the decreasing salinity of the water also recorded more broadly (e.g. in lakes Ohrid, Dojran, and the Kapsia Cave), waterways that have today disappeared or are only seasonal were probably more active in antiquity.²⁹⁶ At Mavromandilia of Prodrumi (PS 36), for example, in the Kokytos valley, geoarchaeological research showed the flourishing of “an ancient riparian culture” at a nexus of settlement, where a dispersed village community developed from the Early Iron Age to the Hellenistic period, and remained active in Roman times.²⁹⁷ At Butrint three Hellenistic-era rivers existed, which probably flowed unabated during the Roman period.²⁹⁸ Because of wetter conditions, riverine communities would have been far more numerous in Epirus in antiquity, using water in agriculture, crafts, and the transportation of people and agricultural produce, which are briefly explored in the next section and more thoroughly in chapters 3–5.

2.2 Natural resources

Epirus was well-suited to produce a variety of resources, including different grains, (such as cereals and legumes), trees and plants (like the oak, olive, and grapevine), and many other weeds and marine resources. Not all are equally visible in our different records. For example, vines (*Vitis*) are for some reason not easily picked up in studies of pollen precipitation (which is used as an indicator of landscape usage)—in a surface sample taken from a central Italian vineyard, in fact, no *Vitis* pollen was found.²⁹⁹ Carbonised cereals are more visible in pollen and

²⁹⁶ See Morellón et al. 2016a, 146.

²⁹⁷ Lavento and Lahtinen 2009, 85.

²⁹⁸ Hodges and Hernandez 2020, 301.

²⁹⁹ Bottema and Woldring 1990, 267; Atherden et al. 1993, 355.

archaeobotanical analyses, but their cultivation is difficult to trace archaeologically, because some, like oats, required minimal to no processing to be consumed, while wheat was more frequently processed into flour to make bread at places of consumption, rather than production.³⁰⁰ Animal husbandry is particularly evasive except to osteoarchaeologists. My aim in this section is to shed light on ancient and specifically Roman-period land-use in Epirus by synthesising evidence from palynological, archaeobotanical and osteoarchaeological studies as well as from ancient accounts. Much of the archaeology will instead be discussed in subsequent chapters.

Assorted grains were cultivated in antiquity for human consumption, to be used as animal fodder, and even as green manure. Recent research on the diet of the population of Rome has highlighted preference for free-threshing wheats, emmer, einkorn, and barley used to make bread or *puls* (a type of porridge), alongside legumes (e.g. lentils, peas, and fava beans) and fruits (e.g. olives).³⁰¹ A similar variety was reflected in archaeobotanical work conducted at two Epirote farms, where Gkatzogia identified cereals and legumes, stored in *pithoi* in the late Hellenistic/early Roman periods, especially oat, wheat, and barley seeds, fava beans, as well as olive and grape pips (possibly from raisins).³⁰² She also noted lesser quantities of bitter vetch, peas, and Lupini beans.³⁰³ Oats dominated at the farm at Episkopi in the Ioannina basin, whose high annual rainfall (today 1,200 mm, with wetter conditions prevailing in antiquity) would have particularly favoured their cultivation.³⁰⁴ Conversely, at the Nekromanteion (a farm that perhaps doubled as a religious site) fava beans were superabundant—and their cultivation would

³⁰⁰ de Vos 2013, 174.

³⁰¹ O’Connell et al. 2019; De Angelis et al. 2020, 243–244.

³⁰² Gkatzogia 2018, 396–401.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁴ Katsikis 2016, 31.

have fared well in the vicinity of the Roman-period river distributary and Acherousia Lake (Figure 26). In the coastal region of Chaonia in the environs of Butrint and Phoinike, where archaeological and written evidence for the production of grains and other foodstuffs sought-after in the Roman period concentrates, that is discussed in chapters 3–4, the transformation of marshes into the alluvial plains of Vrina and possibly Vurgu would have made the expansion of farming activities possible.

Ancient accounts also evince the production of cereals, as well as legumes, in Epirus. For example, Lycourgos referred to grain—*σίτον* (from *σιτηγέω* cited in the imperfect “ἔσιτήγει”), generally understood as wheat, *πυρός*, or barley, *κριθή*—that Kleopatra, acting regent of Molossia (while her husband Alexander I was away at war), sold to Corinth in the late 330s BCE.³⁰⁵ During the Macedonian and Republican wars, Epirus was frequently used to supply the armies of Roman generals from Titus Quinctius Flaminius (198 BCE) to Caesar (49–48 BCE) because of its fecundity and its location between Italy and Macedonia.³⁰⁶ In 169 BCE Livy relates that Quintus Marcius Philippus wrote in a letter to the Senate that he had bought 20,000 measures (*modii*, a *modius* being a dry measure corresponding roughly to 9 L, thus 180,000 L) of wheat (*triticum*) and 10,000 *modii* (or 90,000 L) of barley (*hordeum*) from Epirotes, and asked the Senate to pay their ambassadors in Rome for it.³⁰⁷ About a century later Caesar wrote that when “all of the grain crops (“frumentis”) far and wide had been consumed,” he fed his soldiers with barley, pulses (“hordeum” and “legumina”), and “herd animals (“pecus”), of which there was a large supply in Epirus, they valued them highly”.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁵ *Against Leocrates* 26.

³⁰⁶ Plutarch, *Lives. Titus Flamininus*, 5.1; Caesar, *Civil War*, 3.16, 3.41–49, especially 3.42, 3.47–49. See also Hernandez 2010, 67–76.

³⁰⁷ Livy *History of Rome*, 44.16.

³⁰⁸ “...consumptis omnibus longe lateque frumentis summis...” (3.47.4). “Non illis hordeum cum daretur, non legumina recusabant. Pecus vero, cuius rei summa erat ex Epiro copia, magno in honore habebant.” (3.47.6).

Epirus was (and still is) prized for its livestock: sheep and goats, pigs, cattle, dogs and horses.³⁰⁹ Their consumption was evidenced through osteoarchaeological studies e.g. in the Kokytos valley and in Kassope, which showed that the diets of meat-eaters consisted primarily of (in order of quantities): ovicaprids, pigs, cattle, and wild game, especially deer.³¹⁰ Animal husbandry would have been practised especially in the regions of Kestrini in coastal Chaonia/Thesprotia, where the local bulls were said to have been exceptionally large, as Aelian later wrote;³¹¹ these areas with extensive plains near river deltas would have been suitable for winter pasturage, for example, in the valleys of the rivers Kokytos and Acheron, Kalamas, and the Pavllë and Bistricë rivers (see Figure 2, Figure 26, Figure 32, Figure 33). Areas inland in Molossia, also praised for its cattle, with upland plains and high-altitude valleys would have provided summer pastures, for instance, near modern-day Metsovo (Figure 38).³¹² Because of its high “vertical fragmentation” the Epirote environment could allow shepherds to cross “between a village at an altitude of 1000m and a small valley at 700m or 1500m...in 2–3 hours on foot”.³¹³ Pastoral communities based in Epirus, however, might have travelled well beyond it, especially if seasonal transhumance was practised in addition to mixed farming and pastoralism—this is primarily a question of scale.³¹⁴

In Varro’s Book II we learn through the illustrious voices of his *Synepirotae* that they had large flocks of sheep, e.g. consisting of 700 sheep (for Cossinius, and others as many as 1,000), and multiple herds of cattle each made up of e.g. 120 (for Atticus and Lucienus) or 100

³⁰⁹ Varro, *De re rustica*, 2.2 (sheep), 2.3 (goats), 2.4 (pigs), 2.5 (cows), 2.7 (horses), 2.9 (dogs).

³¹⁰ Niskanen 2009, 146, fig. 4, 152–153; Deckwirth 2011, 301, 306–307; Forsén 2009, 12; 2011, 21; Boessneck 1986, 136–140.

³¹¹ Aelian, *On the Nature of Animals*, 11.11.

³¹² Dakaris 1976.

³¹³ Papayiannis 2017, 342–344.

³¹⁴ Halstead 1987; 1996.

cows (for the aptly-named Vaccius).³¹⁵ These numbers indicate that large-scale stock breeding (hundreds or thousands of animals) occurred in Epirus in the 1st century BCE, which required peripatetic groups of people, who, as Cossinius noted in Varro, live not on the farm, but “range the trails” (“in callibus versentur”).³¹⁶ Some took to herds in far-off mountain valleys and forests, lived in make-shift huts, and included women in their communities. Their leaders kept written diaries to record treatments for ailments.³¹⁷ Cossinius’ description suggests convincingly that these were mobile communities—not unlike the Aromanians (known colloquially in Greece as the “Vlachs”) or Sarakatsani, who also lived in makeshift huts built near grazing areas, with families operating under herd leaders (“tselinges”).³¹⁸ They travelled the Balkan peninsula, seeking littoral areas for summer pastures and meeting again in the mountains over winter (Figure 39). These groups thrived when borders receded during the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires, and in some form, though enslaved to the *Synepirotae*, perhaps existed also during the Roman Empire.

Animal husbandry and the cultivation of grains have received some attention in past scholarship, but the importance of the olive (*Olea*), introduced in the palynological record of Lake Pamvotis in Roman times (corresponding to the section of the core I-284-2), and the grapevine in the region have been underrated (Figure 37).³¹⁹ The record of the lake probably corresponded most immediately to the Ioannina catchment and possibly to the wider Pindos, since some of its waterways would have brought pollen-rich sediment to the lake. However, this record may also reflect the resources consumed by the area’s inhabitants, who could also have

³¹⁵ Varro, *De re rustica*, 2.5.18, 2.10.11.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.10.1.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.10.6–11.

³¹⁸ Hatzimihali 1957.

³¹⁹ Lawson *et al.* 2004, 1616.

imported some of them, like olives, from other parts of Epirus, like those surrounding the Ambracian Gulf, where the production of olive oil is well-evidenced by archaeological evidence. This evidence includes presses, mills, and numerous collecting vats, which can be used as a proxy to estimate the scale of production, and that are discussed in chapter 6. This is mainly because distinguishing between olive oil and wine production necessitates detailed study of the context of production areas in rural sites. In the catchment area of Butrint olives were also an important crop produced in the Roman period, though their cultivation, like that of various weeds and cultivable herbs, including cereals, had begun in the Classical period, as is suggested by the work of Morellón and his colleagues.³²⁰

Because discussion in this section has focused on evidence from palynological, archaeobotanical, and osteoarchaeological studies, and not on the archaeology that is discussed in the following chapters, I have opted not to produce a map of ancient land-use. The reason for this is that a map based on the evidence investigated here would be highly prone to reflecting biases towards areas where these studies have been conducted, that is primarily where excavations attracted the attention of environmental scientists; or in places that yielded finds that had been preserved because of exceptional depositional circumstances, as by fires that contributed to the survival of seeds at the Nekromanteion and at Episkopi.³²¹ The reader is advised to take this discussion as an indicator of what could be produced in antiquity in different regions of Epirus, such as legumes in the Acheron river plain and grains in the Ioannina plain around Lake Pamvotis, as well as in coastal Chaonia, also of the practice of animal husbandry in the coastal regions of Chaonia and Thesprotia (known as Kestrini in antiquity) as well as in Molossia inland (Figure 2). Olives and vines could have been produced in different areas, but

³²⁰ Morellón et al. 2016b, 10, 12.

³²¹ Gkatzogia 2018, 395.

the cultivation of olives may rarely have occurred above 500 mamsl, since olive trees are not productive at such high altitudes.³²² The discussion in subsequent chapters of the archaeology for production equipment, storage spaces, and other finds, combined with the evidence presented here and that from the accounts of ancient authors, is more indicative of what was produced, rather than what might have been. It is also important to remember that while certain areas might have catered themselves to certain uses of the land, any possible specialisation would have happened in the context of a diversity of agricultural practices.

The investigation into the Epirote environment shows that the ancient landscape was not only richer, but also had a greater capacity to produce than its modern-day counterpart. Epirus' productivity depended first on its agricultural suitability, which was higher in antiquity because more cultivable, well-irrigated land existed and quite possibly because the dissipation of borders during the Roman Empire would have allowed mobile pastoral groups to practice long-range seasonal transhumance. Secondly productivity relied on the ability to get goods out, which was also better in ancient times, when Epirus had larger lakes, more rivers and other waterways, and larger inland gulfs, like the Ambracian Gulf, Glykis Limen, and port facilities, like the Butrint harbour. These facilitated exportation and contact with other areas, like Italy during the Roman period. But as humans exploited the landscape, deforestation, intensive farming and animal husbandry, alongside climatic variability, brought about sedimentation that closed areas off, like the harbour of Butrint, which lost access to the Ionian Sea, and turned into the remote site it is today.

³²² Foxhall 2007, 112.

Chapter 3. Rural forms of settlement in Epirus after 168/7 BCE³²³

Historical developments can be reconstructed from different sources of evidence—literary, epigraphic, archaeological, visual. In the case of Epirus, scholars have often started with the written accounts of Roman authors and attempted to make sense of the archaeology in light of the story told by those authors, especially for the last two centuries BCE.³²⁴ I will attempt another approach in this chapter, beginning with the archaeology of different forms of rural settlement, focusing on certain case-studies and exploring the evidence for the different characters of these sites, their chronologies, and agricultural productions. At the end of the chapter, I will discuss some of the material evidence from the broader countryside and from Epirote urban settlement. In chapter 4 I then combine the archaeology with written evidence to understand how the agricultural economy developed from 168/7 BCE to approximately the mid-1st century BCE, situating the investments of the *Synepirotæ* in their broader context of socio-economic interactions, and setting the stage for the agricultural economies that emerged in the early Imperial period.

3.1 Agios Donatos (Kokytos valley, Thesprotia): an early villa?

The site at Agios Donatos (no. 11) commanded a panoramic view of the Kokytos valley (Figures 40-41). Originally a fortress (ca. 1.1 ha) dating to the Hellenistic period, it was argued by

³²³ The period encompassed in this chapter ranges from after 168/7 BCE to the first half of the 1st century BCE.

³²⁴ As noted by Bowden 2009, 167.



Figure 40. Map of different forms of rural and urban settlement in Epirus after 168/7 BCE, showing sites discussed in chapter 3 (Map made by Hallvard Indgjerd, adapting base map of the © European Union, Copernicus Land Monitoring Service 2022, European Environment Agency (EEA))

Forsén—its principal investigator—that in the Roman period the complex was transformed into a villa (Figure 42).³²⁵ Using finds from the earliest deposits excavated, he proposed that the villa was constructed in the mid- or late 2nd century BCE.³²⁶ While the site indeed appears to have been inhabited at the time, I think to identify it as a villa already in this period might be overly optimistic. The evidence indicative of a villa as I discuss below is predominantly later, such as Second Pompeian style wall-paintings that Agneta Freccero dated approximately to the mid-1st century BCE, based on her study of their execution.³²⁷ Furthermore, much of the rich evidence discussed by Forsén, including bricks with Latin stamps as well large quantities of Italian *terra sigillata*, derived from a dump in the tower dated to the early Imperial period.³²⁸ In this section I do not focus on the early Imperial phase of Agios Donatos, which I investigate in chapter 5, but on material corresponding to the second half of the 2nd and the first half of the 1st centuries BCE to investigate the chronology and the character of the site after the conquest, and to begin to understand its inhabitants. I also explore when it may have turned into a villa.

At some point after the fortress was built in the early 3rd century BCE, new rooms appear to have been erected inside it, such as a small cellar containing an early closed deposit with finds dating from ca. 120 to 80/70 BCE.³²⁹ The cellar room, seemingly like other structures built inside the fortress, was constructed using small, irregularly-shaped stones joined by mortar (Figure 43); this is a different construction method to most buildings erected in Epirus in the Hellenistic period, whose architects built foundations of worked limestone blocks and probably

³²⁵ Forsén 2019a, 18–19.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*

³²⁷ *Ibid.*; Freccero 2019 (on the wall paintings).

³²⁸ Forsén 2019a, 18–19; Reynolds and Ikäheimo 2019, 321–322 (on the ITS); Forsén et al. 2019 (on the stamps, especially 414–415). Exceptionally, one fragmentary stamp could be a later intrusion to one of the earlier deposits.

³²⁹ Forsén and Reynolds 2011, 263.

topped with a mudbrick superstructure.³³⁰ Forsén interpreted this new construction technique as *opus incertum*—a technique for the facing of walls whose interior consisted of cement that was employed in central Italy since the first half of the 2nd century BCE and later—and he suggested that its use indicated the existence of a villa.³³¹ However, the wall at least of the cellar room in fact looks not like a cement wall faced with *opus incertum*, but since rubble is also visible in its interior it might better be described as mortar-and-rubble architecture (Figure 43). It is altogether not convincing evidence to identify the site as a villa at the time. It is of course a possibility that a building technique deriving from Italy was applied for other walls at Agios Donatos—though by no means certain until this evidence is presented—but it is also possible that the combination of rubble and mortar might have been used in Epirus independently of architectural developments in Italy. The question of the architecture of the site does raise an interesting question about the identity its occupants, which can be further explored using other evidence.

The finds of the early closed deposit inside the cellar (Locus 7) do not unambiguously point to Italy.³³² For instance, they included cooking pots (e.g. no. 11, Figure 44) with “a stepped shoulder to short collar and everted” rim and a round base, which have parallels in graves probably of members of the local elite excavated at Kephlochori in Thesprotia (third quarter of the 2nd century BCE), but also in the Gravina Pit Group (ca. 80–70 BC) in modern-day Puglia in Italy.³³³ At Butrint such cooking pots were found with Lamboglia 2 *amphorae* (ca. 150/125–

³³⁰ Forsén 2019c, 18–19.

³³¹ *Ibid.* For *opus incertum* see Coarelli 1977, 9; Mogetta 2015.

³³² Contemporary finds were also found in the lowermost layer of the tower, Layer VII in Trench A, which are not discussed here. For them see Reynolds and Ikäheimo 2019, 318.

³³³ Forsén and Reynolds 2011, 254, 257. Riginos 1999 (Kephlochori). Hayes in Small et al. 1994 (Gravina Pit Group).

50/25 BCE), possibly imported from Italy.³³⁴ It is difficult to make interpretations about the identity of the inhabitants based on such find parallels, and we should also be wary of the extent and ways in which the material assemblage of a site might speak to the cultural background of its inhabitants. Still, the cooking pots appear to be local or regional products, according to Paul Reynolds, based on his identification to the naked eye of the orange coarse ware utilised as such, though their shapes may have been more widely popular.³³⁵ Other finds included three wheel-made lamps of two distinct forms, one dating to ca. 120–100 BCE based on parallels in the Athenian Agora, and the second to ca. 80–70 BCE based on parallels from the Gravina Pit Group.³³⁶ The only parallel that could be found for two thin-walled vessels—a cup and a beaker—was from the graves in Kephalochoi, while a small bowl resembled Apulian products, but may have been “reproduced almost anywhere”.³³⁷ Consequently, the pottery from the early closed deposit, while some connections might be made to ceramics in Italy, appears to sit comfortably also with local find assemblages, like those from Kephalochoi. In fact, it seems the connections drawn to Italy might in certain cases be superficial, and actually representative of connections to the pottery forms utilised in different regions, including Italy, in the later Hellenistic period—since for John Hayes the assemblage was ““basically Hellenistic””.³³⁸ It is not possible to draw clear conclusions about the inhabitants of the complex based on this pottery, or the construction of a mortar-and-rubble wall, who might have been locals, perhaps with Italian connections, or Italians, also with local connections—and I wonder whether making

³³⁴ Forsén and Reynolds 2011, 254. Bruno 1995, 27–38, 293–301; van Limbergen 2018, 206 (on Lamboglia 2 *amphorae*).

³³⁵ Forsén and Reynolds 2011, 253.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 252–254.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 252.

³³⁸ In *ibid.*, 263

this distinction, which is difficult to make, using only the material assemblage of a site is particularly productive.

The deposit (Locus 7) in the cellar room was probably formed in the early 1st century BCE, ca. 80/70 BCE or shortly thereafter.³³⁹ It was immediately topped by building debris (locii 6 and 5) described as “Late Hellenistic”, suggested to have been close to it in date.³⁴⁰ I think the deposition of these layers, together with the formation of the roughly contemporary Layer VII in the tower, can be interpreted as clean-up—found in at least two locations on site—which suggests contemporary construction work. This building would have occurred sometime between 80/70 BCE and before the laying out of a new floor in the tower (above Layer VII), including a *cocciopesto* pavement as part of this new floor, whose construction (or a repair to it) was associated with a small layer (Layer VI) dated to ca. the mid-1st-century BCE (50–40 BCE, see no. 11 in the Site Catalogue, Figure 45).³⁴¹ Based on such evidence, but primarily reliant on tentative chronologies of the wall-paintings of a room discussed below, Forsén and his collaborators suggested that Agios Donatos saw a major rebuilding phase around the mid-1st century BCE.³⁴² This is possible, but the extent of construction work is not certain, since only parts of the site have been excavated, while the work could also have occurred slightly earlier, essentially any time after the deposition of the clean-up.

The painting of the walls of one room in the Second Pompeian style at Agios Donatos has been dated using tentative stylistic chronologies by Freccero to ca. the mid-1st century BCE,

³³⁹ Forsén and Reynolds 2011, 264.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*; Reynolds and Ikäheimo 2019, 318–319, 377.

³⁴² Forsén 2019a, 19.

and this has been used to date the “major rebuilding” described by Forsén, perhaps all too easily.³⁴³ This relies on the assumption that the paintings and building work were contemporary, which could be the case but is not definite. Furthermore, it is important to recognise that the methods used to date the paintings can only provide estimates, rather than precise dates. According to Freccero, who studied fragments of the paintings—of which 2,000 were excavated—these made up one decorative scheme that comprised illusionary, monochrome painted panels in yellow ochre, purple, and red colours as well as painted marble, ornamenting an oblong room (in Trench D, Figures 46-47).³⁴⁴ The panels were narrowly framed by floral motifs, painted pilasters and other faux-architectural elements.³⁴⁵ They were also supplemented by architecture in stucco, such as egg-and-dart and Lesbian cyma-friezes as well as fluted columns.³⁴⁶ Using such characteristics Freccero classified the decoration among the earlier types of the Second Pompeian style, fashionable in Italy ca. 90–50 BCE, or 80-40 BCE according to Roger Ling, who also cautiously warns that these dates are approximate;³⁴⁷ particularly, Freccero argued, the warm and opaque colours of the panels made for a close resemblance with the decoration of the Casa di Cerere in Pompeii, traditionally dated to the middle of the 1st century BCE.³⁴⁸ However, dating based on such stylistic attributes is problematic, since motifs can be used based on personal preference at later times than when they first emerge, and they were—at Pompeii all four styles of painting typified by August Mau remained in use until 79 CE.³⁴⁹ Consequently, their proposed chronologies should be taken as guidelines of popularity. For Agios Donatos this means that compositions especially popular in

³⁴³ *Ibid.*; Freccero 2019, 291.

³⁴⁴ Freccero 2019, 291–292.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁶ Freccero 2019, 282, 291–292

³⁴⁷ Freccero 2019, 291; Ling 1991, 12.

³⁴⁸ Freccero 2019, 282–285, 291

³⁴⁹ I am grateful to Charlotte Potts for her discussion with me on this topic. Mau 1882.

parts of Italy around the first half of the 1st century BCE were chosen for the walls of one room. This could have happened around the same time that construction work is attested to have occurred on the site, sometime between the deposition of clean-up in the beginning of the second quarter of the 1st century BCE and the mid-1st century BCE approximately. It is also possible the paintings were later—and conceivably they could even be earlier, though this would be less probable if indeed the techniques had been exported from Italy.

According to Freccero the high quality of the painted decoration denoted expert craftsmanship (e.g. adequate preparations by applying successive layers of plaster, whose final top surface would be painted, thus preventing cracks from incoming moisture, as described by Vitruvius), showing technical know-how, and suggesting to her that possibly artisans from Italy were brought in.³⁵⁰ I would add that the rarity of such paintings in Epirus would support this argument, with the only other known example being the paintings in the Third Pompeian style found at the Actium Victory Monument (dated by Zachos on epigraphic evidence to 29–27 BCE)—which is also an exceptional building.³⁵¹ This speaks to close connections of the inhabitants of the complex at Agios Donatos with painters in Italy. The ability and choice to make use of Italian painters in Epirus, or to transpose their skills there, also suggests affiliations of its inhabitants with members of the elite in Italy. The owners of the site at this point might have been Italian aristocrats themselves, as Forsén has argued, drawing a link to the Cossini family (based on later stamps with the inscription “COS”), or they could have been in some other way connected to Italy’s elite, for instance, as freedmen or clients of Roman aristocrats.³⁵² In fact, many of the finds in the earlier closed deposit would indicate connections also to local

³⁵⁰ Freccero 2019, 277, 279–280, and 291; Vitruvius *De Architectura*, 7.3.

³⁵¹ Zachos 2003, 66, 76; Forsén 2019c, 19; Freccero 2019, 291. I am also grateful to Dominik Maschek for pointing this out.

³⁵² Forsén 2021, 237.

communities (e.g. the thin-walled cup and beaker paralleled only in graves at nearby Kephalochoi in Thesprotia), while a coin of the League of the Epirotes (ca. 148-the second half of the 1st century BCE) in Layer VII in the tower also indicates they were tied up into local economic networks.³⁵³ Yet, the painting of the walls of the oblong room appears to have meant the creation of a new space on the site, with a sophisticated décor, intricately designed, and which resembled elite spaces in Italy (e.g. dining rooms in the central Italian villas of Centroni at Boville, or Fosso dell'Osa in the *suburbium* of Rome).³⁵⁴ Using my criteria laid out in chapter 1, this would suggest the transformation of the site into a villa probably by the mid-1st century BCE. What did this transformation mean for the people living at the site? In my view at Agios Donatos we may be seeing a slow intake perhaps of architectural methods, some pottery, and—exceptionally for Epirus—wall-painting techniques that had emerged in Italy, which appear to have been consciously adopted by its inhabitants, but who also did not stand out as complete outsiders to the Epirote landscape. This is a theory I explore further in my discussion of the site in the early Imperial period in chapter 5.

3.2 Episkopi (Ioannina basin, Molossia): a dispersed village

Unfortified dispersed villages comprised groups of farms scattered in one area, and they were a widespread form of rural settlement in the Epirote countryside during the Hellenistic period. A number of examples were excavated in Thesprotia (e.g. at Kyra Panaghia, no. 15) and in Molossia, especially in the southern part of the Ioannina basin (e.g. at Rachi Platanias; Agioi

³⁵³ Talvio 2011 314, coin no. 17.

³⁵⁴ Marzano 2007, 299, 497 on these central Italian villas.

Apostoloi Pedinis), after their discovery in modern works for the Egnatia Odos highway (Figure 48).³⁵⁵ Many continued to be inhabited after the middle of the 2nd century BCE (Figure 40).³⁵⁶ One of these dispersed villages was located at Episkopi (no. 1), a conglomeration of farm buildings situated between ca. 15-30 m from each other, elevated on a hillock amidst plainlands where seasonal lakes form (Figures 49-50).³⁵⁷ There clear signs of habitation after 168/7 BCE were preserved exceptionally fully at the farm of Building A, originally built sometime in the second half of the 3rd-early 2nd century BCE, and destroyed by a fire that caused its collapse sometime in the first half of the 1st century BCE, thus sealing and preserving many of its contents (Figure 51).³⁵⁸ In this section I explore these and other finds, and the diversity of agricultural and economic activities that they reveal, from cereal cultivation and textile production (based on archaeobotanical remains, loom-weights and spindle-whorls) to extensive trade contacts.³⁵⁹ These go contrary to the widely held opinion in secondary literature that Molossia experienced the harshest face of the conflict, leading to its “annihilation” and consequent “economic depression” as Hernandez argued, by relying mainly on primary texts like Livy who wrote that Molossian leaders were the only ones to oppose Anicius Gallus—as [was discussed in chapter 1](#).³⁶⁰ In fact, I will argue the continuity noticeable at Episkopi might show that perhaps parts of Molossia may not even have been significantly harmed, and they do not appear to have experienced a depression, at least not until the mid-1st century BCE.

³⁵⁵ Forsén 2011:9–14, 16–17; 2019a, 5, 14–15 (Thesprotia). Pliakou 2007, 236–243; 2013; 2016a; 2018a; 2017.

³⁵⁶ Pliakou 2018b, 146–147. Pliakou 2013; 2018b; 2018a. Pliakou 2017, 296 (in Molossia); Forsén 2011, 9–10, 16.

³⁵⁷ See Site Catalogue no. 1.

³⁵⁸ Pliakou 2007, 194–195; 2013, 456; 2017, 298.

³⁵⁹ Pliakou 2017, 296–298.

³⁶⁰ Hernandez 2010, 20; Livy, *History of Rome* 45.26.

The farm of Building A: chronology

Building A was a small dwelling consisting of a central room with a built hearth. Around this space other rooms opened—storage rooms to the west and north, and a semi-outdoor area to the east (see catalogue no. 1; Figure 52). There was also a porch storing farm equipment to the south (e.g. metal agricultural tools; clay grinders for cereals). According to Pliakou the building was constructed sometime between the second half of the 3rd and early 2nd centuries BCE (presumably based on the earliest finds), above the remains of a 5th-century BCE building and of two abandoned kilns.³⁶¹ Definite evidence for its occupation after the Roman conquest comes from the aforementioned destruction layer.

Based on the latest work by Pliakou and Pascual Berlanga, the destruction deposit dated to 90–80 BCE, but its finds also indicated earlier occupation in the second half of the 2nd century BCE.³⁶² The chronology was based on tableware (e.g. grey finewares, second half of the 2nd–1st centuries BCE), two relief *skyphoi* (one with a “Macedonian” star” on its base, probably produced at Kassope, or alternatively in Ambrakia, ca. 2nd-early 1st century BCE, Figure 53), as well as cooking pots (e.g. no. 1, late 2nd–early 1st centuries BCE) and lamps (Figures 54–55).³⁶³ An exceptional silver Athenian tetradrachm of 124/23 BCE (or of 87–85 BCE) also testified to participation in wider economic networks.³⁶⁴ Twelve Lamboglia 2 *amphorae* (ca. 150/125–50/25 BCE) probably produced in Adriatic Italy (see below) might date from the 1st century BCE (or possibly slightly earlier) as Pascual Berlanga suggested, in addition to a Dressel 1C or

³⁶¹ Pliakou 2017, 296–298.

³⁶² This work was presented in their presentation “Trade Amphorae from the Late Hellenistic Farmstead of Episkopi, Ioannina” in the 4th *IARPotHP Conference* held at the NHRF on 14.11.2019.

³⁶³ Pliakou 2007a, 195; 2016b, 379–385 (on the relief *skyphos*); Pliakou 2016a, 54–62; Pliakou 2016c, 96–98.

³⁶⁴ Pliakou 2016b, 374; Pliakou and Pascual Berlanga 2019.

1B *amphora* (late 2nd-/1st BCE).³⁶⁵ Two others, a Punic ATPS-3 (probably produced in Sicily, see below) and a small Phoenician *amphoriskos*, can be more definitively dated to the first half of the 1st century BCE (Figure 56). Some of these finds, like the cooking pot (no. 1), the lamps (e.g. no. 3), and the Lamboglia 2 *amphorae*, have parallels in the early closed deposit of the small cellar at Agios Donatos, which was dated to ca. 120 to 80/70 BCE. Others might, however, be slightly later, like a plate probably of red regional *terra sigillata* (Figure 57).³⁶⁶ Originally thought by Gravani to date from the late 2nd century BCE to ca. 50 BCE, my work has suggested that examples of these plates appear to come from later contexts;³⁶⁷ e.g. the mid-1st-century BCE small layer in the tower at Agios Donatos (Layer VI) and the early Imperial-period Layer V—while such red regional *sigillata* was absent from the early closed deposit or its contemporary Layer VII in the tower—or from the farm at Mavromadilia, possibly constructed in the 1st century BCE, but with more definite evidence for habitation from the early Imperial period (see catalogue entry no. 14).³⁶⁸ It is possible that such red regional *sigillata* plates were produced and used slightly later than was at first proposed. Additionally, a (Sicilian?) Aci-1 *amphora* (Figure 58) that has elsewhere been dated to the second half of the 1st century BCE as Pascual Berlanga and Pliakou noted, was assigned an earlier date at Episkopi because most of the other finds concentrated to the first half of the 1st century BCE (and perhaps because it was argued that the farm may have been destroyed by a raid of Thracian mercenaries of Mithridates in 88 BCE); it should actually bring the deposit down to the mid-1st century BCE at the earliest.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁵ Pliakou and Pascual Berlanga 2019.

³⁶⁶ Pliakou 2016c, no. 3.

³⁶⁷ Gravani 2009.

³⁶⁸ Reynolds and Ikäheimo 2019, 318-319, 323.

³⁶⁹ Pliakou and Pascual Berlanga 2019; Pliakou 2013, 456.

The farm of Building A: agricultural production

The material assemblage preserved by the fire at Building A indicate engagement in versatile and profitable economic activities, including significant local agricultural production and extensive trade. In the storage rooms west and north of the central room, at least 15 *pithei* and 30 *amphorae* were propped up against the walls.³⁷⁰ They contained large quantities of cereals, predominantly unprocessed oats (in whole spikelets) and smaller amounts of barley and wheat, as well as legumes like fava beans, and fruits, especially olives; some of the *amphorae* were lined with resin, probably having contained wine.³⁷¹ Most of these would have been produced locally, and the wet climate of the lake, as I mentioned in chapter 2, favoured oat cultivation in particular. Perhaps blades deriving from pickaxes at Episkopi and a plough blade found in roughly contemporary layers from the nearby hilltop settlement of Megalo Gardiki were also used for this cultivation, while cereals were also seemingly locally ground at Episkopi (Figures 59-60; see also Figure 40 for the location of Megalo Gardiki). Considerable textile manufacture was also evidenced by the discovery of large numbers of loom-weights, which would have made up at least three looms, and four spindle-whorls, also indirectly pointing to the production of wool and animal husbandry (Figure 61).³⁷² After all, Molossians were famed more broadly for their animal husbandry, which in the Ioannina basin was evidenced by the regular presence of loom-weights in sites dating from the Hellenistic and Roman periods.³⁷³ Six inscribed lead weights were also discovered in the southern porch. According to Pliakou, who studied their

³⁷⁰ Pliakou 2017, 298.

³⁷¹ Gkatzogia 2018, 399–400.

³⁷² Pliakou 2017, 298

³⁷³ Soueref et al. 2019.

weights, these were used to weigh solid substances (cereals?), which might indicate that goods produced locally were weighed on site to be sold.³⁷⁴

The farm of Building A: Italic imports

The overseas contacts suggested by the *amphorae* (30 in total) were, according to Pascual Berlanga and Pliakou, “overwhelmingly Italian”, and predominantly Adriatic (about 40%, e.g. with twelve Lamboglia 2 and several Corfiot late Greco-Italic/Corinthian B’s, Figure 58).³⁷⁵ Another 40% were local/regional in “Macedonian” shapes.³⁷⁶ More specifically, the Lamboglia 2 have a pale-white fabric that to Pascual-Berlanga suggested an Ionic-Adriatic origin, or a darker-grey fabric probably from Picenum further to the north.³⁷⁷ The “Aci-1” was possibly from east/south Sicily, while the ATPS-3, a Punic shape, may have been from west/north Sicily.³⁷⁸ Other fabrics come from Campania (Dressel 1C or 1B) and south Italy (Dressel 1), along the Tyrrhenian coast.³⁷⁹ The *amphorae* show close trade contacts with Italy, and especially western Italy, the Adriatic, and Sicily. While it may be a possibility that these Italic *amphorae* were directly imported to Episkopi where they were exchanged for local goods as Pliakou proposed, local goods could also have been sold in the hilltop towns of the basin and exchanged there for Italic imports.³⁸⁰ Hilltop towns at Megalo Gardiki and at Kastritisa continued to be inhabited after 168/7 BCE, as is suggested by rich finds dating to the 2nd and 1st

³⁷⁴ Pliakou 2017, 299-300, 305.

³⁷⁵ Pliakou and Pascual Berlanga 2019.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.* Similarly, for Reynolds (pers. comm.) Lamboglia 2 *amphorae* with a paler fabric were produced towards the south, near Brindisi, while those with fabrics containing many oxides were produced in the northern Adriatic, near Ancona.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁰ Pliakou 2017, 299-300, 305.

centuries BCE (e.g. relief *skyphoi* and lamps from Building B, in addition to 1st-century BCE fusiform unguentaria), as well as to the early Imperial period (e.g. Italian *terra sigillata* at Megalo Gardiki)—these are discussed in more detail later on in this chapter (Figure 40).³⁸¹ Another possibility is the town that appears to have been located along the western shores of Lake Ioannina, recently investigated through test trenches below the Ottoman castle and modern village in the city centre.³⁸² There is no use speculating on exactly how Italic products reached inland Epirus until the assemblages from these towns are fully published, though it is possible they made their way in from the coast, with Lamboglia 2 *amphorae* frequently found in coastal towns, like Dymokastro and Gitana.³⁸³

At Episkopi in Molossia local agricultural production particularly of cereals like oats and textile manufacture (hinting at the rearing of sheep or other animals) are well-evidenced in the closed context created by the fire and dated to the ca. first half of the 1st century BCE. These activities were evidently profitable enough to allow for the production above subsistence level and exchange of local goods for Italic imports. The evidence from this village, hence, contrasts with the view that all of Molossia experienced a downturn after 168/7 BCE. In fact, other dispersed villages (e.g. Agioi Apostoloi Pedinis) and hilltop towns (e.g. Megalo Gardiki) also continued to be inhabited, and exactly how they were inhabited, as well as whether they were used uninterruptedly or recovered after 168/7 BCE is something I explore later in this chapter.³⁸⁴ At the village of Episkopi (no. 1), however, there is little evidence for discontinuity until the

³⁸¹ Pliakou and Antoniadis 2019. See also Pliakou 2015a; Pliakou et al. 2015; Pliakou 2018c (Megalo Gardiki). Yiouni et al. 2015, 58–63; Yiouni and Faklari 2018, 121–123 (Kastritsa)

³⁸² Pliakou 2018b, 140.

³⁸³ Pliakou and Antoniadis 2019 conference presentation; Lazari *et al.* 2018, fn. 17.

³⁸⁴ Pliakou 2018b, 146–147.

fire that led to the abandonment of Building A, possibly as I suggested around the mid-1st century BCE (or according to the excavators slightly earlier). Yet, who was it that profited from the agricultural production and exchange that the material from Building A evinces? Was it members of the elite based at hilltop towns, for whom others living at Episkopi cultivated the land and grazed animals? Or did the people living at Episkopi garner the profits for themselves? It is not possible to tell, and indeed we should expect both scenarios, since the inhabitants of Building B at Megalo Gardiki or Building Complex E at Kastritsa—both houses evidently of the elite as is discussed later on (e.g. the latter with a bath room, a large covered cistern, and a room decorated with a black-and-white mosaic pavement)—would probably have commanded a labour force inhabiting the plains to afford their more glamorous hilltop lifestyles.³⁸⁵ However, the possibility that the simpler dwellers of Episkopi might also have profited is not out of the question. While comparatively little consumption of luxuries is evidenced at Building A, there is evidence for the use of high-quality finewares, like relief *skyphoi* and red regional *sigillata*, possibly produced at Kassope (see above). Additionally, in a corner of the room west of the central room at Episkopi, a bathtub was found.³⁸⁶ This might have been part of a small house bath in a room where *amphorae* were also stored, which would suggest the inhabitants of the farm could afford certain comforts. Exactly who we can understand as a farm's inhabitants using its archaeology is an interesting question investigated further in the next section.

³⁸⁵ Yiouni et al. 2015, 58–63; Yiouni and Faklari 2018, 121–123.

³⁸⁶ Pliakou 2016a, find no. 28.

3.3 The “ville rurale fortificate” of coastal Chaonia³⁸⁷

In the coastal Chaonian countryside large, fortified rural structures were constructed in Hellenistic times and saw new architectural phases in the Roman period (Figure 40). Originally understood as military units (or in the case of Metoq as a temple), they were later re-interpreted as farms after extensive agricultural evidence was discovered during their excavations (e.g. large *pithoi* and *amphorae*; see catalogue nos. 3-8), and described as “fortified villas”.³⁸⁸ However, their modern interpretation as “villas”, or as “epirotic *villae*” according to Shpuza (his italics), used to describe their states both in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, is in my opinion misleading.³⁸⁹ Even though these sites were evidently wealthy farms and engaged in considerable agricultural production as I will argue in this section, their identification as villas at any point in time is I think questionable, because there are some consequential differences between their archaeology and that of villas (e.g. the fortified structures lacked baths and evidence for permanent, extensive agricultural equipment); I begin to explore those differences here and investigate them further in chapter 5, where I also investigate to what extent the form of these sites changed after rebuilding. In this chapter I focus on the first phases of these fortified rural structures that have generally been linked to the Hellenistic period, but whose finds as I will show do not strictly adhere to it, since their habitation did not necessary end with the conquest—some of these sites appear to have continued to be used at least in the late 2nd and

³⁸⁷ Giorgi 2017, 13, 16.

³⁸⁸ Anon 1981, 270–271; Dhima 1982 (original interpretations); Ugolini 1942, 20; Budina 1971, 292–293 (Metoq). Çondi 1984a; 2017; Giorgi 2012a, 120–124; Giorgi 2012b, 407–412; Giorgi 2017, 13, 16; De Maria et al. 2017, 58 (re-interpretations).

³⁸⁹ E.g. Hodges et al. 2016; Shpuza 2017, 108.

most probably also in the 1st century BCE (e.g. at Matomara, as indicated by its pottery, discussed below).³⁹⁰ Understanding the character of these sites in their original form is important in order to place them on the spectrum of rural settlement. For this reason I explore different aspects such as their architecture, locations, and finds (especially pottery), as well as evidence for agricultural production (with an emphasis on gauging its scale). I also investigate to what extent their material culture can be used to draw conclusions about the identities of their inhabitants.

Brief overview

While investigation of fortified rural structures in Epirus has centred on coastal Chaonia, similar sites might have existed in different areas. Fortified rural sites have been noted throughout Chaonia from the rocky coastline north of Phoinike to the Drino Valley inland, as well as in Molossia in inland Epirus, and in Thesprotia to the south.³⁹¹ However, not all of these sites necessarily had the same form, size, or served the same functions. For instance, while in coastal Chaonia fortified rural structures were large, in Molossia smaller fortified structures appear to have existed across its mountain ranges, sometimes described as villages.³⁹² In Thesprotia a fortified rural structure also with evidence for agricultural activities existed at the Nekromanteion (no. 16)—but this covered an area (ca. 2,890 m²) almost three times that of the structures in coastal Chaonia, and it has also been interpreted as a cult place or oracle.³⁹³ Different fortified rural structures would have existed. Yet, there are numerous examples whose

³⁹⁰ Aleotti 2012 (on the .

³⁹¹ Çondi 2017; Perna 2014; Vasileiadis et al. 2008, 71–74.

³⁹² Bogdani 2012b; Çondi 2017; Vasileiadis et al. 2008, 71–74.

³⁹³ See the plan by Baatz 1999, 152.

functions appear to have included agriculture in different parts of Epirus. Since it would not have been possible to investigate all of them in this thesis, I chose to focus on the coastal sites in Chaonia, because these can be understood as part of a contained regional development, with examples showing a noticeable degree of homogeneity in their layout and locations (discussed below), amongst other aspects. This group of structures can also be used to investigate the local agricultural economy of this region.

Many fortified rural sites in coastal Chaonia were investigated through survey, with surface finds indicating they were a feature of both the Hellenistic and Roman countryside.³⁹⁴ A handful were studied in more detail, six were excavated to different degrees (see catalogue nos. 3-8 for research methods), and the findings from these excavations have been partially published³⁹⁵—with the exception of the rural site at Matomara (no. 3), which has been fully published (Figure 62).³⁹⁶ Many of the findings from the excavations conducted at Malathrea (no. 4) were also published.³⁹⁷ Scholarship, with the exception of Bogdani's study on their Hellenistic-period remains, has tended to focus on one, two, or more of these sites, or to draw heavily on material from one of them (either that at Malathrea or at Matomara), on which arguments about their use, chronology, or interpretation have been based.³⁹⁸ In contrast I aim to paint a more balanced picture by drawing as far as is possible on evidence from the different six sites that have been excavated, some of which was only recently published, thus making this possible; notwithstanding this, Matomara and Malathrea feature most heavily because of their more detailed site publications.

³⁹⁴ Giorgi and Bogdani 2012.

³⁹⁵ Bogdani 2012a. Çondi 1984a (Malathrea); 1984b; 1986 (Dobër); Çondi 2017 (Çuka and Metoq); Islami 2020 ("Palace" at Çuka e Aitoit); Bogdani 2012b (Matomara). See also Budina 1978; Anon 1981, 270–271; Dhima 1982.

³⁹⁶ Giorgi and Bogdani 2011; Aleotti 2012; Bogdani 2012a (Matomara).

³⁹⁷ Çondi 1984a.

³⁹⁸ 2012b; 2019.

Architecture, locations and ceramic assemblages

The towers and enclosures of the six fortified rural structures in coastal Chaonia were constructed using large stone blocks, most often ashlar masonry (see nos. 3-8). At Malathrea, Çuka, Metoq and Dobër isodomic masonry was predominantly employed, while at Çuka e Aitoit polygonal masonry was used, and at Matomara only wall foundations made of trapezoidal blocks were preserved (Figures 63-65). There are certain similarities in their layouts, especially between Çuka, Metoq, and Dobër, all of which had a tower centrally located within an enclosure of roughly similar surface area (approx. 900–1,000 m²), while one or several of the inner sides of the enclosure was lined with series of rooms (Figure 62, Figures 66-67). The towers at Çuka and Metoq contained three to four rooms, and at Çuka the tower building was entered via a winding entrance (room D), reminiscent of the maze-like entrance of the Nekromanteion tower (on which see below); a possible function of winding entrances may have been to provide additional layers of defence during attacks, or another might have been to create a sense of anticipation as one entered the tower. The towers appear to have had multiple storeys, as demonstrated by the staircase partially preserved at Çuka and the well-preserved southern tower of Malathrea (Figures 68-69). Such commonalities might suggest, as Çondi argued, that the architects of some of these structures shared common design concepts.³⁹⁹ Another shared feature is that these structures all enclosed an area, which Bogdani interpreted in them as courtyards, and he argued that the multiple courtyards surrounded by rooms at Building 1 (also known as the “Palace”) on the hilltop of Çuka e Aitoit recall such a design (Figure 70).⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁹ Çondi 2017, 189.

⁴⁰⁰ Bogdani 2009, 254.

Malathrea also had a courtyard but it was smaller. According to Çondi the first architectural phase that he singled out there took the form of a *tetrapyrgion*, being a courtyard surrounded by corner towers, rather than enclosing a central tower (Figure 71). However, there is also another possibility for the architectural development of this structure. According to the study of Blomley in the Argolid, fortified rural structures often begun as small suites of rooms to which towers were later attached; so it is possible as an alternative to that of Çondi that at Malathrea rooms D and G (that are on a higher level) were constructed first, and that later towers were built next to them (with good evidence for Çondi's towers I, II and possibly III, but not much for tower IV).⁴⁰¹ Consequently, while a broadly similar design may have developed for these structures, with emphasis on courtyards or enclosed areas and on incorporating fortifications, they were not all identical. Compared to the others, the site at Matomara might appear to stand out, because no tower was noted, nor any stone-built remains beyond the rooms discovered near its entrance in the northwestern side, but this may in large part be due to the site's highly uneven and bad preservation (Figure 72, no. 3).⁴⁰² It seems that only the area of the northwestern segment inside the enclosure was preserved, possibly following intensive agricultural activity in the 1980s, or stones could have been robbed, as a result of which many features may have been lost.⁴⁰³ The enclosure at Matomara did, however, close off a space similar in size (1,070 m²) to that of the other rural structures in coastal Chaonia (Figure 62). For this reason, and because the site due to the detailed pottery work done by Nadia Aleotti offers useful chronological evidence for rural developments in coastal Chaonia, it is investigated in this section alongside other structures that were better preserved.⁴⁰⁴ On the whole, the rural

⁴⁰¹ Blomley pers. comm. See also Blomley 2018.

⁴⁰² Giorgi and Bogdani 2011; Bogdani 2012a, 336-337.

⁴⁰³ Bogdani 2012a, 325-326; 2012c, 214.

⁴⁰⁴ Aleotti 2012.

structures share certain unifying architectural characteristics, chief amongst them a plan consisting of a courtyard or enclosure similar in size, which sometimes had a tower inside it, and with suites of rooms alongside one or more of the sides of the enclosure. Such a general plan is similar to that of fortified farms beyond Epirus, for instance, at Tria Palatania and at Komboloi in Macedonia, which enclosed an area (ca. 2,300 m² and ca. 1400, respectively) and inside this area along at least three sides of the enclosures suites of rooms were built that opened onto a courtyard, which at Tria Palatania had a tower at its centre.⁴⁰⁵ Since there much evidence for the storage and processing of agricultural produce was found, it could be suggested that the courtyards served as multi-functional areas that facilitated busy agricultural activities.⁴⁰⁶ The same theory could explain the emphasis on courtyards in the rural structures in Epirus.

In terms of their locations, most were situated near plainlands but in considerably elevated locations that required some effort to reach—as I discovered from personal experience during my fieldwork. Unlike villas that were usually more accessible and nestled into hillsides or just above plains, these sites were located on higher ground, often atop hills or hillocks. Malathrea, for example, was situated on a plateau towering over the Vrina plain (Figures 73-74). Matomara occupied the top of a hill to the east of Phoinike (Figure 40); Çuka and Metoq were built on top of hillocks to the west (Figure 40; Figure 75). These locations atop hills, together with evidence for fortifications, may have reflected the defensive function of these structures, possibly aimed at protecting stored agricultural produce in places where it would not be so easily reached. No doubt they would also have made these structures impressive to behold.

⁴⁰⁵ Archibald 2013, 129-191.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

The ceramic assemblages of the structures comprised good quantities of fine tableware including black-gloss (e.g. *skyphoi* and cups), storage vessels (e.g. large *pithoi* and *amphorae*), and cookware (Figure 76).⁴⁰⁷ Access to markets is suggested by imported *amphorae*, Adriatic (e.g. late Greco-Italic *amphorae*, with triangular, flaring rims, and Dressel 1B at Matomara, Figure 77), and others from different unidentified sources (e.g. at Malathrea).⁴⁰⁸ Specifically, the Adriatic *amphorae* might have been acquired from local town markets, for instance from Phoinike, where they also featured in the assemblages of town houses (e.g. in the Casa dei due Peristili).⁴⁰⁹ This link between Phoinike and Matomara specifically is further supported by the Phoinikiote origin of the fine tableware used at Matomara.⁴¹⁰ Ceramic forms produced in Phoinike of the 3rd–2nd centuries BCE were particularly well-attested, and shapes of the late 2nd–1st centuries BCE were also noted.⁴¹¹ At Malathrea, Çuka, Dobër, and Çuka e Aitoit, fine black-gloss pottery was found, some of which might also have been locally-produced, since according to Çondi black-glazed pots from Malathrea (especially *skyphoi* with deep vertical grooves) and Çuka resembled examples from Butrint dated to ca. 3rd–2nd and 3rd–1st centuries BCE.⁴¹² Cups like those found at Malathrea and platters, like no. 11, deep and with a very wide mouth—known as fish plates—were widely produced in Phoinike during the Hellenistic period, but also in other places, like Ambrakia, so it is difficult to draw specific connections.⁴¹³ Indeed since the first phases of these sites (sometimes referred to as “Hellenistic”, but which as I discuss below were not clearly confined to the Hellenistic period)

⁴⁰⁷ Aleotti 2012, 344–349 (Matomara); Çondi 1984a, 136–137 (Malathrea); Islami 2020, s92–108 (Çuka e Aitoit); Çondi 2017, 164–165, 174–175 (Çuka and Metoq); Giorgi et al. 2003 (Casa dei due Peristili).

⁴⁰⁸ Aleotti 2012, 339–343, 344–345, 349; Çondi 1984, 136–137.

⁴⁰⁹ Giorgi et al. 2003, 28, 30 (Casa dei due Peristili).

⁴¹⁰ Aleotti 2012, 344–345.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*

⁴¹² Çondi 1984, 136–137.

⁴¹³ For the fish plates produced in Phoinike see Gamberini 2016, 90–94, pl. 18.

have generally not been as well-preserved as later phases (see catalogue nos. 4-8, except at Matomara), and the finds corresponding to them are fewer as well as not being fully published, it is not possible to estimate where the tableware consumed was produced. Access to commercial networks, however, indicated by *amphorae*, together with the significant capital required to build the fortifications, especially towers, suggests that their owners, if not their inhabitants, were members of the elite—although not everyone who inhabited these farms would necessarily have belonged to the elite (see below).⁴¹⁴ Additionally, if it was possible to access markets for goods to be imported, it is possible that goods were also exported.

Agricultural activities: cereal cultivation and pastoralism

Coastal Chaonia and specifically the alluvial plains of Vurgu and Vrina would have been well-suited in Roman times to the cultivation of grains and other foodstuffs and to serve as winter pastures, as I mentioned in chapter 2. Indeed, agricultural diversification would have allowed for the optimal usage of different landscapes: plants including wheat, oats, barley, and fava beans could be grown on the hillsides of the hillocks of the Vurgu and Vrina plains, the foothills of the surrounding mountains, and the alluvial flatlands, which could also be used for animal pasturage, especially cows. The mountainous areas are suitable for grazing, particularly for cows and sheep. Such agricultural activities are well-reflected (though to different degrees) in archaeological and written records. Some evidence points directly to the production of grains, namely carbonised cereal seeds at Metoq, and hopper-rubber mills at Malathrea and (probably)

⁴¹⁴ As noted in chapter 1, Blomley in the Argolid estimated the cost of a tower with a stone base and mudbrick superstructure in the Argolid at ca. 2650 *drachmai*, corresponding to the cost of an average Athenian townhouse (2018, 211-214). See also Morris and Papadopoulos 2005, who made the argument that some rural towers in Greece may also have been used to confine unfree labour.

also at Metoq (referred to as “gurë mokre” or millstones in Albanian).⁴¹⁵ However, the best material evidence for the agricultural productivity of these structures is indirect, indicated by their extensive storage capacity, with large storage spaces in studies of ancient agriculture often linked to grain cultivation because of the extensive storage it required.⁴¹⁶ In Chaonia storage is evidenced in the first phases of fortified structures, for example, through fragments of massive *pithoi* e.g. at Matomara, Malathrea, Çuka, Metoq and Dobër, which were also found *in situ* (e.g. at Çuka, Dobër and in the eastern side of the courtyard at Malathrea).⁴¹⁷ More specifically, at Metoq numerous *pithoi* found *in situ* in rooms of its northern and southern porches indicate that these were storage rooms (Figure 67).⁴¹⁸ Storage rooms appear to have been paved (e.g. the rooms in the northern porch at Metoq, at Çuka), possibly to create raised platforms upon which to store foodstuffs, thus keeping them dry and out of reach of pests.⁴¹⁹ Another example of storage spaces is the suite of rooms G and D located in the eastern wing of Malathrea, which was constructed on a higher level than the central courtyard (Figures 78-79). Furthermore, the towers of fortified structures may also have functioned as storage areas. This has been shown to be the case for the tower of the fortified complex at the Nekromanteion (no. 16) in Thesprotia, where at least 43 large *pithoi* (containing mainly fava beans and cereals) were preserved by a fire that caused the full collapse of the tower sometime in the 2nd or 1st centuries BCE (Figure 80).⁴²⁰ According to Columella, grains, in contrast to liquid products like olive oil and wine, should be stored in order to be preserved in lofts rather than on the ground floor, reached by ladders and with small openings for ventilation to maintain a cool temperature and avoid

⁴¹⁵ Wodtke 2018, 307; Çondi 1984c, 144–147; 2017, 180–181.

⁴¹⁶ de Vos 2013, 174.

⁴¹⁷ Bogdani 2012a, 333; 2012b, 137; Çondi 1984a, 136; 1986, 263; 2017, 164–165, 174–175.

⁴¹⁸ Çondi 2017, 180–181.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.* Columella advised the paving of granaries specifically for this purpose, to keep pests at bay (*De re rustica*, 1.6.13).

⁴²⁰ Gkatzogia 2018.

humidity.⁴²¹ The upper storeys of towers would have been particularly well-suited to his advice. The widespread evidence for storage spaces in the Chaonian structures shows they were capable agricultural producers. However, they were perhaps not engaged in production as large as that of the Nekromanteion, which also had a large rock-cut, subterranean, vaulted chamber (approx. 15 x 4.20 x 4.30 m) that as a cool, dry, and dark space would have been suited to being a store room (Figure 81).⁴²² In fact, Columella also noted that some considered vaulted chambers suitable to store grain, especially in hot regions (though not in Italy, where upper storeys were preferred), the earth thus taking back “the fruits which it has produced.”⁴²³ As the only fortified structure in the Acheron Valley, the Nekromanteion, which was also almost three times the size of the coastal Chaonian structures, would have dominated local agricultural production, serving as a useful indicator of the top end of the scale. The Chaonian structures, which had to share the region’s coastal plains, may be taken as comparably smaller-scale competitors, though they were considerable producers nonetheless.⁴²⁴

The extensive local production of grains in Epirus is suggested by primary written sources who mentioned that it served as a supplier for Roman armies in the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE, as I noted in chapter 2, and discuss this here in more detail. In 49-48 BCE Epirus was a supplier for Caesar’s army. The importance of Caesar’s testimony was highlighted by Hernandez; however, I do not agree with Hernandez’s reading of it, that the testimony suggests Epirus was producing insufficient grain in the 1st century BCE (his argument is that the

⁴²¹ *De re rustica*, 1.6.9–10.

⁴²² Baatz 1999, 153; Wiseman 1998. See also Voulgaraki 2018, 62, 66.

⁴²³ *De re rustica*, 1.6.12, 15.

⁴²⁴ Bogdani 2012b, 137.

destruction wreaked in 168/7 BCE put an end to a previously flourishing production).⁴²⁵ Hernandez used passages from the *Civil War* (specifically in book 3) to suggest that Epirus was dependent on imports for grain.⁴²⁶ The crux of his argument was based on passage 3.42.3–5, where we learn that Caesar had sent two of his legates to procure provisions (or specifically “grain”, depending on how the word *frumentariae* is interpreted) from Epirus, noting that “because those regions were quite distant (*longius*) he established grain depots (*horrea*) in specific locations and assigned nearby communities the responsibility for transport”.⁴²⁷ Caesar “also” (*item*, the crucial word in my opinion) searched for grain in Lissus and in the territory of the Parthini (immediately to the north of Epirus), near his camp at Dyrrachium.⁴²⁸ Caesar wrote about the grain (*frumentum*) of these areas: “This amounted to very little (*id erat perexiguum*)” due to the area’s infertility and mountainous terrain, which forced its inhabitants to import grain (and because Pompey had already seized it).⁴²⁹ Whereas Hernandez seems to have interpreted this particular passage, which refers to a region that could not produce sufficient grain, as referring to Epirus as a whole, in my opinion it makes far more sense to read it in relation to the territory of the Parthini (indeed, a region still quite mountainous), and consider that far-away areas in Epirus, more capable of sustaining Caesar’s army, were not small producers. This also makes sense from another perspective: since these Epirote regions were far away Pompey had not reaped their produce, which also highlights for us the importance of Caesar’s strategic manoeuvre; he could not import by sea, since Pompey had blockaded the sea-routes, so he supplied locally.⁴³⁰ The base for Caesar’s supply operations was none other than Butrint in

⁴²⁵ 2020, 67–68 (on cereals), 71–76 (analysing Caesar’s testimony).

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, 79–80.

⁴²⁷ 3.42.3–4.

⁴²⁸ 3.42.4. For Caesar’s camp: 3.41.5.

⁴²⁹ 3.42.4–5.

⁴³⁰ 3.42.3.

coastal Chaonia, indicating that the region was agriculturally quite productive in the mid-1st century BCE.⁴³¹

Caesar also mentioned that Epirus had a large supply of animals, which in the first half of the 1st century BCE is well-supported for Chaonia by the activities of Varro's *Synepirotae*, owning sheep, goats, cattle, and horses amongst other animals; the *Synepirotae* in Varro also discuss the production of meat, milk, cheese, and wool from their stock.⁴³² Atticus, one of the *Synepirotae*, was based at Butrint. Animal husbandry in association specifically with the Chaonian fortified structures has been suggested using evidence of the negative space enclosed in many fortified structures, which Bogdani for Matomara and Çondi for Çuka interpreted as animal pens, that, for instance, could have been used to nurture animals when necessary.⁴³³ The production of textiles, probably made of sheep's wool, is also indicated by evidence for looms (e.g. loom-weights at Matomara, as well as at the Nekromanteion in Thesprotia).⁴³⁴ The animal husbandry associated with the *Synepirotae* had a long precedent in Epirus, and specifically in Chaonia (as well as nearby coastal Thesprotia), as Hernandez argued, so it is probable that the inhabitants of the Chaonian fortified structures actively engaged in it.

⁴³¹ 3.16.

⁴³² 2.2–6.

⁴³³ Bogdani 2012, 336; Çondi 2017, 171–172.

⁴³⁴ Ferriés and Skenderaj 2015, 199. The evidence from Matomara did not necessarily indicate large-scale production of wool, since only 19 loom-weights were recovered from different layers.

Chronology

Toponym	Provisional chronologies for the first phases
Malathrea	second half of the 3rd-2nd centuries BCE
Matomara	second half of the 3rd-1st century BCE
Çuka	3rd-1st centuries BCE
Metog	3rd-1st centuries BCE
Dobër	3rd-1st centuries BCE
Çuka e Aitoit	second half of the 4th-2nd centuries BCE

Table 1: Provisional chronologies for the first phases of fortified farms, linked to their first architectural phases⁴³⁵

The first phases of the fortified farms except that at Matomara (discussed below) have been approximately dated by their excavators, and based on broad strata, sometimes described as “Hellenistic”, they were assigned tentative chronologies that corresponded to the date ranges of some of the finds found in those strata (Table 1; see catalogue nos. 4-8 for further discussion of dating methods). However, since only some of the finds have been taken into account, and they have not specifically been related to precise archaeological layers, these chronologies should not be taken as definitive, but as provisional. At Malathrea, for instance, there is evidence that the structure was constructed in the second half of the 3rd century BCE, since none of its coins predated this, the earliest being a coin from Corfu dated to 229–48 BCE, but the end of its first phase is less secure.⁴³⁶ Whilst Çondi mentions the finds clustered to the 3rd-2nd centuries BCE, *skyphoi* with a date range of ca. 3rd-1st centuries BCE were also noted.⁴³⁷ Consequently, these

⁴³⁵ Çondi 1984a (Malathrea); 1986 (Dobër); 2017, 165, 174 (Çuka and Metog); Aleotti 2012, 343-351; Bogdani 2012a, 331-337 (Matomara); Islami 2020 (Çuka e Aitoit).

⁴³⁶ Condi 1984c, 133, 138.

⁴³⁷ Condi 1984c, 137, 148.

chronologies do not correspond to precise start and end dates, but they are useful indicators. Some of the material culture can be used to refine the chronological sequence for the first phases of these structures by employing the archaeological *t.p.q.* and *t.a.q.*, particularly for the purposes of this chapter with reference to important events like 168/7 BCE, in order to understand whether any of these chronologies definitely extended to the period after the conquest. Material evidence from the structure at Malathrea concentrated to the 2nd century BCE (e.g. the coins and *amphorae* from Malathrea), suggesting that this was the peak of habitation in its first phase.⁴³⁸ Yet, a coin minted at Phoinike shortly after the conquest (ca. 168–148 BCE) was also associated with the first phase of Malathrea.⁴³⁹ Additionally, a probable cooking pot from Malathrea (no. 1, Figure 76, unidentified context) with a collar and everted rim might date to the second half of the 2nd century BCE, based on its similarity to no. 11 from the Agios Donatos early small cellar deposit and with no. 1 from the destruction layer at Episkopi (both also with a collar and everted rim, discussed above, see Figure 44 and Figure 54). Thus, the chronology of the first phase at this structure extended past the conquest in 168/7 BCE. The provisional date ranges of other structures at Çuka, Metoq, and Dobër were also suggested to have stretched into the 1st century BCE.⁴⁴⁰ At Building 1 at Çuka e Aitoit the main phase was dated up to the 2nd century BCE, but another layer suggested subsequent habitation into the 1st century BCE–1st century CE.⁴⁴¹ Therefore, there is evidence to indicate that the first phases did not adhere to Hellenistic times, but extended into the early Roman period.

In contrast to the other structures, at Matomara pottery was studied by Aleotti and related by her and by Bogdani (the site's excavator) to specific stratigraphic layers (e.g. destruction

⁴³⁸ Çondi 1984c, 136–137.

⁴³⁹ Çondi 1984a, 138.

⁴⁴⁰ Çondi 1986, 262; Çondi 2017, 164, 174.

⁴⁴¹ Islami 2020, 108.

layers) to construct site phases, making its chronology more detailed and reliable.⁴⁴² The complex's main phase of occupation was dated to the 3rd–1st centuries BCE, primarily using evidence excavated from the rooms near the entrance of the enclosure. A bronze coin of the Epirote *koinon* (ca. 234–168 BCE) found in a foundation trench for wall US130 associated with the construction of this structure serves as a *terminus post quem* for it, indicating its construction at least after 234 BCE.⁴⁴³ Forms of the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE were particularly well-attested, suggesting to Aleotti, who studied the ceramics from Matomara, that the complex flourished at that time.⁴⁴⁴ It saw a new architectural phase at some point in the 2nd century BCE, in the late 2nd century BCE according to Bogdani, when new rooms were constructed atop the original ones near the entrance of the enclosure.⁴⁴⁵ They were built using mortar-and-rubble architecture, instead of employing large stone blocks for their foundations like the original constructions, and apparently in a slightly different orientation but still in the same area within the enclosure (see no. 3).⁴⁴⁶ These new rooms were covered by a final destruction layer. Aleotti and Bogdani appear to have disagreed over the precise date of this final destruction layer and, consequently, the end-of-use of this occupation phase. According to Aleotti the destruction layer is dated to the late 2nd–early 1st century BCE;⁴⁴⁷ but according to Bogdani this layer dated the site's end-of-use to the late 1st century BCE.⁴⁴⁸ In fact, these different dates for the destruction layer correspond to its *terminus post quem* and its *terminus ante quem*, and more precisely to the earliest and latest possible production dates of the “late Hellenistic” fineware forms produced at Phoinike that were found within it (i.e. these forms could have been produced as early as the

⁴⁴² Aleotti 2012; Bogdani 2012a.

⁴⁴³ Bogdani 2012a, 332.

⁴⁴⁴ Aleotti 2012, 344.

⁴⁴⁵ Bogdani 2012b, 333–334.

⁴⁴⁶ Bogdani 2012b, 333–334.

⁴⁴⁷ Aleotti 2012, 349–350.

⁴⁴⁸ Bogdani 2012a, 335–337.

late 2nd-/early 1st centuries BCE and as late as the late 1st century BCE).⁴⁴⁹ Consequently, Matomara may have been abandoned between the late 2nd-/early 1st centuries and the late 1st century BCE. However, fragments of eight Dressel 1B amphorae from usage and destruction layers associated with this phase, which were produced between the late 2nd–1st centuries BCE but that were more characteristic of the 1st century BCE, suggest its continuity into the 1st century BCE (Figure 77).⁴⁵⁰

Together, the evidence from the first phases of the fortified structures indicates that these phases continued past 168/7 BCE, and in a number of cases probably (e.g. at Matomara) or possibly (e.g. at Çuka, Metoq, and Dobër) into the 1st century BCE. The lack of certain local fineware forms that were definitively characteristic of the 1st century BCE—especially the later part of it—in the destruction layer at Matomara, like grey regional finewares produced at Phoinike, might suggest that this habitation phase did not last past the first half of the 1st century BCE; nor was red regional *sigillata* noted, of the sort found in the ca. mid-1st-century BCE layer at Agios Donatos (see catalogue no. 11).⁴⁵¹ This farm thus seems to have remained active into the early 1st century BCE, but possibly not beyond it. Consequently, the first phases of the fortified structures spanned the period from the 3rd century BCE (or the 4th century BCE, e.g. for Çuka e Aitoit) until at least the second half of the 2nd century BCE, and at Matomara probably until the first half of the 1st century BCE. The so-called "Hellenistic" phases of these sites, therefore, did not strictly adhere to the Hellenistic period, since they appear to have continued past the conquest.

⁴⁴⁹ See Gamberini 2016, 171–173.

⁴⁵⁰ Aleotti (2012, 346–347) identified these *amphorae* with Lamboglia 2, but the rim profile with a collar, which seems quite high, more closely resembles Dressel 1B (or perhaps 1C) which, however, were used during the same time as Lamboglia 2. Add sources: Peacock, 1971; 1977c; Long, 1987; Hesnard *et alii*, 1989.

⁴⁵¹ Gamberini 2016, 171–173; Reynolds and Ikäheimo 2019, 318–319.

As I have argued, fortified rural structures in coastal Chaonia, which shared certain characteristics in their architecture, locations, and ceramic assemblages, were farms. This is also evident because an important part of their function was to store agricultural produce, and possible to defend it, if need be, though their fortifications could have had a dual purpose, also acting as symbols “of status and power”.⁴⁵² The fortified farms seem to have been engaged specifically in the cultivation of cereals (e.g. indicated by carbonised wheat seeds at Metoq and ancient accounts, like that of Caesar), probably amongst other crops, such as legumes, and they can be linked to profitable animal husbandry, discussed by ancient authors in connection with coastal Chaonia.⁴⁵³ They are also an indicator of the continued productivity of the agricultural economy of the region after 168/7 BCE.

What can we say about their inhabitants using their material culture? Based on the find assemblages, especially the presence of fine tableware, cookware, storage vessels, imported goods (e.g. Italic *amphorae* at Matomara) as well as loom-weights (e.g. at Matomara, Malathrea), and a terracotta figurine at Malathrea, I would argue these were domestic spaces.⁴⁵⁴ Consequently, I would say that this material does to a good degree reflect on the inhabitants of these farms, but I would like to be a little bit more specific about who that could be. Different people, indeed different groups of people, live on a farm, including those who own it and those who help them to operate it but do not necessarily have a share in ownership or the profits, like farm managers and slaves, which is especially pertinent to the ancient world. While members

⁴⁵² Bowden and Pärzhita 2020, 194.

⁴⁵³ For this evidence see [chapter 2](#).

⁴⁵⁴ McHugh has argued that domestic sites like farms can be distinguished from uninhabited agricultural installations by a ceramic signature consisting of finewares, domestic wares, and storage vessels (McHugh 2017, 57-59). For a material culture analysis of different rural sites see also Foxhall 2004.

of the elite who could consume more products may be overrepresented in the material assemblages of these farms, their inhabitants were actually different groups of people. These groups can also change, but it is difficult to use the material fingerprint of a farm to explore such changes. At Matomara access to the markets of Phoinike, both for its fine tableware and to acquire Italian goods in imported *amphorae*, might suggest that some of its inhabitants were members of the elite who circulated in the same circles as members of the elite of Phoinike—though consumption of a particular fine pottery or imported goods is not a definitive marker of any sort of identity. The construction of new farm buildings near the entrance of the enclosure at Matomara could suggest a change in occupation, possibly new inhabitants, but new buildings could also have been needed after a collapse due to any number of other reasons. The use of mortar-and-rubble architecture for those new buildings (instead of large stone blocks for the foundations) also need not necessarily point to a change in habitation; as I discussed earlier in relation to the complex at Agios Donatos, this construction technique became more common in Epirus during the Roman period. Furthermore, market access did not change at Matomara after these new rooms were built, with finewares probably produced at Phoinike and Italic *amphorae* (also found at Phoinike) continuing to be used. Literary sources can also offer some idea of who those different people were. In 58 BCE Cicero wrote to Atticus to thank him for the offer to stay at his place (“*apud te*”) during his exile from Italy, and referred to it as a remote “*castellum munitum*” or fortified castle (perhaps rural given its remoteness?), which may well have been a fortified farm.⁴⁵⁵ About a decade later Caesar while searching for grain in the territory of the Parthini, to the north of coastal Chaonia, mentioned looking for it in *castella*, and it is possible that he was also referring to fortified farms, like those of nearby coastal Chaonia.⁴⁵⁶ So a

⁴⁵⁵ *Letters to Atticus*, III.1, 5, 6, 7.

⁴⁵⁶ Caesar, *Civil War*, 3.42.4.

connection with local communities is also possible. Even when ownership changed, and if members of the *Synepirotae* purchased *castella* alongside other property, they may have employed members of the local population as managers—if the Italians did not spend all their time inhabiting fortified farms (indeed Cicero’s refusal of Atticus’ offer may be telling in this regard), then their presence would be less represented in material assemblages. The point is that there is no use fixating on one identity for the people living in the fortified structures, imagining them as members of local communities or as incoming Italians landowners, because in fact they could have been different people. In some cases property could have been maintained in the same hands, and in other cases it could, and would, have changed hands. But focusing only on Italians buying property in Epirus in the early Roman period is to certainly skew the picture.⁴⁵⁷

3.4 Discussion

In the last three sections I argued that there is good material evidence in the second half of the 2nd and first half of the 1st centuries BCE for the continued occupation or re-use of rural sites that had pre-existed 168/7 BCE. There is also no evidence for villas until the transformation of the complex at Agios Donatos into one, probably by the mid-1st century BCE.⁴⁵⁸ With at least one room decorated with resplendent wall-paintings, the villa at Agios Donatos would, however, have stood out in the Epirote countryside. Instead of villas different forms of rural settlement existed in Epirus in the century following the conquest including farms belonging to dispersed villages like Episkopi in Molossia and fortified farms like those of coastal Chaonia. The rural sites had been inhabited at least since the second half of the 3rd century BCE (or earlier

⁴⁵⁷ E.g. Bowden 2003, 80-81; Forsén 2021, 335.

⁴⁵⁸ See [above](#).

in some cases), and there is no widespread evidence for interruption of their phases that might correspond to the destruction of 168/7 BCE. On the contrary, there is widespread evidence for continued agricultural productivity after the conquest, down to the early or middle of the 1st century BCE. This was based on the cultivation of cereals, like oats and wheat, and legumes, like fava beans, as well as probably on animal husbandry with by-products such as textiles. The predominantly local finewares attested at these sites (e.g. in the early closed deposit at Agios Donatos; in the destruction layer of Building A at Episkopi; at Matomara) are not alone a definite marker of local identity, but these finds suggest that we should not dissociate the countryside of Epirus in this period from local communities. The importation wholesale of Italic *amphorae* at rural sites (e.g. late Greco Italic, Lamboglia 2, Dressel 1, and Sicilian “Punic” ones at Episkopi and Matomara, amongst other possible examples) also shows that agricultural resources produced enough profit after 168/7 BCE to spend on Italian products.⁴⁵⁹ The picture I have painted relies on seven rural units. To what extent, however, was it also reflected in the broader rural landscape and in Epirote cities and settlements?

The archaeological evidence from the broader countryside

Across different Epirote regions there is evidence for rural sites whose habitation extended past the middle of the 2nd century BCE, namely farms that were part of dispersed villages, even if in some areas it is clear that the countryside suffered a significant blow. For example, in the Kokytos valley in Thesprotia, an area systematically surveyed and explored through trial or salvage excavations, rural settlement declined from the late Classical-early Hellenistic to the

⁴⁵⁹ At Agios Donatos, overseas connections are further supported by the possible Lamboglia 2 amphora in Layer VI (while I found other examples of Lamboglias in Mavromandilia and in the assemblages of Epirote cities).

late Hellenistic-early Roman periods, but the decline was less dramatic than in other Greek regions, and some sites associated with two out of three pre-Roman village clusters continued to be utilised (Figure 4).⁴⁶⁰ Take Gephyrakia, a small hamlet belonging to one of the larger village clusters at Mavromandilia/Gephyrakia (Figure 40, no. 13; for the village see also Figure 108); it yielded significant evidence for production including textiles (e.g. loom-weights), metallurgical activities (e.g. good quantities of slag), and equipment for grain processing (possibly a segmented mill or even a water mill, mentioned by Forsén based on as yet unpublished evidence investigated by Turmo), suggesting it was intended for the market.⁴⁶¹ The pottery and coins from Gephyrakia date down to the middle (or even into the second half of) the 1st century BCE (e.g. a coin of the Epirote League, ca. 148-second half of the 1st century BCE; red regional *sigillata*).⁴⁶² The sanctuary at Kyra Panagia, at the centre of the second village, also showed no evidence for a break in its activity after the conquest (Figure 40; see also Figure 109).⁴⁶³

The fate of the large fortified structure at the Nekromanteion in the Acheron river valley in Thesprotia is elusive (Figure 40 and Figure 82; no. 16). While some have preferred to view it as an oracle to the dead, and others as a fortified farm, the large scale of agricultural activities cannot be underestimated.⁴⁶⁴ In addition to significant quantities of produce, like fava beans and cereals, stored in the tower and perhaps in the underground cellar, considerable numbers of hopper-rubber mills and at least two segmented mills for grinding grain, as well as many broken *amphorae* sealed with clay were found (Figures 83-87).⁴⁶⁵ There is also indirect evidence for

⁴⁶⁰ Forsén 2011, 16–17; 2019a, 15, 22; Bowden 2009, 170–171.

⁴⁶¹ Forsén, et al. 2011, 97–99; Forsén 2019a, 22; Forsén 2021, 241.

⁴⁶² Forsén 2021, 241; Talvio 2019, nos. 7–8, 11 and 12 (coins). Forsén 2011

⁴⁶³ Forsén 2011, 9–10, 16. See also Forsén *et al* 2011, 82–83; Svana 2004; 2009; Lambrou 2006.

⁴⁶⁴ Dakaris 1963, 90–91; Voulgaraki 2018 (as an oracle); Baatz 1999 (as a farm).

⁴⁶⁵ Forsén 2019c, 9–11; Peacock 2014, 160–161; Voulgaraki 2018, 87–88.

engagement in animal husbandry, indicated by many loom-weights used in textile production (e.g. in the suite of rooms north of the tower).⁴⁶⁶ Beyond this agricultural evidence, a real need to defend is indicated by the discovery of artillery, at least seven catapults reconstructed by Dietwulf Baatz using finds of clamp sockets and parts of winches, as well as 27 pyramidal projectile heads.⁴⁶⁷ The excavator of the Nekromanteion, Dakaris, highlighted extensive evidence for a destruction of the complex, including the collapse of the central tower; he associated this with the conflict of 168/7 BCE, and argued that the site was re-used in (early) Roman times, when rooms to the east were constructed in the 1st century BCE.⁴⁶⁸ However, some finds (exhibited in the Ioannina museum) seemingly from the thick destruction layer could date to the 1st century BCE (i.e. stamped *amphorae*, an *amphora* stopper), in addition to a 1st-century BCE Knidian stamped *amphora* from room B2 (ascribed, perhaps mistakenly, to a later intrusion by Voulgaraki), though considerable work is needed to confirm this.⁴⁶⁹ Consequently, it is possible, though by no means clear at this point, that the destruction at the Nekromanteion that has been linked to 168/7 BCE may not have happened in the 2nd century BCE, but perhaps sometime in the 1st century BCE. After that the complex was re-used, as I discuss in chapter 5.

In Molossia, Episkopi was not the only site amongst the dispersed villages of the Hellenistic period to continue to operate after 168/7 BCE. As in the Kokytos valley, only one out of three dispersed villages was abandoned, according to Pliakou, who argued that “most *komai*, especially those consisting of complexes of two or three farmhouses, continued to exist”.⁴⁷⁰ Like Episkopi, the village at Agioi Apostoloi, for example, remained in use until the

⁴⁶⁶ Tzouvara-Souli 1983.

⁴⁶⁷ Baatz 1999, 153-154; Forsén 2021, 233.

⁴⁶⁸ Dakaris 1963, 90–92; Forsén 2019c, 21; Voulgaraki 2018, 55.

⁴⁶⁹ This was suggested to me by Dimitris Grigoropoulos when I showed him those finds, who noted that they would probably post-date Sullan deposits in the area of the Roman Agora in Athens. Voulgaraki 2018, 87. See also Vlachopoulou-Oikonomou 1979.

⁴⁷⁰ Pliakou 2018b, 146–147.

mid-1st century BCE (Figure 40).⁴⁷¹ On the basis of the numismatic evidence of the Epirote Koinon (postdating 148 BCE) and pottery from the second half of the 2nd and early 1st centuries BCE, Pliakou argued that “the Roman conquest did not bring dramatic change in the settlement pattern of the Ioannina basin”.⁴⁷² However, it is possible that some of those farmhouses belonging to *komai* went out of use, like Building E near Building A at Episkopi, which Pliakou dated from the 4th–mid-2nd centuries BCE, possibly suggesting a decline in overall site numbers more similar to the situation in the Kokytos valley; without similar survey evidence, however, this is difficult to ascertain.⁴⁷³

In Chaonia there is also evidence for the continuity of the first phases of fortified farms at least until the second half of the 2nd century BCE and probably until the first half of the 1st century BCE at Matomara. These fortified farms, according to Bogdani, would have belonged to larger rural communities, in a similar spatial arrangement to the farms forming villages in the Kokytos valley and in the plain of Ioannina, investigated by Forsén and Pliakou.⁴⁷⁴ He argued this on the basis of the remains surveyed in the vicinity of Matomara, which suggested to him many farms located near each other that he compared to the arrangement of the village community at Kyra Panaghia (no. 15) in the Kokytos valley.⁴⁷⁵ Near Malathrea the “Mursi survey” also discovered two clusters of sites each consisting of multiple buildings (though dated broadly to the Roman period, and to the Imperial period, based on surface finds), perhaps suggesting the existence of another dispersed village, of which Malathrea was the wealthiest, in this case fortified, farm.⁴⁷⁶ Consequently, while the picture is not entirely uniform, and there is

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁴⁷² Pliakou 2018b, 146–147; 2013.

⁴⁷³ 2013, 455.

⁴⁷⁴ Bogdani 2012a, 337.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*; Svana 2004; Forsén 2011, 16–17; 2019a, 5.

⁴⁷⁶ Hodges et al. 2016, 276, 279.

a noted decrease in settlement especially in the Kokytos valley suggesting the abandonment of some villages or some farms associated with them (e.g. one of the hamlets (E 15) that made up the larger village community at Kyra Panaghia, no. 15; possibly Building E at Episkopi, no. 1), dispersed settlements across Epirus continued to be used.

Dispersed settlements or villages reflected the pre-Roman organisation of Epirote communities, like the tribe of the *Prasaiboi* in Chaonia, which, according to Frank Daubner who studied associated epigraphic evidence, were organised in households connected to others through kinship links forming extended family groups (of up to 250 people).⁴⁷⁷ He counted over 90 *ethnika* corresponding to family or clan names in the Butrint manumission inscriptions (coming from the theatre of the Asklepios sanctuary and re-used in a Roman tower), published by Cabanes and Drini who dated them from ca. 160–100 BCE, though some might have been as early as the 3rd century BCE and others as late as the 1st century BCE.⁴⁷⁸ Daubner wrote that these large families compared to the extended family groups of pre-modern agro-pastoral communities in Epirus, like the *sói* of the Sarakatsani or the *paréa* or *stáni* of the Aromanian “Vlachs”.⁴⁷⁹ In this organisation wealth was managed and land was owned collectively amongst the members of an extended family, including women, rather than being managed only by an individual at the head of a family.⁴⁸⁰ For instance, slaves that had been owned by the Philoxenos clan were freed by its different members together.⁴⁸¹ This was by no means an egalitarian society, since the evidence for this social organisation comes precisely from evidence for the freeing of slaves. Furthermore, the numerous examples of fortified farms in coastal Chaonia

⁴⁷⁷ Daubner 2019, 126. See also Daubner 2014, esp. 102–103.

⁴⁷⁸ Daubner 2019, 125; Cabanes et al. 2007, 289.

⁴⁷⁹ Daubner 2019, 127–128.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.* See also Cabanes 1997a, 123.

⁴⁸¹ Daubner 2014, 115; 2019, 127–129.

might speak to a concern for defence, especially of agricultural produce, perhaps in response to competition between local families here or inter-regional competition between communities in different parts of Epirus. Indeed, as discussed in chapter 1, there is evidence that friendship or opposition to Rome in 168/7 BCE was owed to conflicts amongst local leaders. So while we should not envision equal, or entirely peaceful, societies, we might imagine communities organised and acting in collectives (and of course there were also those who were not part of a collective). This sort of social organisation was central to pre-Roman agricultural economies in Epirus, and I would argue the continuity of dispersed villages might actually reflect the endurance of these economies, and how they functioned.

By the middle of the 1st century BCE, however, things were changing. Across farms associated especially with dispersed villages (e.g. Episkopi, Gephyrakia, Agioi Apostoloi) destruction layers have been dated to ca. the mid-1st century BCE, after which these farms were not inhabited or re-used. Together with the end of the first phases of fortified structures, represented by a break in the archaeological sequence, which was followed by new architectural phases discussed in chapter 5, this suggests a broader rural restructuring. In some cases rural sites may have changed a little earlier than the middle of the 1st century, since rebuilding at Agios Donatos—and its transformation into a villa—could have occurred as early as the second quarter of the 1st century BCE, or as late as the middle of the century. At the same time, Bowden noted significant mid-1st-century BCE deposits at Diaporit (no. 9), the site of a later villa but whose form during the 1st century BCE is unclear; these deposits might be associated with clean-up or rebuilding.⁴⁸² The significance of these changes for the development of the agricultural economy is further explored in the next chapter, together with written evidence.

⁴⁸² Bowden and Pärzhita 2014, 470.

Epirote cities, hilltop towns and settlements

Evidence for habitation from rural sites after 168/7 BCE is complemented by material from Epirote urban centres. These included from north to south Kassope, Ambrakia and Horraon near the Ambracian Gulf, Elea, Gitana, Dymokastro and Fanoti in the region of Thesprotia, Megalo Gardiki and Kastritsa in the heartland of Molossia, and Phoinike and Butrint in coastal Chaonia, amongst a greater number of other settlements (Figure 40).⁴⁸³ Different forms of urban settlement can be discerned in this group. Some had features that have been associated with cities or *poleis*, such as theatres and other public buildings in addition to town walls and necropoleis, at Ambrakia, Kassope, Gitana, Phoinike and Butrint.⁴⁸⁴ Others had spaces that have been interpreted as public areas, like the *agora* of Elea nearby the rural complex at Agios Donatos, which consisted of three *stoa*’s laid out in the centre of the flat area enclosed by its robust walls.⁴⁸⁵ However, at walled hilltop settlements such as Megalo Gardiki or Kastritsa—overlooking dispersed villages, like Episkopi, in the Ioannina plain below—only domestic and artisanal buildings have been identified.⁴⁸⁶ To a degree this may reflect the uneven intensity of research by which these different sites have been investigated, which also might have had bearing on the phases of occupation that have been distinguished in different urban settlements. On the one hand, Butrint and Phoinike, have been the focal point of excavation programmes since the establishment of the Italian Archaeological Mission in this part of modern-day Albania

⁴⁸³ For a complete list of settlements see Antoniadis 2016.

⁴⁸⁴ Hoepfner et al. 1994 (Kassope). Kanta-Kitsou 2008 (Gitana). Riginos 2008; Papadopoulou 2015 (Ambrakia). Giorgi 2017; Lepore 2020 (Phoinike, and its necropolis, as well as Giorgi on Butrint).

⁴⁸⁵ Lazari and Riginos 2018, 264-265; Riginos and Lazari 2007.

⁴⁸⁶ Pliakou 2015b; Yiouni et al. 2015.

by Ugolini in the 1920s, lasting until 1940.⁴⁸⁷ At Butrint from 1994 extensive excavations and study of excavated material have been undertaken under the umbrella of the Butrint Foundation project, which have revealed substantial parts of the city, and successive habitation phases dated through meticulous stratigraphic work.⁴⁸⁸ On the other hand, urban settlements in modern-day Greece have seen comparatively far less intensive archaeological research, with the exception of Kassope (and Nikopolis), which was systematically excavated by Dakaris (University of Ioannina) together with Ernst-Ludwig Schwandner and Wolfram Hoepfner under a project centred on domestic architecture;⁴⁸⁹ at Kassope much of the excavated pottery was valiantly studied by Gravani, but especially with the goal of understanding local pottery production (e.g. relief *skyphoi*, red-glaze pottery) through study of its ceramic forms and their decoration and with a focus on the Hellenistic period.⁴⁹⁰ Other cities and towns were explored primarily in the last two-three decades by Ephorates of Antiquities, either in the context of rescue work (e.g. at Ambrakia, which lies under the modern-day city of Arta), or during modern, large-scale restoration projects aimed at creating archaeological parks, as at Elea, Gitana, Dymokastro, Fanoti, Megalo Gardiki, and Kastritsa.⁴⁹¹ Parts of these settlements have been excavated, or as at Kastritsa explored through test trenches, but large segments remain unexcavated, while not all of the finds have yet been studied, meaning our understanding of different phases and their chronology is only partial.⁴⁹² Despite the great variety of research methods and highly uneven research intensity at different urban settlements, by highlight different evidence it is possible to identify habitation phases that date after the conquest.

⁴⁸⁷ Ugolini 1932; 1942.

⁴⁸⁸ Hodges 2012, 45; Hernandez 2010, 112-116.

⁴⁸⁹ Hoepfner *et al.* 1994.

⁴⁹⁰ Gravani 1994; 1996; 2004.

⁴⁹¹ Riginos *et al.* 2018; Pliakou 2015a, 20; Yiouni *et al.* 2015, 14.

⁴⁹² Yiouni *et al.*, 14.

Most towns continued to be inhabited in the second half of the 2nd and in the 1st centuries BCE (as well as later, as is discussed in chapter 5). Butrint according to Hernandez experienced considerable and fast-paced urban growth in the last two centuries BCE.⁴⁹³ In the 2nd century BCE the theatre of the sanctuary of Asclepius (with a capacity of ca. 2,000 people) and the temple above it were built, amongst other constructions.⁴⁹⁴ These building works probably reflect the transformation of Butrint from being the sanctuary-meeting place of the Epirote *koinon* to becoming the *polis* of the tribe of the *Prasaiboi*.⁴⁹⁵ Previously, the tribe was rural (not living in a city, but in villages, discussed above); sometime in the 160s BCE they broke off from the Epirote *koinon* led by Charops the Younger based at Phoinike (κοινὸν τῶν Ἑπειρωτῶν [τῶν] περὶ Φοινίκη[ν described in an inscription), and they made Butrint their city (though they did not necessarily all move from the countryside to Butrint as a result, see chapter 4).⁴⁹⁶ This was cemented by the concurrent embellishment of the urban sanctuary of Asclepius and a rural sanctuary at Dobër (a stone's throw from the fortified structure), both of which received colossal cult statues (one perhaps of Cybele) carved in Parian and Pentelic marble probably made by Damophon of Messene.⁴⁹⁷ Investment in important urban and rural sanctuaries, especially a rural sanctuary seemingly at the border of the territory of Phoinike, would have clearly demarcated the new *polis-chora* relationship embodied by the new *Prasaiboian* state.⁴⁹⁸ Evidence of their newfound prosperity also comes in the form of the manumission inscriptions inscribed on the theatre, mentioned above.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹³ Hernandez 2010.

⁴⁹⁴ 2010, 289; Hernandez and Çondi 2008, 275–281.

⁴⁹⁵ Daubner 2018a, 134–135; Melfi 2012.

⁴⁹⁶ Daubner 2019, 126; 2014, 114. See also Melfi 2012, 24; Daubner 2020. Drini 1987 (on when the new Prasaiboian *koinon* was formed). Syll.3 563A (on the Epirote *koinon* led by Charops based at Phoinike).

⁴⁹⁷ Melfi 2007; Melfi and Martens 2020, 597.

⁴⁹⁸ de Polignac 1995, 33, 40.

⁴⁹⁹ Hernandez and Çondi 2008, 277; Cabanes and Drini 2007, 289.

Other northern Epirote cities have also produced significant evidence for building works in the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE. For instance, the theatre of Phoinike saw a major renovation dating to the second half of the 2nd century BCE (or to the 1st century BCE according to other sources, which could correspond to a second renovation, Figure 88).⁵⁰⁰ At Amantia the *stadium* was dated to the 2nd century BCE, and at Oricum the *odeon* was dated to the 1st century BCE.⁵⁰¹ It has been suggested by some, such as Hernandez, that Butrint and other northern Epirote cities prospered, seeing “an unprecedented phase of architectural developments in the 2nd century B.C.”; meanwhile “the coastal cities of southern Epirus in the territories of Thesprotia and Cassiopea continued to be inhabited, but with a depressed economy,” since according to Hernandez they did not see the same wave of urban constructions (although at Gitana a *stoa* of the Agora was built in the mid-2nd century BCE).⁵⁰² This view on the decline of southern Epirote cities (e.g. in modern-day Greece) was also supported by Zoumbaki, who proposed they may not *quite* have recovered politically, based on a seeming lack of municipal inscriptions from the later 2nd and 1st centuries BCE, although she also noted that the dearth of inscriptions could also reflect the lacuna of epigraphical research there.⁵⁰³ It is also possible that towns in southern Epirus did not need new public buildings because many already had them, unlike those in the north that previously lacked municipal culture. Furthermore, more limited public inscriptions may also reflect a decline in the municipal epigraphic habit. In short, while the urban efflorescence of Butrint in the north is undeniable, I think that the flourishing of northern Epirote cities as a correlative of the decline of southern and inland Epirote cities and towns has been overstated. An examination of archaeological evidence from southern Epirote cities, discussed

⁵⁰⁰ Villicich 2007a, pp. 83–84; 2007b, pp. 71–72; Vasileiadis et al. 2008, 109

⁵⁰¹ Anamali 1972, pp. 79, 93 ; Budina 1964; 1976.

⁵⁰² Hernandez 2010, 71, 305; Vasileiadis et al. 2008, 105.

⁵⁰³ Zoumbaki 2019, 380–381

below, suggests not only that they continued to be inhabited, but also that they prospered, even if the material culture is slightly different to that which has emerged from northern towns.

In most southern Epirote cities and hilltop towns there is evidence from the funerary record, habitation of buildings, and in the form of *amphora* imports dating later than the middle of the 2nd century BCE, and down to at least the middle of the 1st century BCE (or later into the early Empire in other cases), suggesting sustained urban activity (Figure 40).⁵⁰⁴ For example, the cemeteries of Ambrakia and Gitana had tomb contexts dating to second half of 2nd–early 1st centuries BCE.⁵⁰⁵ Elsewhere houses, like buildings B and A at Megalo Gardiki in Molossia, were inhabited; e.g. Building B (room IV, upper layer (III)) produced coins minted by Epirote cities after 148 BCE and late 2nd and 1st-century BCE finewares, including red regional *sigillata* and grey finewares (in addition to considerable Italian *sigillata*, possibly connected to an Augustan phase, and later Imperial coins).⁵⁰⁶ Finewares categorised broadly as “late Hellenistic” (e.g. relief *skyphoi*, e.g. with long leaves alternating with acanthus leaves, or with dolphins), dating from the second half of the 2nd–1st centuries BCE, were also components of assemblages at Fanoti, Thesprotian and other towns (e.g. Dymokastro, Elea), as well as Phoinike.⁵⁰⁷ Italic *amphorae* of the 2nd–1st centuries BCE (e.g. late Greco-Italic, Lamboglia 2, Dressel 1) were imported to Elea, Gitana, Fanoti, and Dymokastro (in addition to Phoinike).⁵⁰⁸ Consequently, Epirote towns in the south did not simply survive, and [as I discussed in chapter 1](#), we should also be cautious not to read destruction and decline described by ancient authors

⁵⁰⁴ Much of this evidence was discussed by Pliakou and Antoniadis in their 2019 conference presentation, already mentioned.

⁵⁰⁵ Aggeli 2000 (Ambrakia); Kanta-Kitsou 2008, 61–65 (Gitana).

⁵⁰⁶ Pliakou et al. 2015, 23–34; Pliakou 2015a, 701–702.

⁵⁰⁷ Pliakou and Antoniadis 2019 conference presentation. See also Pliakou 2019, 301–304; Gamberini 2016, 157–167.

⁵⁰⁸ Riginos 2007, 163–166; Pliakou and Antoniadis 2019 conference presentation, who also noted a Sicilian “Punic” *amphora* of the first half of the 1st century BCE from Elea. Kanta-Kitsou et al. 2008, 49–50; Lazari et al. 2018, fn. 17 (on Dymokastro and Fanoti); Gamberini 2016, 167 (on Phoinike).

into their archaeology, since evidence for destruction is elusive. After 168/7 BCE their inhabitants imported foodstuffs from Italy and utilised fine tablewares, which were also locally produced.

Local potters continued to be productive throughout the second half of the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE, e.g. in Ambrakia, Kassope, Gitana, as well as Phoinike.⁵⁰⁹ At Kassope Gravani identified three different workshops producing relief *skyphoi*, creating a typology based on their decoration, their form and with reference to archaeological contexts.⁵¹⁰ According to her, workshop I operated until the mid-2nd century BCE and not past 167 BCE, workshop II approximately continued after 167 BCE but had declined, and workshop III from after 167 BCE until the end of the 2nd century BCE.⁵¹¹ She also identified the production of red regional *sigillata* plates, with a vertical rim possibly emulating similar plates with vertical rims of ESA or Campana A, which according to her dated from the later 2nd to the mid-1st century BCE.⁵¹² It would be good to be cautious of specific chronologies, particularly because at Kassope archaeological layers have been dated by a combination of their finds and historical events (e.g. the conquest in 168/7 BCE, participation of the Kassopeans in the Epirote *koinon* reconstituted ca. 148 BCE, the Nikopolitan *synoecism* after 31 BCE)—there may be underlying assumptions about the effect these events had on Kassope and local pottery production.⁵¹³ In Thesprotia pottery workshops, like Gitana's, worked from the middle of the 3rd throughout the 2nd centuries BCE, according to Pliakou, and also produced notable relief *skyphoi* in the late 2nd–1st centuries BCE.⁵¹⁴ To the north in Phoinike, ceramic production flourished in the 2nd and 1st centuries

⁵⁰⁹ Pliakou and Antoniadis 2019.

⁵¹⁰ Gravani 1996.

⁵¹¹ Gravani 1996, 225, 227, 234-246.

⁵¹² Gravani 2004, esp. 580; Reynolds and Ikäheimo 2019, n. 21.

⁵¹³ Gravani 2004, 570.

⁵¹⁴ Pliakou 2019, 304.

BCE, and continued into the 1st century CE, as Gamberini's study showed.⁵¹⁵ The activity of Epirote ceramicists, who were in touch with broader ceramic developments and especially it seems with Italian pottery work, shows that their towns were active economically, a sign of prosperity.

Private life also flourished in southern Epirote towns. It has been suggested that after 168/7 BCE only parts of certain hilltop towns continued to be inhabited, e.g. at Megalo Gardiki, Dymokastro, while buildings in lower areas were abandoned, indicating to Forsén a contracted settlement, indicative of depopulation.⁵¹⁶ While some houses evidently saw an end to their use, the degree to which this reflected a contraction of settlement is questionable, since only small parts of those towns have been excavated. Alternatively, this re-organisation of the use of town space could also have had to do with the development of wealthier private houses (at the same time as the abandonment of some smaller ones) from the 2nd to the 1st centuries BCE (e.g. at Kassope, Megalo Gardiki, Kastritsa, possibly Horraon, and Dymokastro).⁵¹⁷ For example, at Kastritsa a large house was formed (seemingly from a number of smaller ones) at Building complex E (Figure 89), which had plastered walls, a black-and-white mosaic floor, and a bath; its cistern was also refurbished with supporting arches and covered with hydraulic mortar (Figures 90-91).⁵¹⁸ While the majority of the pottery from the house published thus far seems to date to the ca. 3rd–2nd centuries BCE, some of it dates down to the late 2nd–/early 1st centuries BCE, according to Pliakou, while coin issues of the Epirote *koinon* reconstituted ca. 148 BCE indicate its use in the second half of the 2nd century BCE.⁵¹⁹ Elements of the renovation, like

⁵¹⁵ Gamberini 2016, 157–167.

⁵¹⁶ Lazari et al. 2018, 269; Forsén 2021, 231–232.

⁵¹⁷ Hoepfner et al. 2005a, 400 (Kassope); Pliakou 2015, 28 (Megalo Gardiki); Yiouni et al. 2015, 58–63; Yiouni and Faklari 2018, 121–123 (Kastritsa); Lazari et al. 2018 (Dymokastro).

⁵¹⁸ Yiouni et al. 2015, 58–63; Yiouni and Faklari 2018, 121–123.

⁵¹⁹ Pliakou 2007, 127, 131.

the mosaic (dated on stylistic features to the late 2nd–1st centuries BCE), suggest a date for the renovation of Building complex E after the middle of the 2nd century BCE.⁵²⁰ At Kassope, houses (e.g. houses 1, 3 and 5) were enlarged both in the 2nd and in the 1st centuries BCE, gradually gobbling up other properties as well as public areas.⁵²¹ At Horraon, the striking House A (whose external and internal walls were built of large stone blocks) was also renovated after the mid-2nd century BCE, its paved internal courtyard turned into a small peristyle or portico (Figure 92).⁵²² Consequently, it is possible that wealth became increasingly concentrated in some cases in private domains, and that some of the towns' inhabitants gained after the conquest while others lost out. Possibly in some cases they lost out to new settlers (e.g. in the house of Building complex E at Kastritsa, for instance, features like the mosaic pavement, the bath and covered cistern would not have been out of place in houses in contemporary Italy). However, this did not reflect a wider urban decline—not in the north and not in the south. While some town houses, like some rural houses, may no longer have been used, these are less indicative of overall decline (certainly not desertion), and more, I would argue, of a changing society and economy, developments which are discussed in greater detail in chapters 4 and 5. Yet, the forms of rural settlement that were used in the period after 168/7 BCE, such as dispersed villages and fortified farms, were the same that had been used in the Hellenistic period.

Across Epirote towns, like in rural sites, particularly close connections with Italy were evidenced in the last two centuries BCE, indicated by *amphorae* imports and by connections between Epirote and Italian ceramic workshops, especially for the production of finewares. Gamberini, for example, argued that Phoinikiote workshops drew increasingly from Italian

⁵²⁰ Kyrkou 2020, 75, fn. 305.

⁵²¹ Hoepfner *et al.* 2005, 392, 400. See also Hoepfner *et al.* 1994, 156–158.

⁵²² Aggeli 2005a, 34.

sources for inspiration.⁵²³ Pliakou also argued for the close relationship of Thesprotian and Italian ceramic workshops, especially to produce lates or dishes in the form of red *sigillata*, as well as *skyphoi*, with vertical rims.⁵²⁴ At the same time, *amphorae*, such as late Greco-Italic, Lamboglia 2 and Dressel 1, which most often carried wine, were imported to Gitana, Fanoti, Elea, Dymokastro, Phoinike and Butrint as well as Dyrrachium, as noted above, though some of them (e.g. at Gitana) could also be local imitations.⁵²⁵ Reynolds agrees that from the 2nd to the 1st centuries BCE we see a stronger Italian factor in imports, which he observed through his (unpublished) work at Dyrrachium, and more recently at Butrint, amongst other Epirote sites, like Agios Donatos and the Augustus Victory Monument at Nikopolis (unpublished).⁵²⁶ Italian *amphorae* were also evidenced in rural sites like Matomara and the village at Episkopi. There is a clear economic connection between Epirus and Italy after the conquest, demonstrated in trade, but which seems to have been deeper than that, especially given what seems to be a strong preference for Italian wine—which the Epirote landscape could and did produce later on during the Empire as I show in chapter 6. I explore the possible reasons for these close Epirote-Italian links after 168/7 BCE in the next chapter, but I do not think that they were purely political, nor only a consequence of Roman agency. As I discuss in chapter 4 they can be traced to the period before the conquest, even if they intensified after it. Since the blow dealt by the conquest may also not have been so harsh or long-lasting, then it might be possible that individuals on either side of the Adriatic actively sought to generate connections.

⁵²³ Gamberini 2016.

⁵²⁴ E.g. Pliakou 2019, 305 (citing especially Morel series 2264, 2265, 2274, 2275 and 2721, 2731 and 2732 as parallels for plates and *skyphoi* with vertical rims produced in Thesprotia). See also at Kassope: Gravani 2004, esp. 580.

⁵²⁵ Pliakou 2019, 305; Preka-Alexandri and Argyrou 2019. For the use of late Greco-Italic, Lamboglia 2, and Dressel 1 *amphorae* to transport wine, the latter also with *tituli picti* evidencing this, see: Van Limbergen 2018, esp. 207; Tchernia 1986.

⁵²⁶ Pers. com. Reynolds. See also Reynolds in Gutteridge et al. 2003 (Dyrrachium); Reynolds and Ikäheimo 2019, 380–381 (Augustus Victory Monument).

Chapter 4. Networks, investment, and the agricultural economy after 168/7 BCE

In a commonly accepted line of thought, Cabanes suggested that after the Roman conquest and its destructive effects, Epirus like other Roman provinces underwent an “agricultural colonisation”.⁵²⁷ Many have shared his perspective. Deniaux saw the *Synepirotae* as analogous, less studied, characters to the large-scale land investors active in Sicily and North Africa during the last centuries BCE and in the Empire.⁵²⁸ Bowden wrote that “the senatorial aristocracy of Rome establish[ed] major landholdings and estates within Epirus, the first area outside the Italian peninsula where this occurred to a significant level.”⁵²⁹ Alcock too emphasised exceptional Roman investment (for her, it was unusual in a Greek context), calling it “large-scale infiltration”, which followed “the devastating attack upon Epirus in 167 BC”.⁵³⁰ Eberle and Le Quéré, in contrast to Alcock, saw the activities of the *Synepirotae* as part of a broader early Roman exploitation of Greece, aimed to feed Italy’s “consumer revolution”.⁵³¹ Forsén agreed, specifically connecting Agios Donatos with Roman aristocrats (Eberle and Le Quéré utilised Forsén’s reconstruction of the site’s development).⁵³² He called the activities of the Roman elite in Epirus during the period 167 to 31 BCE “the years of wild ‘capitalism’”, which disrupted “previous ways of life.”⁵³³

Scholarship has emphasised the narrative derived from ancient accounts and heavily relied on this evidence, namely Livy, Strabo, and Varro, envisioning a linear historical

⁵²⁷ Cabanes 1997a, 124–125.

⁵²⁸ Deniaux 1987, 246.

⁵²⁹ Bowden 2009, 169.

⁵³⁰ Alcock 1993.

⁵³¹ Eberle and Le Quéré 2017, 41.

⁵³² Forsén 2019c, 22

⁵³³ *Ibid.*, 17–18. Contra: Antoniadis (2019, 391) who argued for greater continuity with the Hellenistic landscape.

development that privileges Roman change: from dramatic destruction to eventual economic recovery through the establishment of estates by Roman aristocrats (or "Romans" more broadly).⁵³⁴ As I discussed in chapter 1, this Romano-centric narrative has not been systematically questioned, and little attention has been paid to possibly local forces in the economic activities after 168/7 BCE, which I hope to emphasise in this chapter. Part of the issue has also had to do with the limited rural data and of a low chronological resolution that was available to researchers like Bowden when he published *Epirus Vetus* in 2003. Very few Roman-period rural sites had been excavated and sites dubbed "villas" had been assigned broad, provisional chronologies starting from the 1st century BCE or 1st century CE, as I also discussed in chapter 1. These broad chronologies were mistakenly taken for granted, and appeared to align with the chronology for the establishment of Roman estates discussed in the ancient literature. Yet, the pottery from those sites had not yet been thoroughly studied—and indeed my ceramic work showed some of these villa sites turned out to be later in date (compare Figure 15 and Figure 16). For the period after 168/7 BCE until the middle of the 1st century BCE evidence for villas was limited, as I showed in the last chapter. In chapter 3 I highlighted the different forms of rural settlement that were used like the fortified farms of Chaonia and dispersed villages such as Episkopi. These sites, and even the complex at Agios Donatos until its transformation into a villa by the mid-1st century BCE showed little change in the make-up of their material culture, like the finewares used by their inhabitants (and there was little evidence of interruption to their phases to correspond with 168/7 BCE). I also showed that despite evidence for reduced settlement e.g. in the Kokytos valley, previous ways of life in the countryside and in Epirote towns do not appear to have been so dramatically disrupted; in connection to Epirote towns I

⁵³⁴ On destruction in 168/7 BCE: Livy *History of Rome*, 45.34; Strabo *Geography*, 7.7.3. On the establishment of Roman estates in Epirus: Varro *De re rustica*, Book II.

discussed evidence for urban growth at Butrint studied by Hernandez, and for less-intensively explored towns, I highlighted domestic, ceramic, and funerary evidence, as well as evidence for trade with Italy in the last two centuries BCE.⁵³⁵ Rural and urban activity could often be dated before the *Synepirotae* arrived to Epirus, which means they cannot be used as the sole explanation to explain agricultural activity after the conquest.

Specifically, in our texts Roman elite activities in Epirus are evidenced only from the early 60s BCE. Cicero congratulated Atticus on the purchase of his Epirote property in 68 BCE.⁵³⁶ Varro set his dialogue with the *Synepirotae* when he was in “command of the Greek fleets operating between Delos and Sicily”, for which he received the *corona rostrata* in 67 BCE.⁵³⁷ These chronologies for the investment of Roman aristocrats in Epirus to a degree might also reflect the date of our available texts. We could envision that Roman aristocrats were at least capable of buying property in Epirus as early as the mid-80s BCE, after considerable wealth was accumulated through the campaigns of the First Mithridatic war in the first half of the 80s BCE. Even so, it is not possible to associate agricultural productivity that pre-dated the 80s BCE with the later activities of Roman aristocrats, especially since the material culture of rural sites did not change significantly. We have to look instead for how the activities of the *Synepirotae* fit into broader Roman and Epirote socio-economic developments.

In this chapter I investigate primary literary and other written evidence that I combine with the archaeological evidence presented in chapter 3 to argue that agricultural activities grew not out of purely Roman actions, but from parallel interactions of Romans and Epirotes. Militarily Rome conquered Epirus. However, I will argue that the conquest also afforded

⁵³⁵ Hernandez 2010.

⁵³⁶ *Letters to Atticus*, 1.5.

⁵³⁷ *De re rustica*, II.introduction.1.

expanded network possibilities, especially with Italy, which could be tapped into by individuals on either side of the Adriatic, thus stimulating local agricultural production, and even attracting members of the Roman elite to invest in Epirus. Investigation of this side-by-side activity offers some insight into the nature of Roman conquest, with which economic interests appear at times to have been intertwined. Events, however, also unravelled in Epirus independent of the timeline of Roman developments, which can be better understood not by trying fit them into Roman history, but by visualising them as part of separate yet concurrent developments underway in Epirus in the last two centuries BCE and into the early Empire.

4.1 The Roman conquest: military and economic perspectives

I begin with a brief historical outline of Roman interventions in the eastern Adriatic and in Epirus. In the second half of the 3rd century the Romans, who had been increasingly present in the eastern Adriatic during the course of the 3rd century (e.g. participating in a sea-faring cult to Diomedes at the sanctuary of Palagruža, Croatia, and attested epigraphically as is discussed below), came into conflict with Illyria.⁵³⁸ According to Polybius, in 228/7 BCE the Illyrian Queen Teuta, following her assassination of Roman ambassadors, sabotaged Roman maritime trade by allowing Illyrian pirates to freely commandeer Roman merchant vessels.⁵³⁹ After she conquered Phoinike (then a prosperous trading city), the Romans retaliated in the First Illyrian War.⁵⁴⁰ Teuta surrendered after losing the war, which led to the establishment of alliances with

⁵³⁸ Čašule 2012, 205–207, 214–218.

⁵³⁹ Polybius, *Histories*, 2.8.1–2. See also Zoumbaki 2017, 84.

⁵⁴⁰ *Histories*, 2.8.1–2.

Rome, characterised as protectorates, or, less formally, as friendships (*amicitia*), along the northern coasts of Epirus at Epidamnos, Apollonia, Butrint and Corfu.⁵⁴¹ Subsequently (and intermittently), Rome's interference intensified, though it was Philip V of Macedon who was the aggressor in 214 BCE, initiating the First Macedonian War.⁵⁴² During the three Macedonian wars from 214 to 168 BCE Rome interceded militarily further south than before, namely in the Ionian islands and coastal Epirus. In 197 BCE L. Quinctus Flaminius conquered ancient Lefkas, which would become a major hub for Roman operations; it is interesting, as Pliakou notes, that Lefkas, according to Livy, was successfully besieged only with the help of Italian exiles (traders?) already living in it.⁵⁴³ In 189 BCE M. Fulvius Nobilior deployed poison gas in siege tunnels to exterminate Ambrakiot soldiers and captured ancient Ambrakia, which was extensively plundered of its artworks—"bare walls and door-posts had been left to the Ambrakiots to adore, to pray, and to supplicate" as Ambrakiot ambassadors told the senate in 187 BCE.⁵⁴⁴ Following these sinister developments, ancient Lefkas became a *civitas libera* and ancient Ambrakia, probably an allied city, or *civitas foederata*, securing for the Romans two more southern Adriatic coastal centres in Epirus, now formally connected to Rome.⁵⁴⁵ As the Third Macedonian War unfolded, Roman troops attacked some Epirote cities further inland, such as Fanoti (lost by Appius Claudius in 169 BCE; captured by Anicius Gallus in 168 BCE), Horraon and Passaron, which were allied with Macedon.⁵⁴⁶ The conquest of Epirus, which is also discussed extensively in chapter 1, culminated with the surrender of towns and—depending

⁵⁴¹ Eckstein 2007, 266. See also Zoumbaki's reading of Polybius in relation to the Corfiote relationship with Rome (2017, 84).

⁵⁴² Eckstein 2007, 266.

⁵⁴³ *History of Rome*, 33.17.11; Pliakou 2001, 147. See also Zoumbaki 2012, 85.

⁵⁴⁴ Livy, *History of Rome*, 38.43.5.

⁵⁴⁵ See Pliakou 2001, 147; Karatzeni 1999.

⁵⁴⁶ Livy, *History of Rome*, 43.21; 45.26. Daubner 2018a, 34–48 (discussing the activities of Anicius Gallus and Aemilius Paullus through northern Greece).

on the extent to which we are to believe Livy—their ransacking by the troops of Aemilius Paullus in 168/7 BCE. Yet, there is evidence in Epirote towns not only for their habitation thereafter, but also for engagement economic activities, like trade, indicated by the importation of Italic *amphorae* (e.g. Lamboglia 2 and Dressel 1, preceded by late Greco-Italic) and local fine pottery production, which indeed drew on Italic forms (e.g. Campana A).⁵⁴⁷ This indicates the expansion of Epirote-Italian network interactions, which can be traced back to the period before the conquest through economic developments.

When the Romans clashed with Queen Teuta (228/7 BCE) they did so at least partly over Teuta's interference in the Adriatic activities of Roman traders.⁵⁴⁸ Archaeologically trade with Italy is evidenced in Epirus from the second half of the 3rd and first half of the 2nd centuries BCE by Italian *amphorae*, specifically, late Greco-Italic (ca. 250/225–150/125 BCE), for instance, from Phoinike, and to the north in Illyria (e.g. Aulon, Apollonia and Dyrrachium, for whose distribution see the table in Shpuza).⁵⁴⁹ Contact between the mainland and the Ionian islands can also be confirmed by Corinthian A and B *amphorae* that were produced on the island of Corfu (e.g. with numerous examples from the Classical and Hellenistic phases of the fortified farm at Matomara).⁵⁵⁰ Individuals with Latin names or with indicators of Italian origin in their names, identified as Italians, are recorded in inscriptions from 3rd- and 2nd-century BCE Ambrakia, Dyrrachium, and possibly Butrint, like on the funerary *stele* of “Εὐκλῆς Κλέωνος Συρακόσιος”, presumably from Syracuse (ca. 3rd century BCE), as well as from Ionian islands.⁵⁵¹ Additionally, Eberle and Le Quéré mention Samnite and Messapian names in 3rd-

⁵⁴⁷ See discussion of this evidence in chapter 3.

⁵⁴⁸ Polybius, *Histories*, 2.8.1. See also Zoumbaki 2011, 524.

⁵⁴⁹ Shpuza 2016, 224–230; 2009a, 222–225, especially the table on page 225 on the distribution of Lamboglia 2 and Dressel 1 *amphorae* in northern Epirus and Illyria).

⁵⁵⁰ Aleotti 2012, 339–343.

⁵⁵¹ Katsadima 2003, 146–147, no. 88; Zoumbaki 2019, 374. Čašule 2012, 220–226 (on examples from Butrint and Dyrrachium). Zoumbaki 2017 (on Ionian islands).

century BCE Dyrrachium.⁵⁵² These Italian individuals are often suggested to have been merchants or *negatiatores*, though they are not, to the extent of my knowledge, identified directly as *negatiatores* in inscriptions.⁵⁵³ Their context, however, would not necessarily necessitate such identification, since most come from cult places, with individuals acting as manumitters or witnesses to manumissions (e.g. at Butrint, an honour to bestow upon a visitor, like a trader, as Daubner commented), or from funerary contexts (e.g. at Ambrakia).⁵⁵⁴ As Zoumbaki notes, the ancient literary record makes it clear that such businessmen often accompanied Roman troops and acted also as diplomats.⁵⁵⁵ Furthermore, the written commentary provided specifically by Polybius for Roman commerce in the Adriatic contemporary to the clash with Queen Teuta, combined with archaeological evidence for imported Italian *amphorae*, suggests that at least some of the epigraphically-attested Italian individuals would have been in Ambrakia, Butrint and Dyrrachium, amongst other eastern Adriatic ports, on business. All this suggests that an informal network of interactions between Rome and Epirus through trade existed before 168/7 BCE. Indeed, Čašule argued for its existence extending more broadly in the Adriatic where Roman trading activity is for him attested from the 4th or 3rd centuries BCE, which he suggested formed the background to Roman military activity beginning with the Illyrian War.⁵⁵⁶

The creation of Roman alliances with Epidamnos, Apollonia, Butrint and Corfu after the Illyrian War, followed by the establishment of more official relationships through the granting of *civitas* status to Leukas (after 197 BCE) and Ambrakia (after 189 BCE), would have

⁵⁵² 2017, 38.

⁵⁵³ Zoumbaki 2011, 524; 2017; 2019, 374; Čašule 2012, 220–226.

⁵⁵⁴ Čašule 2012, 220–221; Cabanes, Drini and Hatzopoulos 2007. Daubner comm. in his talk “What to do in Butrint? Occupations and social structures in the city and its surroundings” during the virtual *DERE* workshop III 2020.

⁵⁵⁵ 2011, 524.

⁵⁵⁶ 2012.

secured for Roman merchants privileges in Illyrian and Epirote ports. A senatorial decree (ca. 187 BCE, two years after the sack of Ambrakia by Fulvius Nobilior) described by Livy, suggests that the Roman state and individuals that spearheaded it had or supported mercantile interests in Ambrakia.⁵⁵⁷ Issued by *senatus consultum*, the decree, motioned by Aemilius Lepidus, allowed the Ambrakiots to recover all of their property, to be free, to have power over their own laws, and to collect port-duties, on the condition that the Romans and their Latin allies (*socii nominis latini*) were exempt from paying them.⁵⁵⁸ The decree comes almost 30 years after the *lex Claudia* (ca. 219/218 BCE), which prohibited senators or their sons from owning a *maritima navis*, or sea-going ship, that could hold more than 300 *amphorae*; this law can be interpreted as a check upon the wealth amassed by Roman senators, and it may well also reflect senatorial interests in long-distance trade.⁵⁵⁹ According to André Tchernia and Pragg the law more specifically may have responded to the meddling of senators while serving in the provinces in commercial activities of the state, and it was a means to regulate their behaviour.⁵⁶⁰ If they are correct, the *lex Claudia* would betray the significance of long-distance trade for the Roman state in the early 210s BCE, as well as how attractive it was even for senators. The rising importance of mercantile shipping at this time is also probably reflected in the increase of shipwrecks from the 3rd century into the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE,⁵⁶¹ and by a broader Roman economic interest in port exemptions in the first half of the 2nd century BCE (e.g. decrees similar to that related to Ambrakia come from Messene, while Delos was declared a free port in 166 BCE).⁵⁶²

⁵⁵⁷ Livy, *History of Rome*, 38.44.3–4.

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁹ Livy, *History of Rome*, 21.63.3–4; Meijer and van Nijf 1992, 15.

⁵⁶⁰ Tchernia 2016, 150–173; Pragg 2016.

⁵⁶¹ Tchernia 2016, 3–9; Parker 1992; Wilson 2011 (who also significantly points out the variable risks for wrecks in different periods, and how these may have affected numbers of wrecks over time).

⁵⁶² Strabo, *Geography*, 14.5.2.

Epirote ports specifically, like Lefkas, Ambrakia, Dymokastro, Gitana, Butrint and Phoinike—as well as Ionian islands—would have been important in supporting the activities of Roman merchants. One way in which they might have done so is the export from the Adriatic coasts of Italy of Italic wine carried in late Greco-Italic and Lamboglia 2 *amphorae* manufactured there, which have been found in large numbers in Epirote towns, as I have already discussed.⁵⁶³ Italic wine was exported in vast quantities in the 2nd century BCE and in the first half of the 1st century BCE, and the value of this trade is indicated by the dominance in wreck assemblages of Greco-Italic Dressel 1 and Lamboglia 2 until the second quarter of the 1st century BCE; wine from Italy was exchanged by Roman merchants for other “necessities” (*necessaria*) according to Polybius, such as livestock and slaves.⁵⁶⁴ While it is the Tyrrhenian production of these *amphorae* that has received the most scholarly attention, more recently Van Limbergen has illustrated the significance also of central Adriatic viticulture by assembling evidence for wineries and *amphora* production workshops.⁵⁶⁵ From central Adriatic Italy, late Greco-Italic and Lamboglia 2 wine-containing *amphorae* were exported all across the eastern coasts of the Adriatic Sea, in Greece, and further beyond to the western Mediterranean—especially to Spain, where Van Limbergen counted 60 findspots of Lamboglia 2 *amphorae*.⁵⁶⁶ Epirote ports would not only have been places to buy Italic wine, but they could also have served as crucial nodes for the expansion of the Roman wine trade of the central Adriatic and for the maintenance of a trade network, which had been under threat before, as the example of Teuta’s commandeering pirates illustrated.

⁵⁶³ On the importance of the central Adriatic wine trade see most notably: Van Limbergen 2011; 2018.

⁵⁶⁴ Tchernia 2016, 115-128; Polybius, *Histories*, 4.38.4.

⁵⁶⁵ Van Limbergen 2011; 2018; 2019.

⁵⁶⁶ Van Limbergen 2018, 207, 209, 214.

For Purcell and for Rizakis, early Imperial planning focusing on coastal Ionian locations, namely the foundation of colonies at Nikopolis and Patras, reflected an “economic flavour”; these cities were important because of their nodal position for Mediterranean shipping lanes, especially the Egyptian grain supply.⁵⁶⁷ An economic flavour could also be linked earlier on with the conquest in the later 3rd and first half of the 2nd century BCE, especially with reference to the export of Italic wine. Roman trading activities pre-dating 168 BCE consisted of informal (e.g. trading activities of Roman *negatiatores*) as well as increasingly more formal networks of interactions (e.g. indicated by the granting of *civitas* status to Epirote ports and the Ambrakiot decree of 187 BCE) between individuals on either side of the Adriatic.

4.2 Networks and the agricultural economy

Networks are defined as paths through which information is exchanged, while network analysis is a tool for exploring connections or relationships between places and people over time.⁵⁶⁸ Networks can be scale-free, like the Roman Republic or the Roman Empire, or small-world, like the local networks between towns in Epirus.⁵⁶⁹ They are formed and managed by people working as individuals or together in groups or communities, such as civic bodies, and they can also be brought about organically.⁵⁷⁰ Networks consist of nodes linked by lines, corresponding to connections, as well as hubs, which are particularly well-connected nodes, with numerous

⁵⁶⁷ Purcell 1987, 89–90; Rizakis 1996.

⁵⁶⁸ Brughmans 2010, 277.

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 278–280, see fig. 2.

⁵⁷⁰ Sweetman 2017, 4.

links to others.⁵⁷¹ An example of a hub in the period after 168/7 BCE in Epirus may have Butrint, discussed below, which could also have connected the small-world network in Epirus with the scale-free network of the Roman Republic; although this would not preclude connections also of other towns to the scale-free network, for instance coastal towns like Dymokastro, through maritime trade. Network analysis has been utilised in the study of Greece during the Roman period by Rebecca Sweetman, who has applied it to the Cyclades as a means of exploring the relationships through personal connections between different islands and, directly or indirectly, also with the Empire.⁵⁷² Sweetman emphasises the concept of phase transition in network analysis (developed in a branch of mathematics known as graph theory), that is the process by which new nodes, or even new networks, can form through wide-scale interactions between pre-existing nodes.⁵⁷³ Interesting is also the idea that the breaking of multiple links might function in the opposite way, leading to the disintegration of networks. In my view phase transition is important for understanding how increasing connectivity to the scale-free network of the Roman Republic via hubs like Butrint might have led to the establishment of new indirect links, for instance for rural sites, traceable archaeologically by the exchange of objects like Italic *amphorae*, and stimulated local agricultural production. Networks analysis is useful because it allows me to identify connections of different scales and character, from structured imperial planning, such as the senatorial decree related to Ambrakia (187 BCE), to less structured links made by individuals like merchants; it also gives weight to different perspectives, and allows me to look beyond imperial incentives to local ones.

⁵⁷¹ Sweetman 2016, 49.

⁵⁷² Sweetman 2016. See also Sweetman 2017.

⁵⁷³ Chen and D'Souza 2011, 1; Sweetman 2016, 49.

In some cases the elite of Italian towns developed particularly close relationships with Epirotes. A proxeny decree (ca. 170 BCE) from Dodona, the sanctuary-meeting place before 168/7 BCE of the Epirote *koinon* (“Ἀπειρωτᾶν”, led by the Molossians, including the Thesprotians and Chaonians), records the honours conferred by the *koinon* for services offered as *proxenos* upon a certain Gaius Dazoupos Rennio from Brindisi (“Γαίωι Δαζουποι Ῥεννίωι Βρεντεσίνοι”) and to his descendants.⁵⁷⁴ Dazoupos Rennio might have been a *negotiator* or a diplomat.⁵⁷⁵ He could also have been both. The honours he received (that the decree noted were more broadly granted to *proxenoi*), valid in peacetime and in war, included the right to “ἀτέλειαν” and “ἐντέλειαν”, i.e. to purchase and possess land and a house in Epirus, if he may have chosen to do so.⁵⁷⁶ While traditionally it has been considered exceptional for Romans to have held land in Greece during the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE, Eberle and Le Quéré amassed evidence that showed this could indeed happen, and occurred more frequently than was previously supposed, and perhaps the example of Rennio could be one of the earliest in Epirus.⁵⁷⁷ More importantly, the decree offers an example of a close relationship between an individual on the western end of the Strait of Otranto and Epirote groups, indicating that it was not only the Romans, but also Epirotes that pursued such relationships, and who consequently had an interest in Adriatic networks. On both sides we have evidence before 168/7 BCE for the increasing formalisation of relationships, as the examples of Rome with Ambrakia (ca. 187 BCE) and Epirus with a representative from Brindisi (ca. 170 BCE) make clear; in both cases too, economic interests are referred to (i.e.

⁵⁷⁴ ISE II 1975, 119.

⁵⁷⁵ Hatzfeld 1919, 187; Moretti 1975, 126–129.

⁵⁷⁶ ISE II 1975, 119.

⁵⁷⁷ 2017.

port exemptions) or implied (i.e. the buying up of property). Therefore, networks of Epirote-Italian interactions were a two-way street. The aim was for these relationships to remain in place even during warfare, as is included in the proxeny decree from Dodona, though of course things did not go as planned, since after 168/7 BCE the Epirote *koinon* would have been at least temporarily dissolved. Yet, political recuperation under Roman hegemony was underway after a decade, since two organised Epirote groups were received by the Roman senate in 157 BCE according to Polybius, one based at Phoinike, the other of “those who had been banished from it.”⁵⁷⁸ More groups probably existed. By 148 BCE Epirus and Illyria joined the Roman province of Macedonia.⁵⁷⁹

One of the chief results of the conquest’s culmination in 168/7 BCE beyond the establishment of Roman hegemony was the clearer definition of a scale-free network, e.g. geographically, legally, and in terms of the characters involved, wherein Rome was now central. Some Epirote individuals after the conquest, as I will show, became particularly adept at actively capitalising on the expanded opportunities that Roman connections could now afford, indeed they invited them, something illustrated particularly well by the case of Butrint.

Butrint: the case of the Prasaiboi

The flourishing of Butrint can be understood, as Daubner has argued, in the context of the Roman allegiances orchestrated by members of the tribe of the *Prasaiboi*.⁵⁸⁰ As I already discussed in chapter 3, the *Prasaiboi* were originally a predominantly agro-pastoral community

⁵⁷⁸ Polybius, *Histories*, 32.26.

⁵⁷⁹ Daubner 2019, 126.

⁵⁸⁰ Daubner 2014; 2019. He also presented aspects of this argument in his talk “What to do in Butrint? Occupations and social structures in the city and its surroundings” during the virtual DERE workshop III (06.11.2020).

who seem to have been living in dispersed villages in the countryside, socially organised in family groups or clans, of *ca.* 250 people corresponding to a village community.⁵⁸¹ Their territory would probably have encompassed the Vrina plain and coastal lands south to Konispol, and to the east would have extended to the ridges of the Shendenikut and Plativouni mountains (i.e. roughly to modern-day Qesarat).⁵⁸² This was a “relatively small, relatively closed community” of farmers and shepherds, with 4th-century BCE mercenary origins; after 168/7 BCE, they seem to have belonged to the Epirote *koinon* based at Phoinike led by Charops the Younger.⁵⁸³ Yet, sometime in the 160s BCE according to Daubner based on his interpretation of a Polybian passage, they broke off from Charops to establish their own state, doing so with the support of Tiberius Gracchus.⁵⁸⁴ And then something unusual happened: the *polis* of Butrint was created and added to the *Prasaiboian* territory—not the other way around as was typical in Greek communities.⁵⁸⁵ For Daubner this curious choice to urbanise did not only have to do with political reasons, like the desire for freedom from the tyranny of Charops the Younger, but also with economic incentives.⁵⁸⁶ For him, the urban development of the city, including the construction of a theatre with a capacity of *ca.* 2,000 people and the monumentalisation of the *agora* with two stoas by the end of the 2nd century BCE, was meant to attract further Roman connections, particularly the merchants who had already been active in the region.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸¹ Daubner 2014, 102–103.

⁵⁸² Daubner 2019, 126; Vasileiadis et al. 2008, 87.

⁵⁸³ Daubner presentation 06.11.2020, min 46:09. 2014, 113–114; 2019, 126–127.

⁵⁸⁴ Daubner (2014, 113–114) supported this by pointing out that the “*Kammanoi*” referred to by Polybius, whom Tiberius made Romans (31.9.1: “Καμμανούς ὑπηκόους ἐποίησε Ῥωμαίους”), can actually be identified with the inhabitants of precisely this region, because they act as witnesses in later manumissions from Butrint.

⁵⁸⁵ Daubner 2014, 114.

⁵⁸⁶ Daubner presentation 06.11.2020. Cabanes 2012 (on Charops the Younger). Polybius wrote about Charops that: “there never was and never will be a character more ferocious and brutal than that of Charops” (30.12).

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

I agree with Daubner's theory. Roman mercantile activities, such as the fruitful trade in wine from central Adriatic Italy in exchange for other products, would have benefitted especially from the creation of new nodes that could help expand these activities. The *Prasaiboian* tribe saw this and by making Butrint into a city they effectively created a hub that brought in new connections, making themselves part of a larger network. A century later by the 60s BCE (or as early as the 80s BCE), this brought in serious Roman investors at Butrint, namely the *Synepirotae*. Their clients were prominent local families of the *Prasaiboian* tribe (e.g. the Pomponii and Caecilii, who adopted Atticus' first and second *nomen*), whose names were recorded in inscriptions because they held multiple magistracies, dominating political life.⁵⁸⁸ These developments highlight the active network participation on the part of the *Prasaiboians*.

Changing network dynamics also brought about greater social differentiation, indicated in the manumission inscriptions through the adoption by some members of new property laws, discussed here. For example, traditionally the *Prasaiboians* had matriachical (or bilinear) relationships when it came to the way property was managed; often it remained in a woman's family when she married, the husband becoming incorporated into her family.⁵⁸⁹ However, some families in the last two centuries BCE adopted patriarchal legal relationships, which were more typical of Roman society.⁵⁹⁰ Daubner suggests that this happened because some families due to the new Roman relationships they forged while engaging in wider networks, broke off from the tribe's traditions and adopted broader practices; the same families were those who dominated political life, indicating their choices had to do with their changing ways of life, arguably in the city.⁵⁹¹ At the same time, their income may no longer have come exclusively

⁵⁸⁸ Hansen 2011, 95.

⁵⁸⁹ Daubner 2019, 132–137.

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 137.

from the land, but perhaps also from trade and other activities associated with their network participation, meaning they did not need to live in extended family groups, which had characterised rural communities.⁵⁹² This might also be why these individuals came to own property as individuals, not communally as families as the other members of the tribe did.⁵⁹³ The Roman conquest, under the influence of “globalisation” per Daubner, changed the way local societies were organised.⁵⁹⁴ However, since the chronology of different inscriptions within the corpus is shaky, for Daubner they cannot be used to support an evolutionary development as Cabanes had argued before him (e.g. recording an increase of individual manumitters and concomitant decrease of group manumitters), indicating over time the abandonment of pre-Roman ways of life.⁵⁹⁵ Instead, he suggests traditional legal relationships were not abandoned and extended family groups did not disappear.⁵⁹⁶ Therefore, the conquest led not to an evolutionary development, but to a process of greater social differentiation, manifested in the customs adopted by some members of the tribe but not by others.⁵⁹⁷

The clever network manoeuvres of some members of the tribe arguably also contributed to local agricultural productivity, with products produced in the territory of the tribe, such as cereals and livestock, capable of being traded out, perhaps in exchange for Italic wine. I suggest this is reflected in the continued use of fortified farms located in the *Prasaiboian* territory, like Malathrea and Dobër, at least in the second half of the 2nd and possibly in the first half of the 1st centuries BCE.⁵⁹⁸ As I mentioned in chapter 3, these structures, as was shown through survey for Matomara, might have been the wealthy centres of larger rural communities comprising

⁵⁹² *Ibid.*

⁵⁹³ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁵⁹⁴ Daubner presentation 06.11.2020.

⁵⁹⁵ Daubner 2019, 132, 137; I.Bouthr. S. 259; Cabanes 1997b, 123–124.

⁵⁹⁶ Daubner 2019, 137.

⁵⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁸ See in [chapter 3](#).

dispersed villages. We might think of them as the house-farms of leading families based in the countryside. The contemporaneous development of the urban sanctuary of Asclepius at Butrint with the rural sanctuary at Dobër adjacent to the fortified farm makes the connection between the city and its agricultural production, individuals inhabiting city and individuals inhabiting country, stronger.⁵⁹⁹ Both could have profited from expanded participation in wider networks.

Economic networks beyond Butrint and agricultural activity

Investigation of the case of Butrint, because of the availability of its epigraphic evidence that has also been intensively studied, clearly illustrates how network dynamics played out. Yet, connections to the wider trade network stretched beyond Butrint, as was indicated by the comprehensive distribution of Italian *amphorae* after the mid-2nd century BCE, such as Lamboglia 2, in Epirote towns (e.g. Kassope, Dymokastro, Gitana, Butrint, Phoinike) and rural sites (e.g. Episkopi, Matomara).⁶⁰⁰ This was also suggested by the local production in Epirus of ceramic vessels drawing inspiration from Italian ones, for instance, in Thesprotia (e.g. plates and *skyphoi* with vertical rims) and in Phoinike (e.g. the plates with horizontal, concave rims similar to examples in Campana A and B, mid-2nd–1st century BCE).⁶⁰¹ This evidence points to intense Italian connections. The participation of other Epirote individuals beyond Butrint in the network is also suggested by epigraphic evidence. For instance, a Molossian, Polynikos Kyestos, acted as a witness in a manumission by Apoitias, son of Antigonos, at Butrint;

⁵⁹⁹ See in [chapter 3](#).

⁶⁰⁰ See in [chapter 3](#).

⁶⁰¹ Pliakou 2019, 305 (citing especially Morel series 2264, 2265, 2274, 2275 and 2721, 2731 and 2732 as parallels for plates and *skyphoi* with vertical rims produced in Thesprotia); Gamberini 2016, 95–96, nos. 199–201, and 171 (Phoinikiote plates with horizontal, concave rims).

presumably, Polynikos was visiting the city from Molossia, and he may have been there on business.⁶⁰² The inscription (coming from the Roman tower) should date sometime after 168/7 BCE, since the same Apoitas was also mentioned as *theorodokos* at Delphi in an inscription dating from ca. the middle of the 2nd century BCE.⁶⁰³

Engagement in new network opportunities, for example in Roman trade, would have had positive knock-on effects that could have stimulated the post-168/7 BCE agricultural activity evidenced not only in Chaonia but also in Thesprotia and in Molossia. Hernandez argued for the export of Molossian animal-based goods via Butrint, such as sheep's wool.⁶⁰⁴ Some might have come, for example, from the Molossian farm at the dispersed village of Episkopi, which prospered down to the middle of the 1st century BCE (when it was destroyed).⁶⁰⁵ Its inhabitants were linked in, importing significant quantities of predominantly Italic *amphorae* (e.g. Lamboglia 2, Dressel 1C or B, etc.), possibly in return for exporting local products. Pliakou argued that the lead weights from Building A were probably used to weigh solid products, like the oats produced at the farm, that might have been sold at the market, for example in Molossian towns, like Kastritsa or Megalo Gardiki, alongside other local products (e.g. textiles, with evidence at Episkopi for at least three looms), or animals, and from there sold further to be exported.⁶⁰⁶ The scale of exports cannot be ascertained, but given that Roman merchants made use of Epirote ports, and sold their wine there, goods could easily have been traded out. Furthermore, given the particularly strong Roman connections engineered by some

⁶⁰² This was mentioned by Daubner in his presentation 06.11.2020, but see also Cabanes and Drini 1994, fn. 9 (Polynikos, son of Myrtilos, Kyestos, known from a tower inscription at Butrint). According to Cabanes and Drini (1994, fn. 9), "Kyestos" appears to have been a Molossian name, oft-encountered epigraphically in connection with Molossians: e.g. a Molossian *prostates*, and twice in Dodona in relation to two Molossians (Sabyrtios Molossian Kyestos and Krison Molossian Kyestos).

⁶⁰³ Cabanes and Drini 1994.

⁶⁰⁴ 2010, 79, 80, 292–306.

⁶⁰⁵ See in [chapter 3](#).

⁶⁰⁶ 2017.

Epirotes, like the *Prasaiboi*, and the function of some Epirote ports like Butrint as well-connected hubs, this would have made Epirus particularly attractive for Roman investors, like the *Synepirotae*.

4.3 Roman investors

When members of the Roman elite arrived to Epirus from the ca. 80s-/60s BCE, they were not attracted by a deserted landscape; nor I would argue were destruction and depopulation the only, nay the chief, stimuli for their exploitation. Instead, I would suggest they were pulled in by the manoeuvres of clever Epirotes, and by the network connections they created after 168/7 BCE, putting Epirus in an advantageous position to export products. Atticus and the *Synepirotae* were economically sophisticated individuals, as is suggested by their other activities.⁶⁰⁷ For instance, Atticus (who notably abstained from politics) was not only involved in extensive raising of Epirote stock, but was also a sort of large-scale broker. He loaned money to the city of Sicyon that he struggled to retrieve because of new legislation passed by the Senate, as we learn from his repeated pleas to Cicero to intervene.⁶⁰⁸ Cicero even teased Atticus that he probably flew to the city's outskirts upon hearing it was under siege by the Romans, presumably in order to be one of the first to reclaim the debt.⁶⁰⁹ Atticus also advised Cicero on regulating interest rates for sums loaned by Romans to the Salaminians in Cyprus, while Cicero was governor of Cilicia.⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁷ Zoumbaki 2019, 379, 382

⁶⁰⁸ *Letters to Atticus*, 41 (II.21).6, after 25 July 59 (mentioning Atticus' dealings with Sicyon), 19 (I.19)4. 9, 15 March 60 (hoping Atticus can coax some money out of them); 20 (I.20). 4, after 12 May 60 (plea to Cicero for help). See also Welch 1996

⁶⁰⁹ *Letters to Atticus*, 13 (I.13).

⁶¹⁰ E.g. *Ibid.*, 114 (V.21).10; 115 (VI.1).5; 116 (VI.2).8.

Atticus was not the only one of the *Synepirotae* engaged in varied economic activities. Cossinius, for example, belonged to an extended family of *negatiatores* whose names are known from all over the eastern Mediterranean, including Leukas, Delos and Ephesos.⁶¹¹ Murrius boasted about the export sales of his Reate horses raised in Epirus, which he said he even sold in Arcadia, a region famed for its own horses.⁶¹²

Given the entrepreneurial experience of these businessmen, I think we cannot read their choice to invest in Epirus as one purely arising from its alleged devastation (which I also argued had more limited long-term effects). Instead, their investments in Epirus reflected the network they could use to manage their estates, namely large-scale stock breeding, which was associated with communities of shepherds discussed in chapter 2 (who may have been peripatetic, grazing far beyond the borders of Epirus itself), and to export their products.⁶¹³ The extensive patron-client connections that they developed with local families at Butrint, coming to act as Hansen argued for Atticus as a patron for the city, show that Roman entrepreneurial activities relied on these local dynamics.⁶¹⁴

“Good things don’t last forever” in the words of the 1970s disco band Ecstasy, Passion and Pain.⁶¹⁵ Around the middle of the 1st century BCE Epirote communities were dealt a series of blows, which appear to have effected stronger change, seen in the countryside. For instance, dispersed villages, in use at least since the late Classical period (or earlier), at Episkopi in

⁶¹¹ Láng 2007, e.g. “A. Cossinius Philocrates Puteolanus” on Leukas (ca. 2nd–1st century BCE, probably the 1st century BCE, *CIL* III 574); “L. Cossinius T.” a merchant on Delos (early 1st century BCE). See also Forsén 2019c, 20.

⁶¹² Varro *On Agriculture* 2.6.1. For a lengthier discussion of the economic activities of the *Synepirotae* see Eberle and Le Quéré 2017, 15.

⁶¹³ See [chapter 2](#).

⁶¹⁴ Hansen 2011, 91–92.

⁶¹⁵ 1974.

Molossia or Gephyrakia in Thesprotia, went out of use. At the same time, rebuilding seems to have occurred at Agios Donatos (and possibly at Diaporit) in the middle of the 1st century BCE, while the Hellenistic phases of fortified structures, like Matomara, ended (and were subsequently followed by Roman renovations, discussed in the next chapter). The causes for these rural changes could have been many, and we cannot know which ones had a stronger effect. It is possible that the strife between Pompey and Caesar in Epirus during 49–48 BCE, later followed by the climax of the conflict between Octavian and of Mark Anthony and Cleopatra in 31 BCE at Actium, drained local resources. Caesar confirmed this, writing how his army consumed all the locally-available grain.⁶¹⁶ In fact, food had become so scarce as the conflict unfolded, that his soldiers made “loaves” using a root vegetable that was so unappetising, they hurled the loaves at their enemies.⁶¹⁷ Pompey might also have interfered in Caesar’s Epirote supply chain, burning local farms, perhaps like Episkopi, where Building B was destroyed by a fire, and its inhabitants were not able to recuperate their belongings. In addition to military strife, it has been suggested that a climatic crisis caused by the eruption of the Okmok volcano (in Alaska) in 44 BCE, affected agriculture and could have made matters worse.⁶¹⁸ Together these difficulties would have made it difficult for Epirote communities to produce enough to meet their needs or surplus yields, while fighting could have caused a temporary break in the network, cutting off any available supply from demand, and disrupting the activities of the *Synepirotae*. However, the micro-economies of smaller-scale farmers, like those associated with dispersed villages, would have been less able to recover than those of larger landowners. The decline of village communities that represented a pre-Roman social

⁶¹⁶ Caesar *Civil War* 3.49.1; 3.49.5.

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.47.4,6.

⁶¹⁸ McConnell et al. 2020b; 2020a

organisation, while not ubiquitous (e.g. in the Kokytos valley) as I discuss in the next chapter, was widespread, especially in Ioannina, where farms making up all the different *komai* that existed before 168/7 BCE appear to have gone out of use (e.g. at Episkopi, Agioi Apostoloi). This marked the first important change to the Greek agricultural economy of the region, which would undergo more transformations during the early Empire.

Chapter 5. Colonisation and the agricultural economies of Epirus in the early Imperial period

“**νυνὶ δ’ ἐρήμου τῆς πλείστης χώρας γεγενημένης καὶ τῶν κατοικιῶν, καὶ μάλιστα τῶν πόλεων, ἡφανισμένων, οὐδ’ εἰ δυναίτο τις ἀκριβοῦν ταῦτα [i.e. τοὺς ὅρους αὐτῶν], οὐδεν ἄν ποιοίη χρήσιμον διὰ τὴν ἀδοξίαν καὶ τὸν ἀφανισμόν αὐτῶν, ὅς ἐκ πολλοῦ χρόνου λαβὼν τὴν ἀρχὴν οὐδὲ νῦν πῶ πέπνυται κατὰ πολλὰ μέρη διὰ τὰς ἀποστάσεις...**”

“**...but now that most of the country has become deserted and the settlements, particularly the cities, have disappeared from sight, it would do no good, even if one could determine their boundaries with strict accuracy, to do so, because of their obscurity and their disappearance. This process of disappearing began a long time ago, and has not yet entirely ceased in many regions because the people keep revolting.**”

Strabo, *Geography*, 7.7.3

Translation by Horace Leonard Jones (1924), adapted

*Roman viewpoints on Epirus during the early Empire*⁶¹⁹

Strabo, as can be inferred from the passage above, struggled to describe the geography of Epirus in the early 1st century CE, when he was writing. Strabo wrote that this was due to “the process of disappearing” (“ἀφανισμόν”) of Epirote communities and their settlements, especially the

⁶¹⁹ The period encompassed in this chapter ranges approximately from the middle of the 1st century BCE to the late 1st century CE, though references are also made to developments lasting well into the 2nd century CE.

cities, which had obscured their geo-political boundaries, and turned a once-populous region into a desert (“ἐρημία κατέχει”), which was inhabited “in villages and in ruins”.⁶²⁰ However, his final statement in the above quotation (7.7.3) is a non sequitur. He wrote that the Epirote people kept revolting, thus presenting an obstacle to “the process of disappearing” which had consequently “not yet entirely ceased in many regions”. This implies that Epirote groups and the pre-existing geography were not gone.

Strabo went on to describe Epirote communities and their geography (e.g. of the “Χάονες”, “Μολοττοί”, and “Θεσπρωτοί”) alongside the new Roman geography, which comprised Roman cities like Nikopolis as well as Roman communities, such as the “alien settlers consisting of Romans” at Butrint (“ἐποίκους ἔχον Ῥωμαίους”).⁶²¹ Interestingly, it was only in the case of Butrint, mentioned cursorily in passing, that Strabo explicitly mentioned Roman colonists, while he also did not refer to Butrint as a colony, but only wrote that it had Roman settlers. Nikopolis, according to Strabo, was founded by Augustus to settle the inhabitants of failed or abandoned Epirote cities, like Ambrakia and probably others around the Ambracian Gulf and to the south.⁶²² While the Epirote landscape was changing, therefore, it was not yet as changed as Strabo’s narrative might at first reading lead us to believe.

Modern viewpoints on Epirus during the early Empire

Modern scholars have focused less on the traces of the Epirote geography in early Imperial times, and more on the direct effects that they envisaged the foundation of new Roman cities

⁶²⁰ 7.7.3, 7.7.9.

⁶²¹ 7.7.5.

⁶²² 7.7.6: “ὁ Σεβαστὸς ὁρῶν ἐκλελειμμένας τελέως τὰς πόλεις εἰς μίαν συνήκισε τὴν ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ κληθεῖσαν Νικόπολιν”. The status of Nikopolis is discussed in one of the [sections](#) below.

and colonies having on Epirote power structures and on land-management systems. For instance, Hernandez and Hodges (who focused on Butrint but referred to the province of Epirus as a whole) suggested an “agrarian reconfiguration”, emphasising the influx of Roman settlers, which led to “the formation of a new land-owning aristocracy that brought about changes in municipal political leadership”.⁶²³ For Bowden the “colonial foundations at Nikopolis and Butrint” brought “fundamental reorganisations of the landscape”, such as through proposed centuriations involving the “wholesale redistribution of land”, specifically during the Augustan period.⁶²⁴ These scholars argued that “Roman colonisation” or “Roman imperialism” (beginning earlier with the *Synepirotae*) directly led not only to widespread changes in land-ownership but also fuelled the development in early Imperial times of new Roman structures of exploitation, for instance through land centuriations and the proliferation, in those scholars’ views, of villas, that in Wodtke’s perspective grew in the 1st century CE (others argued for their earlier spread).⁶²⁵ Even in areas where Roman *coloniae* have not yet been definitively evidenced, such as in the Kokytos valley (where a colony called Photike *may* have been founded), it was still supposed that large-scale Roman re-organisations of the landscape would have occurred.⁶²⁶ In regions where colonies do not appear to have been founded, for example near Phoinike, a *civitas libera*, Giorgi also argued for the spread of “the well known Roman villa model”, in part through the transformation, in his view, of fortified farms into villas.⁶²⁷ It was suggested that through these new Roman models of agricultural exploitation Epirus

⁶²³ 2020, 302–305. See also Hodges et al. 2016, 275–276, 281–283.

⁶²⁴ Bowden 2007a; 2007b; 2009, 170; 2011, 112.

⁶²⁵ Wodtke 2011, 384–386, table 1; 2018, 358. Hernandez and Hodges 2020, 302–305; Bowden 2009, 170–171 (on the early Roman spread of villas to Epirus more broadly).

⁶²⁶ Forsén 2019b, 370; 2019c, 27–28.

⁶²⁷ Giorgi 2017, 16.

experienced early Roman agricultural intensification, like many other regions of the Roman world.⁶²⁸

In short, scholars have emphasised features characteristic of an early Roman agricultural economy that resembled those of Italy, areas in the Roman West, and North Africa. They also often supported the idea that, as happened in those other parts of the Roman world, new agricultural practices were implemented by Roman aristocrats and colonists.⁶²⁹ All these modern views for Epirus were not, however, based on analysis of the combined rural evidence from different regions, since no synthesis of Roman rural sites in Epirus has existed before this thesis. To a degree I think scholars assumed a template of colonial impact and development for Epirus drawn from other provinces, which the rural evidence as we will see may not entirely justify.

Other secondary scholarship seeking to make sense of Strabo's narrative argued for the geopolitical decline of Epirote communities from the Augustan period onwards.⁶³⁰ According to Isager, Strabo's account was not entirely accurate, since surveys like the Nikopolis Project survey showed no dramatic decrease in site scatters throughout the Roman period, but it was also not entirely inaccurate—nor was it drenched in rhetoric as Alcock had argued for Achaëa.⁶³¹ For Isager, Strabo's account reflected a decayed Epirote reality and the disappearance of Epirote *poleis*.⁶³² He suggested that early Imperial Epirus was characterised “by small scattered villages, indicating a decayed, more simple, and, according to Strabo's model, barbarian level of urbanisation”, with communities who were not able to organise

⁶²⁸ E.g. Hernandez and Hodges 2020.

⁶²⁹ For this view on the manner that villas spread: Marzano 2015b, 198.

⁶³⁰ Isager 2001.

⁶³¹ *Ibid.*; Wiseman 2001, 56; Alcock 1993, 24–32.

⁶³² Isager 2001, 21–24.

socially or politically on a broader level.⁶³³ Zoumbaki echoed Isager's perspective when she suggested that the dearth of major municipal inscriptions from certain Epirote *poleis* (mainly in the south), may indicate the possible disintegration of their political institutions (she also noted this was not definitely the case, since epigraphic evidence had not yet been collected and studied, so that the small number of inscriptions could also reflect a corresponding dearth of research).⁶³⁴

According to Gravani, the cause for the decline of Epirote towns like Kassope and Ambrakia was the immediate and transformative effect of the Nikopolitan *synoikismos* specifically in the Augustan period (as Bowden also argued).⁶³⁵ According to her, the *synoikismos* caused the abandonment of all pre-existing settlement and the desertion of Molossia, Kassopeia and Thesprotia in Augustan times, though as I have already mentioned she also noted rich Augustan finds from Kassope.⁶³⁶ According to the recent work of other scholars, the archaeology from other Epirote towns, such as Megalo Gardiki and Dymokastro, also included Augustan and 1st-century CE finds, indicating some form of continued habitation (e.g. at Megalo Gardiki the house buildings A and B saw a new architectural phase in the 1st century BCE–1st century CE, probably in Augustan times, based on Augustan ITS).⁶³⁷ It is also possible that members of the elite of those towns, like those of Kassope, or of the pre-Roman Epirote geography more broadly, like the *Prasaiboi*, were incorporated into new Roman cities, like Nikopolis and Butrint, but this has been investigated to a lesser degree. Consequently, Epirote land-owners may not have been entirely marginalised.

⁶³³ 2001, 24.

⁶³⁴ 2019, 380–381.

⁶³⁵ Gravani 2007.

⁶³⁶ *Ibid.*; 1994, 172. See also Schwandner 2001 and Gravani 2001 (Kassope); Dakaris 1971, 67.

⁶³⁷ Pliakou et al. 2015, 29; Lazari et al. 2018, 294.

Scholarly emphasis on the development of a new Roman agricultural economy and on the decline of pre-Roman Epirote communities in the early Empire seems to me to have led to disregard for the possible use or re-use in the early Imperial period of pre-Roman structures of exploitation. Modern scholarly arguments imply the replacement of old models for the land's cultivation by new ones, and consequently the dissolution of those prior models.⁶³⁸ This is seen in remarks such as: “Not unlike the history of the coastal regions around Glyki and Nicopolis, intensive Roman settlement following Octavian’s victory at the battle of Actium in 31 BC significantly altered the Hellenistic settlement pattern.”⁶³⁹ Yet, to what extent and how was the Hellenistic settlement pattern altered and where? Did pre-Roman forms of rural settlement disappear or turn into villas? Did villas proliferate in the early Empire?

In this chapter I investigate to what extent colonisation altered the agricultural economy of Epirus and explore the questions above. I begin with the development of pre-existing models of agricultural exploitation. In the next section I explore the re-use in the Roman period fortified farms in coastal Chaonia, centring on whether and how they might have changed. Thereafter I discuss the development of the complex at Agios Donatos in the early Imperial period, which grew out of pre-existing settlement, but, as I argued in chapter 3, had begun to look like a villa by the mid-1st century BCE (or slightly earlier); I do so by contextualising the site’s development in the broader context of the countryside of the Kokytos valley and its environs in early Imperial times. Finally, I turn my focus to evidently new models, specifically to the immediate hinterland of Nikopolis on the Preveza peninsula, where a well-documented centuriation is attested and rural sites have recently been excavated that seem to be connected to it. Two processes are investigated in these three sections—the transformation, or lack thereof,

⁶³⁸ E.g. Hernandez and Hodges 2020.

⁶³⁹ Hodges et al. 2016, 283.

of pre-existing rural settlement, and the establishment of new rural sites. These processes are discussed in the last section of this chapter, alongside evidence for the composition of the land-owning classes in the early Empire, to gauge the degree, the manner, and the pace of change observable in the agricultural economies of Epirus during the early Imperial period. While scholars have stressed swift agricultural transformation in Augustan times, I think in certain cases we need to reconsider the rate of change to agriculture, and I argue that this was on the whole more gradual.

5.1 The fortified farms of coastal Chaonia in the early Imperial period

In chapter 3 I discussed how rural fortified structures existed in the Hellenistic period in coastal Chaonia that were wealthy fortified farms, which continued to be used after 168/7 BCE. These fortified farms were also central to the development of the local agricultural economy in the early Imperial period. In Roman times these structures (e.g. Malathrea, Çuka, Metoq and Dobër, nos. 4-8) saw new architectural phases involving the construction of new rooms and renovations including the plastering of the walls of existing rooms.⁶⁴⁰ Modern authors like Giorgi, who had described these structures as fortified villas both in the Hellenistic and Roman period, argued that that the “architectonic remodelling” of some of them (e.g. Malathrea, no. 4) led to the loss of defensive elements such as towers, but not to any loss of “functional” structures related to “economic development”; this, together with construction of more typical villas, like Diaporit

⁶⁴⁰ Condi 1984c; 1986; 2017, 172–173, 181–182, 193.

(no. 9), signified the spread of “the well-known Roman villa model.”⁶⁴¹ Diaporit had porticoed terraces extending onto Lake Butrint and a lakeside ornamental water feature suggested to have been a fountain or *nymphaeum* by the mid-1st century CE (Figures 93-94).⁶⁴² Giorgi also supported the idea that the spread of villas was additionally suggested by a societal development indicated in the Butrint manumission inscriptions: namely, that these inscriptions recorded “an increase in the number of slaves possessed by a single family” from the mid-2nd to the mid-1st centuries BCE, suggesting the development of “un sistema di produzione di tipo schiavistico”.⁶⁴³ In fact, the inscriptions do not clearly record an evolutionary development, as also discussed in chapter 4.⁶⁴⁴ Ferriès and Skenderaj, like Giorgi, also supported the idea that the fortified structures were a form of villa specifically in the Roman period, but they argued more strongly for “une adaptation locale du système de la villa”, identifying differentiating features like a more compact plan of these fortified structures than that of villas like Diaporit.⁶⁴⁵ Both, they argued, grew in response to increased market demand during the Empire.⁶⁴⁶ But can we understand the Roman-period remodelling of fortified structures as indicative of their transformation into villas, either in terms of the spread of villa-related agricultural practices (e.g. market-oriented agricultural production), or in terms of the spread of elite villa culture? More broadly, what sort of agricultural developments did the Roman-period archaeology of these structures evince in coastal Chaonia?

My investigation of these questions centres on six excavated fortified rural structures, namely Malathrea (no. 4), Çuka e Aitoit (no. 7), Çuka (no. 5), Metoq (no. 6), Dobër (no. 8) and

⁶⁴¹ 2017, 16; Giorgi in De Maria et al. 2017, 60–61. Bowden and Përzhita 2020, 195–197 (Diaporit).

⁶⁴² 2017, 16; Bowden and Përzhita 2020, 195–197.

⁶⁴³ Giorgi in De Maria et al. 2017, 60; Giorgi 2017, 16. See also Cabanes 1997b, 124.

⁶⁴⁴ Daubner 2019, 132, 137.

⁶⁴⁵ Ferriès and Skenderaj 2015, 221.

⁶⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 221–223 : “avec une continuité d’occupation à peu près comparable.”

Matomara (no. 3), which were investigated to different extents as is discussed in Site Catalogue and in chapter 3. The precise date of their Roman-period architectural phases has not been extensively explored using their material culture. Thus, I begin by investigating the evidence that can be used to clarify the chronology of their new construction phases and their subsequent use.

*Chronology*⁶⁴⁷

Most scholarly interpretations of when the new architectural phases of the structures were built were influenced by historical phenomena, specifically, association with the activities of the *Synepirotae*.⁶⁴⁸ Consequently, the implication was that new constructions dated to the 1st century BCE, and, one would assume, the second or third quarters of that century. Meanwhile, the archaeology and especially specific finds in their stratigraphic contexts have not been systematically studied to date the structures—except at Matomara, whose Roman-period phases, alas, have probably been significantly disturbed by agriculture in the last 60 years.⁶⁴⁹ As I discussed in chapter 3 and in the Site Catalogue (see nos. 4-8), the phases of most these fortified farms have been tentatively and variably dated following their excavations, which have also been of varying intensities. The method employed (e.g. at Çuka, Metoq, Dobër) has been to distinguish broad strata, sometimes described as “Hellenistic” or “Roman”, and using a few finds connected to those layers to assign provisional chronologies for phases that reflect the date

⁶⁴⁷ The reader is advised to refer back chapter 3 to the beginning of the section on the chronology of fortified farms therein as well as to the Site Catalogue for discussion of the research and dating methods that have previously been employed to date these sites.

⁶⁴⁸ Giorgi 2017, 16; Giorgi in De Maria et al. 2017, 61.

⁶⁴⁹ Giorgi and Bogdani 2011, n. 9; Aleotti 2012, 339; Giorgi in De Maria et al. 2017, 59.

ranges of those finds (or rather find groups, like black-glazed finewares dated to the ca. 3rd-2nd centuries BCE at Çuka based on general parallels with finds from other sites).⁶⁵⁰ On this basis the second phases at Çuka and Metoq were dated from the 1st century to the 3rd or 4th centuries CE.⁶⁵¹ The second phase at Dobër was dated mainly from the 1st century BCE to the 2nd century CE, with some evidence for continued habitation through the 3rd century CE.⁶⁵² At Malathrea according to Çondi the second phase corresponded to the first centuries CE, but material of the 1st century BCE and 1st century CE dominated in the excavated assemblage.⁶⁵³ Because of the prevalence of this material he originally associated the Roman-period structure with a villa of Atticus, an association he later withdrew.⁶⁵⁴ At Building 1 in Çuka e Atjoit Selim Islami isolated a stratigraphic sequence of the 1st century BCE–1st century CE, which he suggested was the latest period when the structure was occupied.⁶⁵⁵ He had also earlier commented that the second phase of Malathrea was Augustan.⁶⁵⁶ Thus, based on the suggestions made by scholars until now, the Roman-period structures in fortified farms were built in the early Roman period, some seemingly in or by the 1st century CE, and Malathrea either also in the 1st century CE or possibly as early as the 1st century BCE, with Islami highlighting an Augustan habitation. These chronologies were based on the archaeology, on the drawing of certain broad parallels of finds groups, but not on identification of specific finds, which have not featured heavily in the discussion.

⁶⁵⁰ See Çondi 1984a (Malathrea); 1986 (Dobër); 2017, 164, 174 (Çuka and Metoq). More specifically, for the finds of connected to the second phase at Malathrea see Çondi 1984a, 143–146 (illustrated as follows—*amphorae*: Pl. II; tableware: Pl. III, nos. 14–20; cook ware: Pl. III, nos. 4–10; a glass unguentarium, Pl. III no. 13). For less detailed descriptions of those from Çuka and Metoq: Çondi 2017, 165–175

⁶⁵¹ Çondi 2017, 165, 175, 189.

⁶⁵² Çondi 1986, 263.

⁶⁵³ Çondi 1984a, 147–148.

⁶⁵⁴ *Ibid.*; Çondi 2017, 189.

⁶⁵⁵ 2020, 107–108.

⁶⁵⁶ Islami responding to a comment by Duval in Deniaux 1987, 254.

In order to refine the chronologies I studied some of the pottery from Malathrea, which had been illustrated by Çondi in greater detail than those of other structures, with the aim of making some identifications, or at least drawing comparisons with ceramic finds from other sites like Building 1 at Çuka e Aitoit.⁶⁵⁷ The reason that this was appropriate is that at Çuka e Aitoit a stratigraphic context had been isolated and dated to the 1st century BCE–1st century CE based on specific finds that it contained; those finds had been studied and dated, although not by making identifications, but rather it seems based on knowledge of the local archaeology, i.e. possibly making parallels to the same finds from other local sites, so it would be good to be cautious of their dates.⁶⁵⁸ Most of the ceramic finds from Malathrea that I could identify or find parallels for, indicated in Table 2 below, had date ranges that straddled the turn of the era; they dated to the 1st century BCE–1st century CE (e.g. an *amphora* with the “VEHILI” stamped manufactured in Brindisi), or broadly to the early Roman period. Yet, some tablewares, namely the plate (no. II.17, Figure 97) and dish or large bowl (no. II.16, Figure 97), might have dated to the 1st-century CE, based on their resemblance with finds from Çuka e Aitoit that were dated to the 1st century CE by Islami (nos. 50 and 52 in Figure 98).⁶⁵⁹ The plates (no. II.17 from Malathrea and no. 52 from Çuka e Aitoit), both almost flat may be identifiable with the flat or almost flat dishes and platters with carinated rims (“vassoio carenato”) produced at Phoinike in the Augustan period (e.g. no. 224, Figure 99).⁶⁶⁰ Therefore, some of the tableware from Roman-period Malathrea, and from Çuka e Aitoit, seems to be Augustan. The earliest finds I could draw parallels for (e.g. a 2nd–1st-century BCE bowl no. 19, Figure 97) or identify (e.g. a possible

⁶⁵⁷ For the finds from the “Palace” at Çuka e Aitoit: Islami 2020, with useful drawings (e.g. figs. 11.35, 11.38–11.40, 11.42).

⁶⁵⁸ Islami 2020.

⁶⁵⁹ 2020, 100.

⁶⁶⁰ Gamberini 2016, 99, nos. 221–224.

Lamboglia 2 *amphora* no. I.9, Figure 95) could be used to support a date in the 1st century BCE for new constructions, but no finds could distinctly be dated to the first half of the 1st century BCE. In fact, a piriform ceramic and a glass unguentarium (nos. II.12 and II.13) clearly post-dated the middle of the 1st century BCE, since glass-blowing and the imitation of glass-blown, piriform unguentaria by potters took off from the mid-1st century BCE onwards (Figure 97).⁶⁶¹ Cooking pots also appear to have been early Roman (see Table 2).

To sum up, my survey of the ceramic finds from the structure at Malathrea provided evidence in support of its remodelling in the Augustan period, specifically, I would suggest, during the early Augustan period in the later 1st century BCE. This could also have relevance for other structures because Çondi, who excavated Malathrea, Çuka, Metoq, and Dobër, suggested that their finds were similar.⁶⁶² The chronologies proposed for the second phases of Çuka and Metoq (1st–3rd or 4th centuries CE), while provisional, would indicate their new rooms were built in the 1st century CE, rather than in the 1st century BCE. Consequently, while it is good to keep an open mind until the finds are fully studied, I would argue there is more evidence to link the second phases of the fortified structures in coastal Chaonia with the early Imperial period, than with earlier times.

⁶⁶¹ Indgjerd 2014, 44; Anderson-Stojanović 1987, 110–113.

⁶⁶² Çondi 2017, 165, 175, 182, 193.

Class	Form	Type	Date	Find nos.
Table ware	Bowl	as Islami 2020, fig. 39, no. 32 from Çuka e Aitoit	2nd-1st c. BCE	no. II.19
	Plate	as Islami 2020, fig. 11.42, no. 52 from Çuka e Aitoit	Augustan?	no. II.17
	Dish/large bowl	possibly as Islami 2020, fig. 11.42, no. 50 from Çuka e Aitoit	probably 1st c. CE (acc. to Islami)	no. II.16
<i>Amphorae</i>	<i>Amphora</i>	Lamboglia 2?	late 2nd-1st c. BCE	no. I.9
	<i>Amphora</i>	VEHILI amphora from Brindisi (Cipriano & Carre 1989, 74, 92, 95)	1 st c. BCE-1st c. CE	no. I.11
	<i>Amphora</i>	"Italic", as Islami 2020, fig. 11.35, no. 4 from Çuka e Aitoit	1st c. BCE-1st c. CE	no. I.3
	<i>Amphora</i>	as Islami 2020, fig. 11.35, no. 5 from Çuka e Aitoit	1st c. BCE-1st c. CE?	no. I.8
	<i>Amphora</i> stopper		early Roman?	no. I.13
	<i>Amphora</i> stopper		early Roman?	no. I.14
Cooking ware	Pot	as Reynolds 2019, ERCP 1	early Roman (1st c. BCE/1st c. CE)	no. II.4
	Pot	as Reynolds 2019, ERCP 2 (e.g. Dia 1263.77, Fig. A. 3o)	mid-1st c. CE	no. II.10
Thin-walled ware?	Beaker		late Republican-early Imperial	no. II.14
Unguentarium	Piriform		post-middle of the 1st c. BCE	no. II.12
Glass unguentarium			post-middle of the 1st c. BCE	no. II.13

Table 2: Pottery and a glass unguentarium corresponding to the second phase at Malathrea⁶⁶³

Most of the fortified structures were also utilised after the early Empire. According to Çondi, Çuka, Metoq and Dobër were used until the 3rd or 4th centuries CE.⁶⁶⁴ At Matomara

⁶⁶³ Find nos. II. 4, 10, 12, 13, 16, 17 and 19 are illustrated in Figure 97; find nos. I. 3, 8, 9, 11, 13, and 14 are illustrated in Figure 95.

⁶⁶⁴ Çondi 2017, 164–165, 182, 183, 193.

Roman finds clustered not only in the 1st–2nd, as Aleotti suggested, but also in the 3rd–4th centuries CE.⁶⁶⁵ Numerous forms of grooved-rim cooking pots, a type dating from the mid-2nd to the late 3rd centuries CE according to Reynolds ("Epirote Grooved Rim Cooking Pot"/ERCP 3), were found (e.g. nos. 1–8), especially examples of the middle and second halves of the 3rd century CE (e.g. no. 3 close to form ERCP 3.7, mid-3rd century CE, and nos. 2 and 4 resembling form ERCP 3.10, mid-late 3rd century CE, see Figure 100).⁶⁶⁶ Additionally, at Malathrea, according to Gilkes, the farm was further altered in the 3rd century CE—though not citing specific evidence—but coins also indicated its use up to the late 3rd-/early 4th centuries CE (i.e. coins of Trajan, Hadrian, Faustina, Gordian and Diocletian).⁶⁶⁷ Therefore, while the fortified farms saw new architectural phases and evidently prospered, especially in the early Imperial period, since ceramic finds like those illustrated for Malathrea seem to concentrate in the early Empire, they either continued to be utilised or were re-used later on; the evidence indicates a reinvigoration in the 3rd–4th centuries CE. My refined chronology of the second phases of fortified farms is shown in Table 3 below.

Toponym	Roman proposed periods of use
Malathrea	1st century BCE (Augustan?)-3rd century CE, or slightly later
Matomara	1st century CE-second half of 3rd century CE, or slightly later
Çuka	1st-3rd centuries CE, or slightly later
Metoq	1st-4th centuries CE
Dobër	1st-3rd centuries CE
Çuka e Aitoit	1st century BCE-1st century CE

Table 3: Proposed second phases of fortified farms in coastal Chaonia

⁶⁶⁵ Aleotti 2012, 350–351.

⁶⁶⁶ Reynolds 2019, 406–407.

⁶⁶⁷ Çondi 1984a, 146–147; Gilkes 2013, 221.

Expanded agricultural production

Giorgi argued that “functional” spaces related to the “economic development” of fortified structures were retained in their new Roman-period architectural phases.⁶⁶⁸ In chapter 3 I argued that many spaces in Chaonian fortified farms could be identified as storerooms for the storage of agricultural produce (e.g. in rooms with *pithoi* found *in situ* on raised floors at Metoq, no. 6), most probably of cereals (also found carbonised at Metoq), legumes, and other foodstuffs associated with animal husbandry—all three productions were also evidenced for coastal Chaonia in ancient texts.⁶⁶⁹ Most of the storerooms seem to have been utilised in the Roman period as well. This is suggested, for instance, by the plastering of the walls of probable storage rooms at Metoq (rooms containing *pithoi*) and at Çuka (no. 5), in addition to the walls of rooms in their towers, which I argued were possible storerooms (like at the Nekromanteion, no. 16), especially their upper stories.⁶⁷⁰ Columella advised the plastering of the walls of granaries (going into quite a bit of detail), primarily in order to keep away weevils and other pests, who could ruin an entire crop.⁶⁷¹ Consequently, it is possible that the inhabitants of fortified farms adopted advice and building methods that could help maintain their crop which was circulated in the Roman period.

In addition to the re-use of existing storage spaces, the storage capacity of some fortified farms was expanded in Roman times. New storerooms, for example, which contained *pithoi* (found *in situ* or fragmented) were constructed at Çuka (e.g. the suite of rooms K, L, and O at

⁶⁶⁸ Giorgi in De Maria *et al.* 2017, 60–61.

⁶⁶⁹ See [section](#) in chapter 3.

⁶⁷⁰ Çondi 1984a, 143; 2017, 172, 181–182.

⁶⁷¹ *De re rustica*, 1.6.13–15.

Çuka shown in Figure 66) and at Dobër (no. 8).⁶⁷² At Malathrea (no. 4) a *horreum* with a large capacity was built on the western side of the complex, its floor surface area 181 m², with a tall roof indicated by four large central pillars for its support (Figure 71).⁶⁷³ The rooms D and G also continued to be used as storage areas.⁶⁷⁴ It is not clear if the new rooms constructed in the eastern side of Metoq were also used to store goods.⁶⁷⁵ Together, there is evidence for the expansion of storage facilities across these fortified farms.

Further inland along the course of the Vjosë River, additional probable storage spaces were discovered. Below the modern-day village of Qesarat a few test trenches revealed 20 rock-cut cavities in different locations below the modern village, carved in the shape of *pithoi*, (ca. 1.90 m tall and with a maximum diameter of 0.40 m), and found closed with stone plaques (Figure 101).⁶⁷⁶ While little was found inside them to identify their use or precise date, based on parallels to similar ones in shape and size known from the region of Herzegovina, which had been used for agricultural storage, the pits at Qesarat were interpreted as storage pits.⁶⁷⁷ Indeed, they recall the rock-cut pits or *siri* used to store grains described by Columella, though they could also have been used for the storage of other foodstuffs, or even as cisterns.⁶⁷⁸ Additionally, at the Late Antique fortress of Palokaster (4th–6th centuries CE, with possible earlier structures)

⁶⁷² Çondi 2017, 171–173.

⁶⁷³ Çondi 1984a, 141–143; Gilkes 2013, fig. 93. The identification of room B as a *horreum* rests, as in many other examples from Italian villas and the Balkans, on its large storage capacity made possible by the existence of a tall roof suggested by the large pillars running down its longer side. For Late Antique *horrea* in the Balkans: Rizos 2013, 663, 664, 667, 674, 675, 678, 685; for storage areas in Italian villas see Marzano 2007, 492–493, 550–551.

⁶⁷⁴ Çondi 1984b, 142–143.

⁶⁷⁵ Çondi 2017, 182.

⁶⁷⁶ Zheku 1983. See also Bogdani 2012, 233.

⁶⁷⁷ Zheku 1983, 224.

⁶⁷⁸ Columella *De re rustica*, 1.6.15. Zheku also mentions rock-cut cisterns near the modern-day village of Lukovë (1983, 224). Rock-cut equipment for the processing of wine, and theoretically also olive oil, was also discussed extensively at the VWRW 2021 conference.

in the northern Drino Valley, Riccardo Carmenati recently identified cereals and legumes through archaeobotanical analyses, which were stored there in ca. the 4th century CE.⁶⁷⁹

The enlarged storage capacities of fortified farms in coastal Chaonia suggest that in Roman times the scale of the production of grains increased, and is complemented by additional evidence for the storage of cereals further inland. The transformation of marshlands into alluvial plains in the areas of Vrina and Vurgu, which enabled the expansion of occupation from the Butrint headland onto the Vrina plain at least by early Imperial times (or perhaps a little earlier), made these areas more suitable for cereal and legume cultivation.⁶⁸⁰ Land-reclamation projects accompanying colonisation and the proposed Augustan-period centuriation of the Vrina plain could also have contributed to an expansion of the production of grains.⁶⁸¹ Such a development would also explain why Atticus, who might well have made use of the marshlands and alluvial plains of Vrina and Vurgu as winter pastures for his stock, fought against Caesar's colonisation project.⁶⁸² Consequently, agricultural regimes might have shifted from mixed farming and pastoralism, with animal husbandry holding a more important role in the Hellenistic period and in the period after 168/7 BCE, to a greater focus in the early Empire on grain cultivation. The owners of fortified farms participated in this expanded grain production. It is possible some of the produce was exported (though there is no evidence to the extent of my knowledge), or that increased production reflected the demands of a growing local population. Despite Atticus' best efforts, settlers appear to have been despatched to Butrint by Caesar in 44 BCE, and a *colonia* was more formally founded by Augustus in ca. 27 BCE.⁶⁸³ These settlers changed the make-up

⁶⁷⁹ Baçe 1981; pers. comm Riccardo Carmenati. See also Shpuza 2009b, 107.

⁶⁸⁰ See [discussion of this](#) in Chapter 2.

⁶⁸¹ Bescoby 2019; Hodges et al. 2016, 274, 282.

⁶⁸² *Letters to Atticus*, 15. 29.3, 16.1.2, 16.4.3, 16.16. See also Hansen 2011, 91.

⁶⁸³ Hansen 2011, 85, 90, 92; Forsén 2021, 242. See also Deniaux 2007; 2009.

of Butrint's population to a degree, as is discussed in more detail later on in the chapter.⁶⁸⁴ According to Inge Lyse Hansen's prosopographic study between 44 BCE-14 CE magistracies were held predominantly by clients of powerful individuals in Rome like Atticus who had local economic interests, some of which clients may have been indigenous families (e.g. the Pomponii), and to a lesser degree by civilian freedmen, with only two inscriptions evidencing individuals connected to the army.⁶⁸⁵

Living in fortified farms during the Imperial period

In Hellenistic times the inhabitants of the fortified farms of coastal Chaonia were relatively prosperous, as was suggested by finds such as fine tableware, as well as the ability to construct costly fortifications.⁶⁸⁶ In the Roman period the material culture associated with fortified farms became richer, according to Çondi (e.g. at Çuka).⁶⁸⁷ He suggested this not only based on the building of new constructions and renovations, especially the significant enlargement of Malathrea discussed more below, but also specifically using their finds. These, as we have seen, mainly comprised Italic *amphorae* and dining ware (e.g. at Malathrea, Figure 95, nos. 1–9, 11, and Figure 97, bowls and plates nos. 14–20).⁶⁸⁸ Italic *amphorae* and tableware, including black-slipped and red-slipped vessels broadly described as “terra sigillata”, were also found at Çuka, Metoq, Dobër, as well as Çuka e Aitoit (e.g. Figure 96, nos. 4–5; Figure 98, nos. 50 and/or 52).⁶⁸⁹ It is in most cases not clear from publications whether this dining ware, consisting of

⁶⁸⁴ Hernandez and Hodges 2020, 302–305.

⁶⁸⁵ Hansen 2011.

⁶⁸⁶ See [section](#) in chapter 3.

⁶⁸⁷ 2017, 192.

⁶⁸⁸ Çondi 1984b, 151.

⁶⁸⁹ Çondi 2017, 165, 175, 181, 206 (exceptionally, Metoq may have been less rich in Roman than in Hellenistic times); 1986, 263; Islami 2020, 92–100.

bowls, plates, and dishes, based on the examples illustrated from Malathrea and Çuka e Aitoit, might have corresponded to imported or to regional products. However, some might have been locally produced, based on their resemblance to examples produced in Phoinike, namely the shallow plates no. 17 from Malathrea and no. 53 from Çuka e Aitoit that were similar to the flat or almost flat dishes and platters with carinated rims (“vassoio carenato”) produced at Phoinike in the Augustan period (e.g. no. 224, Figure 99).⁶⁹⁰ Some ITS might also have formed part of assemblages, possibly like the bowl no. 2 from Malathrea (Figure 97), similar to Conspectus 34 (Tiberian-Flavian), but whose stratigraphic context is unclear.⁶⁹¹ Early Roman cooking pots from Malathrea had forms corresponding to Reynolds’ “local-regional” cooking pot series (e.g. see nos. II.4, II.10 in Table 2, Figure 100);⁶⁹² Reynolds developed a typology of these “local-regional” cooking pots, originally described as ‘Illyrian’, later as ‘Epirote’ and more recently thought to have been produced in large quantities in Epirus and beyond, with thin-section analyses of examples found at Butrint evidencing local production.⁶⁹³ At Matomara fine tableware, including imports (e.g. two *ITS*, six Eastern *sigillata*), and *ca.* mid-2nd to late 3rd-century CE cooking pots (with grooved rims) also of Reynolds’ local-regional series were associated with its disturbed Roman layers.⁶⁹⁴ Imported *amphorae* as well as local and imported *terra sigillata*, together with new building works to construct new storage facilities and renovate pre-existing ones, show that the inhabitants of the fortified farms were wealthy in the Roman period, perhaps even wealthier than they had been in Hellenistic times. While there is little doubt that they were rich, did the aggrandisement of their wealth go hand-in-hand with the spread of

⁶⁹⁰ See [above](#).

⁶⁹¹ See Shehi 2014, no. 811, pl. 66.

⁶⁹² Reynolds 2019, 286, 398–408, figs. A3–A7.

⁶⁹³ Reynolds 2019, 286, 397–408, figs. A3–A7. See also the simpler, schematised drawing of the development of these cooking pots in Reynolds et al. 2008, fig. 8.

⁶⁹⁴ Aleotti 2012, 350–351.

elite villa culture? Some light can be shed on this question by investigating their new architectural phases, particularly that of the structure at Malathrea.

For Çondi and Giorgi the expansion of the complex at Malathrea, at the expense of its postulated northern towers (IV and III, for which there was actually little evidence as I discussed in chapter 3), into a larger complex arranged around its central courtyard, pointed to its transformation from a fortified farm with a defensive function into a villa.⁶⁹⁵ A connection previously made between Malathrea and the villa of Atticus, unsupported by any evidence, formed part of this argument, suggesting ownership by a Roman equestrian.⁶⁹⁶ Çondi, however, later revised his villa interpretation of the Roman-period structure, because it lacked luxury spaces.⁶⁹⁷ Ferriès and Skenderaj used the same argument to, on the one hand, counter the classification of Malathrea as a villa like Diaporit, but, on the other, to call it a local villa adaptation, emphasising its compact plan.⁶⁹⁸ I would go a step further to argue that the structure was not transformed into a villa, neither a typically Roman one nor a local version, because it lacked evidence for living spaces that form part of the villa assemblage. The Roman-period structure at Malathrea had no communal baths, no landscape architecture, nor other sort of spaces indicative of Roman social practices, like communal bathing and elaborately-staged dining, which I discussed in chapter 1.⁶⁹⁹ Such spaces were adopted across the provinces, but they were not built into the structure at Malathrea, nor into the other structures at Çuka, Metoq, Dobër and Çuka e Aitoit. Additionally, the southern towers (I and II) of the building at Malathrea were also maintained, whether for defence or to inspire awe, as were also the towers

⁶⁹⁵ Çondi 1984b, 139; Giorgi 2017, 16.

⁶⁹⁶ Çondi 1984b, 148.

⁶⁹⁷ 2017, 189.

⁶⁹⁸ 2015, 214.

⁶⁹⁹ See [villa definition section](#) in chapter 1.

of the structures at Çuka, Metoq, and Dobër. In my opinion, then, these structures did not turn into villas, but remained fortified farms.

The re-organisation of the complex at Malathrea, rather than pointing to the adoption of Roman villa culture, in fact seems to me to indicate close ties to Epirote houses. The primary indication for the resemblance of the Roman-period structure to an Epirote abode is room c the hearth-room, with a permanently built hearth, which could be identified as an *oikos* (Figure 71).⁷⁰⁰ As discussed in relation to the farm at Episkopi, the central placement of a hearth-room was characteristic of Epirote houses, not only small ones (like the farm at Episkopi) but also large ones (e.g. House 1 at Kassope, Classical phase).⁷⁰¹ In grand houses the hearth-room could be accessed through a courtyard (sometimes colonnaded) as at House 1 at Horraon (Figure 92); this house was constructed in the 4th century BCE as the house of a prosperous family of farmers and shepherds (whose agro-pastoral background was suggested to excavators by numerous agricultural tools found in the house); it was used down to the 1st century BCE based on numismatic evidence.⁷⁰² Similarly to the arrangement of House 1, at the Roman-period complex at Malathrea the hearth-room was accessed via a courtyard (though there is no evidence that the courtyard at the farm at Malathrea had columns). The construction methods utilised in these two buildings were also quite similar, employing stone blocks from the foundations to the crowning of both external and internal walls; in contrast elsewhere in Epirus, as at Kassope, the upper rows especially of internal walls were built of mudbricks and/or wood joinery.⁷⁰³ It is possible that the choice to employ stone for the entirety of the walls had to do with its availability as a building material. Yet, it is also interesting how close in design and construction methods

⁷⁰⁰ Condi 1984a, 142.

⁷⁰¹ Hoepfner et al. 2005a, 392–397; 2005b, 429

⁷⁰² Hoepfner et al. 2005b, 428–430.

⁷⁰³ Hoepfner et al. 2005a, 397–398. See also Schwandner 2005.

House 1 at Horraon and the Roman-period structure at Malathrea were. It is possible that similarities in their architecture reflected and extended to cultural resemblances, for instance, that such a house plan and the extensive use of stone was appreciated by wealthy families of Epirote agro-pastoral communities. A similar plan to those of these structures was also found in the second architectural phase of House 1 at Kassope, entered through a longitudinal court that led via another room into the hearth-room.⁷⁰⁴ In some houses in Ambrakia the hearth-room was also entered via a colonnaded courtyard.⁷⁰⁵ For houses in Epirus then, from those living in towns to those living in the countryside, the hearth-room with a permanent, built hearth was a central feature (which in cases such as at House 1 at Horraon was more of a focal point than the courtyard according to Hoepfner and Schwandner); it retained its importance also in the Roman period as Papapoiannou argued (e.g. also in the early Roman farm at Mastilitza, no. 17, where a permanent hearth was also built, and the hearth-room was flanked by two wings as at the farm at Malathrea).⁷⁰⁶ The Roman-period complex at Malathrea shared this focus, which suggests to me that its inspiration was the Epirote house, and more than that that its inhabitants organised their daily activities in similar ways to those inhabiting other Epirote houses, namely, around a room with a hearth often termed *oikos*.

It is also possible but far from certain that the Roman-period house at Malathrea had wall-paintings, or simply that its walls were plastered. Thick plaster fragments were excavated (their precise findspot not mentioned), consisting of white lime and sand with inclusions of tile; their surface was treated with a lime wash or slip, and on parts of it red and pink paint were poorly preserved.⁷⁰⁷ Such evidence might indicate wall-paintings, or alternatively that the walls

⁷⁰⁴ Hoepfner et al. 2005a, 392–396, 400.

⁷⁰⁵ Riginos 2008b, 81.

⁷⁰⁶ Hoepfner et al. 2005b, 429; Papaioannou 2002, 289.

⁷⁰⁷ Condi 1984a, 143.

of certain rooms were plastered for other reasons, for instance to keep pests at bay, as I suggested for the storerooms of Çuka and Metoq. In either case, new Roman building technology appears to have been used, since the interior walls of Epirote houses (e.g. at Kassope) in the pre-Roman period appear to have been treated only with a simpler clay mixture.⁷⁰⁸

All in all, the material culture of the fortified rural structures in the Roman period does not suggest the adoption of living spaces characteristic of villas. Instead, the archaeology points to the maintenance of Epirote lifestyles, especially through the remodelling of the structure at Malathrea, which highlighted the significance of the hearth-room.

Conclusion

I have argued that the remodelling of the fortified farms of coastal Chaonia indicates expanded production of grains and the wealth aggrandisement of their owners, specifically in the early Imperial period. However, the spatial reorganisation and finds of these fortified farms in the Roman period did not evidence the adoption of elite Roman living (e.g. communal bathing as in villas), but instead pointed to Epirote living (e.g. focus on the hearth-room in the case of Malathrea), suggesting fortified farms were a form of local abode, which was culturally distinct from villas. Not all had exactly the same layout, and the way that living was organised in the farms wherein the tower was central remains to be understood. Fortified farms were a form of rural settlement characteristic of the Hellenistic and the Roman countryside of this region. They

⁷⁰⁸ Schwandner 2005, 564.

flourished during the early Empire, but continued to be used thereafter or were later re-used, with finds suggesting their reinvigoration in the 3rd century CE.

The question of the ownership of fortified structures is a complicated one. On the one hand, evidence for Epirote lifestyles at the Malathrea complex points towards members of the elite of Epirote groups, such as the *Prasaiboi*, in whose territory the Malathrea complex was located. The remodelling of this structure with local housing traditions in mind contrasts with the contemporary development at the nearby Diaporit villa (no. 9) opposite Butrint of novel spaces, such as the ornamental lakeside water feature.⁷⁰⁹ However, while variety in housing might speak to the co-existence of traditional and new domestic architecture, including luxurious recreational spaces that developed in close association with villas, I would not take this as a straightforward marker of Epirote vs Roman identity, particularly because this division was becoming increasingly blurry. At Diaporit tiles bearing the stamp “GRA[E]” (found in ca. 1st-2nd century CE contexts) could according to Bowden and Përzhita refer to Publius Pomponius Graecinus, who might have been the villa’s owner.⁷¹⁰ He was also a magistrate in Butrint in the Augustan period, probably deriving according to Hansen from an indigenous family—the Pomponii—rather than from colonists, since they could claim citizenship through their links to Atticus (i.e. before the foundation of the colony).⁷¹¹ Yet, legally, they were also Roman citizens. In the case of fortified farms in the vicinity of Phoinike, like Çuka and Metoq, it is possible that they were owned and inhabited by members connected to the elite of Phoinike. Their composition does not appear to have changed in the Roman period, based on epigraphic, literary, and archaeological evidence according to Giorgi.⁷¹²

⁷⁰⁹ Bowden and Përzhita 2020, 195–197.

⁷¹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹¹ *Ibid.*; Hansen 2011, 94.

⁷¹² Giorgi 2017, 16–17.

Some Epirotes in the early Imperial period, as I suggested for the period after 168/7 BCE, may have continued to work either as the clients or as the managers of Roman aristocratic families, like those of the *Synepirotae*, who either indirectly would be associated with or directly have owned fortified farms. As I mentioned in chapter 4, Atticus might have owned a fortified farm or “castellum munitum” in 58 BCE.⁷¹³ After the death of Atticus in 12 BCE, his property would have passed to his daughter, Caecilia Attica, who married Agrippa, or to his granddaughter, Vipsania Agrippina, who first married Tiberius and later C. Asinius Gallus.⁷¹⁴ Atticus’ property then either stayed with his female heirs or became imperial property. As Hansen notes, Vipsania Agrippina, having the three children required by Augustan law to manage her own property, would at least not have needed a guardian to do so.⁷¹⁵ Both her grandfather’s Epirote property and clients may have become connected specifically with her, including any fortified farms she may now have owned.

Fortified farms in coastal Chaonia prospered during the early Empire. As scholars like Ferriès and Skenderaj suggested, their architectural development matches the early Imperial development of Diaporit.⁷¹⁶ In fact, new constructions associated with a *villa maritima* at Diaporit possibly began in Augustan times, and continued with definite evidence for the construction of the lakeside fountain by 40–80 CE, perhaps closely reflecting the expansion of the farm at Malathrea that I proposed happened in the Augustan period.⁷¹⁷ As we shall see, the growth of these wealthy rural sites was also contemporary with that of others beyond coastal Chaonia, especially in the Kokytos valley.

⁷¹³ *Letters to Atticus*, III.1, 5, 6, 7 [8, 16, 19].

⁷¹⁴ Hansen 2011, 95.

⁷¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷¹⁶ 2015, 223.

⁷¹⁷ Bowden and Pärzhita 2020, 195–197.

5.2 The complex at Agios Donatos and the colonisation of the Kokytos valley

“The arrival of Roman settlers was accompanied by a strong Romanisation”, wrote Forsén in his discussion on “Colonisation and Restructuring” in early Imperial Epirus.⁷¹⁸ In his view this “strong Romanisation” was evidenced in the Kokytos valley, where he suggested it was brought about by the foundation of a proposed early Imperial colony at Photike, possibly Augustan; Photike is thought to have been located in the northern part of the valley, where widespread archaeological remains, including Imperial municipal inscriptions, have been noted—although the area has not yet been excavated, and the existence of a colony in this area is not certain (Figure 102).⁷¹⁹ According to Forsén a colony is indicated by the predominance of the Latin language on inscriptions—81% Latin: 19% Greek (of a total of 52 inscriptions)—though this ratio is based on all inscriptions, spanning multiple centuries.⁷²⁰ It is important to consider the epigraphic context. Most inscriptions appear to derive from funerary settings (e.g. epitaphs), making them both personal in nature and public, since they would probably have been on display,⁷²¹ to a lesser degree the inscriptions come from probable municipal public settings (e.g. of dedicatory or honorific character, or more broadly being monumental inscriptions, which would have arguably been displayed in public settings).⁷²² Since the sample size is small, and

⁷¹⁸ 2021, 242; 2019b, 17–31.

⁷¹⁹ Forsén 2019b, 24; Korhonen and Forsén 2019, 226–238; Forsén 2021, 242. Samsaris 1994a; Rizakis 1998, 266 (on Photike), the latter having reconstructed an inscription from Patras listing Augustan foundations, including Nikopolis, Dyme and possibly “Pho[ticensis ---]”.

⁷²⁰ Korhonen and Forsén 2019.

⁷²¹ Samsaris 1994a, nos. 5–17; Korhonen and Forsén 2019, nos. 9–25.

⁷²² Samsaris 1994a, nos. 1–4; Korhonen and Forsén 2019, nos. 3–8, possibly also nos. 1–2 from religious contexts.



Figure 102. Early Roman rural sites in the Kokytos valley and its environs discussed in this thesis, additionally showing the proposed location of Photike (Map made by Hallvard Indgjerd, adapting base map of the © European Union, Copernicus Land Monitoring Service 2022, European Environment Agency (EEA))

the chronologies ascribed to these inscriptions are broad (spanning from one to multiple centuries), because they have not come from excavation contexts—being chance finds—it is difficult to identify changes over time in the use of Greek or Latin in different contexts, as has been done in other colonies in Greek areas, like at Corinth.⁷²³ However, what is interesting is that the majority of names carved onto the Photikiote inscriptions are Greek (e.g. Rhodope and her father Orinus, Medea, Orestinus, T. Flavius Eunus and his daughter Tycae).⁷²⁴ Therefore, irrespective of the status of the town, much of the population of Photike may have been Greek, or at least Greek-speaking, as different epigraphic researchers have concluded; to a degree they also had latinised names, and in the case of T. Flavius Eunus, Roman citizenship, indicated by his adoption of the *tria nomina*.⁷²⁵ Strong evidence for the adoption, or importation, of Roman burial customs was seen nearby at the recently excavated and partially published cemetery of Mazarakia (ca. late 1st century BCE to mid-2nd century CE), nestled in a small valley to the west of Kokytos valley; this evidence included the widespread use of primary cremation or the rite of *bustum* amongst 28 graves dug in 2008—which is otherwise rare in Thesprotia, where the preference was for sarcophagi or inhumation in cist, tile or pit graves.⁷²⁶ Additionally, a monumental altar-shaped tomb was excavated at Mazarakia (probably early Imperial in date), with clear parallels in Italy where altar-shaped tombs are common, but rare in the eastern provinces, with an exceptional example at Kenchreai (Figure 103).⁷²⁷ Yet, identifying the identity of its owner as Italic is not so straightforward, since the name of the dedicant recorded

⁷²³ Korhonen and Forsén (2019, 236) note the minimal statistical value of the sample size.

⁷²⁴ Samsaris 1994a, no. 7-10.

⁷²⁵ Hatzopoulos 1980, 103; Korhonen and Forsén 2019, 425.

⁷²⁶ Palli *et al.* 2019, 64-67; Riginos 2007.

⁷²⁷ *Ibid.*, 60-61. For the preponderance of altar-shaped tombs in Rome and Italy: Flämig 2007. According to Dominik Maschek the tomb is probably not later than Augustan, and since the epitaph found associated with it was dated based on its letter forms ca. 50-150 CE (Palli *et al.* 2019, 58-59), the example from Mazarakia may date to the first half of the 1st century CE.

on the Latin-language inscription on the epitaph that was found on the front side of the tomb appears to be Greek, that of a woman named “Lamisca”, a name not paralleled in Latin inscriptions surviving elsewhere (outside southern Italy) according to Ourania Palli, Kalle Korhonen and Christos Tsakoumis.⁷²⁸ Lamisca constructed the tomb for her mother—whose name did not survive.⁷²⁹ Consequently, the excavators postulated that Lamisca belonged to a Greek-speaking family, who chose to use Latin for her mother’s tombstone and to closely emulate an Italic funerary monument in the public setting of the cemetery, because the appearance of a Roman—or perhaps central Italic—character was esteemed in this area.⁷³⁰

Because of such evidence for the spread of the Latin language and Roman funerary customs, Forsén has assumed a template of colonial impact and development in the region of Photike, writing that some of the colonists were “settled in new rural sites.”⁷³¹ However, given the lack as of yet of definitive evidence for a colony in this area, the fact that much of it remains to be explored, and the evidence for mixed populations in other colonies in Greek areas, such as Corinth—which included Italian merchants, freedmen of Greek origin, and local notables—it would be good to tread with caution until clear evidence arises.⁷³² Furthermore, unlike near other cities in Epirus such as Nikopolis (discussed in the next section) where rural sites (possibly associated with colonists) were constructed in new, previously unoccupied locations, thus setting off a new settlement pattern, in the Kokytos valley the settlement pattern originating in the Early Iron Age or Archaic period did not change in the early Empire.⁷³³ It remained, as Forsén wrote, “surprisingly static” into the 1st century CE.⁷³⁴ How can we interpret this rigidity

⁷²⁸ Palli et al. 2019, 58-59.

⁷²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷³⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷³¹ Forsén 2021, 242, 246.

⁷³² For the mixed population of Corinth in the early Roman period see: Spawforth 1996.

⁷³³ Forsén 2011, 15–25; 2019b, 370.

⁷³⁴ Forsén 2011, 15–25; 2019b, 370.

in the settlement pattern? How were rural sites re-used, and when? And, did the widespread re-use of pre-Roman rural settlement reflect a colonial template of rural development in the valley? I investigate these questions through exploration of some of the re-used rural sites in the Kokytos valley and its environs, beginning with one of the wealthier and best-explored examples—Agios Donatos—which has furnished rich evidence associated with its transformation into a villa.

The villa at Agios Donatos in the early Empire

I argued in chapter 3 that the structure at Agios Donatos (Figure 42, no. 11) began to look like a villa when at least one of its rooms (in Trench D) was decorated with wall-paintings in the Second Pompeian style during the site's restructuring by the mid-1st century BCE (or slightly earlier, sometime in the second quarter of the 1st century BCE; see Figures 46-47).⁷³⁵ Faux architectural details rendered in stucco, such as egg-and-dart and Lesbian cyma-friezes, would have complemented the wall-paintings.⁷³⁶ In addition to this room with its resplendent decoration (perhaps a dining or reception space), two rooms lined with hydraulic mortar found in trenches G and H that were interpreted as cisterns could have been used to supply a yet-undiscovered bath suite (Figure 42).⁷³⁷ The existence of a bath is suggested by the concern of the inhabitants for good water supply, with water arriving from a nearby spring via a ca. 1 km-long terracotta pipeline.⁷³⁸ Baths and carefully designed spaces to receive guests, indicative of Roman social practices, were typically found in the *pars urbana* of villas. As a result, they

⁷³⁵ See [section](#) in chapter 3.

⁷³⁶ Freccero 2019, 282.

⁷³⁷ Forsén 2019b, 362.

⁷³⁸ *Ibid.*

suggest the transformation of the complex into a villa from the mid-1st century BCE (or possibly earlier) and into the early Empire.

The excavations of the villa also furnished bricks with Latin stamps on them, namely the stamps “COS” (17 finds) and “PHML” (nine finds, in ligature), most of which were found in the early Imperial dump from the tower (ca. late 1st century BCE–middle or late 1st century CE, Figure 104).⁷³⁹ Villa economic activities often included brick production utilising locally-available clay resources, whether directly exploited by the villa’s owner (*dominus*) or, as seems to have happened more frequently, leased to a private brick-producer (*offinator*); either of their names could be found stamped on bricks.⁷⁴⁰ Scholars postulated that bricks could be used for the construction of the villa from whose territory the clay derived, in other villas owned by the same owner, or to be sold on the market (and they could also be gifted for large-scale building projects).⁷⁴¹ The local production of the bricks from Agios Donatos is indicated by the similar composition of their fabrics (to the naked eye) with that of other probably locally-produced ceramic vessels, like *pithoi* from the Hellenistic site at Gouriza in the Kokytos valley (that also had a pottery kiln).⁷⁴² A dozen more bricks with the stamp *COS* and one with the stamp *PHML* were found in the assemblage of the Roman-period complex at the Nekromanteion (no. 16), which also included bricks with other stamps in Latin (“P. CUR” and “P. CURT”) as well as one in Greek (“OYIOΣ”).⁷⁴³ Brick production is thus seemingly well-attested in the Kokytos valley, especially that associated with the more prolific bricks bearing the *COS* stamp. It is possible that the elusive individual(s) behind this stamp was part of the extended family of

⁷³⁹ Forsén et al. 2019, 414–415.

⁷⁴⁰ Marzano 2015, 194; Wilson 2008, 397.

⁷⁴¹ Gualtieri 2000; Marzano 2015, 194.

⁷⁴² Forsén et al. 2019, 414.

⁷⁴³ Samsaris 1994, 137 nos. 26α-δ; SEG XLIV 470 ; Dakaris 1963, 91; Dakaris 1976, 83.

Lucius Cossinius, whom Varro refers to as one of the *Synepirotae* and whom Forsén prefers to see as the owner of the villa at Agios Donatos.⁷⁴⁴ It is also possible that bricks were produced on the land of the Cossinii in the Kokytos valley, or by one of their freedmen who had leased clay beds in the area, and that the bricks were sold to the owners of the complexes at Agios Donatos and at the Nekromanteion. In any of these cases, evidence of brick production indicates that economic activities usually connected with villa estates were practised in the early Imperial Kokytos valley, perhaps even in connection with the villa at Agios Donatos or another one like it.

The floruit of the Agios Donatos villa was from the mid-1st century BCE, when the rebuilding occurred, to the later 1st century CE.⁷⁴⁵ The flourishing of the villa in early Imperial times is particularly well-evidenced through the large quantities of material found in the tower dump (Layers VI-II, dating from the late 1st century BCE to the mid or later 1st century CE), which was deposited “at some stage shortly after the mid-first century” CE, possibly in the early Flavian period.⁷⁴⁶ In terms of non-ceramic objects, bronze ladles with decorated handles, brooches, metal spurs and *stili* were found.⁷⁴⁷ The *stili* indicated that the villa’s inhabitants possessed the level of literacy and education required to run the estate.⁷⁴⁸ Ceramic vessels dated between the late 1st century BCE to the middle or later 1st century CE, though primarily to the 1st century CE, are discussed below.⁷⁴⁹

The tableware from the early Imperial tower deposit indicated a significant shift in the plates, bowls and other dining vessels brought *à la table*. In the first phase, lasting

⁷⁴⁴ Forsén et al. 2019, 419.

⁷⁴⁵ Forsén 2019b, 364.

⁷⁴⁶ Reynolds and Ikäheimo 2019, 317, 327, 348–377 (Layer V finds, the largest and earliest context to be deposited), 339–348 (Layer IV finds), 337–339 (Layer III), 335–337 (Layer II finds, mainly building debris).

⁷⁴⁷ Forsén 2019b, 366–368; 2019c, 392–397.

⁷⁴⁸ I thank Andrew Wilson for pointing this out.

⁷⁴⁹ Reynolds and Ikäheimo 2019, 317, 327.

approximately through to the end of the Augustan period, mainly regional tablewares were used, predominantly locally-produced red-slipped *terra sigillata*, and slightly later grey finewares, probably imported from Patras, though some possibly from Italy.⁷⁵⁰ These mainly local or regional dining vessels were 1st-century BCE/Augustan (+).⁷⁵¹ They predated the arrival of ITS, with only a few ITS sherds and a small amount of ESB imported at that time.⁷⁵² In the second phase, lasting roughly from the mid-1st century CE (or a little earlier) to the early Flavian period, ITS imports exploded (Figure 105).⁷⁵³ Quantities of ITS at Agios Donatos (max. 86 vessels) exceeded those from the Diaporit villa (58 vessels) and neared those from the forum of Butrint (105 vessels), which is astonishing because Agios Donatos was not excavated nearly as extensively as Diaporit or Butrint.⁷⁵⁴ There is a shift observable in the dining vessels used at the villa, from local or regional tableware used in the 1st century BCE through to the Augustan period, to imported ITS in post-Augustan times. I would argue this change not only indicated the inhabitants' gargantuan taste for trendy Italian tableware, but also reflected the broader shift in fineware trade networks, with ITS imports to Greece significantly increasing around the Tiberian period or the mid-1st century BCE, e.g. as seen also at Butrint, and at other rural sites in the Kokytos valley probably dating to early Imperial times (discussed below).⁷⁵⁵ In the second half of the 1st century CE ITS was much more accessible to the inhabitants of the Agios Donatos villa.

⁷⁵⁰ Reynolds and Ikäheimo 2019, 323–324, fn. 21 for the red-slipped *terra sigillata*. According to Forsén (pers. comm.) the grey finewares dated ca. to the 30s–20s BCE.

⁷⁵¹ Reynolds and Ikäheimo 2019, 323–324.

⁷⁵² *Ibid.*, 322–325, noting only a few Augustan ITS sherds in Layers II and III, and none in Layer V.

⁷⁵³ *Ibid.*, 322–325. Much of the ITS (e.g. from the larger Layer V) dates to the second and/or third quarter of the 1st century CE, though some forms have ranges ca. 30–80/90 CE (e.g. no. 211, Conspectus 23.2.2, *Ibid.*, 351–355, fig. 13).

⁷⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 328–329.

⁷⁵⁵ Reynolds 2019, 368–369. See also Reynolds' notes on the early Roman pottery of Dyrrachium in Gutteridge et al. 2003. Forsén 2019c, 24.

In contrast to the tableware, cooking pots and *amphorae* seem to be derived mainly from local-regional resources, according to Reynolds.⁷⁵⁶ Late Hellenistic to early Roman-period cooking pots were well accounted for, and indicated the continuity of forms typically used in Hellenistic times into the early Roman period.⁷⁵⁷ “Medium-sized Epirote *amphorae* with free-standing domed bases...are quite common” (Figure 106), while long distance imports are rare unlike at Butrint or in the fortified farms of coastal Chaonia where Italic Adriatic *amphorae* were numerous (e.g. Lamboglia 2, Dressel 6A, the latter also common in a possible early Augustan group from the Actium Victory Monument).⁷⁵⁸

It is possible that the “local/regional” *amphorae* noted by Reynolds from the tower deposit at Agios Donatos, presumably containing local-regional products, were produced in the Kokytos valley alongside bricks.⁷⁵⁹ This is especially suggested by the reproduction of the “P. CUR” and “P. CURT” stamps (dated to the ca. 1st century BCE by Samsaris, presumably based on their letter forms) found on bricks and on *amphorae* from the Nekromanteion; since the bricks would probably have been produced locally for the construction of buildings, the *amphorae* connected to the same individual(s) were arguably also local products.⁷⁶⁰ They could well have been manufactured in two pottery kilns recently found to the north of the Nekromanteion dated to the Imperial period.⁷⁶¹ Until these *amphorae* (that had a pointed bottom) are studied, we cannot know what products they may have contained, but olive oil is one possibility, since olives were produced in the valley based on olive oil production

⁷⁵⁶ Reynolds and Ikäheimo 2019, 330.

⁷⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 326, 330.

⁷⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 325, fn. 28.

⁷⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 330.

⁷⁶⁰ Samsaris 1994, 137–138.

⁷⁶¹ Κοντογιάννη 2001–2004, 91–92, σχέδιο 51 (ανασκαφή του ενός από τους δύο κλιβάνους); Voulgaraki 2018, 73.

equipment from Elea, as is wine, while legumes or cereals are other possibilities.⁷⁶² Whether these products would also have been exported is not certain but it is probable based on the Latin stamps on the *amphorae*, which may refer to an individual tied to the Curtii family, members of which were engaged in viticulture in the Eastern Mediterranean, trading and possibly producing Koan wine, amongst other potential products.⁷⁶³

Rural settlement in the Kokytos valley and its environs in the early Roman period

“[T]he old settlement pattern going back all the way to the Early Iron Age or Archaic period was not obliterated at once in 167 BC, but lingered rather on for another couple of centuries – at the same time as new elements were introduced, such as the *colonia* Photike” wrote Forsén.⁷⁶⁴ At Agios Donatos the new architectural phase of the complex indicated its transformation into a villa that prospered from the mid-1st century BCE (before the proposed Augustan foundation of the colony) to the middle or later 1st century CE, which was perhaps connected to local brick-production and possibly to the production of *amphorae*. While evidence from the re-used fortified complex at the Nekromanteion (no. 16) has been less extensively investigated, the stamps “P. CUR” and “P. CURT” occurring on both bricks and *amphorae* from the site suggest more definitively local brick- and *amphora*-production. The Nekromanteion complex seems to have seen a peak in activity around the same time as the Agios Donatos villa, based on finds like two silver *denarii* of ca. 50 BCE, and the twelve bricks replicating the “COS” stamp, which

⁷⁶² Dakaris 1963, 91.

⁷⁶³ Forsén 2019b, fn. 121, who refers specifically to one, C. Rabilius Postumius, born C. Curtius Postumius, a client of Cicero, while Dakaris referred to a Poplius Curtius (Dakaris 1963, 91). Eberle and Le Quéré 2017, 17–19, 43–44 (discussing the viticultural activities of Postumius Curtius and his freedman Gaius Curtius Mithres). The name of Postumius Curtius is known from stamped Koan *amphora* handles and from stamps on Italian *amphorae* (*Ibid.*).

⁷⁶⁴ 2011, 20.

was found on bricks from the early Imperial tower deposit at Agios Donatos); this peak was connected with the new architectural phase of the western part of complex (e.g. where three new rooms were built), dated to the 1st century BCE. Elsewhere too in the Kokytos valley and its environs, the precise manner and chronology of re-use of pre-Roman settlement is not as clear as at Agios Donatos, since sites were not as intensively explored, but a few important developments can be discerned.

In the late Hellenistic-early Roman periods, two of the three dispersed village clusters identified by the Thesprotia Expedition, whose zenith was in the late Classical-early Hellenistic periods, continued to be inhabited (specifically, the villages at Mavromandilia/Gephyrakia and Kyra Panagia).⁷⁶⁵ However, the extent of settlement was significantly reduced, with some rural sites producing little material evidence after the “late Classical-early Hellenistic period” (e.g. E 15 in one of the hamlets that made up the larger rural community at Kyra Panagia, no. 15), and others continuing past the mid-2nd century BCE but ceasing to be inhabited after the mid-1st century BCE (e.g. PS 35 at Gephyrakia, Figure 4).⁷⁶⁶ As I argued in chapters 3 and 4, the abandonment of the farm at Gephyrakia (no. 13) together with other farms like that of the dispersed village at Episkopi in Molossia, may have been caused (amongst other factors) by the Civil Wars; the extraordinary demands placed on the local agricultural economy by Caesar’s Epirote supply chain may have sabotaged smaller farmers, and Pompey’s ransacking, possibly by setting fire to some farms, may have led to their demise.⁷⁶⁷ As a result dispersed villages

⁷⁶⁵ Forsén 2011, 20; 2019c14–16, 22.

⁷⁶⁶ Forsén 2011, 20–21. No more specific chronological markers were noted to clarify what is meant by the “early Hellenistic period” in the volume of the Thesprotia Expedition, but based on finds discussed it would not postdate the mid-2nd century BCE.

⁷⁶⁷ See [section](#) in chapter 4.

declined after the mid-1st century BCE in Epirus, especially in the modern-day Ioannina region of Molossia; however, in the Kokytos valley their decline was not as overwhelming.

In some cases, like at the site cluster identified at Mavromandilia/Gephyrakia (no. 12), on the western margins of the late Classical-early Hellenistic dispersed village either a new farm (building E 9, no. 14) seems to have been constructed, which was built in “the traditional way” according to Forsén (i.e. with foundations made of large limestone blocks supporting mudbrick walls); or a farm was rebuilt using its original remains (specifically re-using the large limestone blocks, Figure 107).⁷⁶⁸ Some rooms were also constructed using new building methods, i.e. by joining medium-sized and small stones with mortar (what Forsén called *opus incertum* in at the complex at Agios Donatos), indicating the adoption of new building techniques that were more frequently employed in Roman-period constructions (Figure 107). The farm was used possibly in the 1st century BCE and definitely in the early Imperial period, as was suggested by its finds such as *bulbus unguentaria* (post mid-1st century BCE) and ITS (e.g. a Dragendorff 24 or 25 cup, 40-80 CE).⁷⁶⁹ Therefore, while the farm may have been built (or rebuilt) in late Republican times, it flowered in the early Empire. Its inhabitants also engaged in an at least moderate scale of agricultural production, indicated by a collecting vat and an adjoining room with several *pithoi* found *in situ*; the use of the vat is indicative of wine or olive oil production.⁷⁷⁰ This single farm existed in place of multiple farms that had made up the dispersed village during the late Classical-early Hellenistic periods (Figure 108). Some of those other farms seem to have been progressively abandoned after the early Hellenistic period (e.g. the structures identified by

⁷⁶⁸ 2012, 241; Forsén 2011, 16–17.

⁷⁶⁹ Forsén *et al.* 2011, 101–102; 2012, 241.

⁷⁷⁰ Forsén *et al.* 2011, 101. The vat was also mentioned by Riginos, Tzortatzou, Lamprou, and Lazari in their talk during the *DERE* workshop II, “Αγροτικές εγκαταστάσεις και αγροικίες ρωμαϊκών χρόνων στη Θεσπρωτία. Ίδρυση, διασπορά και χαρακτήρας”; they also mentioned another vat and treading vat at Maroutsi (Thesprotia).

surface survey and magnetometry, respectively at PS 44 and PS 37) and in the 1st century BCE (e.g. at Gephyrakia, no.13).⁷⁷¹ Consequently, we might infer that the dispersed village was replaced by one farm, though we should be cautious not to stretch the evidence any further, for instance, to argue for the growth of a larger-scale landowner to the detriment of the peasantry.⁷⁷² Similarly to the farm at Mavromandilia, at Mastilitza (no. 17) outside the Kokytos valley in coastal Thesprotia, another farm was constructed or reconstructed sometime after 168/7 BCE or in the early Imperial period, the majority of its finds also dating to the 1st century BCE and 1st century CE, indicating its prosperity at the time (e.g. a probable Dressel 1C *amphora*, red regional *sigillata*, ITS of the late 1st century BCE–third quarter of the 3rd century CE).⁷⁷³

Back in the Kokytos valley, in the area of Kyra Panagia (no. 15)—the second site cluster where early Roman-period habitation was attested—no new farm constructions were discovered.⁷⁷⁴ However, the small rural sanctuary of the village near Agia Paraskevi produced evidence for its use in the early Imperial period (e.g. figurines found in the same context with imported ITS, ca. 1st century CE).⁷⁷⁵ According to Forsén, the rural sanctuary was operational from the Archaic period through to the late 1st or even into 2nd century CE, with “no break or change in cult”.⁷⁷⁶ This suggested to him that the chronology of the broader village at Agia Paraskevi also extended into the early Imperial period.⁷⁷⁷ In contrast, the hamlet across low-lying fields to the south, which together with that at Agia Paraskevi arguably formed the larger rural community that prospered in the late Classical-early Hellenistic periods, seems not to have

⁷⁷¹ Forsén et al. 2011, 97–99, 103–104, not noting finds that could indicate a more specific time for the abandonment of PS 44 and PS 37.

⁷⁷² This is especially the case since the new farm was also not necessarily richer than those that had existed in this part of the valley in pre-Roman times.

⁷⁷³ Preka-Alexandri 1994, 427–429; Preka-Alexandri *et al* 2018.

⁷⁷⁴ Forsén 2011, 16.

⁷⁷⁵ Lambrou 2006.

⁷⁷⁶ Forsén 2011, 16.

⁷⁷⁷ *Ibid*; 2021, 232.

been settled in the late Hellenistic-early Roman periods (or at least seems not to have prospered at this time, since few material traces survive, Figure 109).⁷⁷⁸ Thus, while one village in this area seems to have continued to be inhabited in the early Empire based on the evidence from the rural sanctuary, another was not—although it is important to consider that the continuity of the sanctuary did not necessarily mean the continuity of the adjacent village.

Overall rural settlement in the Kokytos valley seems to have been less extensive in early Imperial times than in the late Classical-early Hellenistic periods, for instance in the case of Mavromandilia where one farm replaced a dispersed village that had comprised multiple farms; or fewer rural sites may have prospered. However, some farms did well, and some villages were also still inhabited. While renewed activity at these sites, such as their new constructions, might predate the early Imperial period, they flourished more clearly in early Imperial times. This was a transitional period in the Kokytos valley and its surrounding areas, even if the settlement pattern itself had remained “surprisingly static”.⁷⁷⁹ Forms of social organisation connected with the pre-Roman agricultural economy—the dispersed village or extended rural communities—were no longer a prominent feature in the countryside. In other cases wealthy rural sites grew into villas, as happened at Agios Donatos, and economic activities often associated with villa estates, like brick and *amphora* production, potentially connected to the export of local products, were well-evidenced. In contrast to coastal Chaonia, where fortified farms were a constant form of rural settlement, widespread in the period before and after 168/7 BCE and in the early Empire, in Thesprotia during the early Imperial period rural sites were to a far lesser degree those had characterised the agricultural economy of the region in Hellenistic times, indicating here greater changes to agriculture.

⁷⁷⁸ Forsén *et al* 2011, 83–84; Svana 2004.

⁷⁷⁹ Forsén 2011, 21.

In my view the re-use or re-organisation of rural settlements did not straightforwardly reflect a colonial template of rural development, primarily because most of the rural sites used during the early Imperial period that have been investigated in the Kokytos valley and its surrounding areas appear to have originated during the post-conquest period, before the proposed foundation of Photike. This was unambiguously so at Agios Donatos, where the complex inside the fortress began to develop into a villa in the mid-1st century BCE or a little earlier. It is interesting that people in this case chose to live in a place that was already inhabited before the conquest of 168/7 BCE, and especially inside pre-existing, heavily fortified structures, as at Agios Donatos (and the Nekromanteion). This may have given the villa at Agios Donatos quite a peculiar air, especially from the exterior. If indeed Forsén is correct that the villa belonged to Lucius Cossinius and his progeny, or perhaps if it had been inhabited by one of his freedmen or Epirote clients, their visitors approaching the fortress from the east would have come face-to-face with the tower and entered the villa via the fort's re-used eastern gate, to be received in sumptuous Roman interiors with wall-paintings. The construction of a Roman villa in a Hellenistic shell created contrasts at least in aesthetics that were rare for villas. The choices to build a villa inside the fortress at Agios Donatos and to inhabit the fortified complex at the Nekromanteion, where individuals connected to Italian business-oriented families were also attested, are important indicators. They suggest that the early Imperial development of these rural sites, while it may have been further stimulated by colonisation, sprang out of agricultural activities stimulated by the heightened network opportunities, for instance through trade,

brought about after the conquest during the period after 168/7 BCE, which was discussed in chapter 4.

Network interactions may have originally involved Roman aristocrats, like Lucius Cossinius, other members of Italian or Greek families who were business-oriented, like traders or freedmen, and their clients in Epirus, and they could have expanded to include colonists as well as local people. Italian business-oriented families—the Cossinii and Curtii—or individuals connected to them, are definitely attested in the Kokytos valley by the bricks with the “COS” and “P. CURT” stamps found at Agios Donatos and at the Nekromanteion. However, inscriptions from the area of Photike, especially funerary epitaphs, as well as two epitaphs from the early Imperial-period cemetery at Mazarakia—that of Lamisca (probably early Imperial, based on association with the altar-shaped tomb monument) and another of “Polynicus, a herdsman” (tombstone dated ca. 1st or 2nd centuries CE)—evidence a majority Greek or Greek-speaking population in this region.⁷⁸⁰ This population preferred to use Latin for their epitaphs, as well as in public areas in the city, at least in the early Imperial period (though it is not clear until when given the available evidence).⁷⁸¹ Some of these individuals were freedwomen, like Rhodope who was an imperial freedwoman (*Aug[usti] libertae*), and whose tomb was erected after her death at the age of sixteen by her father Orinus (a transliteration of Ὀρ(ε)ῖνός according to Dimitris Samsaris, meaning mountainous)—both their names also indicate an affection for mountains.⁷⁸² It is possible that in the names and occupations of these individuals we are seeing a local Epirote population factor, who inhabited a mountainous landscape, which became entwined with their identities. In addition to the preference for Latin in this area, at Mazarakia

⁷⁸⁰ Hatzopoulos 1980, 105; Korhonen and Forsén 2019, 425; Palli *et al.* 2019, 58-65.

⁷⁸¹ Korhonen and Forsén 2019, 236.

⁷⁸² Samsaris 1994a, no. 7, who contrary to my argument suggests the Thracian origin of the family, because he associates the name of Rhodope with the Rhodope mountains.

primary cremation, or the rite of *bustum*, was primarily chosen amongst 28 graves in 2008—though it is not yet known how widespread this was in the graves excavated in 2009 and 2010, which have not been published.⁷⁸³ On the basis of the dominance of cremation in the early Roman period in areas of Greece where colonies existed with an Italian population segment, as at Corinth (e.g. dominating Corinthian cemeteries like Anaploga and Cheliotomylos in the 1st-early 2nd centuries CE), it is possible that the use of cremation reflected an influx of Italian settlers.⁷⁸⁴ However, at Mazarakia the practice might alternatively reflect the indirect presence of an Italian population in the wider region, but which was not necessarily buried at Mazarakia where no Latin names are known (thus far). The advent of Italian population groups, possibly to be connected with the foundation of a colony at Photike, who brought their customs with them, may have led local populations to adopt cremation at Mazarakia, and to choose Latin over Greek in the cemetery and in public areas of Photike, because this was the town's respected public face, and of the wider region. However, both languages were understood, if not by all at least by some of the area's population in the early Imperial period, given the extensive evidence for Greek names and use of Latin, which also suggests bilingualism, as Forsén, Korhonen and Reynolds argued.⁷⁸⁵ This bilingualism is seen in the domestic settings at the villa of Agios Donatos, where Greek and Latin etchings were scribbled on pots (e.g. including a possible Greek name ending in “-ατης”), and a Latin graffito over a monochrome, white section of the wall-paintings.⁷⁸⁶

⁷⁸³ Palli *et al.* 2019, 64-67.

⁷⁸⁴ Thomas 2010, 286.

⁷⁸⁵ Forsén *et al.* 2019, 425.

⁷⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 422-425.

The early Imperial-period development of rural sites in the Kokytos valley may not unambiguously reflect the arrival of colonists, but colonisation may have stimulated further agricultural production in early Imperial times, for instance, colonists in Photike creating additional demand for local products. Rural sites here grew around the same time as fortified farms and the Diaporit villa in coastal Chaonia were expanded, indicating broader rural prosperity and agricultural intensification. For example, the villa at Agios Donatos and the fortified farm at Malathrea prospered especially from the mid-1st century BCE and early Augustan period, respectively, into the 1st century CE. In contrast to these areas that made use of sites where habitation had in some form been previously attested, at Nikopolis sites in the immediate vicinity of the new city were founded in new, previously unoccupied locations.

5.3 The early Imperial development of the rural *suburbium* of Nikopolis

Nikopolis, so named by Augustus,⁷⁸⁷ was the “the first *princeps*’ first foundation” after Actium (31 BCE), founded on the peninsula north of the mouth of the Ambracian Gulf to commemorate Augustus’ victory over Mark Antony and Cleopatra.⁷⁸⁸ According to most scholars, its establishment was symbolically, politically, administratively, and economically of grave importance for Augustus, who attached to it considerable honours that distinguished Nikopolis as a new centre of special status (e.g. it was distinguished as ‘ἱερὰ’ or sacred, as was communicated on Augustan coinage).⁷⁸⁹ Founded by a treaty with the local population (*foedus*

⁷⁸⁷ Strabo 7.7.5–6.

⁷⁸⁸ Purcell 1987, 71.

⁷⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 89–90; Strauch 1996, 156–161; Calomino 2012, 105.

aequum) that awarded Nikopolis the status of a *civitas libera*, the city became the centre of the restored Acarnanian League of Actium and of the restored Amphictyonic League.⁷⁹⁰ It also hosted the revived Actian Games sacred to Actian Apollo, whose sanctuary was located on a hill to the north; according to Strabo, Augustus resuscitated the festivals that had in earlier times been “celebrated in honour of the god by the inhabitants of the surrounding country”, and he inaugurated quinquennial games that were held also in his honour (possibly suggesting that the imperial cult became attached to the cult of Apollo).⁷⁹¹ Strabo also wrote that the quinquennial games, which were elevated to Olympian status, were celebrated in a sacred grove below the hill where Apollo’s sanctuary was located, which was thoroughly equipped with a *gymnasium* and *stadium* (the latter also excavated, see location map in Figure 110).⁷⁹² An impressive monument was also constructed on the hill *ca.* 500 m to the north to memorialise the symbolic naval victory, decorated with naval trophies and consecrated to Neptune and Mars; this monument was also excavated and is known today as the Actium Victory Monument (Figure 111).⁷⁹³ The manner of the city’s foundation thus paid respect to the existing geography and indicates its ties to local populations, who were incorporated into it together with an extensive territory.⁷⁹⁴ However, Augustus is also thought to have founded a colony at Nikopolis, as is suggested by excerpts from Pliny and Tacitus, who much later in the later 1st century CE (*ca.* 77 CE for Pliny’s *Natural History*) and in the early 2nd century CE (Tacitus was well into writing the *Annals* in 116 CE) wrote of both a colony and a free city at Nikopolis.⁷⁹⁵ According to

⁷⁹⁰ Purcell 1987, 86–88.

⁷⁹¹ 7.7.6.

⁷⁹² *Ibid.*

⁷⁹³ *Life of Augustus* 18; Zachos 2003.

⁷⁹⁴ Strabo, 7.7.6; Cassius Dio 51.1.2–3 (“πόλιν τέ τινα ἐν τῷ τοῦ στρατοπέδου τόπῳ, τοὺς μὲν συναγείρας τοὺς δ’ ἀναστήσας τῶν πλησιοχώρων, συνώκισε, Νικόπολιν ὄνομα αὐτῇ δούς”); Pausanias 5.23.3 (who mentioned that the Ambrakiots, Anactorians, and Aetolians participated in the *synoikismos*).

⁷⁹⁵ Tacitus in one case mentioned an Achaean city and in another case a colony (*Annals*, 2.53: “... urbem Achaiae Nicopolim...”, and 6.introduction, 5.10: “...Nicopolim Romanam coloniam.”). Pliny’s comment seems to settle it

Purcell, the Augustan city comprised a dual community.⁷⁹⁶ The existence of a colony, and therefore also of colonists, has more recently been indicated also by an inscription studied by Daubner, which mentions the soldier Decimus Furius Octavius, who had been decurion and had been honoured with duumviral *ornamenta* at the colonies of Actia Nikopolis and of Ulpia.⁷⁹⁷ The privileged manner of the city's foundation in Greece was novel and experimental, but this was a part of "the complex experience in the management of the politics of settlement to the newly-won world of the nascent provincial empire".⁷⁹⁸ But because of its significant place in the framework of Augustan policy, scholarship has tended to focus on its foundation and to view Nikopolis as a finished Augustan product; for example, Bowden originally argued "Augustan Nikopolis can be seen... as the physical embodiment of an ideal, representing what the Romans or more specifically Octavian thought that a city should be".⁷⁹⁹ Furthermore, he suggested that its foundation consequently had a dramatic transformative effect on the countryside.⁸⁰⁰ However, as Bowden also wrote, the idea of Nikopolis as an "urban ideal", "falls down somewhat in that we have a less than perfect idea of what Octavian's Nikopolis actually looked like, or more precisely which of the present extant structures relate to the Augustan city".⁸⁰¹ There is a dearth of stratigraphic evidence to date public buildings inside the city proposed to have had Augustan phases (e.g. the Baths of Cleopatra, the *odeion*) precisely to the Augustan period,⁸⁰² while we have more later evidence, which has been connected to later

and date the colony to the Augustan period: "...et in ore ipso colonia Augusti Actium cum templo Apollinis nobili ac civitate libera Nikopolitana" (*Natural History*, 4.3).

⁷⁹⁶ 1987, 88–89.

⁷⁹⁷ Daubner 2018b

⁷⁹⁸ Purcell 1987, 71

⁷⁹⁹ Bowden 2007a, 135.

⁸⁰⁰ Bowden 2007b, 198.

⁸⁰¹ Bowden 2007a, 136.

⁸⁰² Bowden 2007b, 196.

phases under the reign of Hadrian.⁸⁰³ Additionally, recent work by Dario Calomino on the Nikopolitan coinage showed that while the city continued to pay honour to Augustus down to the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE, it may also have been re-founded in the name of Nero, based on issues depicting Nero and the inscription “ΝΕΡΩΝΟΝΙΚΟΠΟΛΙΣ” (obverse), and the imperial galley (reverse); alternatively this coinage commemorated the victory of Nero at the Actian Games.⁸⁰⁴ Despite such evidence for the growth of Nikopolis after Augustan times, little attempt has been made to investigate how the city and its countryside developed; I attempt to do so in this section, which is centred on its rural *suburbium*.

It has been argued that the Augustan colonisation included a centuriation of the immediate vicinity of the city, which Doukellis and Stein identified on the plain of the Nikopolis peninsula using aerial imagery; they argued that the centuriation grid dated to the Augustan period because it aligned with public monuments and infrastructure, like the wall circuit and the city grid, and by associating with it rural sites identified through survey.⁸⁰⁵ More recently, however, the date of the wall-circuit, which had generally been assumed to date to the Augustan period, and the layout of the city have been questioned and debated.⁸⁰⁶ What is more, the study of Riginos and Sakkas on rural sites excavated by the Ephorate of Antiquities of Preveza indicated “the evolution of the settlement pattern” over time rather than its transfiguration in the Augustan period, with sites increasing after the 1st century CE, even calling into question the Augustan date of the land division.⁸⁰⁷ New views of features originally thought to have been part of the Augustan city, but which may in fact be later, the questionable alignment of the

⁸⁰³ E.g. see Zachos 2007, 291–294.

⁸⁰⁴ Calomino 2008, 170; Calomino 2012, 105.

⁸⁰⁵ Doukellis 1988; Stein 2001, 73–75.

⁸⁰⁶ Snively 2007, 742; Aggeli 2007, 527–532 (on dating the walls). Bowden 2007a, fn. 3; Bowden 2007b; Zachos 2007 (proposing different city grids for Nikopolis).

⁸⁰⁷ Riginos and Sakkas 2018a, 718.

centuriation grid with these features, and the evolution of the countryside indicated by the archaeology of rural sites raise the question of just how consequential the Augustan period was for the development and prosperity of the new rural structures connected to Nikopolis. Is it possible to connect the centuriation to the Augustan colonisation? What did the geography of the city and its countryside actually look like in the Augustan period, and how did they develop during the early Empire?

The centuriation

The layout of the Nikopolitan centuriation was reconstructed through traces of the land division preserved on aerial photographs, better than anywhere else in Greece according to Doukellis, who identified at least six centuries, building on work by Cladas (Figures 112-113).⁸⁰⁸ Doukellis produced the first comprehensive map of the scheme, best preserved near the modern district of Mytikas, just to the south of the Roman wall circuit of Nikopolis, and which he established was oriented 18 degrees East (Figure 114).⁸⁰⁹ Stein updated his map, extending the evidence for the centuriation towards, but not into, the Agios Thomas peninsula, and demonstrating that the scheme was composed of 10 x 20 *actus* rectangles (Figure 115).⁸¹⁰

The layout has been linked with the archaeological remains of rural sites discovered through survey or salvage archaeology near the grid's projected *limites*, or in a few cases, like the site excavated near the Archaeological Museum of *Nicopolis* and possibly the one unearthed

⁸⁰⁸ Doukellis 1988, 164; Cladas 1975, 214–215. See also Chevallier 1958, 635–636.

⁸⁰⁹ Doukellis 1988, 164.

⁸¹⁰ Stein 2001, 73–75. Doukellis had suggested 20 x 40 *actus* rectangles, but these numbers may be typographical errors, since Doukellis' lines in his map actually matched those in aerial photographs, in the drawing of Cladas, and in the map of Stein, whose numbers were accurate. Note that Cladas singled out squares of 20 x 20 *actus* (ca. 710 m-long on each side), which were in fact made up of two 10 x 20 *actus*-rectangles.

at Analipsis B, near definite *limites* (visually preserved in the aerial photography, seen in Figure 116). Rural sites have been used by Stein and by Riginos and Sakkas as supporting evidence for the centuriation. They argue for a correlation between the location of rural sites and the lines of Roman fields.⁸¹¹ Additionally the “Early Roman” date suggested by surface survey finds of the farmstead at Neochori indicated the scheme’s Augustan date.⁸¹² While most of these sites generally appear to be near or on lines of the centuriation, there is actually no hard evidence directly linking them to the grid. Specifically, the physical relationship between farms and *limites* has not been demonstrated through study of aerial photographs or excavation, as for example in Kim’s study of the centuriation that accompanied the foundation of a Latin colony at Luceria (northern Apulia, Figure 117).⁸¹³ Consequently, at Nikopolis, since the precise relationship between rural sites and *limites* is not clear, they cannot be used to date the centuriation.⁸¹⁴

The centuriation scheme has also been connected with public monuments and infrastructure of the city, such as the urban street grid and the wall-circuit, with which it was thought to align.⁸¹⁵ Presumed to date to the Augustan period, these urban features were originally used to date the land division.⁸¹⁶ However, more recently the Augustan date of the wall-circuit has been questioned (see below), and the layout of the street grid was fiercely debated by Bowden and Zachos: thus their connection with the centuriation has been called.⁸¹⁷ The debate arose out of the wall’s irregular shape, and especially the irregular placement of its

⁸¹¹ Stein 2001, 73; Riginos and Sakkas 2018a, 716.

⁸¹² Stein 2001, 73.

⁸¹³ Kim 2021.

⁸¹⁴ Additionally, none of these rural sites produced evidence that can securely be dated to the Augustan period. For these sites and material from there see: Stein 2001; Riginos and Sakkas 2018a; Konstantaki 2018, 29–34.

⁸¹⁵ Doukellis 1988, 164; 2002, 102

⁸¹⁶ Doukellis 1988, 164.

⁸¹⁷ Bowden 2007b; Zachos 2007.

gates, whose nonconformity in Zachos' proposed grid of the city stumped Bowden (Figures 118-119).⁸¹⁸ Contrary to Zachos' plan, Bowden supposed that the *cardo maximus* of the city would have corresponded to one of the N-S *limites* in Doukellis' centuriation, specifically that "approximately aligned on the Actium Monument" which evidently entered the city through its NW gate, on either side of which there existed tombs of the northern cemetery (Figure 120).⁸¹⁹ He noted that the extension of this line "has not been traced within the city, and its point of exit to the south is also unknown".⁸²⁰ Additionally, he pointed out that the southwestern gate of the city "lies some distance to the east" of this line, where the modern road passes.⁸²¹ Diverging from Bowden's proposed plan, Zachos suggested the city's *cardo maximus* was located to the east (entering the city from its NE gate, but also with no exit point to the south, Figure 118).⁸²² While it is not clear if parts of this *cardo maximus* were indeed excavated, Zachos based his urban grid on excavated parts of other roads, the most significant of which was a small section of the *decumanus maximus* (excavated immediately to the north of a small gate of the Late Roman wall, Figure 121).⁸²³ According to his calculations, this segment aligned with the western gate of the city, formed by a *nymphaeum* constructed in the 2nd century CE.⁸²⁴ He also noted that at the confluence of the *decumanus maximus* and the *cardo maximus* extensive remains of building complexes were found, the so-called "Amphitheatre" and the so-called "Episcopal megaron", which according to him comprised a civic centre of the city (though since

⁸¹⁸ Bowden 2011, 110.

⁸¹⁹ Bowden 2007b, (right after the section "Roads, sanctuaries and urban planning").

⁸²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸²¹ *Ibid.*

⁸²² Zachos 2007, 288–291.

⁸²³ *Ibid.*, 288.

⁸²⁴ *Ibid.* The *nymphaeum* dated to the 2nd century CE, according to Susan Walker, who made this comment to Bowden (2007a, 136). According to Zachos the western gate was constructed earlier, based on tombs discovered near and in association with it; many of these tombs also date to the 2nd century CE (Zachos 2007, 286–288).

they have not been fully excavated this is not yet certain).⁸²⁵ What is clear is that other major public buildings, like the *odeion*, do fit into Zachos' proposed grid, which he seems to have extrapolated from the excavation of the part of *decumanus maximus* and of other short street segments, especially of different *cardines*; one of these *cardines* was excavated near building remains interpreted as baths in the NW sector of the city; its extension passed west of the *odeion*, and further on exited the city via its SW gate (Figure 118).⁸²⁶ Consequently, Zachos' plan of the city grid is not "almost entirely hypothetical", ⁸²⁷ but based on sound evidence—albeit not yet fully published.

The irregularity of the city's gates reflects the existence of two grids: the urban grid and the centuriation. Based on Zachos' work in conjunction with that of Doukellis, the city grid and the centuriation grid were only broadly connected, namely through the *decumanus maximus* and the *cardo maximus* of the city that aligned with *limites* of the centuriation (Figures 118-119).⁸²⁸ The centuriation plan may have been used to formulate a basic plan for the divisions of the city; namely, each quarter of the city comprised two 10 x 20 *actus* rectangles of the centuriation. Otherwise, the grid inside the city appears to have developed independently. The centuriation would have preceded the urban grid, since it was used to formulate the basic divisions of the city in four quarters, but by how long is not known.

The centuriation also underlays the wall-circuit, which suggests that the construction of the city's walls also post-dated the land division of the area. Traditionally, the wall was thought to be contemporary with the Augustan foundation of Nikopolis.⁸²⁹ However, archaeological

⁸²⁵ Zachos 2007, 291.

⁸²⁶ Zachos 2007, 289.

⁸²⁷ Bowden 2011, 110.

⁸²⁸ Zachos 2007, 291.

⁸²⁹ *Ibid.*, 292.

evidence, such as a foundation trench which produced a *terminus post quem* of the mid-2nd century for the construction of that part of the wall, in fact suggests that the wall-circuit, or at least parts of it, may have been a later addition to the urban fabric of the 2nd century CE, possibly the second half.⁸³⁰ Additionally, the walls were rebuilt in the 3rd and (early) 4th centuries CE.⁸³¹ The wall's irregular shape might reflect its later construction, when it could have been built to accommodate the shape and layout of the city as this had developed over the years.

The construction of the city wall could be contemporary to a wider phase of urban development at Nikopolis in the 2nd century CE. While little of the city has been excavated, evidence from public monuments and private houses dated the 2nd century CE; for instance, the *odeion* was constructed in the 2nd century CE, possible the first half, while it was refurbished in the late 2nd or early 3rd century CE (based on its architecture and excavated finds, Figure 122).⁸³² The aqueduct was built in the 2nd century CE, and Zachos attributed its construction to Hadrian, based on its possible description on Hadrianic coin issues of Nikopolis.⁸³³ From the private sphere, the construction of the well-excavated House of Manius Antonius was dated to the early 2nd century CE; it saw a second building phase in the mid-3rd or early 4th century CE, when many of its lavish mosaics were also created.⁸³⁴ It seems that Nikopolis experienced considerable urban growth during the 2nd century CE, and further constructions in the 3rd and early 4th centuries CE. Thus, many of its urban monuments and infrastructure that have traditionally been used to date the centuriation, while casting a useful light on the urban

⁸³⁰ Aggeli 2007, 531. See Zachos (2007, 286–288), who proposes a possibly earlier date based on tombs excavated in the vicinity of the western gate, which he argues could post-date the wall's construction. Another section of the wall could be earlier, probably dating to the late 1st or early 2nd century CE (Zachos and Georgiou 2003).

⁸³¹ Snively 2007, 743.

⁸³² Leontaris and Stamou 2018, 464–465.

⁸³³ Zachos 2007, 293–294.

⁸³⁴ Kyrkou 2007.

development of Nikopolis, cannot be linked to the centuriation, which they post-dated possibly by a long time.

Can the centuriation be dated through its alignment with buildings located in the extramural sanctuary, on and below the hill to the north of the city? One of the *limites* of the centuriation linked the city, and one of its *cardines*, specifically that exiting the city from its NW gate, with the Actium Victory Monument. The Monument has, indeed, produced Augustan ceramics and it was decorated with wall-paintings in the Third Pompeian style.⁸³⁵ However, the connection to the monument could also have been drawn after its construction. The *stadium* may fit into one of the centuriation's rectangles (see Figure 119, though in Bowden's plan the western end of the *stadium* projected just slightly to the west of the centuriation line, Figure 120); a *stadium* was mentioned by Strabo, as was noted earlier, in the extra-urban sanctuary, but archaeologically it is not clear when the extant one was constructed. Thus, it is also not possible to clearly establish the relationship between the centuriation and the extra-urban sanctuary monuments.

Based on ancient accounts and the city's coinage, an Augustan foundation of Nikopolis is plausible, and this may have been accompanied by a centuriation, but it cannot be proven archaeologically at this time.⁸³⁶ Evidence from rural sites in the city's rural *suburbium*, however, can shed light on the development of its immediate countryside.

⁸³⁵ Reynolds is studying this Augustan pottery from the Actium Victory Monument (for snippets of it. Forsén (Forsén 2019c, 19) mentions the wall-paintings, related to him by Zachos..

⁸³⁶ Purcell 1987; Calomino 2012.

The archaeological evidence from excavated rural sites

Ten rural sites have been excavated via salvage archaeology in the immediate vicinity of Nikopolis, six of which were published by Riginos and Sakkas, and another four by Konstantaki.⁸³⁷ Three of them were smaller and materially poorer than the others and were probably farms; five produced more luxurious evidence, like the small marble statue of Dionysus from the Vaggeli plot, the mosaic of Ftelia , and the Attic sarcophagus of Margarona, possibly suggesting that they were villas; and two sites yielded insufficient evidence to categorise them. Only two of the farms, Analipsis B and Tarana A produced evidence dated to the early Imperial period, ceramic material which I subsequently studied; the majority of these sites dated from the 2nd or 3rd centuries CE onwards, based mainly on the chronological ranges of their finds (Table 4).⁸³⁸

Toponym	Proposed periods of use
Analipsis A	?- <i>ca.</i> early 4th century CE
Analipsis B	(mid?) 1 st century CE, possibly as early as the second quarter of the 1st century, to mid-3 rd centuries CE, or slightly later
Tarana A	middle of the 1 st century CE-first half of the 6 th century CE, or slightly later
Tarana B	2 nd to 3 rd centuries CE
Archaeological museum of Nikopolis	?- <i>ca.</i> middle of the 4 th century CE
Vaggeli plot	mid-2 nd -/3 rd century CE to <i>ca.</i> late 4 th century CE (or possibly early 5 th century CE)
Ftelia	2 nd -/3 rd century CE to 5 th century CE
Margarona	mid-2 nd century to 5 th -/6 th centuries CE
Metamorphosis	2 nd -/3 rd century-5 th century CE

Table 4: Proposed periods of use for rural sites in the *suburbium* of Nikopolis

⁸³⁷ Riginos and Sakkas 2018a; Konstantaki 2018, 29–34.

⁸³⁸ For a discussion of the later material from the other sites see: Riginos and Sakkas 2018a, 711–716, and Konstantaki 2018.

Riginos and Sakkas already drew attention to this settlement pattern, suggesting that it might reflect the later redistribution of land or its heightened cultivation.⁸³⁹ While it is not straightforward for us to explain the significance of this rural pattern or link it to levels of cultivation, archaeological traces are surprisingly few in the early Imperial period. In part this might be because richer later phases, particularly for sites that may have developed into villas, could have disguised poorer early Roman phases, making them difficult to distinguish. Even so, the reasons for the limited evidence related to the early Imperial period need to be explored, and especially whether any of this evidence can be more closely dated to Augustan times, matching the centuriation's date. In the next section I discuss the significance of ceramic material from Analipsis B and Tarana A that I had the chance to study and investigate how their archaeology in the context of the *suburbium* more broadly, for instance combined with evidence from port facilities and tombs, can shed light on its early Imperial development.

The archaeological evidence from Analipsis B amounts to two vats (probably for the settling of wine or olive oil) and a few building remains (including a partially surviving treading floor); the first vat contained early Imperial evidence, and the second predominantly later ceramics (though also an early Roman cooking pot).⁸⁴⁰ At Tarana A the remains of a substantial farm with another vat were preserved. The fill of vat 1 from Analipsis B is the only secure early Imperial context from the rural sites in the *suburbium* of Nikopolis, dating ca. 25-/50–50-/75 CE (see finds in Table 5, e.g. for the rim of one of the cups, Conspectus 23, Figure 123 and Figure 105 no. 14, for the parallel from Agios Donatos, find no. 213).

⁸³⁹ Riginos and Sakkas 2018a, 716–718

⁸⁴⁰ The material from the fill of the vat 2 is discussed by Riginos and Sakkas 2018a, 712–713. The fill, as is also discussed in the subsequent chapter, can provide a closing date, because it contained sizeable, intact cooking pots, after whose deposition the vat could no longer function.

Class	Form	Type	Date
Lamp	Lamp, wheel-made local production?	Painted imitation of Broneer Type XVI, category C	late 'Hellenistic' or late Augustan-early 2nd century CE
ITS	Cup	Conspectus 23, probably 23.2.1; Reynolds and Ikäheimo 2019, no. 213, fig. 13.14	second and third quarters of the 1st century CE
	Cup	Conspectus 23, probably 23.2.1; Reynolds and Ikäheimo 2019, no. 213, fig. 13.14	second and third quarters of the 1st century CE

Table 5. Dated pottery from Analipsis B, vat 1 fill

The evidence I studied from Tarana A is unstratified. While much of this material is middle Imperial (ca. 2nd–3rd centuries CE and later), a few sherds of ITS are earlier, as well as probably a flanged-rim bowl (see Table 6). An ITS bowl could possibly date as early as the reign of Tiberius, while a cup (Conspectus 22.5) might be even earlier (Figure 124, and for a parallel from the Athenian Agora, see Figure 125). However, more definitely ITS was imported in the mid-1st century CE (e.g. the plate, Conspectus 20.4, see Table 6). Yet ITS may not reflect site occupation, but fineware trade networks, and, as I mentioned in the last section, ITS seems to have been more widely imported to Epirus from the mid-1st century CE onwards (or a little earlier).⁸⁴¹ The flanged-rim bowl is more indicative of site use. It has good parallels in the early Roman villa at Agios Donatos, parallels that Reynolds suggested imitated mid-1st century CE ESA forms (see Table 6). Additionally, a lamp from a tomb near Tarana A (tomb 15) can be dated to the second half of the 1st century CE, or slightly later (Claudian-early Trajanic), since it has particularly good parallels (Figure 126, its handle finding an almost exact comparandum

⁸⁴¹ See [above](#).

in Bailey, Figures 127-128).⁸⁴² However, Augustan and Tiberian phases are represented by earlier finewares in Epirus like red regional *sigillata*, produced in Epirote cities, and imported grey finewares of the late 1st century BCE-early 1st century CE found at other sites with early Roman phases, such as Agios Donatos, at Butrint, and even at the Victory Monument in the norther *proasteion* of Nikopolis.⁸⁴³ This and other Augustan finewares are absent from the assemblages of the farms in the city's *suburbium* to the south, which might suggest that they did not have good access to local finewares. They were also seemingly not able to import ITS earlier than others in Epirus, despite the privileged manner of the city's foundation by Augustus. This indicates that the agricultural activities of the city's nearby farms at the time may have been small-scale and not necessarily immediately successful.

If we connect the farms at Analipsis B and Tarana A with settlers, based on their locations in land previously devoid of settlement where traces of centuriation have been recorded (see above), then the earliest positive evidence for the prosperity of settler farms dates to approximately the mid-1st century CE (e.g. the secure context from vat 1 at Analipsis B, ca. 25-/50–50-/75 CE). Furthermore, while the ITS bowl from the farm at Tarana A may date as early as Tiberian times, and the cup even earlier, these could also have been imported later, and more definitive evidence comes from the middle of the 1st century CE onwards (e.g. the ITS plate, the flanged-rim bowl). Based on the lamp dated to the second half of the 1st century CE found inside tomb 15 near Tarana A, this tomb also indicated prosperity of habitation after the middle of the century. This is all not to say that land in the area immediately to the south of

⁸⁴² The lamp belongs to Loeschke type III / Bailey type D, subgroup v; the handle is as Bailey's Q 1048, triangular decorated with a palmette flanked by two dolphins, dated to the Claudian–early Trajanic period.

⁸⁴³ Reynolds 2019, 395-397; Reynolds and Ikäheimo 2019, 323–324. An example of Augustan material from the Victory Monument illustrated by Reynolds and Ikäheimo is a plate, possibly Conspectus 1.1.3, though also quite similar to regional *sigillata* forms which might imitate Italian finewares.

Nikopolis may not have been settled already in Augustan times, but if it was, farmers did not begin to prosper until later, based on their material assemblages. In the course of the second half of the 1st century CE and in the early 2nd century CE, the *suburbium* grew more prosperous,

Class	Form	Type	Date
ITS	Plate	Conspectus 20.4; as Reynolds and Ikäheimo 2019, nos. 176, 177, 53	probably middle of the 1st century CE
	Bowl	Conspectus 37, e.g. 37.4.2	Tiberian-middle of the 1st century, and less popular in the later 1st century CE
	Cup	Conspectus 22.5; Hayes <i>Agora</i> 544	80s BCE-37 CE
Common ware	Flanged-rim bowl	as Reynolds 2019, nos. 115, 239, 238, imitating mid-1st century ESA forms, e.g. 34-37	1st-first half of the 2nd century CE, probably middle of the 1st century onwards
ITS imitation?	Open, local production?	ITS imitation (?), decorated with dashes imitating rouletting?; as Aggeli 2007, fig. 1 (from a mid-2nd-century CE Nikopolitan context)	2nd century CE?
Cooking ware	Pot	as Reynolds 2019, ERCP 3.2	mid-2nd century, or as early as c. 125
	Pan	Phocean Frying pan, as Reynolds 2019, fig. A.8q	late 2nd-early 3rd?
	Pot	LRCP, as Reynolds 2019, LRCP 1.9B	First half of 5th century CE
	Pot	Reynolds 2019, "Pointed rim CP"	c. 525-550
Lamp	Lamp	Broneer Type XXVII, category B or vine-and-ray lamp	late 2nd-3rd centuries CE
ARS C (or D?)	Bowl	Hayes 50 (B?)	c. 350-400+
Coin		Bronze coin of Crispus	317-326 CE
Coin		Bronze coin, Constantius II?	337-361 CE
Amphora	Amphora	LR 1b	5th century CE
		LR 2	4th-7th centuries CE
Lamp	Lamp	Unid. Dated by Riginos and Sakkas 2018, 713	Late Roman, 6th century CE or later

Table 6. Dated pottery from Tarana A

as is indicated by the development of new rural sites, discussed more in the subsequent chapter (see Table 4). Port facilities at Ormos Vathy produced evidence as early as the last quarter of the 1st/early 2nd century CE.⁸⁴⁴ Funerary evidence from the city also increased in the course of the 1st century CE, with many tombs dating to the middle of the 1st century CE and later or to the early 2nd century, and others from the 1st–3rd centuries CE, indicating either the city’s increasing population (which Strabo mentioned was rising already in later Augustan times), or the heightened prosperity of its inhabitants.⁸⁴⁵ This growth matches the urban development of the city. After the Augustan centuriation grid was laid out and the extramural sanctuary began to develop, the urban grid was fashioned, and the city began to form. Contrary to the idea that Augustan Nikopolis was a finished articulation of a large-scale urban plan, Nikopolis, like Rome, took shape over time. In fact, Nikopolis saw significant urban expansion later, in the 2nd century CE. For instance, the wall may have been a later addition of the second half of the 2nd century CE (and was probably renovated in the 3rd or early 4th centuries CE); its construction could have been contemporary to major new constructions of public monuments, like the *odeion* and the aqueduct. The archaeological evidence from the city, its cemeteries and from the countryside, points not to an Augustan transfiguration of the landscape, but to the gradual development of Nikopolis and its hinterland. The construction of new farms probably associated with centuriation plots, and thus perhaps with colonists from areas outside Epirus, or possibly in some cases with new settlers from the Epirote areas that participated in the *synoikismos*, set

⁸⁴⁴ Riginos and Sakkas 2018b.

⁸⁴⁵ Many of the tombs mentioned by Zachos (2007, 287–288) excavated near the city’s walls, date broadly to the 1st century CE. Of those that can be more securely placed, only one near the southwestern gate can be dated to the first half of the 1st century CE, while others seem to date to the middle or second half of the 1st century, and to the first half of the 2nd century CE (*Ibid.*). The earliest lamps from the *necropoleis* of Nikopolis are broadly late Hellenistic-early 2nd century CE (like that from vat 1 at Analipsis B); those that can be more closely dated are imported lamps copying Italian ones, of the mid-1st century CE (though with Greek, not Latin stamps), possibly produced in Patras (Pliakou 2007b); the most numerous lamps are Broneer Type XXVII lamps of the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE (*Ibid.*, 533–536).

off a new settlement pattern. However, the prosperity of these farms developed over time, as other aspects of the city and its infrastructure, its population, and its economy also grew.

5.4 Discussion

I have argued in this chapter that with the exception of the immediate vicinity of Nikopolis, early Imperial-period agricultural economies in Epirus relied on the re-use of pre-Roman forms of rural settlement in coastal Chaonia; and in the Kokytos valley and its environs on the re-use of rural sites that had begun to develop in the post-conquest period. In some cases the evidence suggested that re-used rural sites like the fortified farms of coastal Chaonia were not transformed into villas. For instance, the remodelling of the fortified farm at Malathrea might have been inspired by the architecture of Epirote homes. In other cases, as at Agios Donatos, fortified rural complexes did grow to be villas, while agricultural practices often associated with villas, like the production of bricks and *amphorae*, were also more widely attested in the Kokytos and Acheron valleys. Dispersed villages, unlike fortified farms, declined more dramatically after the mid-1st century BCE, possibly because the effects of the Civil Wars were more detrimental to smaller farmers, but their decline was less overwhelming in the Kokytos valley than in the plain of Ioannina; since the former was intensively surveyed and the latter only explored through rescue excavations, it is possible a similar pattern may emerge in Molossia as well. The reconfiguration of agricultural models in the early Empire consequently had not one dimension, but multiple, with agricultural economies exhibiting greater diversity. Agricultural intensification was evidenced not just or even mainly via villas (with the only early

Imperial examples being Agios Donatos and Diaporit), but through the different forms of rural settlement of the early Imperial period, with good evidence for agricultural growth from Augustan times and especially in the 1st century CE, probably after a break in agricultural activities during the Civil Wars.

The topic of changes to land-ownership is more complicated, and did not necessarily have to do with the form of rural site utilised. It seems likely that colonists would at first at least have stayed in the areas around the colonies themselves, and that those settler farmers who were allotted plots within centuriated areas found prosperity in new places slowly, as I argued for Nikopolis. To what extent members of the population of Nikopolis (discussed more below) identified as colonists—legally, in terms of a different origin to that of the local population, or in other ways—and for how long is not straightforward to answer. On a marble euergetic inscription (erected at Philippi), the soldier Decimus Furius Octavius, who had served under Hadrian during the Third Jewish-Roman War, certainly chose to highlight even in this period the status of Nikopolis as a colony, where he had served as a decurion in the town's administration—here it is the legal colonial status that played a role.⁸⁴⁶ At Butrint the Vrina Plain also saw the expansion of settlement across the Vivari Channel in the early Roman period, and here too researchers have explain this as a result of the foundation of an Augustan colony, with “alien settlers consisting of Romans” according to Strabo (“ἐποίκους ἔχον Ῥωμαίους”).⁸⁴⁷ For Bowden evidence of colonists at Butrint, meaning a new, different population segment, is reflected in the adoption of cremation (e.g. within the cemetery of Mt Sotires west of Butrint, and in one example in the Vrina Plain), which as I already mentioned is attested in areas of Greece where colonies existed, like Corinth—although it is not clear for how long this practice

⁸⁴⁶ CIL III 7334; Daubner 2018.

⁸⁴⁷ Hodges and Hernandez 2020, 304; Strabo *Geography*, 7.7.5.

persisted at Butrint, nor whether there is evidence for it before the Roman period to argue it indicated a change in burial practices.⁸⁴⁸ In terms of the language that was spoken at Butrint, Latin may have dominated after the colony's foundation, but reverted to Greek by Hadrianic times.⁸⁴⁹ In the area of Photike, similarly to Butrint, Latin and cremation, especially primary cremation, were preferred in the early Roman period. As I argued this might indicate the presence of a new Italic population, but not directly, since the names of the individuals known from inscriptions are Greek, suggesting perhaps a local population factor that drew on new linguistic and burial practices (see section above on the Kokytos in the early Imperial period)—although it is not clear based on the evidence currently available for how long. In terms of agricultural practices the slow development of rural prosperity that might be connected to colonists, i.e. by the establishment of rural sites in new locations in centuriated areas, is indicated not only to the south of Nikopolis, but also at Butrint. At Butrint a centuriation has been proposed by detecting field divisions in aerial photographs that are indicative of the existence of a 20 x 20 *actus* grid, though no farmsteads have to my knowledge been excavated in the centuriated areas, as at Nikopolis, making it even more difficult to confirm the date of the proposed land division.⁸⁵⁰ Notwithstanding, material evidence indicative of rural prosperity increased from ca. the mid-1st century CE onwards in the Vrina Plain; e.g. the suburb near the Vivari channel (possibly part of the town rather than its countryside) did not form until the later 1st century CE, and the Diaporit villa was significantly elaborated on in the mid-1st century CE (ca. 40–80 CE).⁸⁵¹ These cases parallel the situation at Patras where new building “traditionally

⁸⁴⁸ Bowden 2011, 113.

⁸⁴⁹ Hernandez 2017a, fn. 99; Daubner 2018, 214–215; Forsén 2021, fn: 88.

⁸⁵⁰ Bescoby 2007; 2013; 2019. The centuriation grid does not align with the arrangement of the suburb near the Vivari channel (2019, 25), but as we saw in the case of Nikopolis, and as has been argued for Carthage, multiple grids are possible.

⁸⁵¹ Hodges and Hansen 2007, 8–10; Forsén 2011, 25. Bowden and Përzhita 2014, 471–474.

linked with the foundation of the colony” did not occur until the late 1st century CE, when site numbers increased.⁸⁵²

Interestingly, in the broader area of Nikopolis around the Ambracian Gulf, as well as in the area beyond the Vrina plain in coastal Chaonia, there seems to be less evidence for a dramatic shift in settlement patterns. According to Moore, her study of survey pottery collected by the Nikopolis Project indicated that, with the exception of increased settlement on the Agios Thomas peninsula and the Acheron valley (esp. more cooking pots) and decreased settlement near Epirote towns “there appears to have been only a very slight change in overall settlement patterns between the late Republic (167–29 BCE) and the Imperial period (29 BCE–4th century CE)”.⁸⁵³ She concluded that “on a very general level, the settlement pattern was not significantly affected by the Nikopolitan *synoecism* except in the vicinity of the city itself.”⁸⁵⁴ While the chronological resolution of this Nikopolis Project survey data is not high, and little of it has been thoroughly published, the situation somewhat parallels that in coastal Chaonia, where more broadly beyond the Vrina Plain it was pre-Roman forms of rural settlement that were re-used, like fortified farms. Thus, colonisation, as at Butrint, or the foundation of new cities with double communities, like at Nikopolis, in my opinion may be said not to have had big effects on broader land-management systems during the early Empire, that is outside of their immediate vicinity, but especially in the case of Nikopolis may gradually have contributed to broader rural changes later on. As we will see in the next chapter, rural sites found via salvage archaeology were constructed in new locations around the Ambracian Gulf, and they could be linked with the inhabitants of Nikopolis, but they peaked in the middle and later Imperial periods.

⁸⁵² Bowden 2009, 169; Petropoulos and Rizakis 1994, 192.

⁸⁵³ Moore 2000, 261–262.

⁸⁵⁴ Moore 2000, 262.

At Nikopolis, in contrast to Butrint and Photike as has Forsén indicated, the Greek language dominated public inscriptions (only 5% of which were in Latin), as well as coinage—though as in other places in Epirus it is not possible at this time to distinguish differences over time, because the inscriptions have not systematically been studied (Figure 129).⁸⁵⁵ This suggests that much of the city’s population was Greek-speaking. Additionally, we find Greek and Latin names on inscriptions.⁸⁵⁶ The city’s Augustan inhabitants also seem to have used mainly tableware forms that had been popular in Hellenistic times, according to Reynolds and Ikäheimo, or regional red *sigillata*.⁸⁵⁷ This archaeology might reflect a Greek population factor, for instance the local Epirotes transposed from other towns, in addition to the colonists already discussed, both of whom may have formed part of the land-owning class. After all, the manner of the city’s foundation drew connections to the local geography, for instance, with Augustus resuscitating Epirote associations like the Akarnanian League; physical links were also forged to important local landmarks, like the sanctuary of Actian Apollo on the hill to the north of the city. Particularly, there were many connections between Nikopolis and Kassope that can be demonstrated through the archaeology. At Kassope *domus* belonging to wealthy individuals were enlarged in the 1st century BCE. They might have been inhabited at least until Augustan times, since exceptionally for Epirote sites ITS was found at Kassope that Gravani dated to the Augustan period.⁸⁵⁸ Some of Kassope’s inhabitants seem to have moved to Nikopolis, literally taking features of their city with them. These included Ionic columns from the north stoa of Kassope, and the transplantation of the ceramic workshop associated with the potter

⁸⁵⁵ Forsén 2019a, 29; Calomino 2012, 108.

⁸⁵⁶ For predominantly Greek names see: Samsaris 1994b, 65–70, 269. There were also many Latin names cut in Greek: Forsén 2019c, 29. For different names recorded see also Sarikakis 1965. Also for possible names of veteran origin, but which require further investigation, at Nikopolis see Purcell 1987, fn. 78.

⁸⁵⁷ Reynolds and Ikäheimo 2019, 330, and n.45 referencing Moore 2006, esp. 18–20.

⁸⁵⁸ Gravani 1994, 172.

Soterichos.⁸⁵⁹ In the past, Schwandner and Gravani suggested these connections in the archaeology of Kassope and Nikopolis indicated the forceful movement of Kassope's population to Nikopolis, but I think, alongside the above-mentioned evidence, also suggest the new city incorporated members of the local elite of Kassope into its new upper classes.⁸⁶⁰ According to Daubner, these elites had proudly supported the Roman conquest, and consequently, whether they were happy to move to Nikopolis or not, they may have been awarded a privileged position there.⁸⁶¹ Given the proposed evidence for Augustan ITS at Kassope, they also had exceptionally good Italian contacts.

The landowners associated with fortified farms in the early Empire, as I argued, may have been the descendants of Roman aristocrats, like Vipsania Agrippina, the granddaughter of Atticus, or members of the elite of Epirote communities, like those of Phoinike and members of the *Prasaiboi*, who were incorporated into the colony at Butrint. At Phoinike, based on the material culture and epigraphy, Giorgi suggested that there was little evidence for change in the composition of its inhabitants.⁸⁶² At Butrint even as the composition of its upper echelons changed after the foundation of the Augustan colony, according to Hodges and Hernandez, indigenous elite families may have retained their positions of power, as argued by Hansen.⁸⁶³ For instance, the Caecilii and the Pomponii (already mentioned), who owed their Roman citizenship to Atticus, were the best-presented epigraphically, holding important magistracies before and after Butrint was granted colonial status.⁸⁶⁴ Hansen argues that Caecilius belonged to “an indigenous provincial family, granted Roman citizenship prior to the settlement of the

⁸⁵⁹ Hoepfner et al. 1994, 134; Schwandner 2001, 112. For the suggestion that potters of Kassope moved to Nikopolis: Reynolds and Ikäheimo 2019, n. 21.

⁸⁶⁰ Schwandner 2001, 112; e.g. Gravani 2007.

⁸⁶¹ Daubner 2020.

⁸⁶² Giorgi 2017, 16–17.

⁸⁶³ Hernandez and Hodges 2020, 302–305; Hansen 2011, 95.

⁸⁶⁴ Hansen 2011, 95.

colony, and whose link with Atticus provided the access into the reconfigured elite circle of Butrint” after the creation of the colony.⁸⁶⁵ He retained his position because he was well-positioned in wider networks tied to Butrint, connected especially to important individuals in Rome with economic interests in Epirus. Another member of his family might even have originally helped to engineer these networks after the conquest of 168/7 BCE, as I argued for members of the *Prasaiboi* based on Daubner’s thesis in chapter 4. Meanwhile in the Kokytos Valley it is the Cossinii and Curtii whose names occur on brick stamps at the villa at Agios Donatos and at the fortified complex at the Nekromanteion (see section above), both of whom belonged to families with economic interests in Epirus or more broadly in the eastern Mediterranean in the 1st century BCE.⁸⁶⁶ There is thus a good deal of evidence to suggest that land-owning patterns, like composition of the elite of early Imperial towns, like Butrint and Nikopolis, owed much to the connections forged in the period before 168/7 BCE, as I also argued in the earlier sections in this chapter on coastal Chaonia and on the Kokytos valley. Despite changes caused by the influx of new settlers, the formation of new elite classes may have privileged individuals who had particularly close Italian connections, originating through networks of interactions that I explored in chapter 4, arguably in trade networks, which had also stimulated local agricultural production after 168/7 BCE, as discussed in chapter 3. Additionally, those connected to larger-scale agricultural enterprises, such as of the *Synepirotae*, could have done particularly well, perhaps like Caecilius and Pomponius at Butrint. Hence, agricultural growth through different forms of wealthy farms in the early Imperial period not

⁸⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁸⁶⁶ For the Cossinii see Forsén 2019c, 20 and for the Curtii see Eberle and Le Quéré 2017, 17–19, 43–44; Forsén 2019b, fn. 121.

only relied heavily on re-use of pre-existing sites, but was also rooted in pre-existing networks, in addition to the increased demand created by the arrival of colonists.

On the whole, the evidence indicates that a balanced perspective is required for our reconstructions of land-ownership in Epirus during the early Roman period. This involved individuals not necessarily of elite backgrounds, like colonists and locals—whose identities may have changed over time; the extended families, freedmen, and client-based networks of Roman aristocrats, possibly even including the imperial family; and members of the elite of Epirote communities. My view contrasts with the general tendency in scholarship to associate the re-use of pre-existing rural sites exclusively with new landowners, like Roman aristocrats and colonists, and consequently to argue for the dramatic effect that they are envisioned to have had directly on the agricultural economy, which in my view has been over-stated.⁸⁶⁷ However, as previous scholars have argued for Epirus, there is evidence indicative of heightened rural prosperity and agricultural intensification. I highlighted especially the expanded agricultural production associated with fortified farms in coastal Chaonia, and possibly the production and consequently export of *amphora*-borne products in Thesprotia, as well as the development of smaller farms across regions, for instance in the Kokytos Valley and near Nikopolis.

Settler farmers who had been allotted plots within centuriated areas found prosperity slowly in new places. As new, heterogeneous societies grew in the course of the 1st century CE (especially from the second half), indicated for instance by the prosperity found by the farmers of the rural *suburbium* Nikopolis, so too would new forms of rural settlement. At Nikopolis some farmsteads continued to be used into the 2nd, 3rd and possibly 4th centuries, judging by

⁸⁶⁷ See the [introduction](#) to this chapter.

ceramic continuity, but others were replaced or joined from the 2nd and 3rd centuries by villas.

As we will see in the next chapter, this was part of a much broader phenomenon.

Chapter 6. The Roman villa in southern Epirus

Villas in Epirus were frequently associated with the “domination of a western Roman,” or “senatorial” aristocracy, who in the first century BCE managed large estates in Epirus, according to Cicero and Varro.⁸⁶⁸ Bowden in his book *Epirus Vetus* (2003) constructed a narrative of society and economy over a long time period from the late 3rd–7th centuries CE, which also incorporated earlier Roman evidence.⁸⁶⁹ However, because of the paucity of detail in the evidence he extrapolated the system of land-management that in his opinion characterised the early Roman period to later times. In *Epirus Vetus* he argued for the continuity of this system through the Imperial period, into Late Antiquity and indeed until the mid-5th century CE.⁸⁷⁰ His work is invaluable to the study of Epirus and its countryside in the Roman period, but it fell into somewhat of an evidentiary problem. Owing to the lack of published stratigraphic assemblages from rural estates when Bowden wrote *Epirus Vetus* and because of a dearth of detail in surveyed assemblages and accompanying methodologies—both of which he singled out as problems—the evidence that was thought to correspond temporally to the first century BCE was stretched too thin over too long a time span. As a result, part of the story is representative of the evidence, but its chronology and the pace of developments, as well as their relationship with others, are not.

⁸⁶⁸ Bowden 2003, 81. Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*, Book 1, who noted Atticus’ estate in Epirus early on in the correspondence that begun in 68 BCE and his villa (1.15–16), called *Amaltheia*, by 59 BCE. Varro, *De re rustica*, II.i.2., whose dialogue with the *Synepirotae* who had large animal flocks in Epirus dated to 67 BCE.

⁸⁶⁹ Bowden 2003, 3–6

⁸⁷⁰ Bowden 2003, 59, 81; see also the review of *Epirus Vetus* by Ward-Perkins (2006, 225) for the poor quality of the archaeological evidence at the time, when few houses had been excavated stratigraphically, and who notes that, “with such limited evidence, the story is inevitably patchy, and some of the speculation a little forced.”

This chapter centres on the acme of villas in Epirus that I propose was not in the early Roman period when only a few villas existed, but from the second half of the 2nd century CE, with a probable zenith in the 3rd century CE, after which villas appear to have been abandoned in the second half of the 4th or early 5th centuries CE. My investigation focuses on villas of the Ambracian Gulf area in southern Epirus, because this is where the majority of villas were located (Figure 130). After revisiting historical questions and the views of modern-day scholars for villas in Greece, I focus on my case-study in this area—the Strongyli villa—exploring its design, location and production facilities, and presenting my revised chronology for it based on my study of its pottery. Using the archaeology of this and of other examples I argue for the interpretation of these sites as villas, because they had extravagantly luxurious residential spaces, such as rooms with mosaics and lavish communal baths, as well as production facilities, like wineries; both formed part of villa assemblages across the Empire, as I discussed in [chapter 1](#). The villa at Strongyli had an oilery equipped with three presses and three mills (discussed below), clearly indicative of specialised, marketable production.⁸⁷¹ Olive oil and wine production is attested more broadly through equipment for the processing of grapes and olives into their liquid forms, namely collecting vats, which I use as proxies for these productions; based on my study of key ceramics from those collecting vats, I believe such productions flourished together with the spread of villas. I suggest this indicated the uptake of new agricultural practices in the middle to later Empire in Epirus. Contrary to most western examples, villas, as well as oleiculture and viticulture, here do not appear to have seen a marked decline in the 3rd century CE.

⁸⁷¹ For the oilery of the villa at Strongyli: Giannaki 2017.



Figure 130. Map of definite villas in Roman Epirus (Map made by Hallvard Indgjerd, adapting base map of the © European Union, Copernicus Land Monitoring Service 2022, European Environment Agency (EEA))

The most important contribution of this chapter is that it provides a synthesis of data collected from Greek excavation reports and publications, from archival material produced by rescue excavations and from my study of the excavated material culture of key villas, especially pottery and production equipment. The material was collected during my thirteen months of fieldwork in Epirus with the collaboration of individuals of the five Epirote Ephorates of Antiquities (Aetolia-Akarnania and Lefkas, Preveza, Arta, Thesprotia and Ioannina). The result here, following a clarification of the sites labelled as villas in earlier chapters, is an exposition of Epirote villas and a revision of their chronology. Because fine data was lacking or access to it was difficult, studies of the Roman Greek countryside have often had to rely on unprocessed information taken at face value and stretched out to reconstruct *longue durée* narratives. These narratives have struggled to interact with larger pictures. The picture sketched in this chapter allows the evidence to sit more comfortably within larger frameworks and enables us to restore an altogether different and specific narrative of the Epirote villa, which begins to make more sense in wider contexts.

6.1 Past views on villas in Epirus

The number of villas

Villas in Epirus were until recently thought to have been few in number. Bowden's *Epirus Vetus* discussed just four in Epirus and two in the Ambracian Gulf area (and one more in Aetolia, see

Figure 131).⁸⁷² His 2018 article included one more example, Ladochori near Igoumenitsa. In the same volume Papaioannou noted six villas on mainland Epirus.⁸⁷³ According to Bowden, “the often unrelenting and precipitous rocky coastline... was less suited to villa building than the bays and islands of Istria and Dalmatia.”⁸⁷⁴ This is certainly true. However, villas could be, and often were, built on hillsides particularly near the coast, as at the Bay of Naples, which allowed for olive and vine cultivation. More recently, the number of Epirote villas cited in scholarship has grown, particularly in the Ambracian Gulf area, due to salvage archaeology. Konstantaki noted eight probable villas in addition to nine possible villas or farms in the broader area of the Ambracian Gulf; not all of them were necessarily villas, such as the farms at Analipsis B and Tarana A, discussed in chapter 5.⁸⁷⁵ A total of eleven villas that were excavated in the Ambracian Gulf area are discussed later in the chapter, though the possible remains of a good deal have been more fragmentarily preserved or have been less explored, but because of their partial nature are not included in my thesis (Figure 132).

*Villas as producers and consumers*⁸⁷⁶

Until recently the archaeology of villas has rarely been used to discuss their roles as agricultural producers in Greek areas. No notable investigation of villa equipment was made by Bowden,

⁸⁷² Bowden 2003, chapter 4; 2018, 388–391.

⁸⁷³ Papaioannou 2018, 334–337

⁸⁷⁴ Bowden 2018, 388.

⁸⁷⁵ Konstantaki 2018, 23–25.

⁸⁷⁶ While I discuss aspects of the incorporation, or “consumption”, of luxuries at Epirote villas, my focus is on their roles as producers and not on their roles as consumers, because the topic of this thesis is the agricultural economy. I am grateful to Dominik Maschek for his suggestion to investigate how villas were integrated in the local and regional construction industry, in addition to other productions, like the production of mosaics; however, as undertaking such an investigation would have left less room in the thesis to investigate forms of rural settlement different to the villa, I chose not to include it in the thesis and I hope to investigate this in the future.



Figure 132. Map of villas in the area of the Ambracian Gulf discussed in chapter 6 (Map made by Hallvard Indgjerd, adapting base map of the © European Union, Copernicus Land Monitoring Service 2022, European Environment Agency (EEA))

with the exception of a brief mention of the olive oil production plant of the Strongyli villa.⁸⁷⁷ The plant was also described in two pages by Ntouzougli and has been the focus of an article (2017) by Giannaki.⁸⁷⁸ Papaioannou in her section on Epirote villas within her article on the “Villas of Roman Greece” devoted little attention to production facilities.⁸⁷⁹ In fact, with the exception of those working on the ground like Ntouzougli, Pliakou, Giannaki, Lazari and Konstantaki, researchers have tended to write off the producing capacity of the region, which according to Bowden allowed for some degree of oleiculture but little viticulture.⁸⁸⁰ The archaeological record investigated in this chapter suggests this view requires some revising, evidencing at least a middle-scale degree of production, which reached a larger scale in some cases in later Roman times. In discounting the economic role of the villa in Epirus, researchers effectively rendered it sterile, detaching it from its very defining function as a villa.

These views stem in part from the idea that villas in Greece were unproductive. The consensus even amongst proponents of their study is that they were somehow different from and perhaps incomparable to Italian and western examples: they were smaller, less productive, or later.⁸⁸¹ Rizakis argued for early Imperial small, ‘Catonian’ villas and farms around Patras, often with equipment like presses or vats indicative of specialised, surplus production, like those studied by Petropoulos.⁸⁸² Zarmakoupi on the other hand argued for the existence of so-called luxury villas from the 2nd century CE onwards, or earlier in some regions like Epirus relying primarily on Cicero’s *Letters to Atticus*, whose productive function was not discussed.⁸⁸³ In Greece, therefore, scholars have argued for different forms of villas at different times and

⁸⁷⁷ Bowden 2003, 64–65.

⁸⁷⁸ Ntouzougli 2003a.

⁸⁷⁹ Papaioannou 2018, 329, 334–336.

⁸⁸⁰ Bowden 2003, 8–12.

⁸⁸¹ See articles in Rizakis and Touratsoglou 2013.

⁸⁸² Petropoulos 2001; 2005; Rizakis 2013, 35–36.

⁸⁸³ Zarmakoupi 2013.

places: on the one hand, small villas with specialised equipment or, on the other hand, luxury villas that were not viewed as producers and emerged later than they did in the west. These views on Roman Greek villas reflect one prevailing perspective in villa studies, namely that luxury villas were separate from productive villas. As discussed in chapter 1, in my perspective the villa is partly defined by the marriage of these two notions. The imbalance in Greek villa research thus far—in Roman Epirus and in Roman Greece more broadly—has been partly the limited engagement with the archaeology of agricultural production and methodologies associated with its study to assess the types of equipment utilised and the scale of the output of villas. It has also partly been the lack of use of villa methodologies as a whole and contextualisation in the villa-scape of the empire of Greek villas, which instead were chiefly explored as Roman cultural markers through their architecture and decoration, that has hindered our comparative understanding of them.⁸⁸⁴ In this chapter I redress the imbalance on the two notions till now upheld when approaching the study of villas in Greece, by combining them in my study of Epirote villas.

The chronology of villas

The lives of Epirotes in the countryside, Bowden argued, were conditioned by early Roman events that soon followed destruction and affected them deeply and for a long time.⁸⁸⁵ According to him, the extra-Italian expansion and exploitation of Epirus by Roman elites from the middle of the 1st century BCE, the colonial foundation of Butrint and the Nikopolitan

⁸⁸⁴ See for instance Papaioannou 2002; 2016; 2018, who has focused on villa and domestic architecture in Roman Greece more broadly to explore this.

⁸⁸⁵ Bowden 2003, 59, 81

synoecism both by Augustus in the last 30 years of the 1st century BCE had direct and long-lasting impact.⁸⁸⁶ He contended that, "...until the latter half of the fifth century, the rural landscape, like some aspects of the urban environment, was shaped by social structures that recognisably derive from those of an earlier period", specifically by strong changes in land management patterns that began earlier than they did elsewhere in Greece, during the late Republic and early Empire in Epirus.⁸⁸⁷ As was already mentioned at the start of this chapter, this argument stretched the evidence over too long a time span, was based on an evidentiary substructure that was limited, and whose chronology was for the most part unreliable. I have already discussed the paucity of evidence from excavated sites available to Bowden in 2003, and now turn to literary sources and survey data.

Literary evidence for the management of Epirote estates by Roman elites from high strata came first from mid 1st-century BCE authors like Varro and Cicero (see above). The next ancient written sources noted by Bowden were much later, of the late 4th and 5th centuries CE, referring to absentee landlords with Epirote property.⁸⁸⁸ Specifically, Paula of Rome (347–404 CE) had land near Nikopolis and Paulinus of Pella had large landholdings worked by *coloni* in Achaëa, Epirus Vetus and Epirus Nova, which produced enough, "to cover the most ambitious pretensions of an aristocrat," as he wrote in 459 CE. There is a significant chronological gap in this literary evidence.

Archaeological data from surface surveys was shaky. Field surveys in the Vrina Plain of Butrint (Butrint survey), to the west of the Ambracian Gulf, and in the Acheron Valley (Nikopolis project) noted Roman and Late Roman pottery scatters at most sites, leading

⁸⁸⁶ Bowden 2003, 73, 81.

⁸⁸⁷ Bowden 2003, 59, 72–77, 81–82

⁸⁸⁸ Bowden 2003, 74–75

surveyors to extrapolate continuous occupation.⁸⁸⁹ Yet, in the Butrint survey (1994, 1996) site visibility was very bad, mainly because of alluvial deposition from the Pavllë River and infilling of the plain due to a rising sea-level since ancient times; as a result, many sites were only discovered when deep ditches were dug.⁸⁹⁰ The survey results were prone to complex depositional biases that made them quite unreliable. The results of the Nikopolis survey (1991—1994) were only partially published. One volume explored the survey project's methodology, the prehistoric periods and the ancient environment.⁸⁹¹ However, historical data appeared only cursorily in archaeological reports, in an article summarising the project with two distribution maps, and in two other publications, one article briefly discussing Roman and Late Antique pottery and the Agios Thomas peninsula south of Nikopolis, and in Moore's doctoral thesis on Epirote ceramics.⁸⁹² The Epirote survey data suggested continued use of the landscape, but they were not a solid basis for characterising how and to what levels the landscape was used over time, much less to describe the continued operation in the same ways of farms or villas diachronically. This Bowden admitted in *Epirus Vetus*, and later spoke strongly about the need to correct. The evidence indicative of the long-term continuity of land-management patterns and villas from the late Republic to the 5th century CE was, regrettably, patchy and inconclusive.

Most other scholars using evidence from excavations have argued for the continuity of the villa phenomenon from the 1st–3rd centuries CE; Bowden too using this remarked that there was little evidence for villa construction phases beyond the 3rd century CE, but read overall

⁸⁸⁹ Wiseman 2001; Pluciennik et al. 2020.

⁸⁹⁰ Bowden 2003, 67.

⁸⁹¹ Wiseman and Zachos 2003.

⁸⁹² Moore 2000; Stein 2001; Wiseman 2001; Wiseman and Zachos 2003.

rural site continuity in the survey data to the 5th century CE.⁸⁹³ In contrast to him, Papaioannou, Katsadima and Angeli noted a late 3rd-century CE decline, when many villas were said to have been abandoned.⁸⁹⁴ More recently, Konstantaki showed that agricultural complexes also had Late Antique phases.⁸⁹⁵ Focusing on the territory of Nikopolis she argued that villas flourished during the 2nd century CE specifically and experienced economic decline during the second half of the 3rd century, as has been suggested for other Greek areas, grew again in the 4th century and were abandoned in the later 4th-/early 5th centuries.⁸⁹⁶ While her argument was influenced by broader historical events, like the so-called ‘3rd-century crisis’, it also rests on much recent evidence.

6.2 The Strongyli villa in the Ambracian Gulf

Beyond the villas at Agios Donatos and at Diaporit, the villa at Strongyli (no. 23) has been one of the most comprehensively explored villas in Epirus, and the first of all three to be excavated, though unlike them the finds from its excavations had not been thoroughly studied.⁸⁹⁷ This is the main reason that I chose to focus on it as a case-study. Additionally, contrastingly to other villas in the area of the Ambracian Gulf, of which only a residential area was unearthed (e.g. at Agios Georgios, no. 24), or snippets of a villa’s assemblage (e.g. at Agia Pelagia, excavated piecemeal as a modern monastery that today occupies the area expanded, no. 21), at Strongyli

⁸⁹³ Bowden 2003, 81.

⁸⁹⁴ Katsadima and Aggeli 2001, 103; Papaioannou 2018, 352.

⁸⁹⁵ Konstantaki 2015.

⁸⁹⁶ Konstantaki 2018, 27–28.

⁸⁹⁷ Ntouzougli 1998.

different parts of the villa had been methodically explored. These parts included a residential area, an oilery, and a bath complex distributed across a small hill (Figure 133).⁸⁹⁸ Consequently, it is possible to explore both functions of the villa as a country retreat and as a centre for agricultural production. Finally, the keeping of meticulous records in excavation journals that I was graciously granted access to allowed me to relate pottery to the stratigraphy; and since excavations at the residential area and at the oilery had reached bedrock, to reconstruct the full phasing of the villa, to whose ancient environment I now turn.

In Roman times the Ambracian Gulf was a far larger lagoon than at present, and extended almost to the foot of the mountains to the north, such as Mt Rokia, which today towers over plains instead of sea, as it would have in antiquity (Figure 19). As mentioned in chapter 2, the larger ancient lagoon was created between the middle Chalcolithic and the Roman periods as the Ionian Sea progressively filled the gulf, more swiftly than the Louros river and its tributaries brought sediment from the north and northwest.⁸⁹⁹ In this maritime environment with far less coastal plains agricultural productions would have differed to some degree, with less suitability for cereals and more for plants that grow on hillsides and in terraces, like olive groves and vineyards. Communication through the larger Ambracian Gulf connected the different territories of Nikopolis, whose *chora* extended around and beyond it.⁹⁰⁰ In the northern part of the gulf there was an island (today Mt Mavrovoun) with a small promontory (today Podarouli hill), and on it the villa known today by the toponym Strongyli was located. As I mentioned, it comprised of a *pars urbana*, built on a small plateau that formed the highest point of the

⁸⁹⁸ Ntouzougli 1998; 2003a; 2003b (on the *pars urbana* and the bath complex); Giannaki 2017 (on the oilery).

⁸⁹⁹ Jing and Rapp 2003, 157, 192–198. See section 2 for more details on this process.

⁹⁰⁰ Strabo 7.7.6.

promontory, an olive oil production plant, and a sumptuous bath-complex (Figure 133); the last two would have been close to sea-level, each about 100 m from the residence above.

As I mentioned in the last section of this chapter, there has been a tendency in villa research in Greece to distinguish between small productive villas with spaces predominantly dedicated to agricultural production or luxury villas with sumptuous residential areas. Yet, at Strongyli there is evidence for both aspects together, and it is the marriage of these two elements that as I will argue makes it a villa.⁹⁰¹ The villa was also open to its surrounding landscape through its architecture and location (e.g. through the entrance portico of the *pars urbana* open to the elements, discussed below), which is a feature of villas more broadly, as [I discussed in chapter 1](#). At its oily not inconsequential quantities of olive oil could have been produced, as I show by drawing minimum estimates of its production, challenging the idea that villas in Greek areas were not competitive producers.

Villa aesthetics and landscape connection: pars urbana

The *pars urbana* of the villa (Figure 6) crowned the Podarouli promontory, and from it one would have experienced spectacular panoramas of the Ambracian Gulf (Figures 134-135). The lagoon would have been framed by mountains, like Mt Zalongo, to the west, while just beyond the lagoon coastal plains stretched out in front of mountains to the east. The approach to the villa was probably from the southwest, because Ntouzougli suggested that a portico entrance (room 8, approx. 17 m long) decorated its south-western side (the intercolumniations of which were later walled) (Figure 6).⁹⁰² The portico gave access to a series of rooms on either side

⁹⁰¹ The idea that a villa combined these two aspects forms part of my villa definition in chapter 1.

⁹⁰² Ntouzougli 1998, 74; 2003b, 9.

decorated with mosaic floors and to a small passage-way ahead (room 3) that led to the back of the villa and to spaces with utilitarian functions.⁹⁰³ Geometric mosaic pavements furnished rooms 1, 7, 12 and 13, decorated with floral motifs like ivy scrolls and tableware, such as a two-handled krater or kantharos, and goblets, whose contents spill out of them, perhaps evoking lavish dinner parties (Figures 136-139).⁹⁰⁴ Fragments of architectural sculpture survive, such of a marble window frame and stucco mouldings, both from room 7, as well as red and cyan plaster on the lower parts of the surface of some rooms' walls (e.g. room 5 and 7) that indicates they may have been painted or plastered.⁹⁰⁵ Little of the inhabitants' household objects appear to have survived after the villa was abandoned, but the artefacts that did indicate that they lit their rooms using lamps that were in vogue in Greece, cooked in regional cooking pots and dined in thin-walled African *sigillata*, imported relief bowls and simpler local dishes.⁹⁰⁶

The elite residential area at Strongyli was not indicative of a villa only because of its individual features. It was also indicative of a villa because of the connection it manifested with the local landscape, partly through its location, which afforded expansive panoramas of the lagoon, and partly through its architecture, such as the probable portico at its entrance, which would have created a play with the landscape. Porticoes, as Zarmakoupi argued, were an evolution of the peristyle that came into existence when architects “broke down” the confines of the internal rectangular courtyard, “opening” the interior of residences to the environment.⁹⁰⁷ As a result, porticoes were liminal spaces between the interior and the exterior. At Strongyli, the portico would have created a semi-outdoor space, allowing the sea-breeze of the gulf to

⁹⁰³ Ntouzougli 1998, 77; 2003b, 6; Konstantaki 2015, 90–91.

⁹⁰⁴ I have numbered the mosaics after their room numbers.

⁹⁰⁵ Konstantaki 2015, 90.

⁹⁰⁶ A relief bowl was pictured by Ntouzougli 1998, fig. 6. See section 3.3 for a discussion of the pottery.

⁹⁰⁷ Zarmakoupi 2018, 92–93.

enter it and creating a gentler climate than a fully outdoor space located in the sun or within closed-off rooms. As the sun set in the northwest of the gulf during the summer, below the towering wooded peaks of Mt Zalongo, and during the winter in the southwest on the gulf itself with Nikopolis on the horizon, its rays could, recalling Pliny's description, be "invite[d]... into the colonnade."⁹⁰⁸ As Pliny wrote in relation to his Tuscan residence: "*Magna sui parte meridiem spectat aestivumque solem ab hora sexta, hibernum aliquanto maturius quasi invitat, in porticum latam et pro modo longam.*"⁹⁰⁹

Olive oil production

The production installation comprised of a room 7.40 m wide x 16.30 m long (Figure 7), which would have been part of a larger building, southwest of the main residence. Its location today borders a stream and in Roman times it sat at the edge of a patch of flatter land that connected the Podarouli promontory with the Mavronouni island. Within the room, three stone olive mills of the *trapetum* type described by Cato (Figure 139) and three stone press beds were uncovered. Besides the spout, or *labrum*, of press bed 1 was a small, stone vat, used to separate the olive oil from the watery liquid deriving from the pressed olive pulp (Figure 140). The presses were positioned against the walls and the equipment set apart at approximately equal distances that allowed all pieces to operate simultaneously. Their findspots seem to correspond to their original positioning, suggesting that this space survived relatively undisturbed from the Roman

⁹⁰⁸ Pliny, *Letters*, 5.6.15.

⁹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

period to the present.⁹¹⁰ The layout of the plant would have looked much the same, allowing for an accurate reconstruction of its nature and the scale of production.

The equipment points clearly to olive oil production, three phases of which are discernible—milling, pressing, and separation of the juices.⁹¹¹ The olive mills fitted two stone mill stones (or *orbēs*, at least five fragments of which were found at Strongyli, Figure 141), cut to fit the space inside the hollow of the *trapetum* (or *mortarium*), at the centre of which was a small post (or *miliarium*).⁹¹² The millstones were connected by a wooden beam that was used to turn them, grinding off the body of the olive, without crushing much of the pit, after the olives had undergone primary cleaning, washing, softening with warm water and salting. The top surface of the press beds themselves bear obvious signs of erosion caused by the frequent exposure of the stone to oleic acid under high pressure during pressing.⁹¹³ To produce oil baskets or frails that were lined with olive paste and soaked in hot water were piled up on the press beds, oozing oil into a channel on the bed which led to the press spout and into different types of separation vats, tanks or other containers like *pithoi* / *dolia*. Thus, the inner diameter of the channel corresponded to that of the frails. In the Roman period, the frails were pressed on the beds using a variety of forces: in two press types, known as Cato's 'lever-and-drum / winch press' and the 'lever-and-screw press', a beam was pulled down on the baskets, the beam being weighed down by weights whose force was assisted by the use of a lever or by the use of a screw mechanism (see Figure 142, A-B). A third type, more often used in Late Antiquity (e.g.

⁹¹⁰ At least 17 lamps and six relief bowls were found almost all intact, while the six collections of *pithos* fragments included parts of bases, mouths and bodies, all noted in Giannaki, *EJ* 4 (2000–2001), Catalogue of Ceramic Finds (e.g. the *pithos* collections: Π5, Π9, Π21, Π23, Π27, Π29). «Π» stands for «πήλινα αντικείμενα» or ceramic finds. Additionally, the neck and handles of an amphora were found.

⁹¹¹ Giannaki 2017, 461–467.

⁹¹² Giannaki, *EJ* 4 (2000–2001), Catalogue of Stone Finds, Λ1-3, Λ9-10, maybe Λ4-5 as well. «Λ» stands for «λίθινα αντικείμενα» or stone finds. Giannaki 2017, 463.

⁹¹³ Evidence for erosion caused by oleic acid was discussed at the *VWRW* 2021 conference as a good indicator of olive oil production.

at the Late Antique production sites of Treia and Fossombrone in Central Adriatic Italy) but which did not replace the others, was the ‘direct-pressure-screw press’ (Figure 142, C).⁹¹⁴ This was smaller, but did not require a beam. While the direct-pressure-screw was more efficient at squeezing the most juice out of the pressed fruit, it was not necessarily more time- and labour-efficient, since it required two individuals to operate it at all times using their own force.⁹¹⁵ The other two beam-operated presses, once lowered by weights, levers and in the second type screws, could be left to operate using the force of gravity, sometimes up to 24 hours.⁹¹⁶ As a result, the different types could be used according to different needs, the size of an estate and the amount of fruit it produced, as well as the availability of labour. In my opinion the presses used at the Strongyli olive oil production plant were direct-pressure-screw presses, because the room was rather narrow to support the simultaneous operation of three presses with beams and three *trapeta*. Additionally, no evidence for counter-weights for the beam, a base block for the piers, or a screw weight for the screw, on both of which the beam would be tethered, was found that would indicate the existence of a ‘lever-and-winch press’ or a ‘lever-and-screw press’ (see Figure 142 for this equipment). All of this equipment for the direct-screw presses, except the press bed, was wooden and perishable.⁹¹⁷ While it is possible these were located outside the excavated room, the beams passing above low room walls, this seems highly unlikely and no corresponding equipment was discovered outside the room in areas that were excavated. The direct-screw presses were placed against the room’s walls (Figures 143-144), and could have been fixed to them to counterbalance the upward pressure generated by the screw’s downward

⁹¹⁴ For Treia and Fossombrone and a brief description of the probable superiority of the smaller direct-screw presses to earlier presses see: Van Limbergen 2019, 118–119.

⁹¹⁵ Wilson 2009b, 359–360.

⁹¹⁶ Wilson 2009b, 359–360.

⁹¹⁷ Burton and Lewit 2019, 582–585; Van Limbergen 2019, 118.

force. This Burton and Lewit argued was the case for such presses from a number of Roman sites.⁹¹⁸ While the direct-screw presses, like the three at Strongyli, were not necessarily well suited to very large-scale production (as in North Africa) because of their high labour cost, they could be used to squeeze the most juice out of the pressed pulp.

The presence of three mills and three presses in one room evidently indicates an oilery production unit, whose very existence in Epirus where such units did not exist in pre-Roman times is evidence enough to establish that we are dealing with specialised and surplus olive oil production. As Mattingly has often put it, as for example in his 1993 article, “the purchase or construction of olive mills and presses is commonly an indication of surplus production...and market orientated rural economies.”⁹¹⁹ It is more difficult to estimate the scale of that production, and whether the surplus that it generated was aimed at feeding the far-above surplus needs of a wealthy Roman extended *familia* or at being sold in markets. In what follows, I attempt to estimate the scale of the production per annum using the evidence for the Strongyli presses and with a conservative level of conjecture, drawing on Mattingly’s methodology and some numbers by Brun. To construct this estimate, like Mattingly, I have consciously used minimum values, whether his or my own.

Mattingly’s estimation of the size of an individual load of baskets with olive paste to be pressed is made as follows.⁹²⁰ First he calculates the cylindrical volume of the baskets lined with olive paste. This is achieved by multiplying the squared radius of the estimated circular surface of the baskets, derived from the internal diameter of the circular channel that corresponds to the basket diameter (see above), by π and the estimated height of the piled

⁹¹⁸ Burton and Lewit 2019, 582–585

⁹¹⁹ Mattingly 1993, 185.

⁹²⁰ It is made principally in two articles that I utilised: Mattingly 1988; 1993.

baskets. Two values are required: the basket diameter, which can be obtained with a good degree of confidence from the internal diameter of the circular channel in which the juices flowed on the press bed, and the height of the piled baskets, which is more difficult to calculate. Using North African presses Mattingly calculated the frails' height by measuring the height from press beds to holes surviving in large orthostats behind them, which he interpreted as holes for cross-bars inserted to support the lever-beams whose pressure was applied on the baskets; holes existed at various levels to be used to exert different levels of pressure. In Epirus, like elsewhere in the Roman world, we have no direct evidence for the height of the stacked baskets. Yet, unlike Mattingly who dissuades his readers from attempting to produce an estimate of scale without such height figures, I believe we can make an educated guess at a relative minimum of the height of the stacked baskets in order to envision a minimum of the estimated output for an individual load. The number I have chosen is that estimated by Brun in his reconstruction of a 2nd-century BCE, Catonian press: 1.5 Roman feet approximately 44.4 cm for the height of the stacked baskets, which is less than half of Mattingly's 1 m minimum calculation of basket height for the large presses of Tripolitania and the Kasserine region.⁹²¹

The internal diameter of the circular channel in which the juices flowed from the baskets stacked within it for press 1 at Strongyli was ~93 cm and for press 3 was ~92 cm; press 2 was broken but is almost the same size as the others—in my calculation, I will use the diameter of press 1. The volume of the cylinder of stacked baskets with olive pulp is 0.3 m³. As Mattingly argues, we can calculate that the uncompressed pulp was approximately 50% of the height of the stacked baskets.⁹²² We therefore have 0.15 m³ (135 kg) of olive paste per load, much less

⁹²¹ Mattingly 1993, 189; Brun 2003, 154–155.

⁹²² Mattingly 1988, 192; 1993, 490

than Mattingly's 0.55 m³ (495 kg) using a maximum stack height of 1.40 m.⁹²³ At a yield of 20% oil:paste, the output of one load of baskets for Strongyli press 1 is 27 kg oil/press load, and for all three presses at 81 kg oil/press load. If the pressing were done by gradually lowering the screws of the Strongyli direct-screw presses, the labourers of the Strongyli oilery could cope with a slow output of olive oil, water and parts of the pulp pouring into the small separator vat, where the olive oil separated from any intrusions and from the water by rising to the top of one basin (with a water volume of 42 l, and olive oil volume of 38 l) and falling into the secondary basin of the separator of approximately the same size (see Figure 140 for the divisions of the two basins of the separator vat).⁹²⁴ From the second basin first good quality olive oil and subsequently oil of lesser quality (from subsequent pressings) could be ladled off and stored in *pithoi*, fragments of which were recovered in the room. The wide double-door threshold that was excavated could have accommodated the carrying of the *pithoi* outside this room to other areas of the installation, which extended in at least three directions as is indicated by walls that protrude to them and by one additional large opening picturing the excavation drawing of Figure 143.⁹²⁵

How does this combined minimum output of all three presses of 81 kg oil/press load correspond to the annual yield of the Strongyli oilery? Mattingly, who investigated larger-scale estates in North Africa, assumed a long 60- to 90-day season from October-December, which he argued would have occurred biennially in order to limit the number of years when many

⁹²³ Mattingly 1993, 490. Note that Mattingly converts this volume in m³ to kg by assessing that, "1 m³ of pulped olives has a mass of approximately 900 kg" (Mattingly 1988, 192). He seems to be using an approximation of the density of olive oil, which is 0.916 kg/l, but which, in fact, should not correspond to the density of pulped olives. Something is off in the calculations. I thank Hallvard Indgjerd for helping me to realise this discrepancy.

⁹²⁴ The measurements to calculate this volume are the internal width, length and depth of the better-preserved basin of the separator vat (0.47 m x 0.53 m x 0.17 m) (Giannaki, *EJ* 4 (2000–2001), 31), consequently translated to litres by multiple the water's volume with the density of olive oil (0.916 kg/l).

⁹²⁵ For the double-door threshold: Giannaki 2017, 461.

additional labourers had to be hired for the harvest and allowing the olives to rest every other year.⁹²⁶ This argument makes far less financial sense at Strongyli, where the use of direct-screw presses suggests a smaller estate, which would not have required the hiring of as large a labour force. I suppose instead a 60-day season, which occurred every year with the labour force that was part of the villa. Since olives bear fruit every other year, half of the olive on the estate would have been harvested every year; this would also minimise the risk caused by the lack of a harvest in a bad year. Estimating that only one load was pressed (once or multiple times) per day, the yearly yield would come to 1,620 kg oil per press and a total of 4,860 kg oil produced by all three presses operating at the same time. Accounting for some bad days and a level of inefficiency (I suggest 25% inefficiency, averaging Mattingly's 20–30%), for instance to replace broken wooden parts of the equipment, a reasonable minimum output for the Strongyli villa estate is 3,645 kg oil/peak annum for all three presses, that is 1,215 kg oil/annum/press. The only difference in my approach from that of Mattingly is my estimated guess of the height of the stacked baskets, which is 44.4 cm, lower than almost all the lowest heights noted by Mattingly, with the exception of two out of 29 examples. Since I argued the oilery of Strongyli operated every year when half of the olive trees of the estate were harvested, the total output in a two-year period should be around 7,290 kg oil overall. This amount corresponds to the quantity of olive oil that could be produced from the full estate of the Strongyli villa.

The figure of 1,215 kg oil/annum/press falls short of Mattingly's range for the peak yearly output (in 60-day seasons) of small presses (3,000 kg), while medium presses produced 7,200 kg and large presses 12,000–18,000 kg in Tripolitania and the Kasserine region.⁹²⁷ However, this should come as no surprise since those North African regions were some of the

⁹²⁶ Mattingly 1988, 192; 1993, 491–492

⁹²⁷ Mattingly 1993, 492

most productive olive oil producers in the Roman world. My estimation of 3,645 kg oil produced by the Strongyli estate in a given year is indicative of a production that far exceeded the needs of any basic household. It points to well-above surplus production that was probably destined to a large degree for the market. Additionally, the presence of three mills and three direct-screw presses points to a desire for efficiency. These expensive pieces of equipment could be used simultaneously to press a large number of olives quickly after they were collected and treated (i.e. cleaned, washed, salted), while the swifter direct-screw press allowed for this to be accomplished faster than with other press types (although with greater labour requirements). The efficiency with which olives are pressed allows for the production of high-quality olive oil; the longer one waits, the more the olive loses its freshness and produces lower quality olive oil. The small separator vat also points to a desire for the collection of the best quality olive oil. Together these indications suggest that the owner of the Strongyli olive groves could not only produce large quantities of olive oil, but also cared about its quality.⁹²⁸

To sum up, the complex at Strongyli can be understood as a villa because it functioned both as a country retreat with sumptuous residential quarters and as a centre for specialised and market-oriented agricultural production, especially of olive oil. Additionally, the villa interacted with its landscape through placement and architecture that opened outwards (e.g. its porticoed entrance), not closed inwards as with the enclosures and fortifications of fortified farms. Such landscape architecture and luxurious bathing facilities like that at Strongyli (discussed below) formed a regular part of villa assemblages, [as I discussed in chapter 1](#), while baths were indicative of social practices, like communal bathing, which spread often with villas across the

⁹²⁸ Much of this was discussed with family members in Kinetta (Megarid), where we produce a small amount of good quality olive oil, and I am thank to my mother and the local olive processing plant operators for their advice.

Roman Empire. As I discuss later on in this chapter, such features and evidence of villas as a combination of countryside retreats and above-surplus agricultural production can also be found across other villas in the Ambracian Gulf area. Importantly, the example of the villa at Strongyli, whose estate could produce a minimum of 7,290 kg of olive oil, contrasts with the view that villas and the mindset of wealthy landlords in Greece during the Roman period (in contrast to those of other parts of the Empire) were less productive and more “acquisitive”.⁹²⁹ Such a view echoes Finleyan reconstructions of ancient elite attitudes towards economic activities, which he described as “acquisitive but not productive”.⁹³⁰ It is possible that this understanding together with the partial nature of the evidence in Greece, either survey or rescue excavations, contributed to the process of distinguishing between small productive “villas” and “luxury” villas in Greece, already alluded to, when in fact villas could not be one or the other, they were both. Crucial to the integration of sites unearthed through rescue archaeology, which as I also mentioned in chapter 1 were often assigned broad, provisional date ranges due to the time constraints of rescue work, is the further study of evidence that can be used to establish secure chronologies, which I present for Strongyli below.

Chronology: stylistic evidence and environmental factors

Ntouzougli originally postulated that the villa residence dated between the 1st–3rd centuries CE, based on pottery and coins of Augustus, Septimius Severus, Caracalla and Gallienus recovered in its various rooms.⁹³¹ The mosaics, however, were originally dated to the late 2nd–

⁹²⁹ Alcock 1993, 79, 85–87.

⁹³⁰ Finley 1973, chap. V, esp. 144, and 144–149.

⁹³¹ Ntouzougli 1998, 78; 2003b, 9; 2003a, 69–70.

3rd centuries, because of their similarities with the mosaics of the *domus* of M. Antoninus (Nikopolis) and the ‘Mosaic House’ (Corinth).⁹³² In her recent synthesis on Roman Cretan mosaics, Sweetman argues that dating by iconographic comparison is often subjective, preferring broad date ranges, rather than narrow ones that could be proven incorrect through other dating means.⁹³³ Motifs such as the ivy scrolls of mosaic 12, the kraters of mosaics 13 and 1, simple, three-stranded and four-stranded guilloches of mosaics 1, 13 and 7 place the pavements in the Late Antique period (respectively, Figure 138, Figure 136, Figure 17). The krater could date as early as the 3rd century CE, or perhaps the late 2nd century CE.⁹³⁴ The mosaic dates the beginning of a usage phase of the villa residence to the later Middle Empire or to Late Antiquity.

The bath complex, ca. 100 m east of the residence, has been dated on the architectural parallels of a large, domed octagonal room (Figure 145), which formed part of it, with decagonal rooms of Roman baths or *nymphaea* elsewhere in rural Epirus. This octagonal room at Strongyli was constructed of brick-faced concrete, had a diameter of c. 5.5 m and at least six small openings on six of its sides, five of which had additional limestone slab supports (0.20 m thick) on either side of these ~60 cm-wide openings, and one with an additional limestone slab (1.30 m-long x 0.25/0.30 m-wide) used as a lintel.⁹³⁵ This last well-supported opening could have served in some phase as an opening for hot air coming from a furnace to heat the room, which may have been a *caldarium*, or hot room.⁹³⁶ Some 20 km from Strongyli on the other side of Mt

⁹³² Ntouzougli 1998, 78; 2003b, 9.

⁹³³ Sweetman 2013, 81–82

⁹³⁴ The grid of serrated fillets, with a serrated square in the centre, and the pattern of adjacent triangles, their black and white colours counter-balanced recalling a chessboard pattern (both of mosaic 13), as well as the bead and reel decoration (mosaic 12), might harken back to the 2nd century.

⁹³⁵ Lamprou, Excavation Journal, ΣΤΡΟΓΓΥΛΗ (τομέας λουτρών Β), Ιούλιος-Αύγουστος 1994, 19–21.

⁹³⁶ Pers. comm. Konogan Beaufay.

Zalongo, a domed, decagonal structure, also of brick-faced concrete, towers above the coast north of Nikopolis at Riza (Figures 146-148). Chrysostomou interpreted the room as a *nymphaeum* belonging to the private gardens of an estate, dating it in his architectural study to the 3rd century, while Katsadima and Angeli argued it was a *frigidarium*, dating to the 3rd or 4th century CE.⁹³⁷ Bowden prefers a slightly earlier date for Riza based on its construction techniques, and argues the octagonal room at Strongyli dated to the later part of the 1st–3rd-century date range proposed for the villa complex.⁹³⁸ At Diaport, on the shores of lake Butrint, he excavated a pier of a similar decagonal room, dated stratigraphically to the late 2nd century.⁹³⁹ Chronologies made through architectural parallels suffer from the same risks as iconographic comparisons of mosaics. Scholars of rural baths today tend to forego them in their studies on the basis that architectural features can have much longer lifespans than previously thought and innovation is to be expected.⁹⁴⁰ The octagonal room at Strongyli could date from the Middle Imperial to the Late Antique periods; while earlier Roman periods cannot be excluded on stylistic grounds of the architecture alone—a domed, octagonal room with many sides is rarely seen in early Roman baths and more frequently in later ones.

Environmental factors would have contributed to the abandonment of the villa. River estuaries of the Ambracian Gulf began to silt up from the later 4th or 5th centuries as the rate of sediment infill increased, probably due to human-induced erosion in the Roman period.⁹⁴¹ By the middle of the 5th century, the land around Strongyli was transforming into marshland, making it impossible for the villa to function at full operation.

⁹³⁷ Chrysostomou 1982, 16–20; Katsadima and Aggeli 2001. See also Zachos 1993, for surface finds and test trenches by the Greek archaeological service yielding pottery from the 1st–3rd centuries.

⁹³⁸ Bowden 2003, 64–65.

⁹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 62–65

⁹⁴⁰ Pers. comm. Konogan Beaufay.

⁹⁴¹ Wiseman 2001, 45–49; Jing and Rapp 2003, 195–198.

Chronology based on ceramic assemblages

The ritual foundation deposits of the 3rd century CE from the oilery

In the stratigraphy described in the excavation journals of the Strongyli oilery, five layers can be associated with its construction.⁹⁴² Two of them come from below press beds 3 and 2. The other three come from the lowest levels excavated within the oilery building. They filled large cavities in the highly uneven bedrock upon which the building rested, and in one of the excavator discovered clay or “γλίνα” that she believed was used to help level the floor surface (Figure 149).⁹⁴³ It is possible that these layers contained some material related to the usage of the oilery, which had a dirt floor. However, any pots associated with a floor surface would presumably not have survived whole, given the floor’s regular usage.

The foundation layers contained a relief bowl and six lamps corresponding to Broneer’s type XXVIIB, also known as vine-and-ray lamps, all surviving in very good condition (Figure 150). The top surface of the lamps was found complete, while parts of the base were often missing and especially the parts closest to the nozzle. The survival of six lamps of the same type and a relief bowl nearly intact suggests that they were consciously deposited with care in these layers, indicating a formalised activity that may be associated with a ritual to commemorate the construction of the oilery. Such a custom was common in ancient Greece and not unknown in Hellenistic Epirus, where foundation deposits associated with a ritual, known as “λάκκοι

⁹⁴² Contexts: StrOileryBuilding..40., StrOileryBuilding..43., StrOileryBuilding.A2.15., StrOileryBuilding.Γ3.22., and StrOileryBuilding.B3.33..

⁹⁴³ Giannaki 2017, 461. Two of these three contexts were also excavated after contexts containing oily soil were removed, which would presumably have been associated with the usage period of the oilery. Kortzi and Giannaki, *EJ Strongyli Oilery* 2000–2001, 69.

εγκαίνια”, that may have been accompanied by feasting or drinking are known from ancient Ambrakia, approximately 14 km east of Strongyli, from the island of Lefkas and from the Kokytos valley in Thesprotia.⁹⁴⁴ Often cups, bowls and plates presumably used in the dining were deposited alongside charred animal bones, but the process and vessels varied from place to place; for instance, in Ambrakia miniature vessels, including lamps, were most often deposited, alongside the charred remains of a small animal or bird, perhaps part of a ritual dinner.⁹⁴⁵ In Apollonia bitumen, a raw material that was locally valued, was deposited alongside two amphorae.⁹⁴⁶ In the Kokytos valley popular vessel forms of Late Classical tableware, found intact, were deposited in a foundation deposit below the press bed of a rural installation that also probably made olive oil.⁹⁴⁷ Turmo argued that this rural production facility was important for the local community’s production of olive oil (particularly since such production installations are generally rare in this period), which is why they saw fit to, in a manner of speaking, bless its construction. The same could apply to the Strongyli oilery, which, with its three presses and three mills, is rather exceptional for Epirus; even if it was only connected to the villa’s production, it would have been valuable to its owner, who could also have processed the crops of smaller nearby farmers.⁹⁴⁸

Moreover, it seems that the vine-and-ray lamps of the Strongyli oilery were all broken in the same place, at the nozzle (Figure 150). This may have been a part of the ritual, which would explain why the lower halves closest to the nozzle are often missing. Additionally, these lamps are not only of the same Broneer type XXVIIB, but are very similar in their particular

⁹⁴⁴ Hunt 2006, 18–20. Turmo 2019, 127–129, accumulated the Epirote evidence.

⁹⁴⁵ Andreou and Andreou 2000, 302. Riginos 2008b, 82.

⁹⁴⁶ Fiedler 2017, 397–410.

⁹⁴⁷ Turmo 2019, 120–136.

⁹⁴⁸ Turmo 2019, 129.

decoration; they all alternate grape bunches with vines (depicting bunches or couples of leaves, Broneer's patterns 19 or 20), often four-leaved, a feature often applied by Corinthian lamp-makers.⁹⁴⁹ Three of the lamps deposited at Strongyli were also inscribed with the name 'ΠΩCΦΟΡΟΥ' on their base; this was a common Roman Greek name particularly well-suited to lamp makers because it is associated with light, "φῶς", and recalls, as Petropoulos noted, Athenaeus' description of a lamp as "φωσφόρον".⁹⁵⁰ Their close similarities strongly suggest that these lamps were contemporary and deposited simultaneously, strengthening the possibility of this being a ritual deposit associated with a celebration for the construction of the oilery, and bringing to mind the house blessings that take place in modern-day Greece.

The material evidence in the foundation deposits provides a *terminus post quem* for the oilery's construction. Most numerous are the vine-and-ray lamps, a type very popular in Roman Greece.⁹⁵¹ While Broneer originally dated them to the 1st–2nd centuries CE, more recently scholars revised their chronology to the late 2nd–3rd centuries.⁹⁵² Two prominent workshops were those of Corinth and Athens. While lamp production is regionally-specific, the examples from the Strongyli oilery bear very close resemblances to Corinthian vine-and-ray lamps, not only because of the preference for vines represented by combined bunches of leaves on the rim (i.e. Broneer's patterns 19 and 2), but also because of the deep relief of the rim decoration and the rays on the discus (at least on lamps moulded from fresh moulds, whose details had not become worn). Close parallels of this sort are B9 and B10 in Patras, both decidedly

⁹⁴⁹ Perlzweig 1961, 94. Petropoulos 1999 sites such examples (e.g. B9–10) as characteristic of the Corinthian production.

⁹⁵⁰ Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, 15.699. Petropoulos 1999, 123.

⁹⁵¹ Broneer 1930, 93.

⁹⁵² Petropoulos 1999 is the only scholar I have come across who dates an example (M133) as early as the middle of the 2nd century at Patras, but his evidence stems from rescue archaeology, which is less reliable than securely dated contexts, e.g. in Corinth. Others (e.g. Perlzweig 1961; Slane 1990; 2017; Reynolds 2019) date vine-and-ray lamps to the late 2nd-early 3rd at the earliest, the early 3rd or the 3rd more broadly.

characteristic examples of the Corinthian production according to Petropoulos, no. 274 in Athens (of which B9 from Patras is an exact replica) dated to the 3rd century, and a series of examples from Corinth (e.g. from the North Cemetery: PT-9, PT-10, PT-11, QQ-23) (Figure 151). Perlzweig argued that the Corinthian workshop probably continued to produce until the late 3rd century, but its products were not be represented in Athens after the early 3rd century, when Athenians stopped importing such lamps and began to produce their own.⁹⁵³ In Corinth, Slane building on Perlzweig's theory, argued that Corinthian vine-and-ray lamps were characteristic of the 3rd century; the earliest example came from a Severan context in Athens, while the latest were found in an early-4th century context at the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore in Corinth.⁹⁵⁴ The vine-and-ray lamps from Strongyli may date from the Severan period to the end of the 3rd century.

Other material in the foundation deposits supports and refines the chronology suggested by the vine-and-ray lamps. One whole relief bowl and the rim of another were found in them, as well as a third almost intact relief bowl from an unidentified context of the oilery (Figure 152). According to Malfitana, the first examples of relief bowls date from the second half of the 2nd century and the latest to the early 4th, but being most common in the 3rd century.⁹⁵⁵ They reflect the chronology of vine-and-ray lamps, in contexts with which they are often found.⁹⁵⁶ Reynolds dates relief bowls in the Vrina Plain to the 3rd/4th centuries.⁹⁵⁷ Consequently, the grouping of vine-and-ray lamps and relief bowls in the oilery foundation deposits confirms that a probable *terminus post quem* for its construction is the late 2nd–3rd centuries. Below press

⁹⁵³ Perlzweig 1961, 8.

⁹⁵⁴ Slane 1990, 16. She mentions that at the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore vine-and-ray lamps were found in securely dated contexts of the 3rd century (e.g. lots 886, 2093, 4363) and two more were found in a context dated to the second half of the 3rd century (lot 2100) (1990, fn. 48).

⁹⁵⁵ Malfitana 2007, 135–140, 157.

⁹⁵⁶ Malfitana 2007, 157.

⁹⁵⁷ Reynolds 2019, 16.

bed 3, alongside a vine-and-ray lamp (no. cΠ34) and a relief bowl (no. cΠ32), one other lamp was found with a rosette of more than 15 petals decorating its discus and a plain rim, unevenly rendered (Figure 153). It may belong to Broneer's type XXVIIC, which includes lamps whose discuses were decorated with a large variety of figural scenes, rosettes, wreaths and, in one case, a geometric pattern not dissimilar to another lamp found in one of the foundation deposits in the Strongyli oilery (context StrOilleryBuilding.A2.15.).⁹⁵⁸ According to Slane, rosette disks were, along with vine-and-rays, quintessentially 3rd-century.⁹⁵⁹ The closest parallels to the rather poor example from the oilery are Bailey's Q 1375 and Petropoulos' M223, both dated to the first half of the 3rd century (Figure 154).⁹⁶⁰ This rosette disc lamp serves as a *terminus post quem* for the foundation deposit below press bed 3, which should date to or after the first half of the 3rd century. It follows that the four other deposits were probably laid simultaneously to it to create the oilery's floor surface. Consequently, the oilery was constructed in or after the first half of the 3rd century and probably not later than the end of the 3rd century.

Chronology based on ceramic assemblages

Habitation evidence dating to the 3rd and 4th centuries CE from the pars urbana

A number of layers associated with the occupation of the elite residence at Strongyli can be identified sealed between destruction levels composed of roof-tiles and the bedrock that underlay the floor surfaces of rooms (compare Figure 155 and Figure 156, see also Figure 157). Specifically, these habitation layers can be distinguished in rooms 3, 5 and area/room 10 (see

⁹⁵⁸ Broneer 1930, 91, 204.

⁹⁵⁹ Slane 2017, 208.

⁹⁶⁰ Bailey 1980, no. Q 1375; Petropoulos 1999, no. M223.

plan of the *pars urbana* in Figure 6). The lowest layers may have contained some foundation material wedged into bedrock that was far more level here than at the oilery, while the highest layers may have included some destruction debris. Nevertheless, the majority of material sandwiched between them should correspond to objects utilised by the villa's inhabitants, and serve as a *terminus post quem* for the destruction of the villa. A date range for the villa's habitation can be produced by distinguishing the earliest and latest finds in these layers.

The earliest material belongs to the late 2nd and predominantly to the first half of the 3rd century, the same period when the oilery was constructed. In area/room 10, which was probably an outdoor space, vine-and-ray lamps were found alongside a relief bowl. These vine-and-ray lamps were different from those of the oilery; the vine decoration on their rims featured leaves, rather than bunches of leaves, and grape bunches, while the decoration appears to be in higher relief, a technique that for Reynolds denotes early variants of these lamps; he dates the layer that contained them on the Vrina Plain to the early 3rd century (layer no. 5017; Figures 158-159).⁹⁶¹ In the lowest levels of rooms 3 and 5, small fragments of rims of 'local/regional' cooking pots were discovered dateable to the early-mid 3rd century; they correspond to grooved-rim (specifically ERCP 3.7) and early variants of rectangular-rim cooking pots, described extensively by Reynolds (Figure 160). Reynolds developed a typology of these 'local/regional' cooking pots, originally described as 'Illyrian', later as 'Epirote' and more recently thought to have been produced in large quantities in Epirus but also throughout Greece.⁹⁶² The cooking vessel in vogue during the 3rd century was the grooved-rim cooking pot (Figure 161).⁹⁶³ For the Strongyli inhabitants this was the cooking vessel *par excellence*,

⁹⁶¹ Reynolds 2019, 246–249.

⁹⁶² Reynolds 2019, 286, 398–408, figs. A3–A7. See also the schematised drawing of the development of these cooking pots in Reynolds et al. 2008, fig. 8.

⁹⁶³ Reynolds and Pavlidis 2018, 198.

found in the occupation layers of rooms 3 and 5 only in very small fragments, but in larger fragments and numbers of fragments elsewhere in the villa, with several almost complete examples; these include a grooved-rim top cooking pot, a type decidedly of the mid-3rd century.⁹⁶⁴ The culinary assemblage of the residence testifies to its occupation during the early and mid-3rd century.

The latest ceramic ware in the occupation layers of rooms 3 and 5, and in two destruction deposits of room 5, is a large dish of Hayes' ARS 'C' ware, distinguished by the light orange colour, with a pink tint, of its slip and fabric that blend seamlessly together, and by its thin walls, consistently measuring in the Strongyli examples 4 mm (Figures 162-163).⁹⁶⁵ The dishes from the villa residence can be identified with the late variants of Hayes form 50A (c. 300–360 CE), specifically because their plain rim is rounded only from the exterior and is straight on the interior (Figure 162, see also Figure 164); unlike earlier variants that display a sharp bevel, these examples are smoothly rounded by minute bevelling of the rim on the exterior, as can be observed upon close inspection.⁹⁶⁶ These dishes are also identifiable with Hayes 50A late variants because without exception, the bases surviving at Strongyli lack the typical recognisable ring foot that is ubiquitous in earlier variants (see the base of dish shown in Figure 163 and compare with examples in Figure 164).⁹⁶⁷ Instead, the Strongyli examples have a Lilliputian flat foot; the walls of the vessel rising from the base are also curved using bevelling, not as minute as for the rim. These characteristics of the bases and rims of the examples from the villa closely resemble the example illustrated by Reynolds and Pavlidis from a 4th-century deposit at Nicopolis of a Hayes form 50A late variant, which dates to the early-mid 4th century

⁹⁶⁴ Reynolds 2019, 399.

⁹⁶⁵ Hayes 1972, 288–291.

⁹⁶⁶ Hayes 1972, 69–73.

⁹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

(Figure 165).⁹⁶⁸ This late Hayes 50A variant at Strongyli is indicative of the latest habitation of the villa in the early-mid 4th century, after which it was destroyed.

Chronology based on ceramic assemblages

A catastrophic destruction in the second half of the 4th century

The remains of room 1 show a violent destruction, probably caused by an earthquake (Figure 22). The excavator discovered a thick layer (> 50 cm) of overturned pieces of a mosaic floor in room 1, which crushed ceramic vessels below them, and were intermixed with large and small stone rubble, mortar, nails, a piece of marble revetment, stone parts of the building's architectural decoration, and a few other finds (Figures 22-23, later on mosaic pieces were re-assembled in the northwestern corner).⁹⁶⁹ The mosaic probably fell from an upper storey; that the villa had a second level was suggested by Ntouzougli and this idea is supported by the existence of a sturdy corner wall built against room 1's northwestern corner that was probably meant to reinforce it against the downward sloping terrain of the bedrock (Figure 166).⁹⁷⁰ This wall was twice as thick as the villa's other walls and was constructed using larger stone blocks rather than the small stones of the other walls; it could have provided the necessary support for an upper storey. Furthermore, the random deposition of pieces of the mosaic floor—vertically, tilted at various angles, topsy-turvy—and utterly disassociated from each other resembles the haphazard deposition of the pieces of a mosaic floor that collapsed from the second storey of the House of the Grand Oecus at Utica (Figure 24).⁹⁷¹ At Strongyli's room 1, the mosaic's

⁹⁶⁸ Reynolds and Pavlidis 2018, 198.

⁹⁶⁹ Tsogka, *EJ Strongyli pars urbana A189* 1993, 65.

⁹⁷⁰ Ntouzougli 1998, 60.

⁹⁷¹ Fentress and Wilson 2021.

collapse from an upper level is all the more probable since the villa's other, ground-floor mosaics were not dilapidated, but remained relatively intact. Little other than an earthquake could have caused such damage to the upper storey of the villa.

The evidence within the thick destruction layer of room 1 can be used, alongside the latest evidence in the occupation and destruction layers discussed above (early-mid 4th century), to determine the *terminus post quem* for the destruction of the villa. Since the earthquake that led to the collapse of the mosaic on the upper level of room 1 and to the formation of its thick destruction layer was a momentary event, the material in it represents the villa's inhabitants' objects in the final moments before the earthquake, not decades or centuries earlier; the destruction occurred simultaneously with the deposition of the objects, not over time.

Another Hayes 50 dish was found in the destruction assemblage, in addition to amphorae (e.g. one LRA2) and other tableware (e.g. a red slipped bowl, possibly Nicopolis ware).⁹⁷² Unlike the examples discussed above, this dish probably did not belong to ARS 'C' but rather 'D' ware, "a coarser fabric of the fourth and fifth centuries," distinguishable also because of the greater wall thickness and occasionally pimply interior surface of its ceramic forms, all of which can be seen in the example from the destruction layer of room 1 (Figure 167).⁹⁷³ This particular dish was also different from its predecessors because of its distinct rim, a plain not rounded rim, but rising to a point, as both the interior and exterior of the rim were slightly bevelled, as in Hayes' example 55, which is transitional from type 50A to 50B; however, the rim is not so smoothly rendered as to form a clear point as in Hayes 50B (compare Figure 168 with example 56 in Figure 164). Consequently, this vessel probably dates somewhere halfway between the

⁹⁷² Tsogka, *EJ Strongyli pars urbana A189* 1993, 65. Contexts associated with this destruction layer are: Str.Room1.testη.II.2., Str.Room1.I.1., and Str.Γ5.II.4..

⁹⁷³ Hayes 1972, 291.

Hayes' date ranges of the late variant of 50A (c. 300–360) and 50B (c. 350–400+), approximately from the second to the third quarters of the 4th century.⁹⁷⁴ Its presence in the destruction debris confirms that the lifespan of the villa lasted at least until the early 4th century, as already suggested by the late variants of 50A in occupation and destruction levels already discussed, and suggests the end of its use shortly thereafter, and not long after the middle of the 4th century (the end of the range for the late variants of 50A being ca. 360). It follows that the villa could have been destroyed by one of the sequential earthquakes of large magnitude that shook Greece in the decades following the midpoint of the century.⁹⁷⁵

How long a time passed until parts of the mosaic were reassembled is anyone's guess, as post-destruction strata are not securely identifiable. It seems a probable scenario, given little ceramic evidence for the villa's occupation after the middle of the 4th century for instance by squatters, that the reassembly of the mosaic in one of the corners of room 1 represents the villa inhabitants' attempt to save some of what was lost, but which in the end could not be rebuilt. They would, after all, have faced limited agricultural potential after the later 4th or 5th century, when the river estuaries began to silt up, probably due to human-induced erosion during the Roman period.⁹⁷⁶ By the middle 5th century the land around the villa was marshland, as it is today, terminating the ease of maritime communications through the Ambracian Gulf and severely reducing the coastal land's capacity for oleiculture, which had been the paramount agricultural activity for Strongyli's owners.

⁹⁷⁴ Hayes 1972, 73.

⁹⁷⁵ Fentress and Wilson 2021, citing Lepelley 1984 and DiVita 1990, 470–474.

⁹⁷⁶ Wiseman 2001, 45–49; Jing and Rapp 2003, 195–198.

To sum up, the ceramic material from the oilery and *pars urbana* indicates that Strongyli was inhabited from the later 2nd century CE (at the earliest) to the early-mid 4th century CE. This period of high activity is suggested by the pottery, and it fits in with a late Roman (or middle Imperial) date for the mosaics, as well as for the octagonal building in the bath complex, which was previously dated by scholars based on architectural parallels to the 3rd or 4th centuries CE (or possibly as early as the late 2nd century CE). The villa at Strongyli has been used as *the* archetypal example of a villa built as a consequence of Augustus' foundation of Nikopolis, 15 km as the crow flies to the southwest. My own research centred on the ceramic assemblages of the Strongyli *pars urbana* and the oilery produced a different picture. I do not deny the possible existence of a 1st-century CE villa whose remains may still await discovery; but there is no direct evidence for it. Instead, I believe that we have missed in our reconstructions of agricultural growth in Epirus a rather later zenith that is indicated by Strongyli during the 3rd century and the first half of the 4th century.

6.3 Strongyli in context: Roman villas in the area of the Ambracian Gulf

Years of rescue excavations by the archaeologists of Epirote Ephorates, especially by the 12th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities and its successors, the Ephorate of Preveza and the Ephorate of Arta, has led to the discovery of numerous villas in the area of the Ambracian Gulf. Konstantaki cited eight probable villas in this area, six of which had been excavated (at Riza-no. 22, Agia Pelagia-no. 21, Kanali-no. 27, Margarona-no. 28, Ftelia-no. 25, and Metamorphosi—no. 29), and two discovered through survey (at Mazemata and

Sampsounta)⁹⁷⁷ Taking her six excavated examples only, I add the *villa maritima* at Strongyli (no. 23), to the north the villa at Agios Georgios in the plain of Kerasonas (no. 24), two probable *villae maritimae* at Almoutsas (no. 19) and Tsoumsa (no. 26) on the western and northern shores of the ancient Ambracian Gulf, and the villa partially preserved at the Vaggeli plot (no. 20) in the rural *suburbium* of Nikopolis.⁹⁷⁸ This brings the total in the area of the Ambracian Gulf to eleven villas (Figure 132). Many more possible villas are known, for instance, at Oropos, as well as a series of others discovered through the survey of the rural *suburbium* of Nikopolis by the Nikopolis Project, like Kleopatra, but these have either not been published yet or were so fragmentarily preserved that it is difficult to confirm that they were indeed villas.⁹⁷⁹ However, I am more interested in the sites with qualitative data, which can be used to assess whether Strongyli as a villa in tune with villas elsewhere in the Roman Empire was an exception or a representative example of Epirote villas.⁹⁸⁰ Most importantly, I work to clarify the chronology of the Epirote villa narrative. Because of these goals I have been more conservative than other scholars, like Antoniadis, in the sites I have chosen to call villas, using only evidence from excavated, better published and better surviving examples, which amount to eleven villas in the area of the Ambracian Gulf, and sixteen villas more broadly in Epirus (Figure 132, Figure 130).⁹⁸¹

⁹⁷⁷ Konstantaki 2018, 23–24.

⁹⁷⁸ Andreou 1987 (Vaggeli plot); Riginos 2012, 356 (Tsoumsa); Faklari and Niarou 2013 (Almoutsas). Konstantaki had also noted Strongyli, Tsoumsa, and the Vaggeli plot villas as possibly villas (2018, 24–25).

⁹⁷⁹ Konstantaki 2018, 25; Stein 2001.

⁹⁸⁰ I should note that numerous other villas were excavated on the Ionian islands, for instance, on the northern plain of Lefkas, but which fall outside the regional confines of my thesis. For the Lefkadian examples see: Pliakou 2001; Pliakou and Gkiza 2013; Gkiza 2015.

⁹⁸¹ Antoniadis 2021.

Villa aesthetics, landscape connection, and production evidence

These eleven villas in the area of the Ambracian Gulf (Figure 132) were all located outside cities, primarily in the countryside in coastal locations, such as Agia Pelagia, which was built at a high altitude of 86 masl on a plateau formed by a large retaining wall along the cliffs rising above the Ionian Sea to the north of Nikopolis. In a similar location, with a breath-taking view of the Ionian Sea, was the villa at Riza, whose *nymphaeum* or bath complex, with the domed, decagonal structure built of bricks, was constructed on a terrace next to a now seasonal stream (Figure 169, see also Figures 146-148 for the structure). Kanali was located to the south closer to Nikopolis above a beach also facing the Ionian. Tsoumsa (4 masl) would have bordered if not touched upon the sea on the northern shore of the ancient Ambracian Gulf; it probably channelled the sea in a series of circular structures, connected cisterns, and in a hypocaust bath that recall the *nymphaeum* of the villa of Diaporit (Butrint), or it tapped into the Louros river whose mouth probably entered the gulf somewhere in this area in antiquity.⁹⁸² At Almoutsas on the western edge of the gulf, a villa was built on a series of terraces that probably also overlooked the sea in antiquity.⁹⁸³ Four villas near Nikopolis were peri- or sub-urban: that at the Vaggeli plot, at Ftelia, at Margarona, and at Metamorphosi, all of which were located quite near the ancient shoreline. Other villas were located slightly further inland, such as Agios Georgios (121 masl) at the edge of the fertile plain of Kerasonas to the north, where water for the villa's baths could have been provided by the same spring that fed the Nikopolis aqueduct

⁹⁸² Riginos 2012, 356.

⁹⁸³ Katsadima, Faklari and Pascual Berlanga *DERE* workshop II 2019b.

(Figure 9, Figure 10). Many of them evidently used water for communal bathing facilities (e.g. Agios Georgios, as well as Strongyli) and ornate waterworks (e.g. Tsoumsa, Riza).

These villas were not equally well-preserved (and the material from most has not been thoroughly published yet), but despite this they fit the definition of a villa as the combination of a countryside luxury residence together with specialised, above-surplus agricultural production most often intended for the market.⁹⁸⁴ Wineries or oileries, for example, were evidenced predominantly through collecting vats, sometimes with treading floors attached to them, noted at Almoutsas (no. 19), the Vaggeli plot (no. 20) and at Kanali (no. 27); in contrast at Riza (no. 22), Tsoumsa (no. 26), Ftelia (no. 25), Margarona (no. 28) and Metamorphosi (no. 29) production facilities are not as clearly evidenced as at other sites, but since rescue excavations were restricted in their extent it is quite possible that such facilities existed nearby and await discovery. Many of these villas also had rooms with ornate mosaic pavements (e.g. at Strongyli, Agia Pelagia, Kanali, Agios Georgios, Margarona, Metamorphosi, and Ftelia), mostly bearing geometric designs (e.g. at Strongyli, Agia Pelagia, Agios Georgios); these mosaics have been studied by Thaleia Kyrkou and are discussed further below.⁹⁸⁵ At Kanali a figurative mosaic depicted grape vine trees within a rectangular tableau surrounded by an ivy scroll, an illustration that might have been particularly suitable to the villa owners' agricultural pursuits—depicted were also small birds next to the trees, which may have plucked at the grapes on the owner's estate (Figures 184-185).⁹⁸⁶ A number of these villas also had communal baths, and they formulated a relationship with their natural surroundings through their placement and architecture, not only by using natural sources of water in bathing facilities, but also by

⁹⁸⁴ Marzano 2007.

⁹⁸⁵ Kyrkou 2020.

⁹⁸⁶ Kyrkou 2020, 46–47.

encompassing stunning views. I delve into slightly greater detail to demonstrate this through some examples below.

Agia Pelagia (no. 21) comprised an extensive complex, including a *pars urbana* with a private water supply, evidence indicative of areas dedicated to the processing of agricultural production, and a nearby *mausoleum* (Figure 170). On a raised platform supported by a retaining wall the remains of a building were found during salvage excavations within the modern-day monastery of the same name; the building had mosaic floors and is identifiable as the villa's *pars urbana* (Figures 171-172). It was fed with water for consumption via a private water supply coming from an arched, covered cistern nearby, and also had two open cisterns or reservoirs; the large, open cistern resembles the cisterns studied by Wilson near Rome, which he argues were used for irrigation (Figures 173-174).⁹⁸⁷ In the garden of the modern monastery a *trapetum* and an *orbis* suggest the villa produced surplus olive oil (Figure 175). In the adjacent chapel of Agia Pelagia, a series of sculpted architectural blocks were noted, which possibly formed part of the decoration of the villa or of a *mausoleum*, constructed a few metres to the south (Figure 176).⁹⁸⁸ The *mausoleum* housed at least one Attic *sarcophagus* (Figure 177); additional examples to match it were found at the villa at Margarona, as well as beyond the area of the Ambracian Gulf at the Ladochori villa near modern-day Igoumenitsa, both of which also had *mausolea* (Figure 178).⁹⁸⁹

Almoutses (no. 19) was a site that developed over eight centuries (ca. 4th century BCE-4th century CE), having different functions before a villa was constructed, probably in the mid-2nd century CE (Figure 179).⁹⁹⁰ Starting out as a kiln site in the late Classical period, it was

⁹⁸⁷ Thomas and Wilson 1994; Konstantaki 2015, 81–83.

⁹⁸⁸ Katsadima and Aggeli 2001.

⁹⁸⁹ Katsadima and Aggeli 2001.

⁹⁹⁰ Giouni et al. 2012

superseded by a winery, interpreted on the basis of a vat and adjacent “wine production-storage areas” («χώρους οινοποίησης-αποθήκευσης») in the late Republic, but little of it survived following destruction probably by fire in the early 2nd century CE.⁹⁹¹ Shortly thereafter around the mid-2nd century CE, as the excavators argued, the winery was reconstructed (Figure 180); at this time its identification as a winery is more secure: a new vat was built next to a pebble floor (probably a pressing area) and a courtyard, with a hard floor made of smaller pebbles and mortar (probably a treading floor).⁹⁹² At a later stage, a built hearth was also constructed nearby, perhaps to heat water that facilitated the pressing.⁹⁹³ A *dolium defossum* a few metres higher from the vat on the hillside the villa occupies may have been used for secondary fermentation of the pressed grape juice, or as an additional collecting vat for primary fermentation (Figure 181). At the same time, a hypocaust bath was built, with two heated rooms and a spaces paved with tiles; later on new piping was also installed (Figure 182).⁹⁹⁴ The construction of a wine production facility and a bath suite in the mid-2nd century CE is clearly indicative of a villa. The site was abandoned in the later 4th century, when a destruction layer covered most of the villa, also filling the vat that contained a series of pots including *amphorae*, which made it no longer possible to use it.⁹⁹⁵

The site at Almoutsas is important because close attention was paid by Giouni, Katsadima, Flakari and Niarou to its phases. They were dated broadly primarily using coins; the majority of these issues that were discussed in relation to the stratigraphy date from the second half of the 2nd-first half of the 3rd centuries CE, the peak of agricultural production,

⁹⁹¹ Faklari and Niarou 2013, 483.

⁹⁹² Faklari and Niarou 2013, 484.

⁹⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 483–484.

⁹⁹⁵ Katsadima, Faklari and Pascual Berlanga *DERE* workshop II 2019b.

according to the excavators.⁹⁹⁶ A number of coins of the later 3rd and 4th centuries CE were also noted (e.g. a coin depicting Aurelian, *ca.* 270–275 CE, several coins representing the sons of Constantine the Great, including Constans I and Constantius II, as well as one of Julian, amongst others).⁹⁹⁷ Thus, while the site was in use since the late Republic, the villa-phase and the acme of its associated production was much later, around the same time as at the Strongyli villa. Is it possible that we have a wider chronological problem on our hands, with villas assigned early Roman start dates when in fact during these earlier phases rural sites may not actually have been villas?

Villa chronologies

Most sites described as villas in the area of the Ambracian Gulf had been dated to the early Roman period, some as early as the 1st century BCE, like that at Almoutsas (described as a villa by some, but not by its excavators), and most from the 1st century CE.⁹⁹⁸ Recently, however, Konstantaki, who has studied material from different villa sites, suggested that villas in the territory of Nikopolis flourished in the 2nd century CE, while many also had Late Antique phases.⁹⁹⁹ Indeed, the majority of the dating evidence I have accumulated—mosaics and buildings (e.g. the polygonal structure at Riza), respectively broadly dated using motifs represented and architectural parallels, as well as coins—suggest that villas appeared increasingly from the 2nd, and flourished in the 3rd and the 4th centuries CE, especially the first

⁹⁹⁶ Faklari and Niarou 2013, 484–491.

⁹⁹⁷ Faklari and Niarou 2013, 484–491.

⁹⁹⁸ E.g. Antoniadis 2021, 21–23.

⁹⁹⁹ Konstantaki 2015; 2018.

part of the 4th century CE. I present the chronologies originally proposed for villa sites (including Konstantaki's work) and the evidence for my revised chronology below.

In preliminary reports and published articles, sites described as villas were dated to the 1st and to the 2nd centuries CE as follows: at Strongyli (1st–3rd centuries CE), at Agia Pelagia (mid-1st century to the Middle Byzantine period), at Riza (1st–4th centuries CE), at Agios Georgios (1st–2nd to 4th–5th centuries CE), at Margarona (mid-2nd to the 5th or 6th centuries CE), at Ftelia (2nd or 3rd to the 5th centuries CE), and at Metamorphosis (2nd or 3rd to the 5th centuries CE).¹⁰⁰⁰ Tsoumsa and Kanali have not yet been published and were dated broadly to the “Roman period”.¹⁰⁰¹ Such broad chronologies often relied on the date ranges of excavated finds; this was evidently the case at the Vaggeli plot (no. 20), whose finds ranged from the mid-2nd century CE to the late 4th century CE (e.g. a statuette dated on stylistic grounds to the second half of the 2nd–early 3rd century CE; ca. 2nd–4th century CE pottery).¹⁰⁰² As noted in chapter 1, these were consequently provisional chronologies following rescue excavations, but they were not taken as such in wider scholarship arguing for the spread of the villa model to Epirus in the early Roman period. As I have extensively discussed in this thesis, this argument was deeply rooted in ancient literary texts that highlighted the narrative of the *Synepirotae* and colonisation in early Roman times, and connected them to villa sites. While in some cases provisional date ranges might reflect the usage of a site, in other cases, as was shown for Strongyli, early Roman finds like a coin of Augustus had nothing to do with the villa's real chronology is based on its

¹⁰⁰⁰ Zachos and Choinas 2000, 557; Katsadima and Aggeli 2001, 91–103; Ntouzougli 2003a, 69–70; Pliakou 2004; Faklari and Niarou 2013, 483–484; Pliakou and Gkiza 2013, 737.

¹⁰⁰¹ Riginos 2012, 356; Konstantaki 2018.

¹⁰⁰² Konstantaki 2018. Riginos and Sakkas (2018) had suggested the pottery was indicative of usage in the 3rd century CE; with their collaboration I had a chance to briefly inspect it, preferring a slightly wider date range.

stratigraphy; this stretched from the late 2nd century CE at the earliest to the 3rd and first half of the 4th centuries CE. Other sites furnished contemporary evidence.

Strongyli, Agia Pelagia and Agios Georgios had geometric mosaics belonging to the Late Antique period, which might be close in date based on their repetition of certain motifs; for instance, the goblet overflowing presumably with wine depicted on mosaic 13 from Strongyli found an exact parallel in mosaic I at Agios Georgios, which also used the bead and reel motif (compare Figure 183 with Figure 137). The mosaic of Agia Pelagia combined a guilloche with Sweetman's pattern R124a, though with serrated squares in the centre, that also had a central dot; both features were also found in mosaic 13 at Strongyli (compare Figure 171 with Figure 137).¹⁰⁰³ Based on such motifs represented, Kyrkou, in her Master's dissertation on Roman Epirote mosaics, dated those from Agios Georgios to the 3rd century CE and those from Agia Pelagia to the 2nd–3rd centuries CE.¹⁰⁰⁴ She placed the figurative mosaics from the villa at Kanali to the 4th century CE (Figures 184–185).¹⁰⁰⁵ The mosaics from the villa at Ftelia were later, dating to the late 4th or 5th centuries CE.¹⁰⁰⁶

The polygonal structures that were possibly part of bathing complexes at Strongyli and at Riza (alternatively perhaps a *nymphaeum*) might date from the Middle Imperial to the Late Antique periods, on the basis that domed rooms with multiple sides appear to have been popular for baths then; although [as I already discussed for these baths](#), an earlier date cannot be excluded, since fashions can have longer lifespans than expected. The *mausoleum* at Agia Pelagia was dated on stylistic grounds to the 2nd century CE; such a specific date is equally

¹⁰⁰³ Sweetman 2013.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Kyrkou 2020, 147–150.

¹⁰⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 46–47.

¹⁰⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 145–147.

shaky, though the fragment of an Attic sarcophagus depicting scenes popular in the early 2nd-first half of the 3rd centuries CE, suggest that the *mausoleum* was in use around that time.¹⁰⁰⁷

Numismatic evidence from villas (e.g. Almoutsas) also concentrated to the second half of the 2nd and the 3rd centuries, with 4th-century CE coin issues also attested. At Strongyli Severan coins and a coin of Gallienus (253–268 CE) were found. A coin of Gordian III (238–244 CE) is mentioned from Agios Georgios.¹⁰⁰⁸ At the Vaggeli plot (no. 20) the pottery (e.g. lamps, plates) indicated the use of the building in 3rd century CE (or a little earlier or later); albeit the ceramics have not yet been thoroughly studied (and their range might extend from the 2nd–4th centuries CE).¹⁰⁰⁹ It is not possible using the evidence discussed here to ascribe start dates for these villas, but it is possible to highlight a period in which villas flourished.

Some villas in the area of the Ambracian Gulf might have been constructed as early as the 1st century or in the 2nd century CE, but more definitive evidence concentrated in the second half of the 2nd, the 3rd and the early 4th centuries CE. This chronology is also evidenced by villa sites outside this area, like the villa at Zavali, dated preliminarily by Lazari based on the finds she excavated (e.g. pottery, coins) from the mid-2nd to the mid-4th centuries CE.¹⁰¹⁰ Combining the evidence discussed in the sections above with material from villa sites outside this area, the picture that emerges is that the villa phenomenon in Epirus marked the end of the middle Imperial period and early Late Antiquity. More specifically, my proposed chronology for the villas of Epirus, presented in Figure 16, indicates the acme of villas perhaps as early as the 2nd century CE in some cases, but predominantly in the 3rd and first half of the 4th centuries CE; the material and rationale for their dating is discussed in greater detail in individual entries in the

¹⁰⁰⁷ Katsadima and Aggeli 2001, 97–103.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Faklari and Niarou 2013, 490.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Riginos and Sakkas 2018.

¹⁰¹⁰ 2019.

Site Catalogue. This chronology contrasts with that which had been proposed for villa sites before the work conducted for this thesis, shown in Figure 15.

When did villas in Epirus go out of use? Most villas appear to have been abandoned sometime in the 4th century CE, especially from the middle to the late 4th century CE. A destruction dateable to the 4th century CE was identified at Agios Georgios.¹⁰¹¹ At Almoutsas (no. 19) a destruction layer probably dating to the later 4th century CE covered the remains of the villa; it was dated primarily using the closing fill of the collecting vat, which contained 4th-century CE Broneer XVII lamps and ARS plates, and *amphorae* that could be attributed to the 4th century CE, whose chronologies overlap in the second half of the century (e.g. a Keay 27 *amphora*, ca. second half of the 4th–5th centuries CE; some 3rd–4th-century CE *amphorae*, an Agora G199 *amphora*, ca. late 1st–4th centuries CE).¹⁰¹² At the Vaggeli plot (no. 20) a coin hoard probably dateable to the second half of the 4th century CE (e.g. with coins of Theodosius I, 379–395 CE, and Arcadius, 377–408 CE) and stratigraphically associated with a destruction deposit, also suggests the abandonment of the villa probably in the later 4th, or possibly early 5th century CE.¹⁰¹³ At Strongyli the material in the thick destruction layer of room 1 at the *pars urbana*, and the latest evidence in other occupation and destruction layers from it, dated to the early and mid-4th century CE, also suggesting the abandonment of the villa shortly after the middle of the 4th century CE. I argued that the villa probably collapsed following one of the earthquakes that marked the second half of the 4th century CE, and whose destructive effects are well-evidenced in Epirus.

¹⁰¹¹ Riginos 2021.

¹⁰¹² Katsadima, Faklari and Pascual Berlanga *DERE* workshop II 2019b.

¹⁰¹³ I consulted the find records associated with these coin hoards in the records of the Ephorate of Preveza.

Collapse evidence that has been attributed to earthquakes dating from the mid-later 4th century CE is known from Butrint (e.g. late 4th-century CE wall collapse from the Vrina Plain *domus*). One of these is suggested to have caused the forum to tilt $\sim 1.7^\circ$, and possibly cracked parts of the theatre, as I discussed in chapter 2. This damage is probably attributable to one of the many earthquakes that seem to have shaken Greece and other parts of the Roman world in the second half of the 4th century CE, which as Stiros and Wilson and Fentress argued was a time of heightened seismic activity. Some of these earthquakes might also have generated tsunamis, which could have affected food production near the coast. As a consequence, the agricultural economies of villa owners would have suffered, making it difficult for them to meet their surplus yields, and leading to a break in the chain of supply and demand, possibly leading them to lose their niche in the market. While some might have recovered, like the owners of the villa at Ftelia that seems to have continued later into the Late Antique period, most of them appear to have found it difficult to bounce back. As Wilson and Fentress argued for cities, the inability to recover and to rebuild is indicative of economic or political stress, which seems to have been felt in the agricultural economy of Epirus in the later 4th and early 5th centuries CE.¹⁰¹⁴ As was discussed in chapter 2, by this time the northern parts of the Ambracian Gulf would have begun to silt up, making the transportation of goods difficult, especially from maritime villas in the northern Ambracian Gulf like Strongyli.

¹⁰¹⁴ Fentress and Wilson 2021.

6.4 Epirote viticulture and oleiculture

The scholarly investigation of Epirote viticulture began in 1984 when Robert Étienne studied the comments of the Roman authors Pliny and Columella on a prolific vine variety known as *basilica*.¹⁰¹⁵ This vine became famous in the Roman world through their writings after it was imported to Italy and perhaps from there to Spain, where it was known as the *cocolobis* (or *coccolobis*).¹⁰¹⁶ However, the *basilica*, Étienne argued, may have originated in the wetter climates of Epirus, on the basis of Pliny's comment that the vine was espoused by the people of Dyrrachium to the north.¹⁰¹⁷ His suggestion was dismissed because archaeological evidence for wine production did not exist in 1984.¹⁰¹⁸

In the 37 years since Étienne's paper archaeologists in modern-day Greece and in southwestern Albania, who have investigated the ancient countryside through rescue archaeology, uncovered approximately 22 stone- or brick-built vats from 18 sites; I added another two from the Tirana villa near Dyrrachium, because this was an area particularly relevant to the discussion of Epirote viticulture begun by Étienne, bringing the total to 24 vats from 19 sites.¹⁰¹⁹ Often described as cisterns in the past, recent work by Konstantaki, Lazari, and Faklari and Katsadima, together with my work indicates that many of these vats were used in the production of wine or olive oil, as I discuss below.¹⁰²⁰ Because they were dug deep below ground level in antiquity,

¹⁰¹⁵ Étienne 1987. Pliny *Natural History*, 14.4; Columella 3.9.

¹⁰¹⁶ Étienne 1987; Pliny *Natural History*, 14.4; Columella 3.2.19.

¹⁰¹⁷ Étienne 1987; Pliny *Natural History*, 14.4.

¹⁰¹⁸ Al. N. Oikonomides comment to Étienne's paper (1987, 243).

¹⁰¹⁹ It should be noted that a number of vats were also found on the Ionian islands, most notably at Lefkas island (see Pliakou and Gkiza 2013 for the winery of the Megali Vrisi villa), where I was able to locate nine vats from six sites. However, because the islands form a separate regional entity and would require a further study of their own, I have not included material from them.

¹⁰²⁰ Konstantaki 2018; Lazari 2019. Faklari, Katsadima and Pascual Berlanga presentation in the *DERE* workshop II 2019b.

they have been less prone to later disturbances than other areas of production facilities, which is why the preserved vats and their contents are useful tools to reconstruct the landscape of production.

The uses of collecting vats

Collecting vats were a fundamental part of the *intrumenta* of ancient wineries and oileries. In ancient wine production they could have been used for the settling or decantation of must from marc, not necessary for red wine but required for white wine, and for fermentation of must with marc to produce red wine. In the ancient Eastern Mediterranean it is estimated that fermentation lasted between five to seven days.¹⁰²¹ If a winery also had storage areas with *pithoi* or other containers, which could have been used for secondary fermentation and maceration, the vats would have been suitable for primary fermentation, lasting a shorter time span.

In olive oil production vats would have been used for the decantation of olive oil from water (which makes up the bulk of the olive), the precious oil floating to the top, where it could be collected. To facilitate the decantation process ancient oileries often had multiple, interconnected vats, which made it possible for olive oil to overflow from one vat to another, as was probably the case at the Garoufalia street oilery built near the cemetery of ancient Ambrakia (although since only one of the proposed vats was excavated, it is not definite that multiple existed, Figure 186).¹⁰²² At the *pars rustica* of the Vaggeli plot villa (no. 20), probably an oilery (e.g. based on finds inside the vats like an *orbis* used in *trapeta*) liquid could have overflowed from a slightly more elevated vat (vat 1) to another (vat 2), and have been stored in an adjacent

¹⁰²¹ Brun 2003, 63.

¹⁰²² Aggeli 2012.

storeroom with semi-buried *pithoi* (Figures 187-189). However, connected vats could also have been used for the decantation of must from marc to make white wine, so a distinction simply based on the number of vats is not always reliable.

It is not always to differentiate between ancient facilities for wine or olive oil production, because the processing of grapes and olives often involved much of the same equipment (e.g. presses, collecting vats, *dolia/pithoi*, *amphorae*). However, recent work has made significant progress in distinguishing the distinct hardware combinations employed in the two productions.¹⁰²³ For example, oileries often included mills for the grinding of olives and produced oleic acid during pressing that left its traces on press beds.¹⁰²⁴ Wineries can often be identified through the combination of a treading floor (*calcatorium*) and a vat (e.g. as at Almoutsas, Figure 181).¹⁰²⁵ Based on such combinations of equipment I distinguished the uses of vats in facilities connected to olei- or viti-culture. The majority of Epirote vats (20) were probably used in wineries, three vats were used in oileries, and in ten cases it was not possible to make the distinction (Figure 190). The use of the majority of vats in wine production is also suggested by the fact that most installations had only one vat, with two to three in five cases, rather than more numerous interconnected vats, typically associated with olive oil production. Most wineries clustered around Nikopolis and one, perhaps two, oileries were located around ancient Ambrakia.

¹⁰²³ See especially Van Limbergen 2011, 80–84; Dodd 2020, chapter sections 3.1 and 5.1. This was a topic that was also extensively discussed during the *VWRW* 2021 conference.

¹⁰²⁴ This was confirmed in discussions during the *VWRW* 2021 conference.

¹⁰²⁵ Discussions during the *VWRW* 2021 conference



Figure 190. Map showing the location of collecting vats used in oleiculture, viticulture, or either of the two (Map made by Hallvard Indgjerd, adapting base map of the © European Union, Copernicus Land Monitoring Service 2022, European Environment Agency (EEA))

Chronology

The archaeology associated with vats could be used to help date them in different ways. For instance, for the Flampoura vat, the base of a probable Lamboglia 2 *amphora* (late 2nd-1st century BCE) inserted in the floor of the vat to collect physical vegetal material provided a *terminus post quem* of the 1st BCE/1st CE, or slightly later, for a phase of the vat's usage (Figures 191-192). In other cases the ceramic or numismatic contents of vats could provide a broad date for their usage, for instance, for Analipsis B vat 1, which contained a few small sherds of ITS dating to the 1st century CE (after whose deposition the vat could have remained in use).¹⁰²⁶ More frequently, it was possible to use material in later layers nearer to a vat's surface, after whose deposition the vats could no longer have functioned at all or at full capacity, as closing dates (e.g. for Analipsis B vat 2, the Tarana vat, and the Almoutsas vat 2).¹⁰²⁷ In other cases I could draw on the usage phases for production installations (e.g. for the wineries at Almoutsas and at the Vrina plain "villa", as well as for the Garoufalia street oilery); or use the dates proposed for the rural sites in which those installations were located more generally (e.g. for Mavromandilia, Zavali, the Vaggeli plot, the Aliverti plot, Analipsis A, and the Tirana villa).¹⁰²⁸ These data were used to establish the number of collecting vats possibly constructed and disused in a given half-century, shown in Figure 193 and Figure 194. These figures illustrate that wine

¹⁰²⁶ See Table 5 in chapter 5 for the ITS sherds from Analipsis B vat 1.

¹⁰²⁷ Analipsis B vat 2: intact grooved-rim cooking pots, ca. second half of the 3rd century CE (Riginos and Sakkas 2018, fig. 4.). Tarana vat: a third of a LR1b *amphora*, ca. 5th century CE, and an almost intact lamp, ca. 6th century CE, as well as rim and handle fragments of an LR2 *amphora*, ca. 4th-7th centuries CE (see Table 6 in chapter 5). Almoutsas vat 2 (for the contents of the closing fill see catalogue no. 19).

¹⁰²⁸ Vrina plain "villa" winery (no. 10); Mavromandilia (no. 14); Zavali (no. 18); Vaggeli plot (no. 20). Garoufalia street oilery dated from the 2nd century BCE (*tpq* of the 2nd century BCE, when an earlier oilery was destroyed) to the late 1st-/early 2nd century CE (when the second oilery was destroyed; for the Garoufalia street oilery see: Aggeli 2005b; 2009; 2012). Aliverti plot, dated ca. 3rd-4th century CE (Andreou 1983). Tirana villa, dated ca. 3rd century CE (Hobdari 2003). The only evidence yielded by Analipsis A was a coin of Galerius, suggesting the site was in use in the early 4th century CE (Riginos and Sakkas 2018, 712).

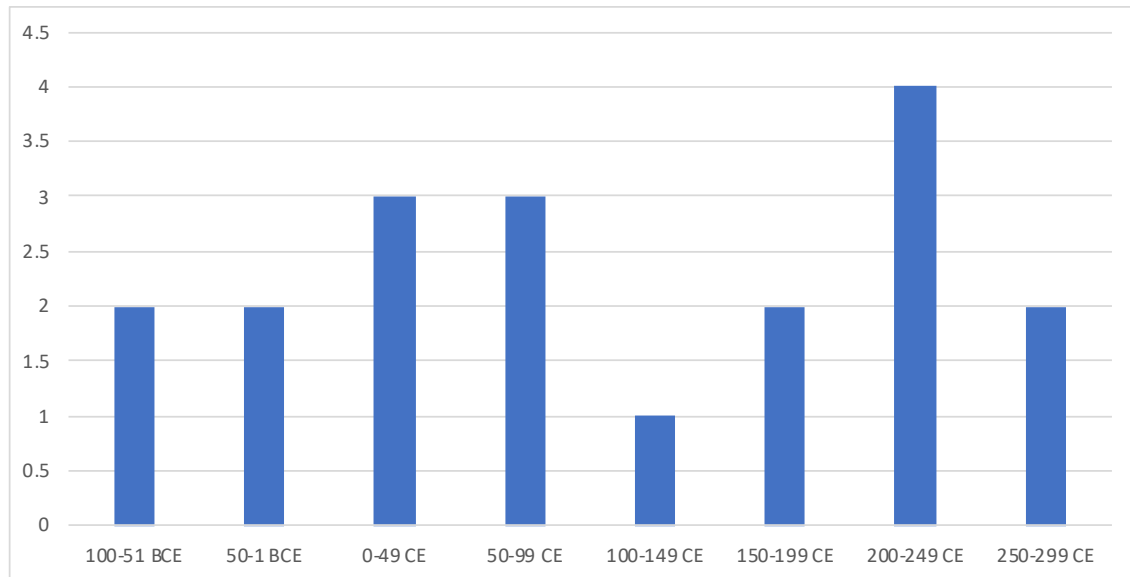


Figure 193. Number of collecting vats possibly constructed in a half-century. Note that this graph does not correspond to vats definitively constructed in a half-century; for example, those constructed over a century-long period are counted twice corresponding to two half-centuries.

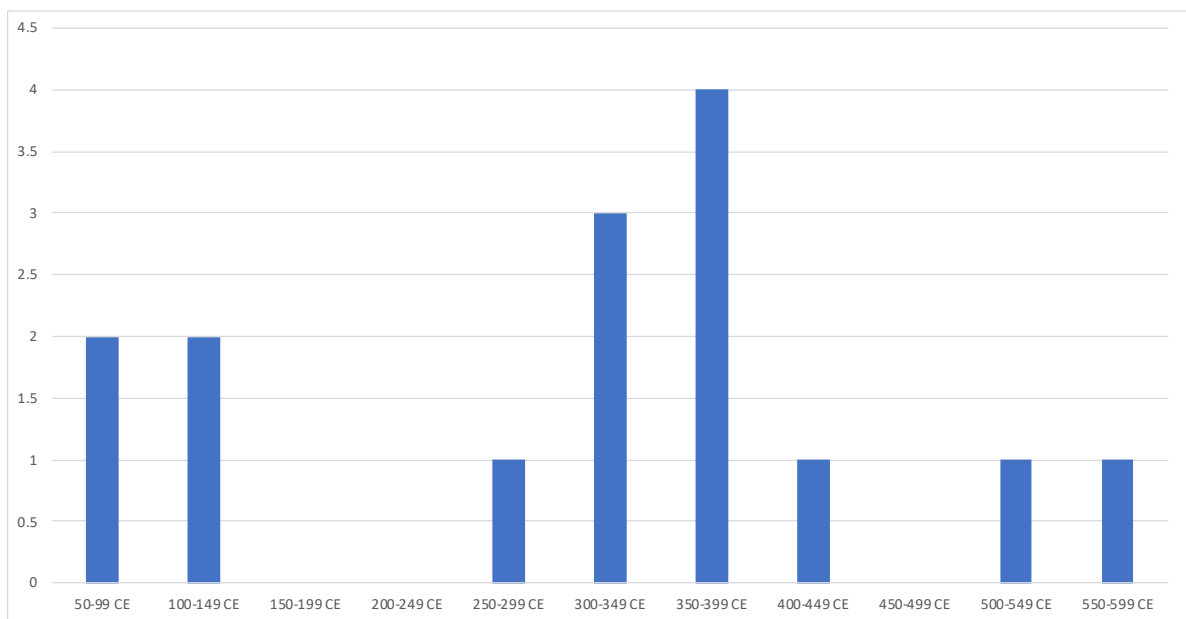


Figure 194. Number of collecting vats possibly disused in a half-century.

and olive oil production begun in the early Roman period, but increased later on, with numerous, new vats constructed in the second half of the 2nd and in the 3rd centuries CE.

The capacity of vats and output

Collection vat volumes reflect minimum output levels for wineries, because they represent the volume of must with marc that could be fermented at a time (for red wine), or the volume of grape must decanted from marc (for white wine). Vats used in primary fermentation would have been filled seven or nine times per vintage or season based on the calculations for the duration of primary fermentation in the ancient Eastern Mediterranean, so the output of their wineries would have been seven or nine times the volume of the vats. In the case of olive oil production they do not correlate directly to the amount of oil produced, since much water would also have filled the vats, but they are nevertheless an indicator of the scale of production. What is more, since such vats associated with viticulture and oleiculture were studied in the central Adriatic, even if their volumes do not directly correlate to the amount of production, they can be used to compare the scale of production on the western and eastern shores of the Adriatic.¹⁰²⁹

The minimum estimated capacities of Epirote vats are displayed in Figure 195. Most vats associated with wineries fell in the range of 526–4,000 l, but a few exceeded those numbers and reached colossal capacities, like the 3rd-century CE vats of the winery of the Tirana villa near ancient Dyrrachium (vat 1 volume: 10,500 l; vat 2 volume: 5,265 l). This output is comparable to that of large-scale wine-producing installations in central Adriatic Italy, like that of Tortoreto Muracche (vat 1 volume: 2,900; vat 2 volume: 12,900 l). In central Adriatic Italy

¹⁰²⁹ Van Limbergen 2011.

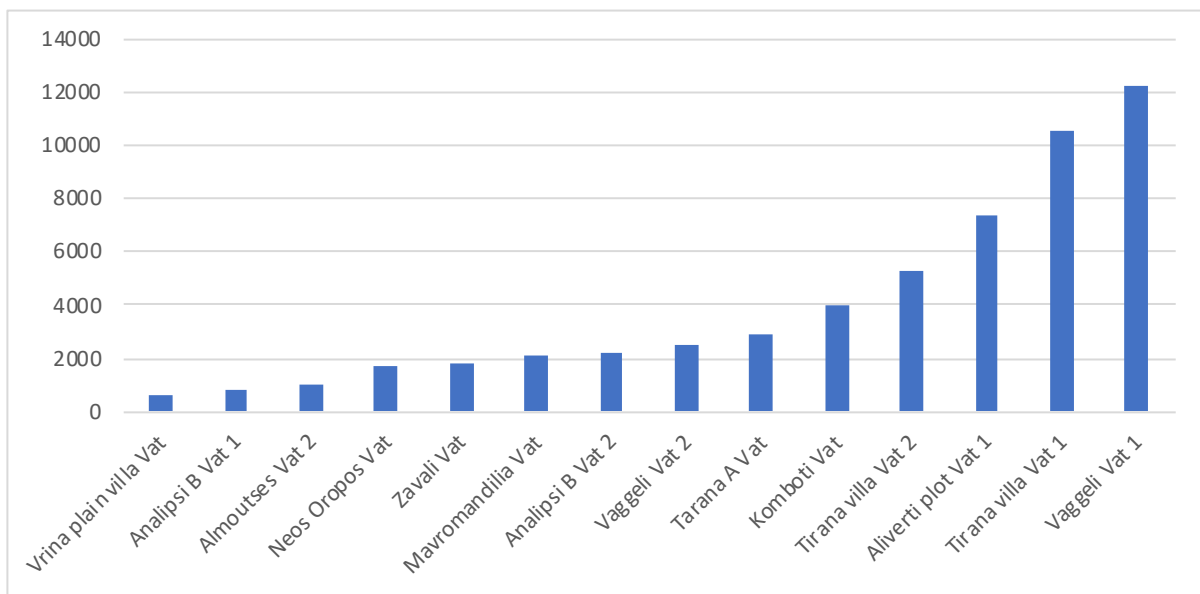


Figure 195. Estimated (minimum) volumes of collecting vats arranged in order of scale

more such large-scale wineries have been identified, however, to a degree this could reflect research biases.¹⁰³⁰ Vats probably connected to oileries had generally larger capacities, like the inter-connected Brobdingnagian vats of the Vaggeli plot villa (vat 1 volume: 12,195 l; vat 2 volume: 2,548 l), which dated from the mid-2nd–4th centuries CE. The Aliverti plot vat (ca. 3rd century CE) was also large-scale (vat volume: 7,344 l), but it is not clear if it belonged to a winery or an oilery.

Larger-scale vats in Epirus dated from the second half of the 2nd and in the 3rd centuries CE, indicating that wine and olive oil makers built larger facilities, with colossal vats, at that time. Conversely, during that period on the other side of the Adriatic in Italy evidence for wine and olive oil production decreased, with large-scale installations, like that at Tortoreto Muracche and Monte Torto, turning into smaller rural sites.¹⁰³¹ Van Limbergen has argued that there were exceptions to this, like the large, 3rd-century CE site at Isola del Piano (a possible oilery).¹⁰³² While we need to contemplate what we mean by economic decline, as well as when and how it affected different areas in Italy, the scale of Epirote production clearly increased (instead of decreasing), and may have done so in part to meet the deficiency in production created by the decrease of central Adriatic production.

How much of Epirote product was sold to markets abroad or remained local is difficult to tell. There is very little evidence for the production of *amphorae* dating to this period,¹⁰³³ though it should be noted that beyond central Adriatic Italy, whose *amphora* production was heavily researched by Van Limbergen, few Roman *amphora*-production workshops have been

¹⁰³⁰ *Ibid.*, Appendix 2 table.

¹⁰³¹ Van Limbergen 2019, 117.

¹⁰³² *Ibid.*, 108, 113.

¹⁰³³ An *amphora* waster was found at Ormos Pogonitsa on the Agios Thomas peninsula near Nikopolis (Stein 2001, 71).

noted also on the western coast of the Adriatic; most of them also correspond to the late Republican and early Imperial periods.¹⁰³⁴ It is possible that these regions used barrels for the transport of liquid substances, especially in the later Roman period, as was argued for central Adriatic Italy.¹⁰³⁵ Extensive Epirote forests could certainly have been capable of supplying the wood to make barrels. Additionally, as I argued in chapter 2, Roman Epirus would have had larger gulfs, like the Ambracian Gulf and the Glykis Limen in Thesprotia, while Nikopolis had extensive port facilities, for instance, at Ormos Vathy. These would have improved the ability to export goods out.

6.5 Discussion

I argued in this chapter that villas in the area of the Ambracian Gulf, where they were most numerous, were part of the wider phenomenon of the villa, but spread later than villas in the west. Strongyli and other *villae maritimate* located in the littoral of the lagoon, like Agia Pelagia and Almoutsas, were not only leisure retreats in the countryside or small “Catonian” villas, as was argued for villas elsewhere in Greece.¹⁰³⁶ Instead, these were agricultural producers with equipment indicative of specialized production pointing to the existence of cash-crop agriculture. Some of them produced olive oil, like Strongyli with an estate whose output in a

¹⁰³⁴ Van Limbergen 2018. Pers. comm. Andrew MacLean, based on his recently submitted doctoral research.

¹⁰³⁵ Van Limbergen 2018, 218.

¹⁰³⁶ Rizakis 2013, 35–36; Zarmakoupi 2013.

two-year period would have been 7,290 kg of olive oil, while others produced wine, like the villa at Almoutsas.

The villa system of land-management was encapsulated by Moses Finley in his expansive take on Roman elite self-sufficiency.¹⁰³⁷ For Finley this ranged from Trimalchio sumptuously filling his tables to Cicero's glorification of agriculture and positive appraisal of long-distance trade in his passage from the *De officiis*.¹⁰³⁸ Villa owners, in this vein, could by extending their claims to self-sufficiency play a part in filling the tables of the empire. This idea stems from the idealisation of villa production by Roman elite authors of the late Republic and early Empire.¹⁰³⁹ In contrast for most authors after Finley, like Horden and Purcell, agricultural production, driven by a need for diversification to adapt in the face of the Mediterranean's climatic variability in times of imperial expansion and demographic growth, developed into profit-oriented agriculture in Roman times.¹⁰⁴⁰ I argued that Epirote villa owners participated in this. Additionally, their residences employed landscape architecture that considered villa placement in respect to views, welcomed the environment into villa spaces by the use of porticoes (Strongyli, no.23; also Kranoula, no.2, in the Ioannina lake-basin in central Epirus), and used waterways in baths and fountains (Riza, no. 22; Tsoumsa, no. 26; Agios Georgios, no. 24; Diaporit, no. 9, on the Butrint lagoon). Epirote villa owners, in short, invariably spoke the language of the villa.

The villa phenomenon in Epirus might have begun in the middle of the 1st century BCE, as was evidenced by the villas at Agios Donatos and at Diaporit. However, the most secure evidence that characterised a period of high villa activity, indicative of the spread of villas,

¹⁰³⁷ Finley 1973, 34–38, 41–44.

¹⁰³⁸ Petronius, *Satyricon* 48.1–3; Cicero, *De officiis* 1.150–1.

¹⁰³⁹ Cato, *De agricultura*, 2.3.7. Martial 3.58. Marzano discusses this and these authors Marzano 2007.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Horden and Purcell 2000, chap. 6, esp. page 190 with reference to the villa.

belongs to the end of the middle Imperial period and early Late Antiquity, specifically to the second half of the 2nd, 3rd and first half of the 4th centuries CE. Additionally, vats indicative of larger-scale wineries and oileries belonged to the second half of the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE, going out of use primarily in the first and especially in the second halves of the 4th century CE, like many villas. Consequently, the development of villas and of larger-scale agricultural production in Epirus was later than it was in some other areas of the Roman world. There is also little evidence in this region of the Roman world for the so-called “3rd-century crisis”, traditionally ascribed to the 50 years from 235–285 CE—in fact, quite to the opposite, this was a period of growth in the agricultural economy in Epirus.¹⁰⁴¹

How did villas develop in Epirus, and why did they spread later than they did in other Roman regions? In my opinion they grew as new cities did, like Nikopolis, and as their inhabitants grew more prosperous. In chapter 5 I discussed how the foundation of Nikopolis set off a new settlement pattern connected to the centuriation of its immediate hinterland, but noted that this was confined to the city’s immediate vicinity, with prosperity associated with colonist farms developing slowly. Yet, as Nikopolis grew, villas also spread, both in its immediate hinterland and more widely around the Ambracian Gulf. Their spread together with the spread of market-oriented olive oil and wine production, especially at a time when other sources, for instance, in the central Adriatic, were struggling to meet the demand that they had in the early and middle Empire, indicated the full-blown development of a new, agricultural economy. This

¹⁰⁴¹ The existence of the ‘3rd-century crisis’ has recently been a hot topic of debate. Some, like Witschel (1999, 24), argued for a less dramatic crisis, which, except in the great political turmoil of 250/60 CE and 280/90 CE, did not really exist. Others citing the evidence for the empire’s civil wars and invasions argued for deeper, negative consequences, as Liebeschuetz (2007) summarised. One tendency has been to overlook decay, as Ward-Perkins (2005) contended, but another for a long time before it was to emphasise decline.

was a landscape of production fundamentally different from that which had characterised Epirote regions in the century after 168/7 BCE and in the early Empire. I think that its development reflected a transformation in society, namely the efflorescence of communities at Nikopolis that developed a culture that was in many ways shared with others in the Roman Empire, and this included villa agriculture. This is something I discuss in more detail in the next chapter, where I also explore how the growth of villas may have reflected the role of Epirus in this period in helping to supply Empire-wide demand, as other areas were struggling to do so. However, the development of villas did not mean that other rural sites had completely disappeared. As I noted in chapter 5, the material from fortified farms in coastal Chaonia (e.g. Malathrea) indicated that they either remained in use or that their owners experienced a degree of rejuvenation in the 3rd century CE. Consequently, in coastal Chaonia this form of rural settlement was also used in this period, perhaps alongside villas, showing that different forms of rural settlement could co-exist. While in some areas a transformation in the agricultural economy was complete, in others rural sites, like fortified farms, which had existed already before Roman times continued to be used.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

The transformation of the agricultural economy of Epirus

This thesis began by pointing out that we cannot make distinctions between "Greek" and "Roman" agriculture based on broad assumptions, particularly since distinctions are being questioned.¹⁰⁴² Yet, by investigating the archaeology of rural sites in Epirus at different times it was possible to identify periods in which different forms of rural settlement were used. In the early Roman period villas were not the characteristic way of managing agricultural resources for members of the elite, but they were one of different manners, with fortified farms being another alternative. Other rural settlements were also widespread, like unfortified farms forming dispersed villages. There was a gradual agricultural transformation from the use mainly of sites that had been the norm before the Roman period, like fortified farms and dispersed villages, to villas, but it was not complete until the middle and later Imperial periods, when villas flourished. I do not think this transformation straightforwardly reflects a development from "Greek" to "Roman" agriculture, since distinctions are difficult to make—fortified farms corresponded to large estates, like villas, rural sites changed over time, and at all times the countryside was characterised by a diversity of forms that could be used by different sorts of people. These points make the idea of an evolutionary development in ancient agriculture quickly crumble. Instead I would argue the transformation had to do with changes in the organisation of societies and economies. For example, the decline of dispersed villages corresponded to change within

¹⁰⁴² E.g. by Izdebski *et al.* 2020a.

societies that had been organised mainly in family groups, like the *Prasaiboi*, but in which we saw the rise also of individuals.¹⁰⁴³ Individuals owned villa estates and often stamped their names on their products (e.g. on bricks or *amphorae*)—but here too we should tread with caution. It was family names we find stamped on those products (e.g. Cossinii), while the practice of stamping *amphorae* is attested also in earlier times (e.g. *amphorae* with the stamp “ΝΙΚΑΝΔΡΟΣ” from the Nekromanteion).¹⁰⁴⁴ Furthermore, the adoption of different rural sites, like villas vs fortified farms, need not only reflect social changes, but also personal preferences, and some people, like Atticus, may have had both. Notwithstanding, changes in agriculture are a useful indicator of broader cultural transformations, and as I argued the pace of these in Epirus was slow. I summarise my argument using the evidence I collected and discussed in the preceding chapters.

From 168/7 BCE to the arrival of the Synepirotae

Following the conquest in 168/7 BCE and the incorporation of Epirus in the Roman province of Macedonia in 146 BCE, some rural sites, like some urban dwellings, went out of use, but others continued to be inhabited. As I argued in chapter 3, in the countryside rural sites were overwhelmingly pre-Roman forms of rural settlement at this time, like fortified farms and dispersed villages. Their archaeology indicated their habitation in the second half of the 2nd and first half of the 1st centuries BCE. This material culture came predominantly from local sources, and it shows continuities with the material culture used in Hellenistic times. For instance, at Matomara the tableware consumed before and after the conquest continued to be that which was

¹⁰⁴³ Daubner 2019, 137.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Vlachopoulou-Oikonomou 1979, 292.

produced at Phoinike. At Episkopi relief *skyphoi* were used, of which noteworthy productions existed in different local towns in the Hellenistic period (e.g. in Kassope, Gitana, and Ambrakia), productions which did not cease after 168/7 BCE—in fact, at Gitana the production of relief *skyphoi* flourished.¹⁰⁴⁵ Cooking pots also seem to have been local or regional products at Agios Donatos (though no provenance work has been undertaken), and one of them (with a stepped shoulder to short collar and everted rim, and with a round base) was also found at Episkopi and probably at Malathrea. As new tablewares were produced in Epirote towns, like red regional *sigillata* (e.g. at Kassope) which drew on Campana A or ESA forms, these were also consumed at rural sites, e.g. at Episkopi and at Agios Donatos. Isolated pockets of material culture change can be seen in country houses, like at Agios Donatos, which began to develop into a villa around the mid-1st century BCE, and indeed in urban houses, for instance at the hilltop town of Kastritsa (e.g. in the embellishment of Building complex E with a mosaic pavement, a small private bath, and covered cisterns). The continuity seen in the countryside was also reflected in evidence for the continued habitation of almost all local towns that had existed before the conquest. Building on evidence collected by different researchers, like Pliakou and Antoniadis and Hernandez, I highlighted domestic and funerary evidence (e.g. at Kassope, Megalo Gardiki, Ambrakia, Dymokastro), as well as evidence for urban growth at Butrint through the construction of public buildings.¹⁰⁴⁶ Towns like Kassope, Gitana, and Phoinike also engaged in economic activities like pottery production and trade, especially with Italy indicated by Italic *amphorae* (e.g. Lamboglia 2), which shows that in many cases they prospered. The continuity of local towns after the conquest has also been highlighted in Macedonia by Rizakis and Touratsoglou, which was also conquered early on and annexed

¹⁰⁴⁵ Pliakou 2019, 304.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Pliakou and Antoniadis 2019.

together with Epirus.¹⁰⁴⁷ On similar lines to my own they have argued that ancient authors exaggerated the decline of towns, when in fact none appear to have gone out of use.¹⁰⁴⁸ Rizakis and Touratsoglou also emphasised that local pottery production continued, and probably also trade, though the evidence is not as strong as it is in Epirus.¹⁰⁴⁹ They have not explored the agricultural economy of Macedonia as I have for Epirus, but they argued for the confiscation of royal land, but not necessarily non-royal land, which they suggested may have continued to be farmed by the same people in return for a small fee to Rome mentioned by Livy (a smaller fee than that imposed by Macedonian rulers).¹⁰⁵⁰ In Epirus I argued that continuity observed in town and country, together with their shared material culture and its limited change, suggests that agricultural activity should be connected also with the local population in the second half of the 2nd and first half of the 1st centuries BCE. There was not yet clear large-scale Roman investment, for which we have no literary evidence until the 60s BCE.

Agricultural activities were stimulated by active participation in Roman networks, like trade, as I argued in chapter 4, engineered by certain Epirotes, like members of the tribe of the *Prasaiboi* in coastal Chaonia. In Chaonia participation into the Roman Republic might have been sought by local communities, rather than imposed, first by Charops the Younger, and subsequently by the *Prasaiboi*. But the *Prasaiboi* did not simply tap into existing networks, they created new ones, namely by establishing Butrint to attract Roman merchants as Daubner has theorised.¹⁰⁵¹ Roman merchants would also have profited from ports that could facilitate their activities, for instance, for the export from central Adriatic Italy of Italic wine, which was

¹⁰⁴⁷ Rizakis and Touratsoglou 2021, 733-737.

¹⁰⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 737-741.

¹⁰⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 732.

¹⁰⁵¹ Daubner 2020.

exported to Greece and across the western Mediterranean, as indicated by the distribution of Lamboglia 2 *amphorae* of Adriatic origin. Lamboglia 2 *amphorae* and other Italic ones were also found across Epirote rural and urban settlements in this period. This suggested to me that the attraction of Roman merchants to Butrint may also have led to connections for towns further inland, for example in Molossia, and for rural sites, like Episkopi, where Italic *amphorae* from the central Adriatic have been found, demonstrating network phase transition.¹⁰⁵² It is also possible that the creation of such a network lured in Roman investors, like Varro's *Synepirotae*, and famously Titus Pomponius Atticus. The potential for profit in Epirote animal husbandry would have been another motivation. As was discussed in chapter 2, the evidence in Book II of Varro for mobile herding communities enslaved to the *Synepirotae*, indicated that large-scale animal husbandry was practised, which could have been based in Epirus, but that might have extended far beyond the region. The dissolving of borders under Roman hegemony would have made long-range transhumance all the more possible. All these activities, however, seem to have suffered during the Civil Wars, which in my opinion had a more detrimental effect on rural settlement in Epirus than has previously been recognised. Around the mid-1st century BCE dispersed villages, which had characterised the Epirote geography since the late Classical period, if not before that, declined, for example in the plain of Ioannina in Molossia or in the Kokytos valley in Thesprotia. As already mentioned the decline of dispersed villages—though not their complete disappearance—might also reflect change already underway within societies after 168/7 BCE. In the case of the *Prasaiboi* the conquest caused greater social differentiation: family groups perhaps reflective of dispersed rural communities continued to exist, but individuals as heads of families also emerged.¹⁰⁵³ The enlargement of houses in different Epirote

¹⁰⁵² Pliakou and Pascual Berlanga 2019.

¹⁰⁵³ Daubner 2019, 137.

towns in the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE, as at Kassope or Dymokastro, Megalo Gardiki or Kastritsa, which sometimes gobbled up other private or public properties, could point to similar social transformations. This is not yet clear since little is known about the epigraphic corpus of those towns to reconstruct specific changes to their populations and their social organisation, but it is an area of great future research potential. It is possible the Civil Wars also precipitated social change.

The early Imperial period

In the early Imperial period the re-use of pre-existing forms of rural settlement, which were sometimes transformed and other times maintained, together with the construction of new ones indicated growth in the agricultural economies of Epirus after the Civil Wars. In coastal Chaonia fortified farms were enlarged but they were not transformed into villas, indicating the continuity of a form of rural settlement that had existed since the Hellenistic period. Contrastingly in the Kokytos valley, some rural sites like the complex at Agios Donatos exceptionally did turn into a villa, and aspects of villa economies were also evidenced in the valley by the production of bricks or *amphorae*. Still the villa at Agios Donatos is not representative of a wider uptake of villas at this time, the only other definite villa of the early Imperial period being that at Diaporit, which also only clearly took off from the mid-1st century CE. Consequently, villas were still sparse, and elites in this period still made use of a variety of forms of estates to produce agricultural resources. Exploring evidence related to the land-owning classes, I proposed in chapter 5 that agricultural growth associated with large estates, like the two villas and more numerous fortified farms, was connected to elites who had engineered connections to Roman

networks, especially to the Roman aristocrats who had invested in the area, and whose families appear to have continued to be active there in early Imperial times. The names of the Cossinii and Curtii appeared on bricks in the Kokytos Valley, while ties to Atticus were demonstrated by the Caecilii and the Pomponii at Butrint, who Hansen proposed were indigenous families, possibly testifying to the existence of extensive client-based networks. But it was not necessarily the Roman aristocrats who had sought these families out. If Daubner's hypothesis, of the establishment of Butrint after 168/7 BCE by the *Prasaiboi* to attract Roman merchants, and my arguments that this also lured Roman investors in are correct, then it was the indigenous families who might have sought to forge connections to Roman patrons. This could have been beneficial because of the additional connections that could be generated, and the investment of capital it could bring to help expand agricultural activities; if the social organisation of communities had been changing, with winners but also losers after the conquest, then more land or other resources may also have been available to buy. Italian landowners were also on the lookout for such opportunities in the east as the work of Eberle and Le Quéré has shown, and while their activities began earlier and flourished in the time of Cicero and Varro, epigraphic and other evidence indicates they continued to do so in Augustan times, and possibly in the 1st century CE (e.g. T. Arminius Tauriscus at Megalopolis, Livia Augusta at Thyateira, L. Vaccius Labeo at Cyme, M. Vispanius Agrippa at Thracian Chersonesus, and anonymous groups of Roman landowners at Kos).¹⁰⁵⁴ In contrast to the picture from Epirus, where the patron-client networks formed in the 1st century BCE, and earlier, appear to have been maintained following colonisation, on the island of Vis in nearby Croatia, Adam Lindhagen has argued using changing names of *amphora* stamps that while production continued to be exported after the foundation of a colony, it was

¹⁰⁵⁴ Eberle and Le Quéré 2017, tables 1 and 2, 30-32.

managed by different people.¹⁰⁵⁵ Therefore, in Epirus the patron-client networks formed before colonies that continued to play a significant role after their establishment were particularly strong and embedded in the re-organisation of societies.

Colonisation, e.g. at Butrint, and the creation of a new city at Nikopolis with a double community did not appear to have had significant effects on land-management systems during the early Empire beyond the immediate vicinity of those towns. Near those towns small farms were built, in new locations at Nikopolis, but despite the Augustan foundations of the colony at Butrint and Nikopolis, rural prosperity associated with new farms was slow to develop. Signs of it in the form of the importation of ITS came from the middle and second half of the 1st century CE at Nikopolis, and this was also tentatively supported by other pottery forms (e.g. the probably mid-1st-century CE flanged-rim bowl and the lamp of the second half of the 1st century CE at Tarana A). The slow growth of the hinterland of areas where colonies were founded, paralleled also at Patras, may suggest that the first years were tough going for newcomers, especially when they were faced with powerful existing relationships around the ways land was managed, as in Epirus. The picture from the rural *suburbium* of Nikopolis somewhat seems to have reflected its urban development, which picked up in the second half of the 1st century CE, but was not marked based on the archaeology excavated thus far until the 2nd century CE—although it is important to be open-minded since much of the city remains to be excavated, and much of what has been excavated remains to be studied. At the same time, there is little stratigraphic evidence that can positively be dated to the Augustan period, beyond deposits (unpublished) from the Actium Victory Monument, which however might be understood as an imperial and remarkably singular building project.¹⁰⁵⁶ This picture parallels the moderate

¹⁰⁵⁵ Lindhagen 2013, 243, 245.

¹⁰⁵⁶ See Reynolds and Ikäheimo 2019, fig. 27 for some finds from those deposits.

development of the colony at Knossos, which was probably also founded in the Augustan period, but based on its material culture synthesised by Sweetman does not seem to have prospered until 100 years after its foundation, with significant changes to its archaeology not seen until the second half of the 1st century CE.¹⁰⁵⁷

What is significant about the agricultural economy of Epirus in early Imperial times is that a diversity of rural sites were used, making this a transitional period for the transformation of the agricultural economy. At the same time, there were marked differences in the material culture of these sites: at Malathrea the expansion of the fortified farm drew on local housing traditions, as I argued, while at Agios Donatos and at Diaporit villas developed that incorporated ornamental landscape architecture (like the fountain at Diaporit) and wall-paintings. Innovative spaces that spread in villas across the Roman world had begun to become a part of the rural landscapes of Epirus. There were also distinctions in the societies that existed in this period: some people were still based at pre-existing towns like Kassope and Megalo Gardiki, to judge from the import of Augustan ITS there, but new communities also emerged at new cities, like Nikopolis, and at pre-existing ones, as at Butrint, following the foundation of a colony. Thus, it was still possible to see differences between old and new, between the landscape that had characterised the region in Hellenistic times, and a new landscape that was forming in Roman times—even if distinctions were blurry, and different groups intermingled, like the Kassopeans and colonists in Nikopolis.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Sweetman 2007.

The middle and later Imperial periods

As new communities consisting of people from different backgrounds grew in Epirus, for instance at Nikopolis, and across the Roman Empire for that matter, the differences became less and less pronounced, at least archaeologically speaking. At this point societies existed in Epirus that were not necessarily more "Epirote", or "Roman", or "Hellenistic", but they were societies that exhibited common features—what Sweetman called in her study of Crete a “cultural commonality”.¹⁰⁵⁸ This can be seen at Nikopolis especially in the 2nd century CE, in the construction of public buildings, such as the *odeion*, and water infrastructure, like the aqueduct. These were features that existed in cities across the Roman Empire, with *odeia* being more prominent in eastern provinces, e.g. at Athens, Messene. They also employed architecture that was widespread in this period, for instance, the aqueduct being constructed using tunnels and arches made of brick-faced concrete. As I mentioned, since only parts of the city have been excavated, it is good to be sceptical of the chronologies of these monuments. Nevertheless, its excavators, like Zachos, have also stressed phases of urban growth in the 2nd, as well as in the 3rd and early 4th centuries CE, when private houses, like the House of Manius Antoninus, were also embellished with mosaics and fountains.¹⁰⁵⁹ The development of city and country was symbiotic. It is from this point on, and especially from the middle of the 2nd century CE, that we also see more and richer rural sites in its *suburbium* (see Table 4 in chapter 5), and that villas—which by this point were also widespread in the Roman Empire—take over. Villas dotted agricultural landscapes around the Ambracian Gulf, and spread more broadly in Epirus,

¹⁰⁵⁸ Sweetman 2013, 143.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Zachos 2007, 294. See also Papaioannou (2002, 282–283) on the prospering of domestic spaces at Nikopolis from the 2nd century CE onward.

from the second half of the 2nd century CE to the first half of the 4th centuries CE, and in some cases continued a little later, as I argued in chapter 6 (see Figure 16 and Figure 130). Viticulture and oleiculture also expanded in the second half of the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE, based on vats as proxies for these productions. Consequently, in the urban development of places like Nikopolis we may be seeing the embedding of agricultural prosperity, with agricultural wealth making it possible to invest in the city, or vice versa—as was discussed in relation to Butrint and the *Prasaiboi*, it was also possible for the foundation of a new city to have a stimulating effect on its countryside. A similar situation to that at Nikopolis might be observed near the port town at Ladochori, which may have been established in early Imperial times, but prospered from the late 1st century CE onwards, and where a *villa maritima* was built on its southern outskirts at Zavali (mid-2nd to mid-4th centuries CE).¹⁰⁶⁰ In urban and in rural settings the widespread uptake of aspects characteristic of Roman urbanism and agriculture coincided; these are not to be associated with a specific kind of person or identity, they are simply features that had spread across the different edges of the Roman Empire, used by different people—even if there were many regional adaptations. Contemporaneous urban and rural development also suggests the flourishing of Epirus in this period, which is also observed in other Greek areas, such as Crete, whose cities also saw a building expansion in the 2nd century CE, and shared common traits.¹⁰⁶¹ It is in this sense that I explain the spread of villas to Epirus, as a feature of that now shared culture, associated especially with places where the communities that shared it were based, like Nikopolis. The question, thus, is not only why villas spread to Epirus from the mid-2nd, but also why communities connected to them flourished at that time, with the exception perhaps of places like Butrint that prospered earlier.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Papadopoulou 2019; Lazari and Palli 2018.

¹⁰⁶¹ Sweetman 2013, 142-143.

There are different possible answers. One is that prosperity in this period was related to the carving out of the province of Epirus sometime in the 2nd century CE, by Trajan according to Sarikakis, or perhaps a little earlier;¹⁰⁶² a *procurator* of Epirus, Sex. Pompeius Sabinus, is known from an inscription, dated between 70 and 100 CE.¹⁰⁶³ The reasons for this are not clear, and I do not suggest newfound prosperity was the result of, or only of, a top down imposition, but the creation of a separate Epirote province indicates its growing significance once more in Roman networks, now of a slightly different nature. From the mid-2nd century CE onwards economic stress exacerbated by the Antonine plague coupled with climatic fluctuation, led certain core areas of the Roman world, like Italy, to experience decline and stagnation.¹⁰⁶⁴ Recovery and growth would not follow until the later 3rd and especially in the early 4th centuries CE in many regions. The decline of those areas may have left a void in the Roman network, or an open space, which could be taken up by others who saw the opportunity. While Empire-wide demand might have decreased to a certain extent, for instance, due to high mortality caused by the Antonine plague, it was certainly not eliminated; however, by contrast production decreased dramatically, thus creating a deficiency between levels of demand and production. I think areas like Epirus, and perhaps other regions where villa agriculture also spread later (discussed below), like parts of Greece and Britain, may have been stepping up to fill the demand while others were in distress. This suggestion seems convincing to me for Epirus in this period also because shortly after regions like Italy began to recover in the first half of the 4th century CE, the economy of Epirus started to dwindle in the second half of the 4th and in the early 5th

¹⁰⁶² Sarikakis 1964; 1975.

¹⁰⁶³ Samsaris 1994b, no. 3; *CIL* III 12299, which Pflaum 1960, 123, 53 dated to between 70 CE and 100 CE. See discussion in Forsén 2021, 248.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Bruun 2007; Lo Cascio 2012; McConnell et al. 2018; McDonald 2021.

centuries CE.¹⁰⁶⁵ For instance, Nikopolis, like its countryside, was famously facing problems by the second half of the 4th century CE; in 362 CE the consul Claudius Mamertinus lamented its sorry state, which required the intervention by the Roman emperor Julian to help sustain the city.¹⁰⁶⁶ These problems may have been attributable to climatic factors discussed in chapter 2, like the silting up of parts of the Ambracian Gulf and of other ports in coastal areas, which may have disconnected Epirus from broader networks.

Another possible reason for the later spread of villas is that in the early Roman period societies and agricultural economies, including fortified farms and dispersed villages, that had characterised the region in Hellenistic times persisted more strongly, inhibiting the growth of villas. This may have happened also in other parts of Greece (discussed below), but also in other regions of the Roman Empire, like Britain. Millett argued that early Roman rural settlement in Britain was “deeply rooted in the existing settlement system”, even if some “villas” arose; he continued that “in the later Roman period a series of developments can be observed which reflect a radical deviation from that established in the early Empire”.¹⁰⁶⁷ The example of Britain is pertinent despite its distance from Epirus because there research has strongly highlighted the importance of rural site diversity.¹⁰⁶⁸ In fact, many of Millet’s “villas” have since been re-interpreted as different rural sites.¹⁰⁶⁹ A similar variety can be seen in different parts of Greece and in the east.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Millett 1990, Epilogue.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Pan. Lat. 3.9.2. in Nixon and Saylor Rodgers 1994, 408.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Millett 1990, 181.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Smith *et al.* 2016 (who revise the original view in Britain privileging villas and prioritise the simpler farm in their study, as well as other rural site types).

¹⁰⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

Implications for the study of agricultural economies

Some parallels can be drawn between the Epirote countryside and that of other areas of Greece. Villages, which I highlighted continued to be a notable feature of the Epirote landscape until the mid-1st century BCE, also “flourished through to the Early Imperial period” in the Peloponnese, based on survey evidence; comparatively in Boeotia villages were still used but declined in numbers by the late Hellenistic and early Imperial periods.¹⁰⁷⁰ Researchers have also recently supported the idea of the continued use in some cases of Classical and Hellenistic fortified farms connected to large agricultural estates in the Roman period, for example, in Macedonia, in Attica, and in the Cycladic islands.¹⁰⁷¹ In certain cases their inhabitants made limited changes to their design, while in others, like that at Mieza near Naoussa (Macedonia), which originally in the 3rd-2nd centuries BCE had a courtyard plan that resembled that of other Macedonian fortified farms (e.g. Tria Platania), they were turned into villas by the incorporation of luxury features, like an *atrium* with a shallow *impluvium* and *opus signinum* pavements at Mieza.¹⁰⁷² Consequently, a degree of agricultural intensification in the early Roman period through a diversity of rural structures and strategies, which had already been used in Hellenistic

¹⁰⁷⁰ Bintliff 2008, 23–24.

¹⁰⁷¹ Adam-Veleni *et al.* 2003; Papaioannou 2018, 331–334 (on Macedonian fortified farms). Ketanis is preparing a doctorate, soon to be completed, on the subject of Roman Macedonian farms some of which were fortified farms, entitled *Αγροικίες και αγροτική οικονομία στη Μακεδονία κατά τη ρωμαϊκή και υστερορωμαϊκή περίοδο (2ος αι. π.Χ.-6ος αι. μ.Χ.)*; Rizakis (forthcoming) also cites evidence accumulated by Ketanis of large farms of the Classical and Hellenistic period re-used in the Roman period in Macedonia. D’Aco 2013; Stainchauer 2013 (on farms in Roman Attica). Fachard discussed the fortified farms of Attica that he associated with large agricultural estates, a number of which he suggested were also used in the Roman period, in his presentation entitled “Rural Attica: Farmsteads, Production, and Agricultural Investment” (02.03.2020) in the Oxford Classical Archaeology Seminar (Hilary Term 2020), which centred on *The Archaeology of the Ancient Greek Economy*. Dodd proposed the use of fortified farms in the Cyclades from the Hellenistic to the Late Antique periods in his presentation “Wine production on the Hellenistic to Late Antique Cyclades: knowledge networks and press technology” (28.10.2021) in the conference *Vine-growing and Winemaking in the Roman World*.

¹⁰⁷² Papaioannou 2018, 333.

times, may not only apply to Epirus, but also to other areas of Greece, as Stewart has also pointed out.¹⁰⁷³

Over time more villas developed. Generally, in Greece their productivity has been consistently underestimated. However, as this thesis showed for Epirus, and as the work of others is showing for other Greek areas, this does not appear to have been the case. While typically villas in Greece have been considered small and unproductive, this is partly a reflection of their partial remains, which have mainly come out of rescue archaeology, and have gone understudied. New work accumulating this evidence, for instance by Ketanis in Macedonia and by Loulakoudis in southern and western Greece, is showing that villas had extensive production facilities, especially in the later Imperial period and in Late Antiquity, including oileries, wineries, and areas for the processing of marine resources.¹⁰⁷⁴ At the same time, since villages and fortified farms might have been used in early Roman times, we may need to reconsider how stark the contrast was in agricultural productivity between the early and late Roman periods, and how agricultural practices differed, by taking forms of rural settlement other than villas also into account. In part this is a matter of diversity and change in agricultural economies.

Some remarks about diversity and change in agriculture can be made through a comparison between fortified farms and villas. Both were country houses engaged in the production of considerable agricultural surpluses, which appear to have been intended for the market. In fortified farms this was often indicated by substantial storerooms (e.g. in fortified farms of coastal Chaonia discussed in chapters 3 and 5; at Komboloi and Tria Platania in Macedonia), and to a lesser degree by agricultural equipment (e.g. presses, treading floors,

¹⁰⁷³ Stewart 2010.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Ketanis forthcoming; 2016 (on Macedonia). Loulakoudis 2021 (on southern and western Greece).

pithoi interred into the ground used for the fermentation of wine), indicating the production of olive oil and wine, amongst other products.¹⁰⁷⁵ In villas evidence for extensive and often specialised production installations, such as wineries or oileries, seems to have been more common.¹⁰⁷⁶ It is possible that production in villas was more specialised and that they produced a greater surplus. However, it is difficult to draw this simple distinction, since evidence for fortified farms has not yet been accumulated as it has for villas, and indicates that it is important to amass evidence also for fortified farms.

Fortified farms were widespread in Classical and more so in Hellenistic times across different regions, like Asia Minor, the Balkans, around the Black Sea, Macedonia, Attica, the Argolid, Aegean islands, Ionian islands, Sicily, and North Africa (e.g. around Carthage).¹⁰⁷⁷ Villas were prominent in the Roman period, especially in the central and western Mediterranean and the northern provinces, but also existed in the eastern Mediterranean.¹⁰⁷⁸ However, the idea that fortified farms were used only in pre-Roman times and villas only in Roman times does not hold up to scrutiny. Fortified farms continued to be used in some areas during the Roman period (e.g. Epirus, other parts of Greece, and Asia Minor), especially where villas were slow to emerge.¹⁰⁷⁹ Were they maintained in those areas because they could rival villas in productivity, and if so, was this only the case in Roman times, or also earlier?

In certain examples of fortified complexes in the Hellenistic period, as at the Nekromanteion in Epirus, the discovery of numerous hopper-rubber mills and several

¹⁰⁷⁵ E.g. for such equipment in Macedonian fortified farms: Adam-Veleni *et al.* 2003; Archibald 2013, 129-191.

¹⁰⁷⁶ See chapters in Marzano and Métraux 2018a.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Rind 2015 (Asia Minor). Ferriès and Skenderaj 2015, 221 (referring to examples in the Balkans). Fentress 2001; 2013 (on examples in the central Mediterranean, in Sicily and North Africa; and fn. 28 for Naskoje in the Black Sea area). Margaritis 2016, 190–198 (Macedonia); Blomley 2018, chapter 7, part 2 (Argolid); Marangou 2009 (for the well-excavated example of Agia Triada on Amorgos island in the Aegean).

¹⁰⁷⁸ Wilson and Bowman 2013, 5.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Rind 2015 discusses the Hellenistic-period fortified predecessors of Roman “villas”, from which he argued Roman ones drew inspiration, probably also suggesting the continued use of fortified farms in the Roman period.

segmented mills from the tower that collapsed sometime in the 2nd or 1st centuries BCE, indicated considerable investment in milling equipment and in different milling technologies. In this case the level of investment in specialised equipment reflects that seen in villas, though exactly how agricultural resources were managed at the Nekromanteion, which was an exceptional site, and whether this was at all similar to the management villa estates is another question. Elsewhere, fortified rural complexes were often described as military units, for example in the Argolid before the work of Blomley, but many of which turned out to be, or to double, as farms.¹⁰⁸⁰ Instead of making strict divisions between agricultural practices used at different times, we might come at the evidence with an open mind, recognising that different approaches to agriculture existed at all times, and making room to explore agricultural innovation in different periods.

The significance of rescue archaeology

Rescue archaeology is too seldom studied by independent researchers in Greece. It is generally thought that the fragmentary ancient remains that rescue work produces, together with the more limited time available to excavate them thoroughly, makes this a somewhat damaged evidentiary dataset. As a result, a vast quantity of material has remained disregarded in storage rooms, left never to see the light of day, and its quantity continuously proliferates. In my experience the view that remains excavated in rescue work are somehow damaged is entirely unfounded. What is more, the recent reorganisation of Ephorates of Antiquities in Greece has led to the centralisation of data as well as its digitisation, making it all the more possible for

¹⁰⁸⁰ Blomley 2018.

independent researchers to study and to incorporate such evidence in their work. To do so effectively one must seek to collaborate with local archaeologists who excavated this material, and to investigate with them which parts of it can be used to tackle specific questions. The archaeologists of Greek Ephorates have instigated new developments in the management of material culture that show a desire for it to be used; this was something I felt personally in my collaborations with archaeologists in Epirus. Researchers and other professionals only really need to meet them halfway. This has the potential to make a fundamental difference in the way we understand Greek rural landscapes, and, indeed, in the ways that we work with each other.

The Transformation of an Agricultural Economy

*Forms of rural settlement in Epirus
from the 2nd century BCE to the 4th century CE*

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Volume Two: Site Catalogue, Bibliography, and Figures

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Site Catalogue

The catalogue offers summaries of information related to rural dwellings that have been excavated in Epirus and can be dated to the Roman period, including research methods and intensity. The rural sites that have been included are forms of rural settlement that are directly connected to agriculture: simple farms, villages made up of multiple farms, fortified farms, and villas; other forms, like rural baths or cult places, have been excluded. Because my research agenda has been to prioritise the use of excavation evidence to explore rural sites, with the specific goal of using this to clarify differences between forms of rural settlement, which have until now been difficult to distinguish in specific terms using survey data in Greek areas, and to clarify their chronologies, I have also excluded from my catalogue sites that were explored only through survey. For a more comprehensive account of Roman-period sites in Epirus, including rural and urban settlement and a full bibliography, the reader is advised to consult the useful catalogue compiled by Antoniadis (2016) as part of the *TABVLA IMPERII ROMANI* series.

Each entry begins with an introductory paragraph with a brief account of a site's topography, the methods by which it has been explored, and its broad chronology, as well as any other discoveries in its vicinity. This is followed by a basic description of the site where the finds are arranged in chronological order—and discussed in the context of available stratigraphy—in order to provide here the evidence used to reach conclusions about its chronology, while the arguments themselves are discussed in greater detail in the main text. Minor issues relating to the interpretation of evidence that did not need to be included in the main text, as well as interesting finds that were not relevant to my main discussion, are also detailed here. As a result, the catalogue works as a stand-alone resource of Roman-period rural

sites with agricultural functions, which can be used by researchers interested in the countryside and agricultural economy of Epirus during the Roman period; and it works with the main text to support my discussion by providing important information which is useful for understanding the basis of my main arguments, for instance on research methods or aspects of the stratigraphy, but which for the sake of brevity has been omitted from the main text. The catalogue also includes a bibliography of publications that more comprehensively discuss the evidence excavated from a site and provide interpretations as to its significance. As already noted, for reports the reader can refer to the full bibliographies thoroughly by collected Antoniadis (2016) as part of the *TABVLA IMPERII ROMANI* series.

A. Ioannina basin

1. *Episkopi* | *Επισκοπή*

In the plain to the south of Lake Ioannina the Ephorate of Antiquities of Ioannina excavated several buildings forming a dispersed village dating to the Hellenistic, as well as the early Roman, periods. The structures were situated on the slopes of a hillock and consisted of building A (the best preserved, ca. second half of the 3rd-first half of the 1st centuries BCE), building E (provisionally dated mainly using coin finds to the 4th-mid-2nd centuries BCE), and three smaller buildings (B, Γ, Δ), in addition to a pottery production area (Z). While the majority of the finds dated to the Hellenistic-early Roman periods, a few ceramics were hand-built, possibly prehistoric, and others dated to the Classical period (late 5th-4th centuries BCE), indicating earlier occupation. A nearby cemetery with ca. 43 graves of the middle Imperial period (tentatively dated to the 2nd-3rd centuries CE) was also investigated on the western slope of the hillock.

Building A was a farm that had been destroyed by a fire sometime in the first half of the 1st century BCE, which preserved its architecture and material assemblage at the time in a thick end-of-use layer. The building was constructed of large, water-worn stones and presumably had a mudbrick superstructure. It consisted of a central room with a built hearth, referred to as an *oikos*, around which other rooms, especially storage spaces, opened in the north and west. These spaces stored ca. 15 *pithoi* and 30 imported *amphorae* containing cereals (e.g. oats, barley and wheat), fava beans, other legumes, olives and probably wine in some of the *amphorae*, which were lined with resin. The room to the east was interpreted as a semi-outdoor area. Another room, perhaps a porch, in the south had a separate entrance, and in it was found much farm

equipment, including metal tools, clay and stone grinders for cereals, and stands for pottery production; additionally, a series of lead weights were discovered, five inscribed with the letters “AKTI” and the sixth spelling “AKTIA/KAI”. The principal investigator, Pliakou, argued on the basis of the weight of these lead weights that they were probably used for measuring solid substances, like cereals. Many loom-weights were also found in Building A, making up at least three looms, indicating that textiles were produced. Outside of the farm a ceramic kiln abutted its northern wall. Building A was probably in use from the second half of the 3rd-/early 2nd centuries BCE, when it is thought to have been constructed, until the first half of the 1st century BCE.

Bibliography: Pliakou 2007, 194-195; 2013 (on the coins); 2016 (on two relief *skyphoi*); 2017 (on the lead weights). Gkatzogia 2018 (on archaeobotanical remains).

2. *Kranoula* | *Κρανούλα*

Near the modern-day village of Kranoula the remains of an extensive building, which had a large bath suite, were recently excavated by the Ephorate of Ioannina but have not yet been published. The building was entered via a portico. To the north was the bath suite, with a well-preserved *praeefurnium*. Finds from the bath included *pilae* tiles and *tegulae mammatae*, as well as a coin dated to the 4th century CE. A sarcophagus (ca. 3rd century CE) was previously also found in the general area near the modern-day village.

Bibliography: Giannaki Giovanopoulou 2018; Antoniadis 2016, 51.

B. Coastal Chaonia

3. *Matomara*

Ancient remains associated with a large farm were located on a terraced shelf of a low hill east of Phoinike. The site was articulated by a large enclosure (1070 m²), and it was surveyed by the team of the Italian Archaeological Mission to Albania based at Phoinike, and a part of which was excavated, corresponding mainly to the northwestern segment of the site (approx. 1/3 of the total area enclosed). Investigations focused on this part because in much of the rest of the site ancient remains appear not to have been preserved, since the bedrock was visible; this may have been due to intense modern agricultural activity occurring in the 1980s in this area. The work in the northwestern segment unearthed at least two rooms with a corridor next to the entrance of the enclosure. Using the finds from these excavations the main phase of occupation of the site was dated to the 3rd-1st centuries BCE, during which the rooms saw two architectural phases. Additionally, an early phase (late 6th-4th centuries BCE) and a later phase (Imperial-period, up to the second half of the 3rd century CE or slightly later) were also detected using the finds collected by the survey. In the larger vicinity of this site Matomara multiple other sites and tombs of the Hellenistic-Roman periods were discovered through survey.

The walls of the enclosure and the rooms near its entrance were constructed using large trapezoidal stone blocks, and in most cases only one course of them was preserved. The structures do not appear to have been constructed before the late 3rd-early 2nd century BCE, and a constriction date near that time as is suggested by the discovery of a bronze coin of the Epirote *koinon* (ca. 234-168 BCE) in a foundation trench for wall US130 associated with the first

architectural phase. Tableware and *amphorae* found dated to the 3rd-1st centuries BCE, the *amphorae* from the second half of the 3rd century. Much of the tableware was produced at Phoinike, with most forms found at Matomara dating to the 3rd-2nd centuries BCE, and a few dating up to the 1st century BCE. At some point in the 2nd or, less probably, in the 1st century BCE, new rooms were built above the original ones, signifying a second architectural phase. The walls of these rooms were constructed using small stones joined by mortar (also known as mortar-and-rubble architecture). Subsequently, the rooms were covered by a thick destruction layer that sealed the preceding architectural phases and finds, including in a probable Dressel 1B *amphora* of the late 2nd-1st centuries BCE.

Agricultural activities were evidenced by *pithoi* to store produce and loom-weights (19), coming from different contexts and indicating wool-processing, though not necessarily on a substantial scale. It was also proposed that the large size of the enclosure indicated its use as an animal pen. Numerous late Greco-Italic and Dressel 1B/C *amphorae* probably from Italy, and an Aegean and a Knidian *amphora* were also found.

Layers above the destruction were significantly disturbed by modern agriculture, making it difficult to understand the site's subsequent use in the Imperial period. While there is no surviving evidence that the rooms were rebuilt, finds (e.g. early Imperial? tableware, 2nd-3rd-century CE cooking pots) indicate the site continued to be utilised, possibly more sporadically according to its excavators, at least up to the second half of the 3rd century CE and possibly up to the early 4th century CE.

Bibliography: Bogdani 2012c, #SA109, 211-214; Bogdani 2012a; Aleotti 2012; Giorgi and Bogdani 2011; De Maria, Bogdani and Giorgi 2017, 56-60.

4. *Malathrea*

The remains of a fortified structure, with ashlar masonry and at least two towers preserved to a height of 6 m, were located on a shelf of the western slope of Mt Milë, southeast of Butrint. The structure began to be excavated by Ugolini and Marconi in the 1940s as part of the Italian Archaeological Mission to Albania, but more extensive excavations were undertaken in the 1980s by Çondi of the Albanian Institute of Archaeology. Little is known about the methods employed in these excavations or about the sequence of the stratigraphy. However, Çondi published a large part, though not all, of the findings. He also distinguished two architectural phases. While it was not clear exactly when either construction period occurred, the chronology of the finds ranged from the 3rd century BCE well into the Roman Imperial period. It is also possible that earlier phases existed. Nearby to the structure at Malathrea the ‘Mursi survey’ of the Butrint Foundation identified further rural sites.

In the first architectural phase according to Çondi the structure may have closely resembled a 15 x 15-m fort with four corner towers arranged around a courtyard (8.2 x 8.2 m), though only two of the towers have actually survived. An alternative possibility that I discuss in the main text is that structure grew from a small suite of rooms (D-G, on a higher level), to which one or more towers were gradually added, and from which the complex expanded further. The complex was originally entered from the west, where an arched gate is partially preserved, with a triangular top. While the chronology of habitation connected to the structure before it saw a new construction period is little understood, it was suggested that it was possibly constructed as early as the second half of the 3rd century BCE, based on the discovery of three coins on the foundations dating ca. 3rd-2nd century BCE. Finds apparently associated with this

first habitation period also included fine ceramic tableware, including black-glazed pottery and shapes such as *skyphoi* (some ca. 3rd-1st-century BCE) and cups amongst others, lamps, and a few *amphorae* possibly of the 2nd century BCE, as well as a coin from Phoinike dating ca. 168-148 BCE. Agricultural activities were evidenced by fragments of *pithoi* and stones for the grinding of grains, as well as agricultural tools.

In its second architectural phase the structure was enlarged to a rectangular complex (ca. 1000 m²) with a courtyard at its centre, and new rooms were built in the north and west (possibly also in the east). The large room (room B, ca. 181 m²) to the west with four parallel pillars along the centre of its longer side might have been a *horreum*, and rooms D and G were also used for storage. The construction of this room also closed off the original entrance, and a new entrance was opened to the south from room A, that was framed by the two towers, and had a panoramic view of the Vrina plain. The chronology of the complex in this period is better understood than in earlier times. As I argue in chapter 5, the site prospered particularly during the early Roman period as is suggested by the majority of finds linked to the period after rebuilding that date to the 1st century BCE-1st century CE, including Brobdingnagian Italic *amphorae*, tableware, cooking pots, ceramic and glass unguentaria, as well as coins (e.g. of Trajan, Hadrian, Faustina, Gordian and Diocletian). The earliest evidence that might date the new architectural phase to the 1st century BCE were some of the Italic *amphorae* (with rims paralleled at Çuka e Aitoit), especially one whose rim resembled that of a Lamboglia 2 *amphora* (late 2nd-1st century BCE), as well as a bowl probably ca. 2nd-1st centuries BCE. It is possible that the structure saw minor alterations to its layout in the 3rd century CE.

Cereal processing is suggested by fragments of hopper-rubber mills found on the ground's surface.

Bibliography: Çondi 1984; 2010; 2017, 181; Bogdani 2012c, 253-255; Gilkes 2013, 221-223; Ferriès and Skenderaj 2015, 214; Hodges *et al* 2016, 276; Wodtke 2018, 306-308.

5. Çuka

A fortified structure was situated on a low hill in the modern-day village of Çuka (today subsumed by the city of Sarandë); it has sometimes been referred to as Çumpora. The site had wide views of the Vurgu plain and visibility of the hill of Phoinike to the north. It was investigated by the Albanian Institute of Archaeology in the late 1970s and 1980s. Budina began to excavate the complex in 1978, reaching levels below destruction layers—and singling out different phases ascribed to the Hellenistic and Roman periods—but seemingly not reaching the ancient ground level. Investigations on site continued in 1984 and 1988-1989, though little is known about them. The finds produced by this work were, however, studied by Çondi, who has published cursorily some of the results of his study, but not the findings themselves. As at Malathrea, two architectural phases were distinguished, that have in this case been linked to two broad excavated strata (collapse layers?) ascribed approximately to the Hellenistic and Roman periods, but these periods were loosely and not consistently defined (i.e. Hellenistic: 3rd-1st centuries BCE; Roman: 1st-3rd centuries CE, or 1st-4th centuries CE). The site also appears to have been utilised in the Middle Bronze Age.

In its first architectural phase the complex is suggested to have consisted of an enclosure (990 m²) with a tower in its centre, built in ashlar masonry. In addition a series of rooms (E, F, G, L) forming a porch of sorts were built inside the enclosure along wall 8 using small stones joined by a clayey substance. The tower was entered via a U-shaped corridor and it had three rooms. A staircase inside it led to a second storey, and it was entered through a narrow arched doorway with a triangular top. The stratum linked to the habitation of the complex in this form was tentatively dated from the 3rd-1st centuries BCE. Finds included tableware (e.g. cups,

skyphoi, and dishes) that was generally black-glazed of the ca. 3rd-2nd centuries BCE, and a coin of the Epirote *koinon*, ca. 234-167 BCE.

The second architectural phase is said to have seen the construction of a second series of rooms (K, M, N, O) abutting the pre-existing rooms built along wall 8. The tower continued to be the focal point and some of its walls were plastered. Some of the new constructions also employed bricks (2.5-3cm-thick) and tiles, as well as material recycled from the first architectural phase. Habitation was generally dated to the 1st-3rd centuries CE, or to the 1st-4th centuries CE. The material associated with this period was “richer” (according to Çondi), including tableware, massive *pithoi*, Italic *amphorae*, cookware, lamps and glass objects.

In both phases agricultural and trading activities were well-evidenced by the *pithoi*, some found *in situ* and others fragmented, and *amphorae*. Some of the floors of the rooms were paved. The south-western part of the enclosure may have been left open to house animals, and it was suggested this area was delineated to create a separate animal pen in the Roman period by the construction of wall 5.

Bibliography: Çondi 2017; Bogdani 2012c, 173-175.

6. *Metoq*

A fortified structure at Metoq occupied a low hill ca. 4 km northeast of Çuka, also overlooking the Vurgu plain. It was excavated in 1989-1991 by the Albanian Institute of Archaeology. Two broad strata (collapse layers?) were distinguished preserved in different parts of the complex that were ascribed generally to the so-called “Hellenistic” and “Roman” periods, meaning 3rd-1st centuries BCE and 1st-3rd century CE, but which were as at Çuka not consistently defined—the Roman period also to the ca. 1st-4th century CE. Two architectural phases were also identified, and linked to these two different habitation periods.

In its first architectural phase the site was articulated by an enclosure with a tower in its centre, like that at Çuka. The tower had two rooms entered via a corridor. Three porches were constructed each alongside the south-western, north-western and south-eastern walls of the enclosure. There is also evidence for a possible portico, suggested by the discovery of a limestone column base. The stratum linked to the habitation of the complex in this form was tentatively dated from the 3rd-1st centuries BCE. Finds included massive *pithoi*, apparently similar to examples from Phoinike, Malathrea, Çuka, and Dobër dated to the ca. 3rd-2nd centuries BCE.

In its second architectural phase the complex saw some renovations in the tower and porches, some of whose walls were plastered on the interior. The north-western porch (rooms S and R) was rebuilt in mortar-and-rubble architecture. Bricks and tiles, some re-used from the existing constructions, were employed. Habitation connected to this phase was broadly dated to the 1st-3rd or 1st-4th centuries CE. This was suggested by finds, including tableware, Italic *amphorae*, cookware, lamps and glass artefacts, as well as large *pithoi*.

Agricultural activities were suggested especially by evidence for the storage of produce, well-evidenced for the first habitation period, since *pithoi* were found *in situ* in rooms of the north-eastern and south-western porches, in addition to possible hopper-rubber mills and carbonized wheat seeds, before the second construction period. Finds of massive *pithoi* were also found as part of both the so-called “Hellenistic” and “Roman” strata, while Italic *amphorae* belonged to the second phase.

Bibliography: Çondi 2017; Bogdani 2012c,167-169.

7. *Building 1 (“The Palace”) at Çuka e Aitoit*

Building 1, also known as “The Palace”, was the largest of three buildings clustered on the northwestern slope of the hill of Çuka e Aitoit, located outside the eponymous fortified hilltop settlement. These structures overlooked the southern Vrina plain and the passage to the Konispol plain to the south. Building 1 was excavated as part of a survey and excavations in the area by Selim Islami in 1979. Its precise chronological development is not known because the stratigraphy of structures in this area had been partially disturbed by earlier excavations carried out by the Italian Archaeological Mission in the 1930s. However, based on the finds habitation of Building 1 appears to have begun in the second half of the 4th century BCE, with a main phase of occupation that has been associated with architectural expansions placed in the 3rd-2nd centuries BCE, after which the building remained in use as was indicated by a stratigraphic sequence dated to the 1st century BCE-1st century CE.

Building 1 was constructed using polygonal masonry, which was also employed on its interior. It originated as single-storey structure that gradually expanded to three levels, covering an area of ca. 900 m². It came to enclose at least two courtyards and a number of rooms, three of which (*a-c*) were laid out in a suite near the entrance and were reached via a staircase. This staircase led up to a corridor and an arched gate, with a triangular top similar to that of Malathrea. This gate and the impressive masonry probably gave the building its name, known to the locals as “the Palace” or “Palati”. Room *a* may have had wall-paintings, as is suggested by many fragments of mainly white, but also pink, green and light blue painted plaster found inside it. The large courtyard in the southwest of the building also had a rock-cut well or cistern lined with plaster.

Finds comprised a few fragments of *pithoi*, cookware, good quantities of fine tableware and *amphorae*, including Italic ones dating to the last centuries BCE, with close similarities in their forms to examples from Malathrea, as is discussed in chapter 5. Fine plates and Italic *amphorae* derive from the stratigraphic sequence associated with the 1st century BCE-1st-century CE habitation, after which Building 1 appears to have been abandoned.

Bibliography: Islami 2020; Bogdani 2009, 254. For the settlement on the hill Çuka e Aitoit more broadly see Bogdani 2012c, 249-252.

8. Dobër

The fortified structure at Dobër was constructed on the smooth surface of a low hill on the eastern foothills of Mt Milë. This location afforded a commanding view of a plain that extended to the southeast of the Vurgu plain, and probably of the main route by land from Phoinike to the Vrina plain—this route would have crossed through the plain that the structure looked out to, before passing in between Mt Milë and Mt Saraqinit to exit into the Vrina plain. The structure was one of a series of ancient buildings in this area, including a probable temple at the bottom of the low hill, which have seen multiple but cursory investigations that have been little published. Parts of the structure atop the hill were excavated by the Albanian Institute of Archaeology in the 1980s, revealing a long history of successive architectural and habitation phases from the Hellenistic to the early Byzantine periods, but which are not well understood since only parts of the site have been explored.

In the first architectural phase the structure is suggested to have had a tower located approximately in the centre of an enclosure built using ashlar masonry, in addition to several rooms forming at least one porch inside the enclosure. A block was found whose shape suggested an arch with a triangular top, similar to those from Malathrea and Çuka (and possibly Çuka e Aitoit). Habitation was dated broadly from the 3rd-1st centuries BCE. Finds included black-glazed tableware (e.g. *skyphoi*, bowls, cups, lamps and jugs), 3rd-2nd century BCE coins, as well as massive *pithoi* and *amphorae*, paralleled at Malathrea (and possibly at Çuka).

In the second architectural phase the existing enclosure was expanded to the north and possibly to the west, and new suites of rooms were added. Habitation was dated generally from the 1st century BCE-2nd century CE, but it possibly continued through the 3rd century CE. Finds

included *terra sigillata*, bowls and cups with parallels at Butrint, Çuka and Malathrea dating primarily from the 1st century BCE-2nd centuries CE, and some later ceramics.

The storage of produce in the Hellenistic-Roman periods is suggested by *pithoi* found *in situ* in some of the rooms inside the enclosure. Additionally, a *trapetum* for the crushing of olives was found nearby on the ground's surface.

In the third architectural phase during the Byzantine period a small church (4.80 x 3.30 m) was constructed inside the structure, which may have re-utilised parts of the tower, and was dated from the 7th-10th centuries CE.

On the bottom of the hill a few meters to the east of the fortified structure was the building that has been interpreted as a temple, constructed of ashlar masonry, but with blocks that had been worked in order to be smoothened in comparison to the rougher masonry used for the tower and the enclosure on top of the hill. The rural sanctuary has provisionally been dated to the Hellenistic and Roman periods. In the vicinity fragments of colossal statues carved from Pentelic and Parian marble were also discovered, including one of a draped, seated goddess (Statue No. 2). These sculptures were ascribed by Melfi and Martens to the sculptor Damophon based on technical and stylistic similarities with other works thought to be of his; for instance, deep, round dowel holes were cut into the left side of the torso of the seated female figure, which would have been used to insert long metal rods to attach the arm, and similar dowel holes were made to attach the right arm of the enthroned Demeter at Lykosoura.

Bibliography: Çondi 1984; 1986; 2017; Bogdani 2012c, 140; Bogdani 2012c, 193-194; Ferriès and Skenderaj 2015, 206; Shpuza 2009, 500. For the statues: Melfi and Martens 2020.

9. *Diaporit*

On the shore of Lake Butrint extensive building remains comprised different ancient complexes, whose habitation stretched from late Hellenistic times to Late Roman period. Thorough excavation and study by members of the Butrint Foundation and especially by Bowden and Përzhita has clarified the development of these successive complexes with great detail.

The earliest constructions belong to the late Hellenistic period, specifically to the late 2nd or early 1st century BCE (and possibly slightly earlier). Archaeological layers dated to this time were connected to a long porticoed structure near the shore, built of large limestone blocks that were topped by a mudbrick superstructure (suggested by thick layers of green clay), which supported a roof (indicated by rooftiles excavated in those layers). Significant deposits were also found of the ca. mid-1st century BCE, whose significance is little understood, but that could possibly correspond to clean-up. While the site was evidently inhabited, the creation of lakeside terracing is not sufficient evidence, as the excavators argued, to suppose the existence of a villa.

In the late Augustan/Tiberian period (ca. first decade of the 1st century CE or a little later) a new construction period seems to have begun. A vat lined with *opus signinum* was constructed near the shoreline, in addition to multiple structures on the western part of the site, probably terraces. They indicated according to the excavators the creation of a more substantial waterfront complex, which they suggested was unquestioningly a *villa maritima* at this time, however, this is only possibly the case, since the exact use of the structures is not known.

From around the mid-1st century CE (though perhaps also slightly later, ca. 40-80 CE), the complex underwent rebuilding; earlier structures were torn down and new ones were constructed on a different alignment, seemingly including a room with wall-paintings, which

would more definitively suggest the site's transformation into a villa. Most notable amongst them, might be an intricate building interpreted as a fountain or *nymphaeum*, consisting of an almost circular structure containing a rectangular structure with a semi-circular basin inside it; this construction may alternatively have been a *piscina* or fishpond. While the excavators connect the waterfront construction with the building works of the 1st century CE at the site, it should be noted that its chronology is little-understood, since its excavation involved mainly the removal of beach gravel and no stratified layers were found.

A stamped tile bearing the inscription “GRA[E]” was found in probable 1st- to 2nd-century CE layers, which could refer to Publius Pomponius Graecinus, a *quinquennial duovir* and *duovir* at Augustan Butrint, or to Gaius Pomponius Graecinius, a suffect consul in 16 CE, or perhaps to one of their descendants.

Sometime in the 2nd century CE the complex saw considerable additions which indicate the existence of a more luxurious villa, namely the construction of a *triclinium* with an ornate mosaic floor (consisting of several adjoining panels with different schemes), as well as a bathhouse in the later part of the 2nd century CE. The bath complex comprised a massive double-apsed room and a hexagonal room on the upper terrace, in addition to a large apsidal *frigidarium* in the lower terrace (which was preceded in this area by an earlier heated room, possibly of the 1st century CE).

Shortly after the aggrandisement of the villa, towards the end of the 2nd century CE or in the early 3rd century CE, the complex according to its excavators ceased to be used as a “luxury villa”, when the bath and *triclinium* were turned over to productive activities. A large oven was constructed in the *frigidarium*, and the floor became covered by a thick dark occupation deposit containing predominantly coarse wares of the late 2nd- and early-3rd century

CE. In the area of the *triclinium* a pottery kiln was built, whose use might have caused the burning of parts of the room's original decoration, like the Africano marble panels in the centre of one of the panels of the mosaic; the mosaic was also pierced by 35 post-holes. A deposit formed in the western part of the room that contained pottery wasters and other pottery dated to the late 2nd or early 3rd century CE. By the mid-3rd century CE it seems the site was abandoned, though there are a few sherds from the mid-3rd and 4th centuries CE possibly suggestive of sporadic activity.

The site was re-occupied in the late 5th century CE, when a major Christian complex was built over the remains of the villa, with a three-aisled basilica and nearby buildings, including a bath, tower, and small chapel, as well as store rooms with a cistern. A tile kiln in the vicinity may also have been built to supply rooftiles for the buildings of the complex. Inside the basilica three-marble lined tombs beneath the apse and chancel were found. The size of the complex and the amenities it seems to have been able to provide are suggestive of a pilgrimage complex, as was proposed by its excavators; they also postulated the tombs in the basilica could have held remains believed to be saints or martyrs. The basilica was used until the mid 6th century, but the function of the other buildings turned to more prosaic uses by ca. 525-550 CE.

Bibliography: ¹⁰⁸¹; 2020.

¹⁰⁸¹ Bowden and Përzhita 2014

10. Vrina plain "villa"

Building remains belonging to a larger suburban complex, which may have comprised a villa, were situated immediately to the east of the Vrina Plain suburb, past the area of the cemetery. The complex consisted of a building in the southern part of this area, a bathhouse and a mausoleum to the north. Excavations by Gilkes and other members of the Butrint Foundation centred on the southern building, one substantial part of which was excavated, revealing the several different forms that it took from the mid- to later 1st century CE to the Mid-Byzantine period.

The complex begun as a rectangular building, which was open but had a roof supported by central pillars, that has been interpreted as an agricultural facility; it was constructed in the mid-to-late 1st or early 2nd century CE, based on well-worn ceramics of the mid- and late 1st century CE and extending to the 2nd century CE found in the levelling layer below the building. The excavators theorised that the construction of this building indicated the contemporary construction of a larger villa complex, which the agricultural building would have been a part of. However, it is also possible the agricultural building comprised a smaller farm in its initial stages; clearer evidence to indicate the existence of a villa did not date until slightly later.

In the 2nd century CE the agricultural building was expanded, when new rooms were constructed. The large bath was also probably built at this time, in the early 2nd century CE, or perhaps slightly earlier in the late 1st century CE. The construction of the bath indicates the aggrandisement of the wealth of its owner, and might suggest the development of the larger suburban complex into a villa.

In the late 2nd or early 3rd century CE a wine production installation was constructed in the agricultural building, when room D was converted into a room for the treading of grapes. Adjoining it a new room (I) was built with a collecting vat, thickly lined with hydraulic mortar and with a cavity at the bottom; the vat was connected to the treading floor via a channel cutting through one of the walls of room D, through which a *tubulus* was originally inserted to conduct the must. Room C, where a *dolium* was found set into the floor, may have been used to store wine; other rooms could have also served this function, since fragments of *dolia* were found throughout the building. Possibly around the time of the construction of the winery, or even a little later, the bath complex to the north of the building was abandoned. However, a mausoleum was constructed near it in the early to mid-3rd century CE, possibly indicating a change in the way the area was used.

A rubble layer dating to the later 3rd or early 4th century CE sealed the rooms of the agricultural building, including a coin of Maximinus Thrax (235-238), at which point the villa complex may have been in decline or gone out of use. The building could have been destroyed by an earthquake in the mid- to later 4th century CE that brought down parts of the complex on the bridgehead, though some alterations were also made to it thereafter in the later 4th and 5th centuries CE. The mausoleum continued to be used for burial throughout the 3rd and 4th centuries CE.

Bibliography: Gilkes *et al* 2020.

C. Thesprotia

11. Agios Donatos of Zervochori | Άγιος Δονάτος Ζερβοχωρίου

The remains of a fortress occupied a small outcrop (at 239 masl) of the western foothills of Mt Gorilla overlooking the Kokytos valley. Survey and trial trenches undertaken by the Thesprotia Expedition led to the excavation of several structures, including the fortifications of the fortress dated to the early Hellenistic period, and buildings inside it dating to Hellenistic and Roman times. Some of these buildings were interpreted as belonging to a villa of the Roman period. In the wider vicinity, parts of a terracotta pipeline were also discovered, some in strata corresponding to the Roman period, suggesting the villa was supplied with water possibly from a spring located ca. 200 m higher and 800 m to the southeast. Fragments of an entablature re-used in the construction of the nearby 17th-century CE chapel of Agios Donatos (consisting of triglyphs and undecorated metopes) may have belonged to an barrel-vaulted tomb monument, a stoa or a temple dating to early Hellenistic times. To the north of the chapel there was a burial ground of the 14th-15th centuries CE.

The fortifications surrounded the outcrop from the west and south, enclosing an area of approximately 1.1 ha. They were dated to the first quarter of the 3rd century BCE based on their masonry styles. There was at least one square tower that was excavated (Trench A), which formed part of the original fortified settlement and was also used in the Roman period when the villa was constructed.

The villa was built on three terraces and entered through the gates of the fortress in the east. Only small parts of it appear to have been investigated through trial trenches, and it is based on these explorations that our understanding of the Roman-period complex inside the

fortress relies. In addition to the use of the tower (Trench A), the excavated rooms of the complex consisted of a small cellar, containing an early closed deposit (Trench F, which could have predated the existence of the villa, as is discussed in the main text), three rooms that were possibly cisterns lined with hydraulic mortar (Trench G and H), and an oblong room (Trench D) that would have been decorated with wall-paintings in the Second Pompeian style, in addition to having architectural ornaments in stucco. Palmette antefixes found in several trenches would have been used on the roof.

Our knowledge of habitation in the Roman period relies on the few excavated stratigraphic sequences. The longest sequence was unearthed in the tower, spanning from the late 2nd century BCE to the first half of the 5th century CE. Indications for the earliest habitation after the conquest, however, are best evidenced in the early closed deposit of Trench F (ca. 120-80/70 BCE). This deposit found inside the small cellar consisted of household material (e.g. cooking pots, lamps, thin-walled cups and beakers—discussed in the main text) topped by building material that filled the cellar. While there is no doubt that these finds evidence the fortress was inhabited in the second half of the 2nd century BCE, I argue in chapter 3 that this occupation cannot unambiguously be associated with a villa, as the excavators have proposed, because much of the evidence indicative of a villa appears to have been later.

In the 1st century BCE, probably in the second quarter and on, construction work seems to have occurred across the site. This is indicated by the deposition of building debris in Trench F at the latest around 80/70 BCE and by the formation of the contemporary Layer VII in Trench A of the tower, followed by the laying out of a *cocciopesto* pavement on top of it. Associated with the new *cocciopesto* floor, corresponding to its construction or perhaps to a repair to it, is a small layer of reddish clay in which a few finds, including red-slipped regional *terra sigillata*

(e.g. a dish, perhaps 50-30 BCE, similar to ESA 3 or ESA 4A) were found; these finds dated the layer to the first half of the 1st century BCE or perhaps to the mid-1st century BCE, and hence also date the construction or repair of the *cocciopesto* pavement. It is possible rebuilding occurred around this time, or also slightly earlier, in the second quarter of the 1st century BCE. This rebuilding might have been approximately contemporary to the painting of the walls of the oblong room explored in Trench D, which is a possibility discussed in chapter 3. In that case, the site might be described as a villa from around this time.

The apogee of the villa was in the 1st century BCE–1st century CE. It is well-evidenced between Augustan and early Flavian times, corresponding to the range of the large quantities of material found in the thick dump from the tower (ca. 80 cm). This material included tremendous quantities of imported ITS vessels (mainly dating from the mid-1st century CE to the early Flavian period), as well as bricks stamped “COS” and “PHML” and other finds, discussed in chapter 5.

Finds dating to the 2nd-3rd centuries CE were few, suggesting dwindling activity after an earthquake was suggested to have damaged the villa in the late 1st century CE. The excavators prefer to see this as the end-of-use of the villa, but the site continued to be inhabited (or was reused), with particularly good evidence from the tower deposits of mid-3rd-century CE cooking pots. This habitation was significantly disturbed probably by another earthquake in the 4th century CE that caused the collapse of the tower and may have led to the destruction of the buildings in the fortress.

The site may have been used by squatters until the middle of the 5th century CE, as the discovery of scanty finds could suggest.

Bibliography: Forsén 2011, 17-19; 2019b; 2019c, 18-21 . Forsén et al. 2011, # PS 25, 109-113; Viitanen 2019; Reynolds and Forsén 2019 (the “early closed deposit); Forsén and Suha 2019 (tower stratigraphy); Reynolds and Ikäheimo 2019 (the tower ceramics); Freccero 2019 (the wall-paintings). For the fortress and fortifications: Suha 2007; 2009, 130-131; 2011, 203-215. For the spolia in the nearby church of Agios Donatos: Tikkala 2009.

12. Mavromandilia/Gephyrakia | Μαυρομαντήλια/Γεφυράκια

A cluster of different sites identified through survey and explored further through excavations made up a non-nucleated or dispersed settlement located in a well-watered environment on the western edge of the eastern part of Kokytos valley. While this settlement originated in the 8th century BCE or in the Late Bronze Age, it was most densely inhabited in the late Classical and early Hellenistic periods, when it comprised two small hamlets, made up of buildings ca. 30-40 m apart, at Gephyrakia or PS 35 and at PS 46, as well as three individual farms, one of which also had a pottery kiln (PS 37, PS 31 and PS 44, with graves near PS 44). This organisation recalls that of the non-nucleated settlement at Agora (No. 9). In some areas habitation continued into the early Roman period.

Bibliography: Forsén 2011, 10-12; Forsén et al. 2011, # PS 35, 97-99, #PS 46, 102-103, #PS 37, 103-104, #PS 31, 100-101, #PS 44, 103.

13. Gephyrakia PS 35 | Γεφυράκια

The small hamlet at Gephyrakia (PS 35) belonged to the larger non-nucleated settlement at Mavromandilia/Gephyrakia (No. 10). Two of the buildings at PS 35 were partially excavated by the Greek Archaeological Service. The excavations revealed textile production, indicated by many loom-weights, and metallurgical activities, evidenced by large amounts of iron slag (also at PS 46, a neighbouring hamlet) and particularly by a building that would have belonged to a workshop. This building had a 17-m long water channel that conducted water to a room whose floor was lined with hydraulic mortar, into which was built a terracotta basin (made from a repurposed bathtub). The majority of finds, such as black-glazed pottery, dated to the late Classical or early Hellenistic periods, but some indicated the continuity of habitation at Gephyrakia after 168/7 BCE and probably at least into the first half of the 1st century BCE if not slightly later (e.g. a coin of the Epirote League, ca. 148-second half of the 1st century BCE; early Roman pottery, including a red-slipped fine vessel). According to the latest work on the coins, discussed by Forsén in 2019, the later phase of the site dated between 148-50 BCE, to which a Greek-style rotary mill (perhaps animal-powered) also seems to belong.

Bibliography: Forsén 2011, 16-17; 2019, 22 ; Forsén et al. 2011, # PS 35, 97-99; Talvio 2019, coin nos. 7-8, 11 and 12.

14. *Mavromandilia E9* | *Μαυρομαντήλια*

On the western margins of the late Classical-early Hellenistic hamlet at PS 46, a farm (E 9) dating to the late Hellenistic?-early Roman period was excavated by the Greek Archaeological service, in an area where the survey of the Thesprotia Expedition produced late Hellenistic and early Roman finds. The farm building, located near several springs, measured 30 x 9.5 m, and appears to have re-used the remains of an earlier farm, or to have been constructed using traditional building techniques (i.e. with foundations made of large limestone blocks supporting mudbrick walls). According to Forsén, it resembled “in many ways” the farmstead at Episkopi in Molossia.

The farm had a number of rooms, including one with an oval hearth (where many cooking pots were also found) identified as a kitchen, and store rooms where *pithoi* were found *in situ*. These rooms were adjacent to an area dedicated to the production of wine or olive oil, with a rectangular collecting vat (2 m x 1.5 m x 0.70 m) lined with hydraulic mortar; the vat was surrounded by built channels and had three steps leading to the bottom, where the base of a *pithos* was inserted into the floor to collect residues. It is not possible to distinguish between the production of wine or olive oil on the basis of the evidence, though the Kokytos valley was renowned for its olive oil production, also evidenced at Elea. The presence of the collecting vat suggests production on a decent scale and that this was a relatively well-off farm.

Finds dated from the late 2nd century BCE to the early 2nd century CE. However, most ceramic finds were late Republican or early Imperial: e.g. an early Roman flagon rim, a Hellenistic or early Roman ring base, red regional *sigillata*, and Italian *sigillata* (e.g. a Dragendorff 24 or 25 cup, 40-80 CE), in addition to other early Roman pottery (e.g. bulbous

unguentaria). A silver *denarius* of L. Memmius Galeria (ca. 106 BCE), and two coins dating to the reigns of Domitian and Trajan were also found.

Bibliography: Forsén 2011, 16-17; Forsén et al. 2011, # E 9, 101-102; 2021, 240-241; Talvio 2019 (the coins).

15. Kyra Panagia | Κυρά Παναγιά

A cluster of sites interpreted as a dispersed village was found at the foot of the Liminary hill near Agia Paraskevi of Kyra Panagia, partially investigated through salvage work and by survey, which is located in the western part of the Kokytos valley. It comprised at least five buildings with a small rural sanctuary (two at PS 5-6) spread out across the foot of the hill in an area of approximately 6 ha. Another hamlet (E 15) consisting of three buildings, one monumental in size built using ashlar masonry, was situated ca. 500 m to the south at the northern slopes of the hills near the modern-day village of Kyra Panagia, across low-lying fields prone to winter flooding. Arguably, this second hamlet was connected to the first, forming a larger rural community in this part of the valley.

Habitation began in the Archaic period, as was indicated by finds from the rural sanctuary, but peaked in the late Classical and especially during the early Hellenistic period. In the early Roman period at least the larger village near Agia Paraskevi appears to have continued to be inhabited, as was suggested by unbroken continuity of cult at the rural sanctuary until the late 1st or possibly the 2nd century CE. Finds indicative of this continuity included figurines (mainly depicting female figures) dating through to the 1st century BCE (according to Svana, presumably on stylistic grounds) or to the 2nd century CE (according to Lambrou), some of which were found in a context that also contained 1st-century CE Italian *sigillata*.

Bibliography: Forsén 2011, 9-10, 16; Forsén *et al* 2011, # PS 5-6, 82-83, # E15, 83-84; Svana 2004; 2009; Lambrou 2006.

16. *Nekromanteion* | *Νεκρομαντεῖον*

On the hill of Mesopotamos towering over the Acheron river the remains of a fortified complex were excavated and identified by Dakaris and others who have supported his interpretation as an oracle to the dead. Others, especially Baatz, preferred to see the complex as an agricultural unit, namely a fortified farm, primarily because of the well-persevered evidence for abundant agricultural production. This evidence included at least 43 large *pithoi* containing predominantly fava beans and cereals amongst other plant remains, numerous hopper-rubber mills and two segmented mills presumably for grinding grains, as well as *amphorae* sealed with clay, all seemingly excavated from inside the central tower (T). The tower collapsed due to an extensive fire, thus preserving its contents. Additionally, below the tower an underground chamber was found, which according to Dakaris was a make-believe entrance to the underworld used in sanctuary rites, but according to Baatz was a cellar. While the proposed use of the underground chamber as an entrance to the underworld is largely hypothetical, it is indeed possible that at the site both ritual ceremonies and agricultural activities occurred (both also took place during the 18th century CE when a monastery was built over the ancient remains). However, irrespective of the different interpretations of the fortified complex, the large scale of agricultural activities should not be underestimated.

In addition to the evidence for agricultural production already mentioned, in the rooms to the north of the tower complex (alongside corridor N) many loom-weights were found, indicating the production of textiles and indirectly pointing to animal husbandry. Furthermore,

many imported *amphorae* were found in room B2, which was cut into the bedrock, possibly functioning at least partially also for storage of goods partially underground.

While the complex has been extensively excavated and restored, the evidence has not been thoroughly studied and published, and much of it has yet to see the light outside of storage rooms. As a result, its chronology based on the stratigraphy is little understood. Baatz distinguished five architectural phases, the first four of which were suggested to have been constructed in Hellenistic times based on the building material and methods (e.g. polygonal masonry). The final fifth phase saw the construction of three small rooms near the entrance to the complex (adjacent to room B2), built using small stones joined by mortar, a construction method that seems to have been employed primarily from the Roman period onwards in the Kokytos Valley (i.e. roughly from the mid-2nd century BCE onwards, and it is described by some as *opus incertum*).

Dakaris associated the extensive destruction of the Hellenistic complex, especially well-preserved in the tower (T), with the conflict of 168/7 BCE. However, there is some evidence that might come from the destruction layer dating to the 1st century BCE (e.g. a 1st-century BCE Knidian stamped *amphora* from room B2, perhaps mistakenly identified as an intrusion), amongst some other finds. *Amphorae* with the stamp “ΝΙΚΑΝΔΡΟΣ” dating to the second half of the 2nd century BCE were also found, though their findspot is not known. It is possible the Hellenistic complex was destroyed slightly later than Dakaris suggested, perhaps sometime in the 1st century BCE.

After the destruction event, the structure and especially the western part of the complex was re-used and the three new rooms were constructed, according to Dakaris in the 1st century BCE, who also noted the complex continued to be inhabited until the Late Roman period (when

he proposed it was finally destroyed by Christians). Evidence dating to the 1st century BCE and 1st century CE included 2 silver *denarii* ca. 50 BCE, *amphora* stoppers and handles with the Latin inscriptions “P. CUR” and “P. CURT”, also found on several bricks, as well as twelve bricks bearing the stamp “COS”; this last one is exactly like the “COS” stamp on bricks from the early Imperial layers of the villa at Agios Donatos. Additionally, *amphora* stoppers with the inscription “IRCULO” were noted, as well as broadly Roman pottery.

Habitation after the 1st century CE seems to have continued in some form, e.g. evidenced by an *amphora* with the stamp “LATINI” dated to the 2nd century CE. Additionally, an *amphora* handle bearing a stamp showing a cross seems to confirm Dakaris’ later Roman habitation.

Bibliography: Dakaris 1963, 90-91; Voulgaraki 2018 (as an oracle to the dead). ¹⁰⁸²; Wiseman 1998 (as a fortified farm). ¹⁰⁸³, 9-11; 2021, 233-234, 239-240; Voulgaraki 2018, 72-73 (on the early Roman evidence). ¹⁰⁸⁴, 160-161 (on the segmented mills). ¹⁰⁸⁵ (on the *amphora* stamps). ¹⁰⁸⁶ (on the loom-weights). Samsaris 1994, 137-138; Forsén and Korhonen 2019 (on the brick stamps).

¹⁰⁸² Baatz 1999

¹⁰⁸³ Forsén 2019c

¹⁰⁸⁴ Peacock 2014

¹⁰⁸⁵ Vlachopoulou-Oikonomou 1979

¹⁰⁸⁶ Tzouvara-Souli 1983

A rural building was excavated by the Greek Archaeological Service near the delta of the Kalamas river (possibly the ancient Thyamis river), on the foothills of a hill occupied by the hilltop settlement of Mastilitsa. The building may have been located along the ancient coastal route from Butrint to Nikopolis. It measured ca. 23 x 16 m, and was erected sometime in the early Roman period, though in an area where pre-Roman habitation was also indicated by the finds that were perhaps indicative of an earlier structure.

The walls of the early Roman building were constructed using large limestone blocks, which seem in one well-preserved wall to have been topped by large blocks (though the preservation of the upper courses of the walls was generally not good, since they were destroyed by an excavator machine in modern times). These construction materials would resemble those used for the fortified farm at Malathrea and House 1 at Horraon. Also like in these houses, a built hearth was constructed in the central room, which could be identified as the hearth-room; it was flanked by two wings, and the suite was entered via a corridor perpendicular to it. One of the wings at Mastilitsa (room I) was also decorated with a small black-and-white mosaic (ca. 1st century BCE) encircled by an *opus spicatum* pavement. This suite was entered via a corridor perpendicular to them. Consequently, its inhabitants combined local architectural traditions with Roman floor décor.

While the principal investigator of the site argued that the building was a villa, the small size of the building, together with the lack of spaces typically found in villas other than the room with a small mosaic, such as a bath suite for communal bathing, rather suggests a well-to-do farm, perhaps a fortified farm.

Finds ranged from the late 2nd century BCE to the middle of the 3rd century CE. However, while some black-glazed finewares were evidenced, the majority of the ceramics dated to the early Roman period, especially to the 1st century BCE and the 1st century CE, e.g. relief bowls, red regional *sigillata*, and Italian *sigillata* (dated by Preka-Alexandri to the late 1st century BCE-third quarter of the 1st century CE). Additionally, fragments of *amphorae* (including a Dressel 1C, ca. late 2nd-1st century BCE, possibly dating up until the second quarter of the 1st century BCE) and *pithoi* indicate the import and storage of produce, possibly olives, evidenced by preserved olive pits.

Between the first half of the 2nd-first half of the 3rd centuries CE, the farm underwent several renovations, and was extended to the southeast. Room I was converted into a small workshop area when three clay basins were inserted into its floor, damaging the mosaic. In front of it, a new wall was constructed in room V, dividing the space, and the walls of room VII (the original entrance corridor) were plastered. This later use of the farm was indicated by coins of Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Alexander Severus and Maximinus, in addition to some pottery (e.g. vine-and-ray lamps, late 2nd-3rd century CE).

A cemetery of the Classical, Hellenistic and Roman periods was excavated ca. 300-400 m to the south of the hill.

Bibliography: Preka-Alexandri 1999; Preka-Alexandri *et al* 2018; ¹⁰⁸⁷, 289.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Papaioannou 2002

18. Zavali, Ladochori | Ζάβαλι Λαδοχωρίου

In an olive grove in the southern part of the gulf of modern-day Igoumenitsa, remains of a large building, with many rooms, that belonged to a *villa maritima* were discovered during the course of public works to expand the city's harbour. The villa would have been located to the southwest of a late Roman settlement located in the area known today as Ladochori. Next to the villa there was a mausoleum of the middle to late Roman period that contained three Attic sarcophagi, while the lid of a fourth was found near its entrance. The remains of the villa probably extended to the north, in the area that is today underwater, and possibly to the west.

The main building of the villa (ca. 28 x 20 m) had a central semi-covered courtyard, with a hearth, around which a series of rooms were arranged, occupying three levels. This organisation recalls the internal arrangement of farms with a central *oikos*, seen in a simpler form in earlier Roman and pre-Roman Epirote farms, like Episkopi, Malathrea and Mastilitsa. A probable wine production area extended over the top (southernmost) level, consisting of two treading floors lined with hydraulic mortar (rooms II-III), which were connected to a collecting vat (1.8 m³) that had a ceramic vessel in its floor for accumulating residues. Other finds included storage vessels (e.g. the base of a *pithos* in room Ia), olive pits, and three fishing hooks. This part of the building may have been the *pars rustica* of the villa. In the northern part of the building, which has partially fallen to the sea, some evidence was found indicative of a *pars urbana*. Room XII contained many mosaic *tesserae* suggesting the existence of a mosaic in the room or near it, while its walls were also plastered. Room X to the east may have belonged to a bath complex, based on the fragments of *pilae* and *tegulae mammatae* discovered within, with

a possible mosaic, indicated by stray *tesserae*. A long room (XI) was also later added on the northern side of the building, which the excavator suggested would have had wooden posts lengthways to support its roof.

The villa prospered especially in the second half of the 2nd and in the 3rd centuries CE, when the majority of its finds concentrated, including vine-and-ray lamps (late 2nd-3rd century CE), relief bowls, red-slipped pottery; an earlier coin of Hadrian was also found, possibly but not definitively suggesting habitation in the first half of the 2nd century CE. The long room (XI) was probably added in the second half of the 2nd century CE. The villa went out of use around the middle of the 4th century CE.

The mausoleum was already known before the building next to it was excavated, having been repeatedly looted as early as the 8th century CE, and first investigated by archaeologists in 1975. Out of the Attic sarcophagi, one (now in the Archaeological Museum of Ioannina) depicted scenes from the Trojan war, like the ransom for Hector's body in Achilles tent, a theme popular in the late 2nd-early 3rd centuries CE. The lid of the fourth sarcophagus supported a reclining male figure, which the Greek inscription below him identifies as “Ἀντώνιος”. Several Roman inhumation graves in cist, tile and simple burials, containing multiple burials, were also more recently explored inside the mausoleum and attached to its sides on the exterior; they dated from the mid-2nd to the 4th centuries CE. Other graves post-dated the Roman period dating up to the 17th century CE, indicating the re-use of the area as a burial ground.

Bibliography: Lazari 2019; Betsiou 2019 .

D. Area of the Ambracian Gulf

19. Almoutsas, Sellades | Αλμούτσες, Σελλάδες

Amidst the olive-spotted hills to the east of the Ambracian Gulf, an agricultural complex with a particularly long lifespan, from the 4th century BCE to the 4th century CE, was unearthed through rescue archaeology after being discovered during construction work for the modern Ionia Odos. Over its lifespan the site, constructed on a series of terraces, saw several different uses.

In the second half of the 4th or early 3rd century BCE a pottery kiln was constructed on the western part of the site. In the eastern part a rectangular structure built of large limestone blocks was partially preserved, possibly the remains of a tower. Sometime in the 3rd century BCE a thick destruction layer sealed remains on the western part of the site.

In the second half of the 2nd century BCE or in the early 1st century BCE new constructions were erected. Amongst them might be the building of a likely wine production facility, with a collecting vat (through which a later wall cut) and possibly an adjoining treading floor, though this could also be later, perhaps from the late 1st century BCE, when the excavators noted the site begun to function as a production facility.

From the early 1st to the early 2nd century CE more structures were built, including a courtyard with a pebble floor and a room with a built hearth interpreted as a kitchen.

Sometime in the first half of the 2nd century CE the building seems to have been destroyed, since it was covered by a thick destruction layer found inside the collecting vat and covering existing walls.

Around the mid-2nd century CE the complex was rebuilt and enlarged. A new winery was constructed with a vat and adjacent treading floor in the western part of the site; slightly to the east on a higher level a *pithos* interred into the ground might have functioned as an additional collecting vat or for the storage of wine. A bath suite was also constructed with a hypocaust for heating. These features combined indicate the existence of a villa.

Thereafter the villa saw some renovations during its lifespan, in production areas and in the bath, where, for instance, new piping was installed.

Sometime in the later 4th century CE a fire appears to have caused various parts of the building to collapse, indicated by a thick destruction layer probably dating to the second half of the 4th century CE, which was found across the site and that also closed the vat. Finds inside the vat included mainly 4th-century CE ceramics, including Broneer XVII lamps, ARS plates, and *amphorae* (e.g. a Keay 27 *amphora*, ca. second half of the 4th-5th centuries CE; some 3rd-4th-century CE *amphorae*, an Agora G199 *amphora*, ca. late 1st-4th centuries CE), as well as a large utilitarian bowl with comparanda in an early 5th-century CE deposit at Nikopolis.

Numismatic finds had a date range that extended throughout the use of the site, but coins clustered to the later Imperial period, it seems not only from the second half of the 2nd to the first half of the 3rd century CE, the proposed height of agricultural production, but with finds also of the later 3rd and the 4th centuries CE coins (e.g. a coin of Aurelian, ca. 270-275 CE, several of the sons of Constantine the Great, including Constans I and Constantius II, as well as one of Julian, amongst others).

Bibliography: Giouni, Katsadima, Faklari 2012; Faklari and Niarou 2013 (on the coins); Katsadima, Faklari and Pascual-Berlanga *DERE workshop II* 2019b (on the closing fill of the second vat).

In the rural *suburbium* to the southeast of the Roman city of Nikopolis the remains of an extensive building, with two adjoining vats, were found by rescue archaeologists and originally interpreted as part of a bath complex, but probably comprised the agricultural facility of larger villa complex.

The building was discovered during modern construction work, which destroyed part of it and compromised the stratigraphy of the two vats. The excavated remains of the building with at least six rooms measured ca. 28 x 17 m, but it would have extended to the west, east, and south, under the Ethniki Odos and local roads, where its remains could not be investigated. The two vats, probably collecting vats, were located in the northern part of the building; because they were built using large limestone plaques they were preserved to their full height, despite the destruction caused by modern construction. Their floors, lined with hydraulic mortar, had cavities near corners of the vats for the collection of residues. One of the vats was immense (vat 1, with a capacity of 122 hl) and slightly elevated in relation to the second, smaller vat (vat 2, with a capacity of 25 hl); this would have made possible their use for the decantation of olive oil or must from marc for white wine, which could have overflowed from vat 1 to vat 2. The product could have been fermented in a storeroom with semi-buried *pithoi*, found in the southern part of the building. It is not possible to distinguish whether the facility functioned as an oilery or a winery, but the former is more probable, since decantation by overflow via interconnected vats seems to have been more frequently attested in olive oil production facilities in the Roman world. Additionally, a crusher (Ionic column?) was discovered a few meters away from the vats.

In the rubble of the modern construction were found artefacts suggestive of the *pars urbana* of a villa nearby, namely the right arm of a small statue as well as decorative marble slabs for walls and floors. Later a statue with a missing right arm was brought in to the Archaeological Museum of Ioannina, and could be joined with the right arm found at the Vaggeli Plot. The statuette, possibly representing Dionysus, appears to have served as a supporting piece for furniture (and was interpreted as a *trapezophoron*); it was dated on stylistic grounds to ca. the second half of the 2nd-early 3rd century CE.

Most of the pottery from the Vaggeli plot (e.g. lamps, plates) indicated the use of the building in 3rd century CE (or a little earlier or later); the ceramics have not yet been thoroughly studied (and their range might extend from the 2nd-4th centuries CE). Two coin hoards were found that are useful for establishing the abandonment of the villa. One seems to have contained issues of Magnetius (303-353 CE) probably minted in Trier, four probably of Theodosius (347-395 CE) and one of Arcadius (377-408 CE). Another contained 70 coins of issues belonging predominantly to the second half of the 4th century CE (e.g. Theodosius I, 379-395 CE; Arcadius, 377-408 CE). The second hoard was stratigraphically connected to a destruction deposit, indicating the abandonment of the villa probably in the later 4th, or possibly in the early 5th century CE.

Bibliography: Andreou 1989; 1992; 2007, 254-55; Riginos and Sakkas 2018, 715-716.

21. *Agia Pelagia* | *Αγία Πελαγία*

On a plateau to the north of Nikopolis overlooking the Ionian Sea, remains belonging to a villa were discovered inside and around the present-day monastery of Agia Pelagia. These remains, built on an area that had been levelled and was supported by a substantial retaining wall, included rooms with mosaics excavated in the monastery cells and a nearby *mausoleum*, as well as covered and open cisterns, which have been partially investigated through rescue work.

The rooms with mosaics probably belonged to the *pars urbana* of the villa. On the basis of motifs that they depicted, like ivy scrolls, Kyrkou dated them to *ca.* the 2nd-3rd centuries CE.

The *mausoleum* (ca. 2nd century CE) was rectangular in shape and had three niches that originally were probably intended to hold *sarcophagi*.

Various architectural fragments were found in this area and built into the church of the monastery, some possibly belonging to the villa and others to the *mausoleum*, such as Corinthian capitals and the bases of Ionic columns. The lower part of a marble, Attic *sarcophagus* (dated to the third quarter of the 2nd century CE) was also amongst the finds built into the modern church. These finds were investigated by Katsadima and Aggeli, who also studied the architecture of the *mausoleum*.

The pottery from the fragmentary excavations of the villa, the *mausoleum* and the covered cisterns had a long date range, stretching from the mid-1st century CE to Byzantine times.

The site could have had multiple phases from the early Imperial to the Byzantine periods, and Konstantaki suggested three phases. However, the acme of the villa was probably

the 2nd-3rd centuries CE, based on the clustering of evidence in this period, like the mosaics and architectural fragments.

A large *trapetum* and *orbis* were found between the monastery cells and its church, indicative of investment in equipment to produce olive oil. The open cistern was located on a lower level nearer to the sea and was rectangular; it may have been used for the irrigation of nearby fields.

A Byzantine burial was also found.

Bibliography: Vokotopoulou 1970; Chrysostomou (1988) ; Katsadima and Aggeli 2001, 94-100; Antoniadis 2016, 32; Konstantaki 2018, 30-31. Kyrkou 2020, 51 (mosaics).

Several partially preserved buildings were discovered during salvage work in the area of Riza constructed on several terraces, on a hill overlooking the natural harbour of Artolithia, with a panoramic view of the Ionian Sea. The complex was located near an abundant spring.

The most impressive construction, built on an upper terrace, was a large, domed, decagonal structure, whose walls were built of brick-faced concrete and survived to a height of 4 m. Chrysostomou studied the architecture of this building, which he dated to the 3rd century CE and interpreted as a *nymphaeum* probably belonging to a villa. Contrastingly, Katsadima and Aggeli argued this was the *frigidarium* of a bath suite, probably also part a larger villa complex, and dated it broadly to the 3rd or 4th centuries CE, based on the use of certain architectural features, like multiple niches; the pottery excavated during its investigation also dated to the 3rd and 4th centuries CE.

On a lower terrace walls several rooms belonging to another building were found. Test trenches produced fragments of marble revetment and mosaics, which Konstantaki interpreted as the remains of a *pars urbana*.

The area was surveyed, yielding surface pottery dated from the 1st-4th centuries CE.

Bibliography: Chrysostomou 1982, 16-20; Zachos 1998; Katsadima and Aggeli 2001, 91-94; Konstantaki 2018, 30.

The remains of several buildings belonging to a villa occupied the low hill of Podarouli next to Mt Mavrovouni, in an area which today borders the northern marshes of the Ambracian Gulf, but which in Roman times was surrounded by the sea, making the site a *villa maritima*. They included parts of a *pars urbana*, of an oilery, and of a bath-suite with a large, domed, octagonal room. The structures belonging to this villa have been of the most thoroughly investigated in Epirus, excavated over several months by the 12th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities. The residential area was excavated during two months in 1993-1994 following the discovery of deteriorating mosaics, excavations at the oilery began in late 2000 and continued in the spring of 2001 (followed by activities for its anastylosis), and the bath complex was excavated during one month in 1994. While archaeological activities at the residential area and the oilery reached bedrock, leading to the full unearthing of those parts of the villa, work at the bath complex appears to have been restricted to surface levels, though new excavations are underway there by the Ephorate of Antiquities of Arta. The villa was provisionally dated based on the chronological range of its finds, particularly coins, from the 1st-3rd centuries CE. My close examination of the evidence from the *pars urbana* and the oilery, especially detailed study of the pottery in its stratigraphic context, which is discussed in chapter 6, indicated that it was inhabited probably from the late 2nd to the middle of the 4th CE. Other buildings may have existed on the Podarouhil hill as is indicated by surface finds but they have not been explored, while those that have been investigated also appear to have extended in different directions, suggesting the existence of a large villa complex.

The *pars urbana* was located atop the Podarouli hill and was made up of two areas connected via small corridor. In the southern part of the residence, a portico (room 8, approx. 17 m long) would have given access to rooms elegantly furnished with geometric, polychrome mosaics (rooms 1, 7, 12 and 13). Through the corridor (room 3) in the northern part were rooms that probably functioned as storage rooms and others with utilitarian functions. Fragments of sculpted architecture, such as a marble window frame and stucco mouldings, made up part of elaborate decoration of the residence. Finds included *amphorae*, lamps, relief bowls and plates as well as coins of Augustus, Septimius Severus, Caracalla, and Gallienus. The building may have been destroyed by an earthquake, as was suggested by mosaic fragments found in room 1 upturned, tilted at various angles and vertically, whose deposition indicates they probably fell from an upper storey.

The excavated part of the oilery consisted of a rectangular building, which was probably constructed on the Roman shores of the Podarouli promontory; the building appears to have extended in different directions, suggesting that a larger oil production unit existed. The equipment of the excavated building included three *trapeta* and three presses, probably direct-screw presses as is discussed in chapter 6, found more or less *in situ*, as well as a small separator vat for the decantation of olive oil. Numerous lamps were found almost intact below press beds 2 and 3, which I argue in chapter 6 comprised a foundation deposit for the construction of the oilery. Other artefacts included *amphorae* and fragments of *pithoi* presumably to transport and store olive oil.

The bath complex was located approximately 100 m to the east of the main residence, and, like the oilery, would have been located next to the Roman-period shore. The main domed, octagonal structure was constructed of brick-faced concrete. The building had a diameter of

approx. 5.5 m and at least six small openings (ca. 60 cm wide) in its sides, five of which had additional limestone slab supports (0.20 m thick), and one also had a limestone slab used as a lintel (1.30 m long and 0.25/0.30 m wide). It is possible the latter at some point functioned as an opening for hot air from a furnace to heat the octagonal room, which could have been a *caldarium*—I am grateful to Konogan Beaufay for this remark.

After the villa was destroyed sometime in the second half of the 4th century CE, pieces of the disassembled mosaic that had fallen into room 1 from a higher level were used to construct a surface in one of the corners of the room. Perhaps this indicates that the inhabitants of the area attempted to rebuild what had been destroyed.

Bibliography: Ntouzougli 1998; 2003a; 2003b (on the *pars urbana*). Giannaki 2017 (on the oilery). Konstantaki 2015, 90-93.

24. *Agios Georgios* | *Άγιος Γεώργιος*

To the north of the present-day village of Agios Georgios, at the edge of the Kerasonas Plain, an extensive building corresponding to a villa was excavated in salvage work, but only cursory reports of the excavation have been published. It was discovered near the spring of the Louros river, which also supplied the aqueduct of Nikopolis.

The building had several rooms, five of which were decorated with geometric mosaics. The mosaics depicted motifs such as a goblet overflowing with a liquid substance (mosaic I), and bead and reel, which date them to the Late Antique period, specifically to the 3rd century CE according to Kyrkou. Next to these rooms there was a bath-suite, equipped with a hypocaust, and a *praefurnium* was also located.

The excavation yielded pottery dated broadly from the 1st-/2nd to the 4th-/5th centuries CE, though it was also noted that the building was destroyed by a fire in the 4th century CE. Based on the date of the mosaics, the villa prospered in the 3rd century CE. A coin of Gordian III (238-244 CE) was also mentioned by Faklari and Niarou.

Bibliography: Zachos and Choinas ADelt 55 (2000), 556-557; Zachos 2012, 344; Antoniadis 2016, 30; Kyrkou 2020, 149-150; Faklari and Niarou 2013, 490.

On the shores of the Mazoma Lagoon immediately to the east of Nikopolis a longitudinal building belonging to a villa was excavated in rescue work, consisting of at least five rooms, with mosaic pavements. To the east there was a courtyard, while to the north there was a retaining wall running parallel to the building, probably in order to support it. The finds from the excavation spanned the 2nd-/3rd to the 5th centuries CE, including coins of Hadrian and Aurelianus. One of the mosaics dated to the late 4th or 5th centuries CE according to Kyrkou.

Bibliography: Orlandos and Pallas 1959; Konstantaki 2018, 31-32; Kyrkou 2020, 145-146.

Next to low-lying hills that in Roman times would have bordered the shores of the Ambracian Gulf, an extensive complex (more than 522 m²) was excavated in salvage work (unpublished) with several suites of rooms, a hypocaust bath, a possible water feature, and open-air courtyards, one of which had a pebble floor, were excavated. Some of the rooms had mosaics. Numerous rectangular vats may have formed part of the water feature. Additional spaces attributed to productive activities were also found, but their precise use was not discussed. The excavators dated the villa broadly to the Roman period. These discoveries were also cursorily published in a brief report and await further publication.

Bibliography: Riginos 2012, 356; Konstantaki 2018. 33.

27. *Kanali* | *Κανάλι*

Next to the present-day seaside settlement of Kanali facing the Ionian Sea, a large complex (ca. 250 m²) was excavated in salvage work recently but has not been published, approximately 170 m from the shore. On the eastern side of the complex, a retaining wall supported a building with multiple rooms, while in the northeast there was a bath suite with rooms decorated with mosaics pavements. In the southern part of the complex a vat was discovered, lined with hydraulic mortar. The remains corresponded to a villa, which according to Konstantaki had a Roman and an early Byzantine phase. One of the mosaics had figurative decoration, and dated to the 4th century CE according to Kyrkou. Numismatic finds associated with the Roman phase dated up to the late 2nd century CE, which suggests that coins of the late 2nd century CE existed amongst the finds.

Bibliography: Konstantaki 2018, 31; Kyrkou 2020, 47.

28. *Margarona* | *Μαργαρώνα*

On the south-eastern projecting arm of Ormos Vathy, the Roman harbour of Nikopolis, the remains of a sizeable building complex were excavated in salvage work in the vicinity of the modern-day church of the Virgin Mary. This complex included an ellipsoid construction belonging to a bath, located near a water source. Next to this construction in the modern-day church fragments of a geometric, black-and-white mosaic were found. On a higher level near a modern-day luxury hotel a Roman *mausoleum* was discovered, which contained at least one Attic *sarcophagus*; included amongst its finds were pieces of marble revetment and sculpted architectural fragments belonging to the *mausoleum*. The finds dated from the middle of the 2nd to the 5th-/6th centuries CE.

Bibliography: Stein 2001, 67, 70; Konstantaki 2018, 31.

In the north-western part of the peninsula of Agios Thomas facing the Ambracian Gulf, the remains thought to belong to a villa were found in rescue work, including a large, apsidal building, as well as architectural fragments, pottery and bricks. The finds have a range stretching from the 2nd-/3rd centuries CE to the 5th century CE. The possible villa was located immediately to the south of a small, well-sheltered harbour, with good access to Nikopolis.

Bibliography: Stein 2001, 67, 71; Konstantaki 2018, 32.

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