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Houses in Byzantium

Charalambos BOURAS

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HOUSES IN BYZANTIUM[1]

A. Introduction

For many reasons matters to do with housing, and not only Byzantine housing, have been attracting a growing number of scholars in recent years. Such matters have more to do with everyday life than with different kinds of buildings, they are more concerned with the art of the people and more clearly related to society and the economy than to other aspects of architecture. Nonetheless, houses are the determining factor in the shaping and character of cities since they account for the great majority of buildings within them.

But we run into a number of snags when considering housing in Byzantium. This is because even nowadays the subject is beset with limitations. We know of extremely few Byzantine houses and can interpret them only with great difficulty. In contrast with the surviving examples of the medieval house in western Europe, the scientific material at our disposal is for the most part material obtained from excavations and consists, not of entire houses, but of the remains of buildings. Moreover, the peculiar nature of the written sources, that is, of Byzantine texts, renders them of the barest assistance to the acquisition of knowledge of our subject.

There is perhaps no point in mentioning how mistaken it would be to seek for general typological and stylistic characteristics of the houses the Byzantines lived in. Clearly, there must have been any number of architectural solutions occasioned by the diverse conditions prevailing at different times in the various regions of the empire. The designation the "Byzantine house", reminiscent of that old treatise by Général Léon de Beylié [2], seems to be associated with the out-dated 19th-century concept of Byzantium as an undeveloped and decadent world. For there is no such thing as the Byzantine house, only Byzantine houses, of many types and categories, each meriting individual study.

Anyone who has had to do with the history of Byzantine architecture

1. This article is identical with the text of a communication by the author in the seventeenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, at the University of Birmingham, March 26, 1983.

2. Léon de Beylié, L'habitation byzantine, Grenoble-Paris, 1902.

knows that there has been only limited research into the subject. It began with the publication in 1902 of the massive but not detailed volume by Général Léon de Beylié just referred to. His work was distinguished by a total ignorance of evidence from excavations and by the citing of examples which at least nowadays would not be thought of as Byzantine, such as the houses at Galata. There followed in 1915 a small study by Gerland [3], the content of which was similar. The first substantial study of Byzantine houses was published only in 1936; it was by Anastasios Orlandos [4] and featured the houses and palaces at Mistra, scientific material which, despite its restricted topographic and chronological scope, is still of fundamental importance. There appeared simultaneously a study by Phaidon Koukoules «περί τήν βυζαντινήν οἰκίαν» [5] ("on the Byzantine house"), which rested almost exclusively on written sources; this study remains an indispensable aid to related research, notwithstanding its recognized defects. A vital contribution to the problem was made by the publication in 1957 of a book by Robert Scranton [6] on the Byzantine levels at Corinth and between 1960 and 1974 of articles by various archaeologists on Byzantine finds in other Greek cities in the annual Ἀρχαιολογικόν Δελτίον. Outstanding among published reports on houses of the early or late Byzantine period is one by Tchalenco on the villages of northern Syria [7] which introduces not only new material but a new method of interpreting it. Other local archaeological research has been carried out in recent years, chiefly in Asia Minor where both town planning and individual houses have been studied; the most important research has been by Prof. Harrison in Lycia [8] and Dr Radt at Pergamon [9]. Condurachi's researches in Romania [10] should also be mentioned.

3. E. Gerland, Das Wohnhaus der Byzantiner, Der Burgwart, 16, 1, p. 10-19.

4. In ABME 3 (1937), p. 1-114.

5. In ΕΕΒΣ 12 (1936), p. 76-138 and Βυζαντινῶν Βίος καί Πολιτισμός, Athens, s.d., p. 76-138.

6. R. Scranton, Mediaeval Architecture in the central Area of Corinth, Corinth XVI, Princeton, 1957.

7. G. Tchalenco, Villages antiques de la Syrie du Nord, I, II, III, Paris, 1953. Similar scientific material has been recently presented: J. P. Sodini, G. Tate, B. et S. Bavant, J. L. Biscop, D. Orssaud, Dehes, Recherches sur l'habitat rural, Syria 57 (1980), p. 1-308.

8. Martin Harisson, Nouvelles découvertes romaines tardives et paléobyzantines en Lycie, CRAI 1979, p. 222-239. Idem, An early Byzantine Town at Arif in Lycia, Yayla, II (1979), p. 13-17 (in collaboration with G.R.J. Lawson).

9. Wolfgang Radt, Die Byzantinische Wohnstadt von Pergamon, Wohnungsbau im Altertum, Berlin, 1978, p. 199-223 (with previous bibliographical reference).

10. E. Condurachi, Quelques maisons byzantines des villes Pontiques, Studies in memory D. Talbot-Rice, Edinburg, 1975, p. 171-183.

The subject is so complex in itself that it can hardly be investigated as a whole. In consequence no one today expects a general review under a title such as the one Général de Beylié gave to his volume, but rather a series of examinations of distinct facets of the subject within a particular topographic or chronological context, or even from a special viewpoint. The last general work on questions concerning housing in Byzantium was written twelve years ago by Kirilova Kirova [11]. Unfortunately, in this instance, too, a large sector of excavation material was ignored.

Perhaps from what little I have already stated it is obvious, I believe, that the chief source of original information about housing lies in archaeology and excavations. It must not be thought, however, that archaeological research and subsequent analysis are without their difficulties, or that they constitute the unique source of information on the subject.

An initial prerequisite is that excavations be carried out properly, by specialists, unhurriedly, and that detailed drawings and photographic records be made, and collaboration with all manner of specialists be feasible. The interpretation of material, especially when it has to do with Byzantine houses, presents difficulties because the structure is usually of poor material and has been subject in later times to repairs, additions, alterations, and all kinds of modifications. Their chronology is also a matter of some difficulty because there are no inscriptions and all assumptions must rest on coinage (which is rarely found) and potsherds, which also may be dated only approximately.

Texts of the Byzantine period are similarly a source of information in our researches. Most of them have already been mentioned in the work by Phaidon Koukoules previously referred to. But the nature of these texts greatly reduces their value as documents, a fact known to all historians of art and architecture who have been occupied with them [12]. If one excepts some notarial documents (wills, deeds of sale, *Acta* of Haghion Oros), Byzantine writings do not aim at precise definition but at the cultivation of a literary style or rhetoric or something akin. Nevertheless there are scattered references to dwellings or to features of a house in patristic or hagiological texts, in "ekphraseis", epigrams, letters, the poems of Theodoros

11. Tatiana Kirilova Kirova, Il problema della casa Bizantina, Felix Ravenna 2 (1971), p. 263-302. The recent article by Thanassis Papazotos, Τό ἀστικό βυζαντινό σπίτι, Ἀρχαιολογία, Febr. 1982, p. 37-44, does not add anything to our knowledge.

12. Cyril Mango, The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312-1453, Sources and Documents, Englewood Cliffs, 1972, p. XIV-XV and Byzantine Literature as a distorting Mirror, Oxford, 1975.

Prodromos, and in other such written remains. Finally, in studying and reconstructing dwelling-houses we must not forget the building regulations that applied in Byzantine cities: the *Basiliká,* the *Hexabiblos* of Harmenopoulos, etc.

Yet another source of information about houses in Byzantium are the various illustrations of buildings that occur in scenes, usually religious, appearing in wall-paintings, icons, or manuscript miniatures. In some cases a particular significance was attached to them [13]. But even when they are of a fairly lavish nature, or full of convincing detail [14], or correct in their proportions [15], they do not represent actual buildings. They appear rather to be derived from successive copies of originals of late antiquity or from pastiches of such representations with liberal additions of more recent elements. In the portrayal of historical events, as in the famous manuscript of Skylitsis' chronicle in Madrid Library [16], which one would expect to be something of an exception, we again find conventional illustrations [17], their value as sources of information lying mainly in their detail.

Dwelling-houses built after the fall of Byzantium in the Balkan peninsula and in Asia Minor, some of them of very impressive appearance, may be considered the ultimate if indirect source of information. This was the view Deroko [18] maintained throughout the fifties. However, it does not carry conviction if one reflects that most of these houses are at least three centuries removed in time from the collapse of the Empire [19]. This highly specialized problem calls for individual treatment.

The wide gap that admittedly exists in our knowledge of late 6th- to

13. As by Léon de Beylié.

14. As in the case of the frescoes of the Mavriotissa in Castoria. Cf. Nic. Moutsopoulos, Καστοριά, Παναγία ἡ Μαυριώτισσα, Athens, 1967, p. 43, figs. 62, 68, 69, 75-77.

15. As in the case of the Aracou Church in Cyprus. Cf. A. H. S. Megaw, Background Architecture in the Lagoudera Frescoes, JÖB 21 (1972), p. 195-201, pls. 1-8.

16. S. C. Estopañan, Skilitzes Madritensis, I, Barcelona - Madrid, 1965. A. Grabar - M. Manoussacas, L'illustration de manuscrit de Skylitzes de la Bibliothèque Nationale de Madrid, Venise, 1979.

17. A. Grabar - M. Manoussacas, op. cit., p. 149-150, 160-161.

18. A. Deroko, Quelques reflexions sur l'aspect de l'habitation byzantin, Actes du Xe Congrès Intern. d'Études Byzantines, Istanbul, 1955, p. 124 ff, pl. XI. Similar opinions are expressed by S. Tomoski, Makedonska Navodna Architektura, Scopje, 1960, p. 81 and by Nic. Moutsopoulos, Μακεδονική Ἀρχιτεκτονική, Συμβολή εἰς τήν μελέτην τῆς ἑλληνικῆς οἰκίας, Thessaloniki, 1971, p. 33, 54-72, 317.

19. Charalambos Bouras, Introductory Essay to «Ἑλληνική παραδοσιακή ἀρχιτεκτονική», I, Athens, 1982, p. 30.

10th-century Byzantium (and in particular of its provincial areas) separates two long periods that differ from one another in many respects. Not only had the boundaries and ideological basis [20] of the state altered in the interval but also the way of life [21], society, and the economy, too. This distinction between surviving elements of antiquity and the middle ages is now generally accepted. It is only natural that Byzantine dwelling-houses, built and used in these diverse circumstances, should present fundamental differences, at least in those instances where their users were able to choose the form and style of their homes [22]. The villa of late Roman and early Byzantine times was replaced in the middle ages by a building usually of two storeys, the living quarters being confined to the upper storey.

For the sake therefore of a more orderly arrangement, as well as for reasons of a fundamental nature, this general examination of the dwelling-house in Byzantium is divided into two parts: the one concerns the early Byzantine and the other the late Byzantine house.

B. Houses in Byzantium from the 10th to the 15th century

As it is already noted, archaeology is still the chief source of information on houses in Byzantium. This is valid for the period after the dark ages notwithstanding that the material at our disposal is very much less than that for the previous period. Scientific evidence for houses from the 10th to the 15th century that comes from excavations or direct observation, has the great quality of immediacy. Despite the random nature of finds, their disappointing state of preservation, the inadequacy and improvised character of their excavation, and finally despite the approximation of their dating, the remnants of these houses provide the surest means to an understanding of our subject.

This scientific material remains to a large extent unknown or difficult of access to Byzantine scholars, with the possible exception of a few houses at Mistra which have been rather better known for a while now. Because of this, I believe I should demonstrate, as concisely as possible, the evidence

20. See in general, H. Ahrweiler, L'idéologie politique de l'empire byzantin, Paris, 1975.

21. Cyril Mango, Daily life in Byzantium, XVI. Intern. Byzantinisten-Kongress, Akten. Wien, 1981, p. 337-353.

22. On the same matter in general see in Cyril Mango, Byzantium, The Empire of New Rome, London, 1980, p. 81, A. Kazhdan-G. Constable, People and Power in Byzantium, Washington, 1982, p. 50, 51.

that comes from the soil —particularly of Greece and, to a lesser extent, of Asia Minor; and then attempt one way or another to comment briefly on this material and relate it to other sources, mainly the written ones. The further interpretation of this architectural framework, its correlation with contemporary life and with the prevailing social and economic conditions in Byzantium have never been systematically attempted. And quite clearly this brief paper is no place for such an attempt.

The capital city itself is immediately excluded from our consideration. The Genoese houses in Galata, the only ones Léon de Beylié [23] studied in 1903, plainly have nothing to do with our subject. Today, eighty years later, we can add hardly anything to the archaeological record of the houses of Constantinople in the middle Byzantine period [24]. This inability greatly reduces the scope for research, given that literary references to houses in Byzantium concern for the most part the empire's capital city.

Though only a small area of it has been excavated [25], middle Byzantine Corinth provides a considerable addition to our knowledge [26]. The spacious ancient agora, built over on the course of the middle Byzantine period, has been thoroughly excavated by the American School of Classical Studies. The excavations revealed an extensive network of walls belonging to the commercial and workshop centre of medieval Corinth [27] which in turn provided a wealth of information though exceedingly few composite plans of entire houses. The ruins had been preserved to a low height and almost all of them were later destroyed to allow the excavations to reach Greek levels. The house next to the Peirene Fountain [28], which had an upper floor, retained nearly all its walls, formerly parts of earlier buildings, and an intervening triple arcade, a "tribelon", that invested a large living-room with a certain grandeur (Fig. 1). Another oblong room, with an arch springing from columns that supported a wall of the upper storey, was found in the 12th-century house 3. L [29] (Fig. 2). We see the identical feature in a mid-10th-cen-

23. L'habitation byzantine, p. 180 ff.

24. About the remains of some buildings of major scale, see in W. Müller-Wiener, Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbuls, Tübingen, 1977, p. 39-47.

25. Demetrios Pallas, Book review of the volume Corinth XVI in ΕΕΒΣ 28 (1958), p. 530-537.

26. On the urban design of medieval Corinth, see also Ch. Bouras, City and Village, XVI. Intern. Byzantinisten-Kongress, Akten. Wien, 1981, p. 617-619.

27. R. Scranton, op. cit., passim.

28. Op. cit., p. 39-41, fig. 2, pl. 34.

29. Op. cit., p. 129, plan in folding plate no VI.

tury house close to the South Stoa [30]. Some other houses of mid-Byzantine Corinth that should be mentioned here, though regrettably they have been

Fig. 1. Corinth. Interior of the tenth-century house east of the Peirene Fountain.

inadequately studied and published, include houses lying at the west end of the South Stoa [31] (Fig. 3) and on site 69-70 A [32], but more particularly

30. Charles Williams Jr., Corinth 1974: Forum Southwest, Hesperia 44 (1975), p. 2-6, fig. 1.

31. Charles Williams Jr., Corinth 1977: Forum Southwest, Hesperia 47 (1978), p. 29-33 and Henry Robinson, Excavations at ancient Corinth, ΑΔ 16 (1960), Β΄, p. 83-85.

32. Charles Kaufman Williams II, Corinth 1976: Forum Southwest, Hesperia 46 (1977), p. 63-67, fig. 6.

a group of houses found in 1964 [33] to the south of the same stoa (Fig. 4). In each of the two examples there is a courtyard containing a well and baking oven and surrounded by small rooms and pantries.

Athens, too, possesses quite a few examples of Byzantine houses, though none survive on the Acropolis which was heavily inhabited in the middle ages and during the Turkish occupation. There are faint traces still on a

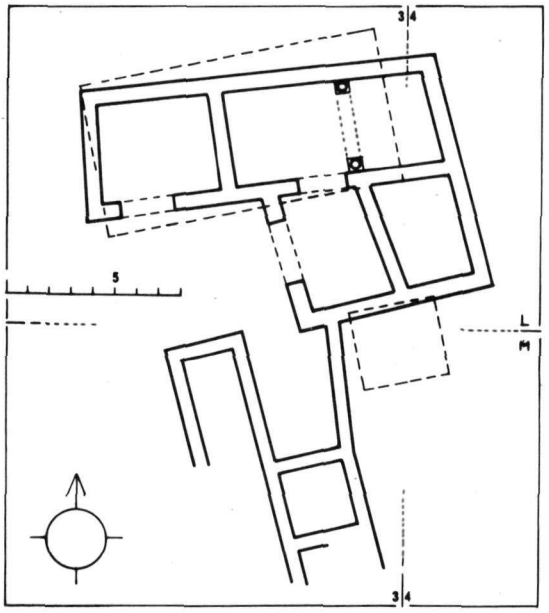

Fig. 2. Corinth. Schematic plan of a byzantine house in the Agora area (R. L. Scranton).

drawing of 1864 [34] of the chapel attached to the archbishop's palace into which the Propylaia were converted during the episcopacy of Michael Choniatis (late 12th century). The dense Byzantine settlement in the Athenian Agora, uncovered by the American School of Classical Studies [35] between the years 1932 and 1938 and now obliterated [36], is still awaiting publication [37].

33. Henry Robinson, American Excavations at Corinth, ΑΔ 19 (1964), Β', p. 100, pl. 103 b.

34. Paris, Rome, Athènes, Catalogue de l'exposition, Paris, 1982, p. 210, fig. 10 (section drawing by Louis François Boitte).

35. Leslie T. Shear, Hesperia 1935, p. 311 ff, 340, Hesperia 1938, p. 312, Hesperia 1939, p. 211. See also Alison Frantz, The Middle Ages in the Athenian Agora, Princeton, 1961 and mainly John Travlos, Πολεοδομική ἐξέλιξις τῶν Ἀθηνῶν, Athens, 1960, p. 154-158.

36. The remains were destroyed in order to allow excavation in lower Greek strata.

37. By John Travlos and Alison Frantz.

An outer part of the same settlement, uncovered in the past thirteen years [38] and also still unpublished, consists of houses built around square courtyards with ground-floor rooms and pantries. The complete foundations of a house are to be seen in the upper part of the Agora close to the Eleusinian

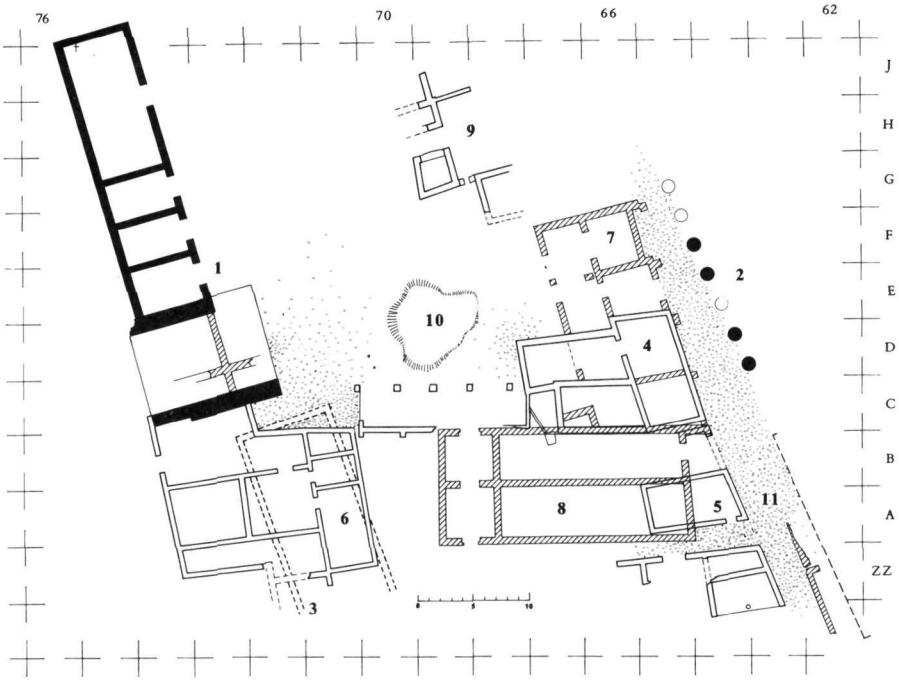

Fig. 3. Corinth. Complex of Byzantine buildings, in the Agora area, west of the South Stoa. Plan: 1. West shops. 2. Row of archaic columns. 3. Ancient building. 4. House of the 11th century (Hesp. 1975). 5 and 6. Houses of the 11th century (Hesp. 1978). 7. House of the 12th century (Hesp. 1975). 8. Building of the 12th century (Hesp. 1962). 9. House of the 11th century (Hesp. 1974). 10. Pit (Hesp. 1977). 11. Street (Ch. K. Williams).

Way [39]. Other houses, belonging to the 11th and 12th centuries, were found during excavation of an artisan settlement on the site of ancient Kerameikos [40] (Fig. 5) (their function, with storerooms on the ground floor, is not apparent); and yet other similar houses in the precincts of the sanctuary

38. The reports of these excavation campaigns have not yet been published.

39. John Travlos, op. cit., p. 154, fig. 106.

40. Karl Kübler, Mitteilungen aus dem Kerameikos IV, AM 53 (1928), p. 167, 183 and Wolfram Hoepfner, Das Pompeion, Berlin, 1976, p. 192-195, figs. 205-207.

of Olympian Zeus [41] (Fig. 6). It is unfortunate that of all the chance finds of mid-Byzantine houses in Athens none has been the subject of a special study and rarely has yielded the complete plan of a single house. Several

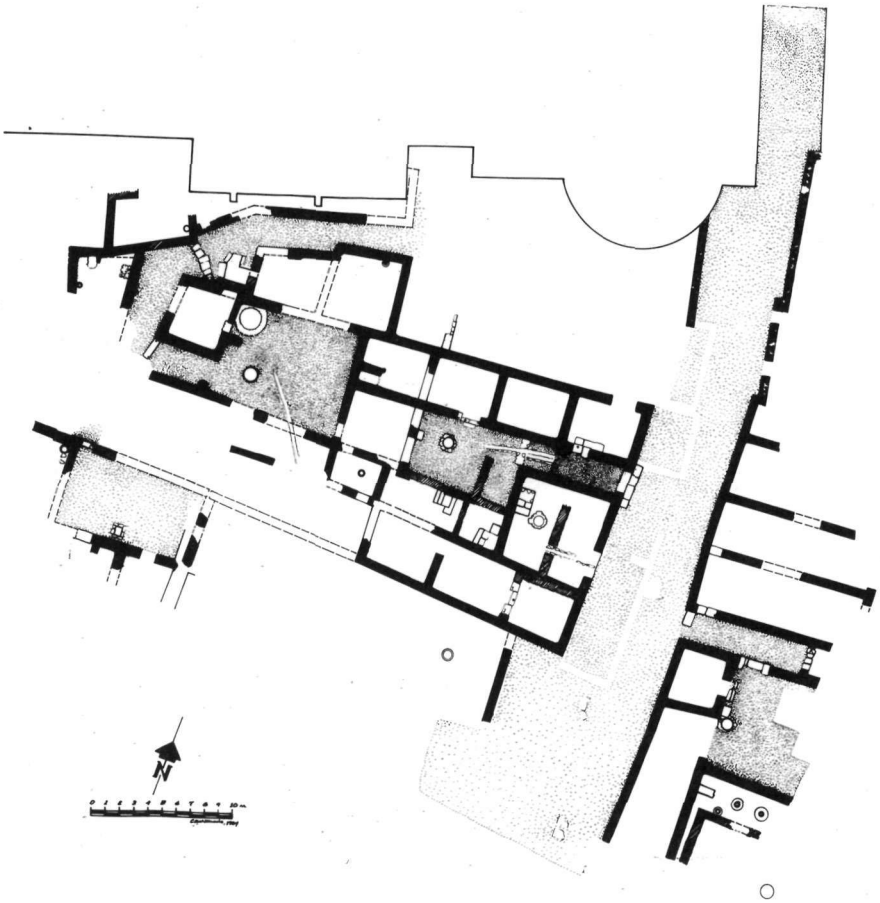

Fig. 4. Corinth. Byzantine houses in the Agora area, south of the South Stoa. Plan (H. Robinson).

examples, however [42], have confirmed the widespread practice of reusing the walls, floors, and architectural members of earlier (Greek, Roman, and

41. J. Threpsiadis - J. Travlos, 'Ανασκαφαί νοτίως τοῦ 'Ολυμπιείου (1961), ΑΔ 17 (1691-62), Β', p. 9-14, fig. 1.

42. See ΑΔ 21 (1966), Β', p. 39, 46. 22 (1967), Β', p. 43, 56, 66, 149, 150. 24 (1969), Β', p. 49, 56, 61. 26 (1971), Β', p. 23-26. 28 (1973), Β', p. 56. AAA IV (1971), p. 1-9, fig. 3.

early Christian) buildings on the same site, such as at 7-9 Kekrops Street [43] and 11 Pittakis Street [44].

The same obscure and confused picture emerges from Byzantine Thebes [45]. Here there have been only random excavations —never has any systematic research been done— whenever a 19th-century house has made way for a modern multistoried building. The remains of many houses have been

Fig. 5. Athens. Kerameikos area. Remains of Byzantine houses, excavated in 1928 (W. Hoepfner).

uncovered, but the entire plan has evolved in only a handful of cases. These include the house situated on the Leontaris plot [46], a very large structure with a spacious courtyard (Fig. 7), lying outside the city walls on the small Kastelli hill [47]; and another on Electra Street [48], known from a few of its sections only, which probably incorporated a loggia supported by columns, intended to present a more imposing façade.

The reuse of walls, floors, and construction material belonging to earlier

43. Olga Alexandris, Γ' Ἐφορεία Κλ. Ἀρχαιοτήτων Ἀθηνῶν, ΑΔ 24 (1969), Β', p. 50-52, fig. 19.

44. Olga Alexandris, Γ' Ἐφορεία Κλ. Ἀρχαιοτήτων Ἀθηνῶν, ΑΔ 22 (1967), Β', p. 108-109, fig. 54.

45. On the general design of the city see also Ch. Bouras, op. cit., p. 622-625.

46. N. Faraklas, Ἀρχαιότητες καί μνημεῖα Βοιωτίας, ΑΔ 23 (1968), Β', p. 208-210, fig. 3.

47. Op. cit., p. 214-216, fig. 8.

48. Alex. Ioannidis, Ἀρχαιότητες καί μνημεῖα Βοιωτίας - Φθιώτιδος, ΑΔ 28 (1973), Β', p. 277, fig. 2.

buildings, noted in both Athens and Thebes, was also commonplace in the Byzantine houses found in Argos. The ground floor storeroom of a house was found on the Pelios plot [49] in 1973 among Hellenistic and Roman walls. According to the evidence of coins and potsherds, it was in use in the 11th

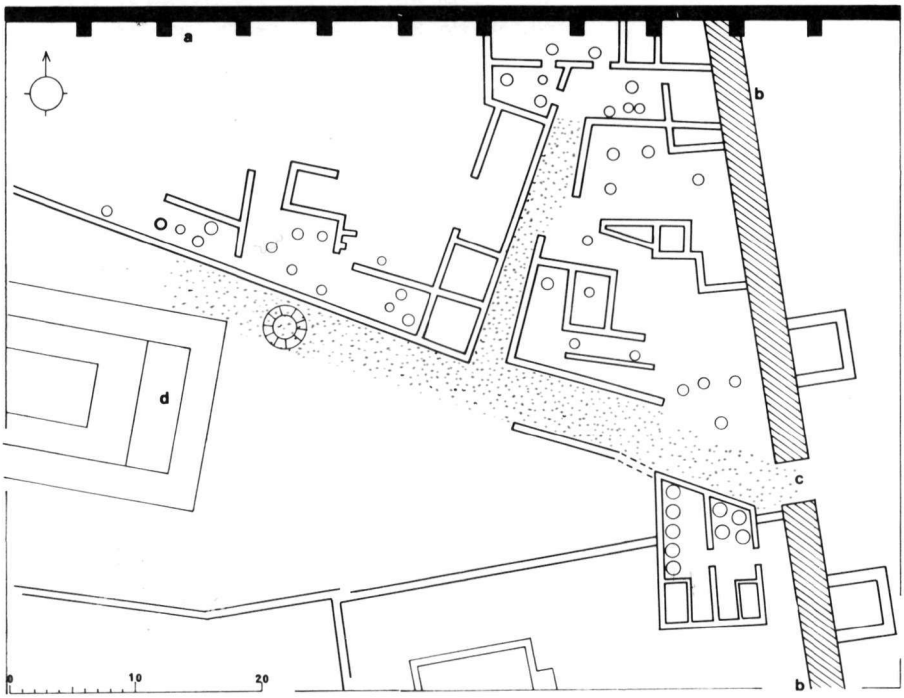

Fig. 6. Athens. Remains of middle Byzantine houses and workshops south of the Olympieion. Plan: a. South retaining wall of the Olympieion. b. Late Roman city wall. c. Gate flanked by two towers of the Justinian period. d. Foundations of the temple of Apollo Delphinios (John Travlos).

and 12th centuries. The same is true of the find on the Pontikis plot [50] where the surviving ground floor, containing large storage jars, is of very fine construction (Fig. 8). More often than not, however, the remains brought to light during excavation work are indeterminate [51] and the Byzantine walls

49. E. Deilakis, Ἀρχαιότητες καί μνημεῖα Ἀργολίδος-Κορινθίας, 1971-1972, ΑΔ 28 (1973), Β΄, p. 105-109.

50. Ch. Kritzas, op. cit., p. 123-125.

51. Like the cases described in the archaeological reports ΑΔ 24 (1969), Β΄, p. 108, ΑΔ 25 (1970), Β΄, p. 154, ΑΔ 27 (1972), p. 192-194, ΑΔ 28 (1973), Β΄, p. 105, 123, 130, ΑΔ 29 (1973-74), Β΄, p. 212, 227, 229 (Tsougrianis plot in Atreus street) etc.

are not all of equal antiquity. Much the same impression is gained from the few known mid-Byzantine levels at Chalkis, medieval Euripus [52], where some ten years ago two narrow streets were identified; these streets were flanked by the ground floors of small detached houses that had storerooms but no courtyards and were irregular in general plan. The houses belong to either of two Byzantine periods, the 9th or 10th century and the 11th or 12th century.

A 12th-century farmhouse found in 1969 at Armatova in Elis (Pelopon-

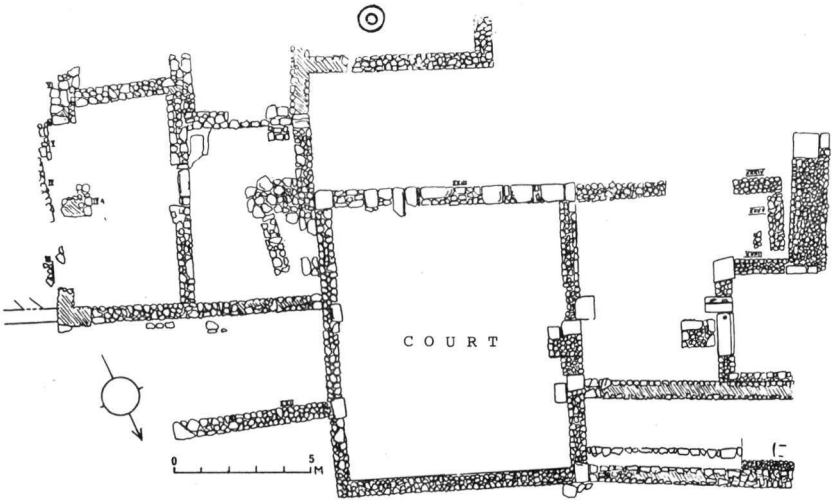

Fig. 7. Thebes. Kastelli hill. Remains of a great Byzantine house (?) excavated on the local school plot, in 1967 (N. Faraklas).

nese) [53] presents a much clearer picture (Fig. 9). It consists of three small rooms and a lean-to that must have been of wooden construction. The single-storied timber-roofed house gives us an idea of the isolated cottages of the time.

Three detached buildings, preserved in this instance not just at ground level but almost in their entirety and thought to have been the residences of owners of some substance, remain essentially unpublished. The first is on the island of Ikaria; it was identified in 1968 and is known locally as the

52. At the square of Haghia Barbara. Cf. Maria Georgopoulos-Meladinis, Μεσαιωνικά μνημεῖα Εὐβοίας, ΑΔ 29 (1973-74), Β', p. 499-507.

53. See John Coleman in ΑΔ 24 (1969), Β', p. 156-158, fig. 4, pl. 159 d.

Palati[54]. The second is on the island of Samos, in a locality called the Twelve Doors near the village of Myloi, a two-storied rectangular building erected between the 9th and 11th centuries[55]. The third was recently identified by Hild and Restle at Saimbeili in Cappadocia[56]; it is a tall, square, tower-like

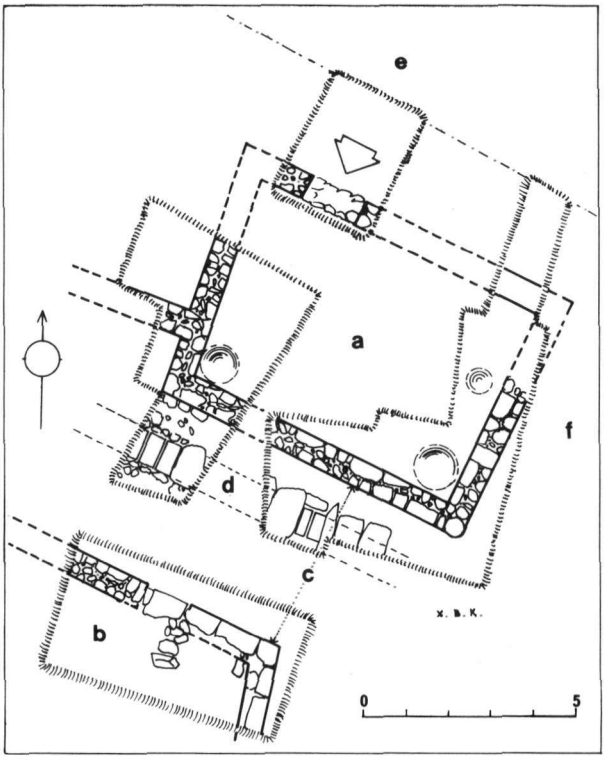

Fig. 8. Argos: a. The basement of a single-room Byzantine house on the Pontikis plot. b. Remains of another house. c. Road. d. Drain under the road. e. The modern Theatrou street. f. Modern passage (Ch. Kritzas).

building with arched windows in the upper storey, and dates to the 12th or 13th century.

While Greek cities were in decline during the years of Frankish occupation, a part of Asia Minor was enjoying a revival and prosperity under the Lascarid dynasty. A building of quite outstanding importance, but with which it would not be appropriate to concern ourselves here, is the palace

54. Linos Politis, ΠΑΕ 1939, p. 139. Paul Lazaridis, ΑΔ 23 (1968), Β', p. 398 and pl. 358 δ. Nicos Zapheiropoulos, ΑΔ 25 (1970), Β', p. 421, pl. 356, 357. The medieval building was erected over the ruins of a Roman odeum.

55. Paul Lazaridis, op. cit., p. 401.

56. Friedrich Hild-Marcell Restle, Kappadokien (Tabula Imperii Byzantini 2), Wien, 1981, p. 233.

of the Nymphaion [57], the imperial summer residence near Smyrna, which has so far not been exhaustively studied. Of great importance to the present review are the houses at Pergamon that have been systematically excavated in recent years and that date in this period. They belong to a settlement, lying above the Gymnasia to the north of the ancient temple of Demeter and discovered in 1973; it was investigated by the German Archaeological Institute. Wolfgang Radt has published, in Archäologische Anzeiger [58], a series of reports on the excavation that has revealed a picture precisely anal-

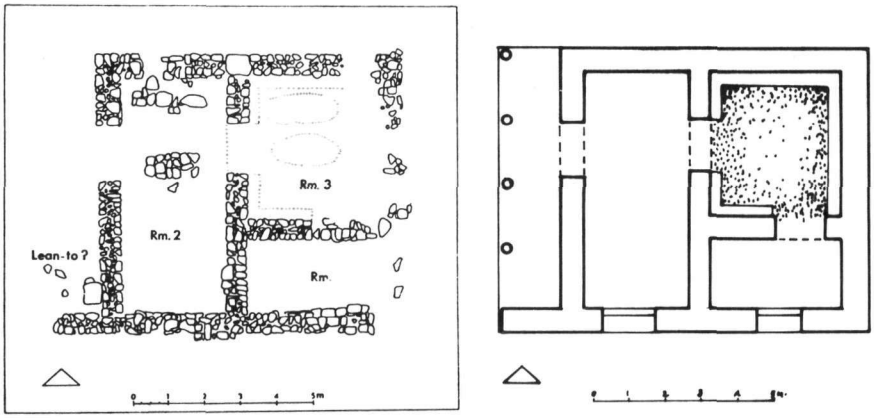

Fig. 9. Armatova, Elis. A rural Byzantine house in area D. Plan of the remains after the excavation (J.A. Coleman) and suggested restored plan of the original building.

ogous to that of Byzantine levels in Greece: construction overlying Roman ruins and sometimes incorporating sections of the latter, irregularity, and dynamic development of the settlement. In his preliminary publication [59] Dr Radt discerned three types of house in the Pergamon settlement: the first, large houses, perhaps the property of nobles, such as the "house with the mill"; the second, houses with rooms arranged around an almost square courtyard; and the third, houses with a linear arrangement of rooms run-

57. Semavi Eyice, Le palais byzantin de Nymphaion près d'Izmir, XI. Intern. Byzantinisten-Kongress, Akten. München, 1958, p. 150-153, pls. 26-29 and Hans Buchwald, Laskarid Architecture, JÖB 28 (1979), p. 263-268, pls. 1-3, p. 280 ff with previous bibliographical references.

58. AA 89 (1974), p. 273, fig. 1. 90 (1975), p. 356-357, figs. 1, 2. 91 (1976), p. 305-309, figs. 1, 2. 92 (1977), p. 297-302, figs. 1, 2. 93 (1978), p. 407, 409-412, figs. 1, 2. 94 (1979), p. 306-316, figs. 1, 2.

59. Wolfgang Radt, Die byzantinische Wohnstadt von Pergamon. Wohnungsbau im Altertum 3, Berlin, 1978, p. 199-223.

ning the length of a meagre courtyard of narrow oblong shape [60] (Fig. 10).

Houses dating to the last period of Byzantium, when the empire was ruled by the Paleologues, are perhaps more numerous but they, too, have been only partially studied. Mistra, near the modern town of Sparta, is of

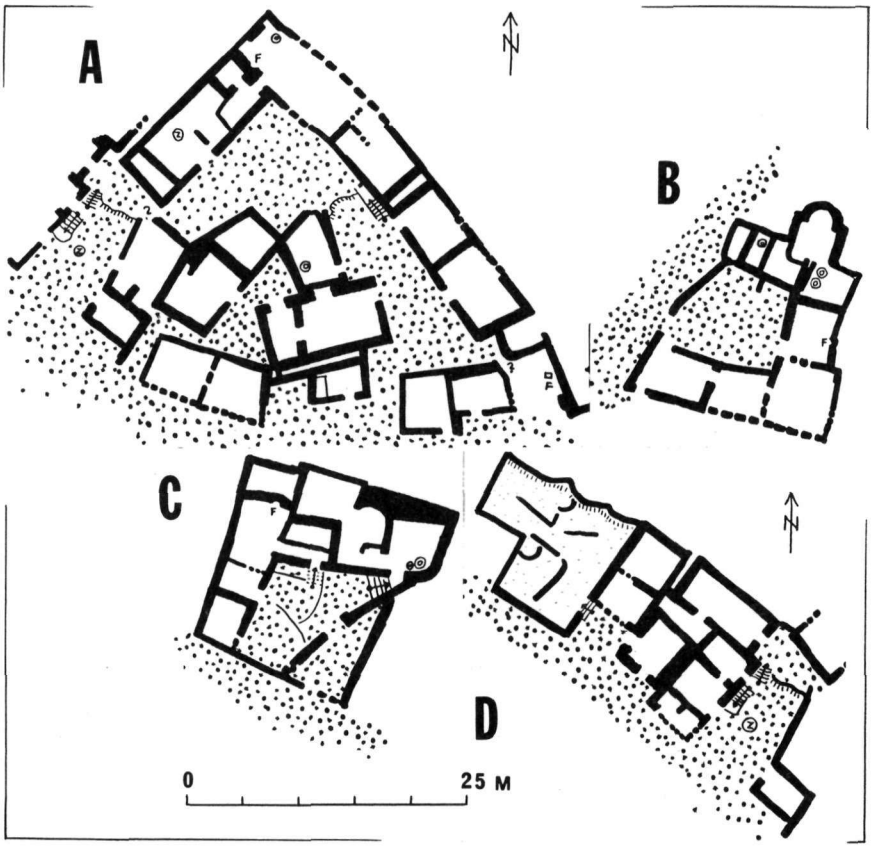

Fig. 10. Pergamon. Area over the Gymnasium, excavated in 1973. Schematic plans of four houses of distinguished types (W. Radt).

enormous significance in this context. Mistra is undoubtedly the most prominent of the provincial cities of Byzantium [61] because it was built as an

60. Op. cit., p. 216-217, figs. 4-10.

61. For Mistra in general see G. Millet, Monuments byzantins de Mistra, Paris, 1910, Manolis Chatzidakis, Mistra, La cité médiévale et la forteresse, Athènes, 1981, D. A. Zakythenos, Le despotat Grec du Morée, II, Athènes, 1953, p.

administrative and cultural centre, the capital of the despotate of the Morea, and was besides an affluent city. It was an entirely new foundation, uninhibited at the outset by pre-existing walls or earlier ruins. The steeply inclined terrain was a major influence on both the lay-out [62] and the architecture of the city. The high standard of construction of the houses at Mistra largely account for their almost unique state of preservation. In most instances the buildings survive in their entirety but for roofs and floors.

An old article [63], written by Anastasios Orlandos in 1937 and supplemented many years later, in 1972 [64], with more recent observations, is of great importance to our knowledge of the material presented by Mistra. It must not be thought, however, that the subject has been exhausted: Orlandos published general plans of only nine houses and referred to elements of twenty-three in all. At least three times as many houses still stand on the site, in either poor or mediocre condition. Moreover, the correctness of Orlandos' conclusions has already been called into question [65].

In general, Mistra houses have a ground floor and one, only rarely two, upper floors. The ground floor, which may have been vaulted, contains all the ancillary spaces, while the upper floor, invariably covered with a timber-framed roof, comprises one large room for daytime use, the "triclinium". This room was probably subdivided into smaller rooms by thin walls of reeds daubed with plaster. In complete contrast with other Byzantine houses we have seen in Greece, Mistra houses evidence design and architectural planning in both their dimensions and their architectural form.

The houses at Mistra are usually detached and have large sun-balconies enjoying superb views of the plain of Sparta. They do not have courtyards. Irrespective of their size, Orlandos identified three types:

Houses belonging to the first type, which accounts for the majority, have the longer side of their rectangular ground-plan running parallel with the contours of the hill. The so-called "small palace" [66], a building of exception-

171-173, Steven Runciman, Mistra, Byzantine capital of the Peloponnese, London, 1980, P. Kanellopoulos, Mistra, Das byzantinische Pompeji, München, 1962.

62. Ch. Bouras, op. cit., p. 631-32.

63. Τά παλάτια καί τά σπίτια τοῦ Μυστρᾶ, ΑΒΜΕ Γ' (1937), p. 3-114. The second part of the study concerns the houses of the city, p. 53-114.

64. A. C. Orlandos, Quelques notes complementaires sur les maisons Paléologuiennes de Mistra, Art et société à Byzance sous les Paléologues, Venise, 1971, p. 73-82. The same text in Greek, in «Λακωνικαί σπουδαί» Β' (1975), p. 77-84.

65. Georgos Velenis, Wohnviertel und Wohnhausbau in den byzantinischen Städten. Wohnungsbau im Altertum, 3, Berlin, 1958, p. 227-236.

66. A. C. Orlandos, ΑΒΜΕ Γ' (1937), p. 65, 86, fig. 75, 93-102, figs. 85-91 and G. Velenis, op. cit., p. 229, fig. 1, 230.

ally fine construction and general appearance (Fig. 11), with a high tower at its southern end and a "triclinium" extending to eighteen metres in length, is characteristic of this first type. Contrarily, in houses of the second type the longer side follows the gradient of the hillside, the shorter side facing the view. Examples of this type are the Frangopoulos house [67], the house

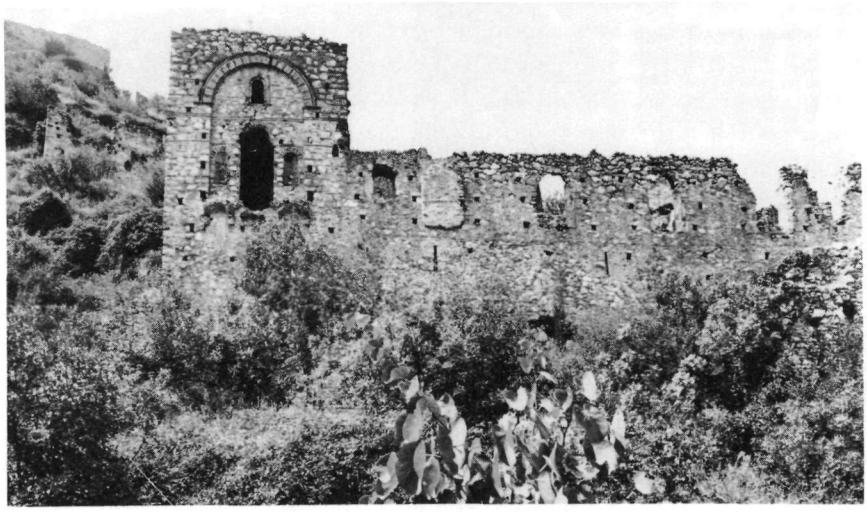

Fig. 11. Mistra. The so-called «small palace» late Byzantine house. View from the East.

known by the letter E [68] and the so-called Lascaris house [69]. The third type according to Orlandos consists of houses with a sort of arched façade; a house near Pantanassa monastery [70] provides an example of this kind.

It is obvious that a review of the houses at Mistra would reveal shortcomings in the above classifications and disclose the peculiarities of each house arising, for instance, from the probable modifications it underwent in the course of time. For example, a large complex lying behind the palaces and recently published [71] (Fig. 12, 13) clearly comprises more than two phases of construction and cannot be classified according to any one of the three types just described. The same applies to the magnificent three-storied house,

67. A. C. Orlandos, ibid., p. 74, fig. 61, p. 106-109, figs. 97-99.
68. Ibid., p. 59, fig. 49, p. 66, fig. 55.
69. Ibid., p. 109-113, figs. 100-102 and G. Velenis, op. cit., p. 234-235, figs. 2-4.
70. A. C. Orlandos, Quelques notes complementaires, p. 82, fig. 33.
71. Rodoniki Etzéoglou, Ἐπιμελητεία Μυστρᾶ, ΑΔ 29 (1973-74), Β΄, p. 414-416, figs. 1-4. The mesured drawings, by Ploutarchos Theocharidis, do not indicate the building phases of the complex.

close by the church of Haghia Sophia [72] (Fig. 14). Finally, it should be noted that doubt has been expressed about Orlandos' opinion regarding the existence of not a few examples of houses with arcade along the ground floor [73].

It has been established that houses dating to this final period of Byzantium survive in other parts of Greece as well, but unfortunately they have

Fig. 12. Mistra. Late Byzantine house north of the palace. View from the Northeast.

Fig. 13. Mistra. Late Byzantine house north of the palace. Interior.

never been recorded or studied. There are many houses now in a state of complete ruin that should be excavated and researched at Mouchli [74], a fortified city in central Arcadia, and others at Yeraki [75] and Longanikos [76] (Fig. 15), Lakonian fortresses with noteworthy Paleologue churches. The

72. A. C. Orlandos, ΑΒΜΕ Γ' (1937), p. 76, fig. 64, p. 86, fig. 76, p. 103-105, figs. 94-96.

73. A. C. Orlandos, Quelques notes complementaires, p. 79-80.

74. Eugene Darko, Ἡ ἱστορική σημασία καί τά σπουδαιότερα ἐρείπια τοῦ Μουχλίου, ΕΕΒΣ 10 (1933), p. 454-482. For information on the houses of the settlement see in p. 469 f.

75. For general information on the castle but not on the houses, see in R. Traquair, Laconia I, Mediaeval Fortresses, BSA XII (1905-1906), p. 262-270.

76. On the churches of Longanikos see A. C. Orlandos, Βυζαντινά μνημεῖα τῶν κλιτύων τοῦ Ταϋγέτου, ΕΕΒΣ 14 (1938), p. 461-485.

same may be said of Monemvasia, both in the lower town (which possesses some remarkable excavated finds) and in the fortified citadel. Close by the fortress of Karytaina a virtually unrecorded 14th- or 15th-century house [77] has been preserved in fairly good condition. But three dwelling-houses in Thessaloniki, identified as dating to the 15th century [78], no longer exist now.

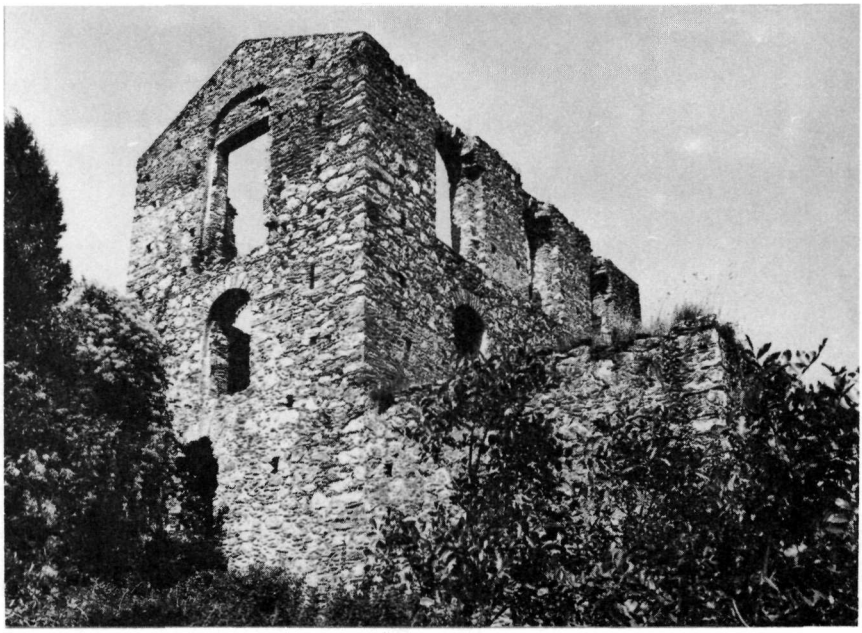

Fig. 14. Mistra. The late Byzantine «House Γ». View from the East.

Finally, an example in Melenikon [79] is now believed to belong to the early post-Byzantine period [80].

Following this condensed review of the Byzantine houses known to us today, it is clear that science has a long way to go before it can formulate conclusive ideas [81]. A large part of the material is in fact not available. Nevertheless, as regards provincial cities of the mid-Byzantine period, one can

77. Antoine Bon, La Morée Franque, Paris, 1969, Texte, p. 630, not. 3.

78. Apostolos Vakalopoulos, Τρεῖς οἶκοι βυζαντινοῦ ρυθμοῦ ἐν Θεσσαλονίκῃ, Γρηγόριος Παλαμᾶς 19 (1935), p. 310-316 and Ἱστορία τῆς Μακεδονίας 1354-1833, Thessaloniki, 1969, p. 130, 131, figs. 42-44.

79. Léon de Beylié, op. cit., p. 72-75, 199-202.

80. See N. Moutsopoulos, Τό ἀρχοντικό τοῦ Μπάμπουρα στό Μελένικο, ΕΕΠΣΑΠΘ, Θ' (1982), p. 339.

81. See C. Mango, Byzantium, The Empire of New Rome, London, 1980, p. 81.

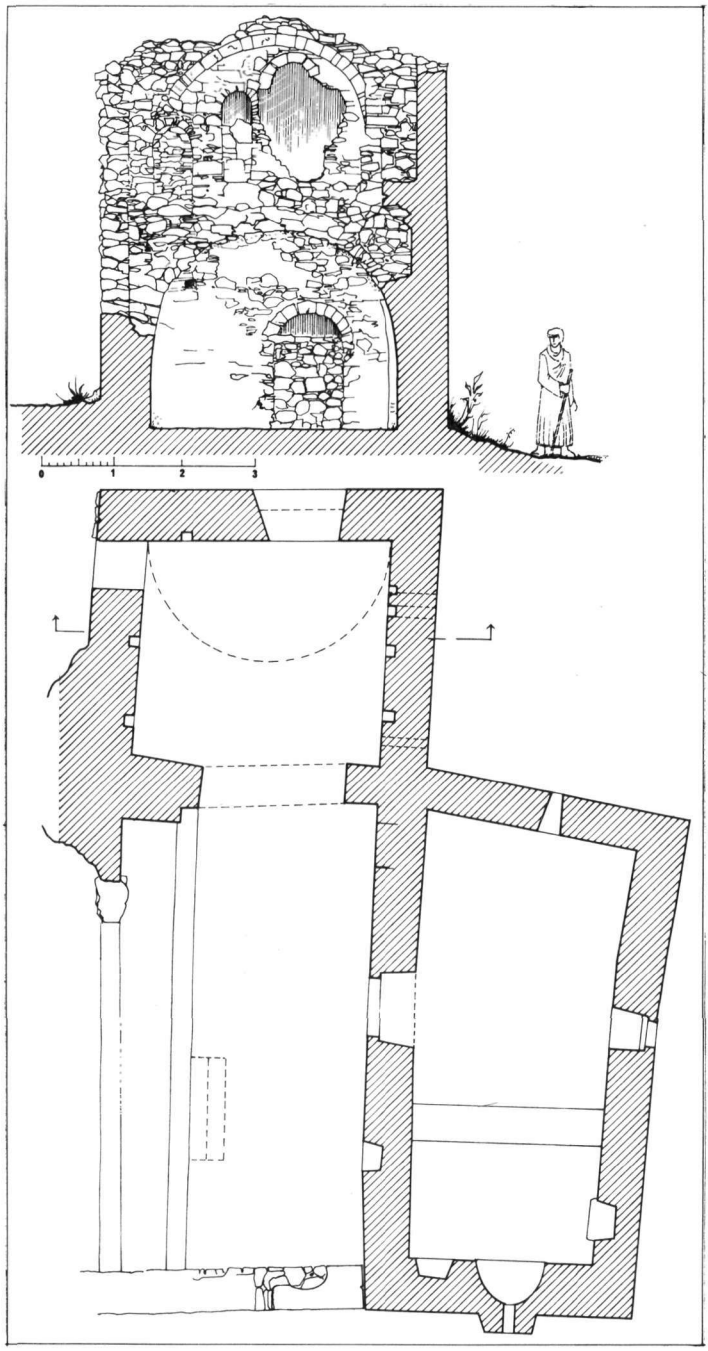

Fig. 15. Longanikos. Plan and section of a ruined Byzantine house. (Archive of the Nat. Techn. University of Athens).

perhaps express some clear convictions and compile a list of problems or subjects for investigation.

An almost identical picture emerges in each of the many ancient cities of Greece that underwent adjustments after the passing of the dark ages, particularly after the year 1000, and also in Asia Minor the city of Pergamon: a new functional organization and a new scale of magnitudes came into being atop the architectural relics of the ancient settlement. Almost in all cases the tissue changes. Building occurs without any obvious planning and, lacking any deliberate architectural scheme, materializes dynamically to meet needs as they arise. There is no monumental element, so one may speak of a vernacular building style. Walls, floors and architectural elements (spolia) taken from pre-existing ancient ruins are frequently reused, imposing natural restraints upon the development of new solutions. Though there are many exceptions, building was of a low standard and of an improvised nature; rooms were of irregular shape and usually small. The commonest type of house comprised a series of rooms arranged around a small courtyard, without a peristyle but perhaps with an open-fronted roofed space; at least part of the house was of two storeys. Small houses with direct access to the street are also not unknown. Living rooms were normally on the upper floor, many of the ground-level spaces being storerooms used for agricultural produce and equipped with earthenware and constructed storage vessels. Stairways seem to have been internal and built of timber. Perhaps these extensive storage spaces should not always be associated with agricultural produce for in houses belonging to senior state officials in Constantinople [82]; similar provision was made for products, suggesting a developed domestic economy rather than that the occupants were engaged in farming.

We know very little about houses built in the new cities of Byzantium in the middle and late periods of the empire, with the exception of course of Mistra. But here the differences are more numerous, for reasons that have been explained. It is now established that in houses of the Despotate's capital city there was not only a differentiation of types but also a clear desire to introduce certain comforts and conveniences (fireplaces [83], latrines [84], and large constructed stairways) and, more important still, a desire to employ architectural forms for the decorative and ostentatious effects they could

82. As in the house of Michael Attaleiatis, who had the titles of patricios, anthypatos and krites tou hippodromou kai tou velou, which on the ground floor included a mill run by a donkey. See Διάταξις τοῦ Μιχαήλ τοῦ Ἀτταλειάτου (Ed. P. Gautier) in REB 39 (1981), p. 27-29.

83. A. C. Orlandos, ABME Γ' (1937), p. 77.

84. Ibid., p. 79-80.

produce. However, Frankish influences, which are undoubtedly displayed in the palaces [85] and some of the churches at Mistra, must not be exaggerated, nor should they persuade us that the fabric of the city or the private dwellings it contained, stemmed directly from Italian originals.

The problem of the derivation of the Byzantine houses, that is of their possible relations with Greek, Roman or early Christian dwellings, in Greece or Asia Minor is undoubtedly an interesting one but it is far from easy of solution. Various Greek scholars [86] have let it be understood that there is continuity of at least one typological kind; J. Travlos has made an impressive comparison of the ground-plans of Athenian houses built at times seventeen centuries apart [87]. In this instance, as in others at Corinth, Thebes and Pergamon [88], it might be more correct to talk of architectural solutions that arose from similar circumstances of everyday life and production and not the survival of a type [89]. This question of continuity since antiquity, or otherwise, includes the problem of the survival into medieval times of many-storied buildings for multiple occupation. We know that in early Christian Constantinople a considerable sector of the population lived in buildings of many storeys each [90]. No specific buildings of such a type and dating to the middle ages has been found. But there is convincing written evidence of several sorts [91] that they existed, at least in the capital.

Buildings of a monumental nature and columned frontages (suited to houses of prosperous citizens) cannot have been unknown in middle Byzantine cities. It seems that a few pre-Justinian buildings with colonnades [92]

85. Ibid., p. 21, 42, 50 and Cyril Mango, Byzantine Architecture, New York, 1976, p. 290-91.

86. Mainly Phaidon Koukoules (op. cit.) and Anthony Kriesis, Tradition in evolution, The persistence of the classical house, Arch. Review 1948, p. 267-268 and idem, Greek Town Building, Athens, 1965, p. 185-186.

87. John Travlos, Πολεοδομική, p. 159, fig. 104. The foundations of a house dating to the 5th century B.C. are compared with those of another, of the 12th century. The two buildings have almost the same general arrangement, size, access and orientation. This pair of plans have appeared many times in various publications.

88. That is with an inner almost square court and rooms around.

89. See also Ch. Bouras in «Παραδοσιακή ἀρχιτεκτονική», 1, Athens, 1982, p. 29, not. 39.

90. Anthony Kriesis, Über den Wohnhaustyp des frühen Konstantinopel, BZ 53 (1960), p. 322-327.

91. As for instance the texts of Tzetzis and Ptochoprodromos (cited below). In the building regulations codified by Harmenopoulos, there is mention of «...δευτέρα καὶ τρίτη στέγη καὶ ταῖς ἐφεξῆς ἐν πόλεσιν...». (See Πρόχειρον Νόμων ἢ Ἑξάβιβλος, Ed. K. Pitsakis, Athens, 1971, p. 120, Περὶ ὑψωμάτων οἴκων).

92. Like the house (?) nowadays in the gardens of Gülhane, which does seem to be

and arcaded streets [93] had been preserved in the capital. Up to the time of the Paleologues [94] ecclesiastical architecture continued to feature arcades supported on columns. Both the Lakapinus palace [95] in the 10th century and the so-called Tekfour Seraï [96] in the 14th century had colonnades ranged along their front in the same manner as had Venetian mansions [97], supposedly of Byzantine origin. However, neither in Greece nor in Asia Minor have excavations led to the discovery of similar examples [98]. Monumental effects and grand architectural concepts are rediscovered in Mistra [99], but in an entirely different form. There the palaces and the houses of wealthy persons reflect a grandeur which we find again in comparatively late buildings, the Nymphaion and Tekfour Seraï.

The material that has come to light does not greatly assist us to assess the extent of privacy afforded by Byzantine houses. It is generally held that public life in the middle ages was of a very limited nature (especially in the provinces) [100]. Home life was of a strictly private character [101]; Cecaumenus' [102] advice regarding prudent behaviour in this respect is well known. *Pace* Orlandos [103], it is obvious, in view of their particular appearance and detach-

in use in the later period, see E. Unger, Grabungen an der Seraispitze von Konstantinopel, AA 1916, p. 1-48 and W. Müller-Wiener, op. cit., p. 40-41.

93. Called «ἔμβολου» by the Byzantins. Arcated porticoes of c. the middle of the 10th century, are represented in the Skylitzes manuscript. See A. Grabar-M. Manoussakas, op. cit., p. 77, fig. 159 (folio 131 b.).

94. The question is treated by C. Mango in Byzantine Architecture, p. 271, 295.

95. A characteristic element of the palace in the spacious vestibule measuring 14×6 m. and a portico with five columns forming part of the façade. See R. Naumann, Der antike Rundbau beim Myrelaion und der Palast Romanos I Lekapenos, IstM 16 (1966), p. 199-216, fig. 1.

96. W. Müllet-Wiener, op. cit., p. 244-247, and C. Mango, op. cit., p. 275, figs. 297-300.

97. As in the wall known Fondacco dei Turchi.

98. In front of the shops of the commercial area of Corinth (R. Scranton, op. cit., p. 59) were porticoes with wood supports. The small size and the functional character deprived these porticoes of monumentality. In the poor remains of a building at Thebes (AΔ 28 (1973), B′, p. 278, fig. 2) we could recognise a narrow loggia with columns, but it is douptful if it is really a house.

99. The third type distinguished by Orlandos (Quelques notes complementaires, p. 82) occurs in small houses with their arcades on secondary narrow streets in a way not convincing for great intentions for the appearance of the house. The brick ornament of the Mistra houses is discussed by A. Orlandos in ABME Γ′ (1937), p. 82-90.

100. C. Mango, Byzantium, The Empire of New Rome, p. 82 and A. Kazhdan-G. Constable, op. cit., p. 19-36 (Homo byzantinus in Society).

101. As in the classical times in Greece.

102. Cecaumeni Strategicon, Ed. B. Wassiliewsky-V. Jernstedt, 1896, p. 42.

103. A. C. Orlandos, ABME Γ′ (1937), p. 55 and 91.

ment, that houses at Mistra must have provided privacy. The same may have been true of houses in Greek cities where their courtyards were separated from the street front. But the annoyance caused by neighbours in multistoried apartment houses in the capital, where the labouring classes lived, was altogether intolerable. Peering through the gaps in a wall of reeds Ptochoprodromos could see his neighbour's fire ablaze [104], while Tzetzis had to bear with his neighbour's children and the piglets he kept on the top floor [105]. Privacy within the house itself remains an open question because we do not know if the individual spaces we look at today were once curtained off or screened with rugs or partitioned with thin walls to form corridors or smaller rooms.

The degree of security offered by Byzantine houses in the middle period of the empire remains uncertain [106]. The construction of squat houses outside city walls was commonplace in the 11th and 12th centuries [107], but the Frankish occupation was a time of peril and soon gave rise to altogether different conditions; even in the cities themselves there was no sense of safety. Social upheaval, civil wars and insurrections [108] led to the rich fortifying their houses so they could resist any assault. It is quite obvious how matters stood at Mistra: walls at ground level were built without a break except for narrow slits the bowmen could use, and houses often had tall towers [109] and cisterns in the basement. There are references to dwellings with fortified towers in the small town of Petrina [110], as well as in Constantinople itself [111], in the middle of the 15th century.

Unfortunately not one house has survived of which we can say with

104. Poèmes Prodromiques, Ed. Hesseling - Pernot, IV, 130.

105. Ioannis Tzetzis, Epistolae, Ed. Th. Pressel, Tübingen, 1851, p. 19.

106. In poor quarters of Constantinople the threat of fire was permanent. See for instance the information given by Michael Attaleiatis (Ἱστορία, Ed. Bonne, 1853, p. 252) for the distruction of a big area in 1077, and by Tzetzis (ibid.) about the «...τοῦ πυρὸς φόβητρα...».

107. Ch. Bouras, op. cit., p. 620, 622, 624, 625, 627.

108. The words of Cydonis are characteristic (Correspondence, Ed. G. Cammelii, Paris, 1930, Καλοφέρῳ, 1378-1380, p. 62-63) «...τῶν μὲν ἔξω τειχῶν πάντων δουλευσάντων τοῖς Τούρκοις, τῶν δὲ ἔνδον πενίᾳ καὶ στάσει καὶ μυρίοις ἄλλοις κακοῖς ἀναλισκομένων».

109. A. C. Orlandos, op. cit., p. 54, 55, 97-100, 102.

110. Ioannis Eugenicos, Κώμης ἔκφρασις (Ed. Σπυρ. Λάμπρου, in «Παλαιολόγεια καί Πελοποννησιακά» Α΄, Athens, 1912-13, p. 53-54) «...Πύργος ὑψηλός... Δῆλον δὲ ἐν τῷ πρὸ μικροῦ τῶν ἐμφυλίων δεινῶν ὄχλῳ τῆς ἐκ γειτόνων λύμης (τοὺς οἰκήτορας) ἀπαλλάξας...».

111. The family of the Great Dux Notaras was safe in the tower of his house in Constantinople, during the assault on and the fall of the city in 1453. See Michael Doukas, Ἱστορία, Ed. Bonne, 1834, p. 295.

certainty that it belonged to the local aristocracy of a provincial city. We are therefore unable to investigate whatever might have been peculiar to the city's highest ranking citizens. Literary sources [112] tell us that in the 12th century the rich lived in luxurious houses that seemed like "cities within cities" [113] and which, moreover, were furnished in great comfort and with private baths [114]; these sources cite specific examples, such as the Doukas family property outside Serres [115]. But none of all this has come down to us. The only archaeological remains that might be ascribed, with some reservations, to the houses of the aristocracy are a few sculptures, possibly closure slabs (θωράκια), with pagan motifs that are now preserved in museums [116]. Indeed it is precisely on account of their subject matter, drawn from ancient Greek mythology, that churches cannot be thought of as the provenance of these marbles. Furthermore, we know from written evidence [117], that murals in the reception rooms of the houses of the wealthy depicted identical [118] mythological subjects such as Heracles, centaurs, and sphinxes.

I hope this short and hurried survey has illuminated the multifarious nature of the subject of late Byzantine houses, as well as the interest that attaches to it. The future of research into this field of domestic architecture lies in study in depth, and in the dating and detailed exposition of each and every example, both those already known and those yet to be discovered. It lies too in a complete understanding and interpretation of the scant information about dwelling-houses and everyday life that may be gleaned from Byzantine texts.

CHARALAMBOS BOURAS

112. Cyril Mango, Byzantine Architecture, New York, 1976, p. 235. See also Cecaumeni Strategicon, p. 39 and Θεοδώρου τοῦ Προδρόμου λόγος εἰς τὸν Πορφυρογέννητον Κυρὸν Ἰσαὰκ τὸν Κομνηνόν, Ed. Kurtz in BZ 16 (1907), p. 113.

113. Ph. Koukoules, ΕΕΒΣ ΙΒ' (1936), p. 90, not. 3 and 4.

114. Ph. Koukoules, Βυζαντινῶν βίος καί πολιτισμός, 4, Athens, s.d., p. 426-427.

115. In the locality Pentigostis. See Anna Comnena, Ἀλεξιάς, 9, 5, 4, Ed. B. Leib, Paris, 1967, vol. II, p. 171.

116. As the well known marble slabs of the Athens Byzantine Museum depicting a centaur, a harpy confronting a soldier and Heracles. See G. Sotiriou, Guide du Musée Byzantin d'Athènes, Athènes, 1932, p. 51-52, figs. 28, 29, nos 177-179. Slabs with the representation of Digenis Akritas had perhaps the same function. See St. Pelekanidis, Un bas-relief byzantin de Digenis Akritas, CA 8 (1956), p. 215 f and Dem. Pallas in ΕΕΒΣ 28 (1958), p. 236, in relation to the slab A.M. 399 of Corinth (R. Scranton, op. cit., p. 106, no 21, pl. 21).

117. Ph. Koukoules, ΕΕΒΣ ΙΒ' (1936), p. 125 with similar references.

118. With those of the relief slabs of the Byzantine Museum, nos 177-179.