BYZANTINE SETTLEMENTS IN CAPPADOCIA: LIVES BETWEEN OSTENTATION AND AUSTERITY

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ABSTRACT

In Byzantine Cappadocia, extreme opposites of lifestyles co-existed. This is especially remarkable in courtyard settlements such as those in Açıksaray. Here, on the one hand, we see elaborate mansions carved around courtyards and reception halls set behind monumental façades, and on the orther hand, we observe the existence of humble hermitages. Furthermore, in Açıksaray, the site organization indicates a degree of prior planning. Accordingly, courtyard houses form the core that is outlined with irregular forms of settlements, agricultural installations, and many churches. While a large medieval cemetery is located at the center, a Roman necropolis is found on the northern outskirts of the settlement. Correspondingly, this article, focusing on examining the physical evidence of daily life between formal and ceremonial spaces, religious and spiritual spaces, and utilitarian spaces and agricultural installations in Açıksaray, will question the contemporaneity and interdependencies of its medieval occupants.

KEYWORDS

Byzantine courtyard settlements, rock-cut architecture, courtyard houses, Açıksaray, Cappadocia

Öztürk Büke, Fatma Gül. "Byzantine Settlements in Cappadocia: Lives between Ostentation and Austerity." *Valonia: A Journal of Anatolian Pasts* 1 (2024): 91-109. DOI: 10.5505/valonia.2024.66375

CAPPADOCIA

Located in the center of Turkey, Cappadocia draws attention with its unique volcanic landscape, peculiar rock formations, and numerous rock-cut settlements.* The modern-day cities of Aksaray, Nevşehir, Kayseri, and Niğde mark the region's territorial boundaries. Cappadocia has been inhabited for more than a thousand years, and the region was home to the Hittites, Romans, Byzantines, Seljuks, and Ottomans. Throughout its history, the region has oscillated between security and insecurity, due to its strategic location and changing borders. It was a land of regular encounters, some peaceful, some less peaceful.

Due to its history and the nature of the rock-cut architecture in Cappadocia, not only extreme opposites of lifestyles but also spaces of life and death—some contemporary and some successive—have been preserved side-by-side or on top of each other. Accordingly, surviving Cappadocian rock-cut architecture ranges from hidden underground spaces to elaborate and ostentatious mansions, from humble hermitages to painted parish churches, from the Roman necropolis and medieval burials, to agricultural installations.

A number of the carved spaces are so intertwined spatially and temporally that it is often difficult to determine where the boundaries of one area or occupancy of a group ends and another begins. This is especially true for the agrarian villages that developed organically and where traditional ways of life continued without any notable changes until the mid-twentieth century. For instance, in Zelve, which was evacuated in the 1950s due to rock falls, the rock-cut settlement consisted of living quarters, agricultural installations, churches, and a mosque. In valley settlements such as Zelve and in so-called "castle settlements" such as Uçhisar, the settlement unit—the home of a single-family—is not recognizable as such, and boundaries between neighbors' homes are not obvious. This also applies to so-called underground cities, where entire settlements were carved below ground level on several floors.

COURTYARD SETTLEMENTS

On the other hand, in Açıksaray, Çanlı Kilise, Selime-Yaprakhisar, and Gökçe (Mamasun), where settlements consist of several elaborate mansions carved around courtyards that were adorned by monumental façades, the physical dimensions and limits of the residential unit—the courtyard house—are more explicit and deliberate (Fig. 1). Moreover, closer examinations of the settlements in Açıksaray, Çanlı Kilise, and Selime-Yaprakhisar indicate a degree of prior planning.[1] These settlements, comprising large courtyard houses, differentiate themselves from the simple agrarian villages in the region and are commonly dated to the tenth and eleventh centuries, to

* Intensive fieldwork at Açıksaray was possible through the courtesy of official permits, fellowships, and financial support. The Republic of Turkey's Ministry of Culture and Tourism General Directorate of Cultural Heritage and Museums granted me a student work permit to survey the site in 2007, 2008, and 2009, an archaeological survey permit in 2013 and 2015, and a work permit to survey the rock-cut façades in Nevşehir, Cappadocia, in 2020 and 2021. The American Research Institute in Turkey granted me a fellowship in 2012, and Çankaya University supplied financial support in 2013 and 2021 for my fieldwork in Cappadocia. I would like to thank Aykut Fenerci for his contributions to the survey and preparations of architectural drawings. I wish to thank Nilüfer Peker for her contribution in the 2013 season and Tolga B. Uyar for his contribution in the 2015 season. I convey my appreciation to Prof. Suna Güven and Prof. Robert G. Ousterhout for their input throughout my academic studies.

1 Robert G. Ousterhout, in *Visualizing Community, Art, Material Culture, and Settlement in Byzantine Cappadocia*, Dumbarton Oaks Studies 46 (Washington D.C.: Harvard University Press, 2017), 368, points out that when compared with ancient cities built on a grid system, Cappadocian settlements at first glance appear less organized. However, as Ousterhout also admits, closer inspections show a hierarchical order and some principles in the setting of different functions in courtyard settlements. Nilüfer Peker, in "Agricultural Production and Installations in Byzantine Cappadocia: A Case Study Focusing on Mavrucandere," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 44, no. 1 (2020): 56, recognized "a clear separation between domestic, monastic and agrarian areas" in her survey in Mavrucandere in southern Cappadocia.

the brief period of security and stability between the Arab attacks and the arrival of the Seljuks. Although many were at first mistakenly thought to be monasteries, now it is widely accepted that the courtyard houses were more likely homes for the land-owning military aristocracy in Cappadocia during the Middle Byzantine period.[2]

Nevertheless, the identical physical and environmental conditions must have applied to both more simple agricultural villages and carefully planned and decorated elite settlements with courtyard houses. Thus, in courtyard settlements, there were utilitarian spaces and agricultural installations, in addition to the formal and religious spaces; i.e., places to celebrate life and commemorate death.[3] Also noteworthy is that irregular settlement forms are found in the immediate neighborhood of most of the elite settlements. While their contemporaneity can be challenging to prove with certainty, the juxtaposition of these different lifestyles can be explained by the interdependencies of patrons and their subordinates. On the other hand, the many churches, as well as the refectories and hermitages found in some of the elite settlements, suggest a community comprising laypeople, monks, and hermits, at least at some point in the history of those settlements.

In fact, in Byzantine Cappadocia, extreme opposites of lifestyle appear to have co-existed. This is especially remarkable in Açıksaray. Here, on the one hand, we see formal and ceremonial spaces behind monumental façades, and on the other hand, there are indications—at least one with certainty—of humble hermitages. Furthermore, in Açıksaray, courtyard houses are outlined with irregular forms of settlements, including agricultural installations, many churches, a probable refectory, a large cemetery, and a Roman necropolis.

Correspondingly, this article, focusing on examining the physical evidence of daily life between formal, religious, and utilitarian spaces in Açıksaray, will question the contemporaneity and interdependencies of its medieval occupants.

FIG. 1.

Açıksaray, courtyard houses Area 1 (background) and Area 2 (foreground) (photo: Aykut Fenerci).

2 The first intensive study to make this suggestion was penned by Robert G. Ousterhout in "Survey of the Byzantine Settlement at Çanlı Kilise in Cappadocia: Results of the 1995 and 1996 Seasons," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 51 (1997): 301–6. Ousterhout surveyed Çanlı Kilise in western Cappadocia between 1994 and 1997. For an early suggestion of the residential use for courtyard houses in general, see Thomas F. Mathews and Annie Christine Daskalakis-Mathews, "Islamic-Style Mansions in Byzantine Cappadocia and the Development of the Inverted TPlan," *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 56, no. 3 (1997): 294–315. For a critical approach to the unfounded yet common opinion that Cappadocia was a monastic center, see Robert G. Ousterhout, "Questioning the Architectural Evidence: Cappadocian Monasticism," in *Work and Worship at the Theotokos Evergetis 1050–1200*, eds. Margaret Mullett and Anthony Kirby (Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Enterprises, 1997), 420–31; Veronica Kalas, "Early Explorations of Cappadocia and the Monastic Myth," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 28 (2004): 101–19. For historical and administrative changes of the period that witnessed security and prosperity between the Arab attacks in the eighth and ninth centuries and the Seljuk occupation following 1071, see Friedrich Hild and Marcell Restle, *Kappadokien (Kappadokia, Charsianon, Sebasteia und Lykandos)* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1981), 70–105. For Cappadocian aristocracy and wealthy landowners during the tenth and eleventh centuries, see Michel Kaplan, "Les grands proprietaires de Cappadoce (VIXI siècles)," in *Le aree omogenee della civilta rupestre nell'ambito dell'Impero Bizantino: La Cappadocia*, ed. Cosimo Damiano Fonseca (Galatina: Congedo, 1981), 125–58; Jean Claude Cheynet, "L'aristocratie cappadocienne aux X^{e} et XI^{e} siècles," *Dossiers d'Archéologie* 283 (2003): 42–50.

3 Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community*, 20, defines Cappadocia as "a living landscape rich with evidence for both life and death in the Byzantine Empire." He points out that "Cappadocia offers a unique window onto daily life (and death) in the Byzantine period."

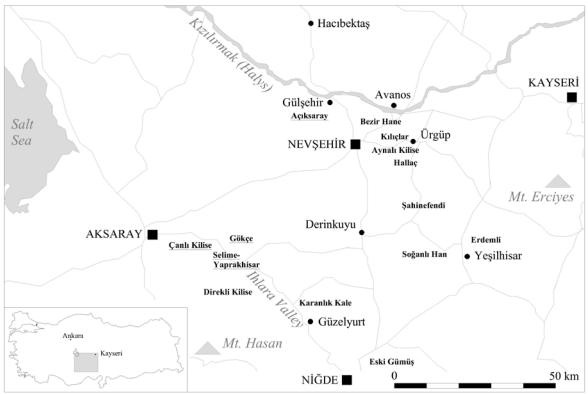

FIG.2.

Map of Cappadocia, distribution of isolated courtyard houses and courtyard settlements (drawing: author).

FIG.3.

Açıksaray, courtyard house Area 5, the main façade and the partly collapsed kitchen (photo: author).

COURTYARD HOUSES

The Cappadocian courtyard house is a distinctive typology without any predecessors or followers in rock-cut architecture and without any convincing comparison from the realm of built architecture in Byzantium and its neighbors. There are up to fifty courtyard houses recorded thus far in Cappadocia, many of which are found as part of an ensemble forming settlements in Açıksaray, Çanlı Kilise, Selime-Yaprakhisar, and Gökçe (Mamasun) (Fig. 2).[4] Spaces organized around natural or artificially carved courtyards (two-sided Lshaped, three-sided Ushaped, and, in rare cases, four-sided square-shaped) and the axial organization of ceremonial spaces behind a central rock-cut façade facilitate the identification of the courtyard house as an independent unit and determine its boundaries.

Area 5 in Açıksaray can be described as an outstanding example of the courtyard house typology. Its monumental façade, still quite impressive, is visible from a great distance (Fig. 3). This façade imitates a multilayered building, although carved spaces behind it at the center and in the lateral arms of the Ushaped courtyard are on the ground level (Fig. 4). Behind the façade, a banded barrel-vaulted rectangular vestibule is set parallel to it (Fig. 5). Another barrel-vaulted hall similar in size is set perpendicular to the vestibule. The monumental façade and both halls, forming an inverted T shape, are set axially at the center of the

4 For a comparative architectural examination of courtyard complexes in Cappadocia, see Fatma Gül Öztürk, "Negotiating Between the Independent and Groups of Courtyard Complexes in Cappadocia," in *Proceedings of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand: 30, Open*, eds. Alexandra Brown and Andrew Leach, vol. 2 (Gold Coast, Queensland: Society of Architectural Historians Australia & New Zealand, 2013), 837–49. For more on Açıksaray, see Fatma Gül Öztürk, "Açıksaray 'Open Palace': A Byzantine Rock-Cut Settlement in Cappadocia," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 107, no. 2 (2014): 785–810. For Çanlı Kilise, see Robert G. Ousterhout, *A Byzantine Settlement in Cappadocia*, Dumbarton Oaks Studies 42, rev. ed. (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2011). For Selime-Yaprakhisar, see Veronica Kalas, "Rock-Cut Architecture of the Peristrema Valley: Society and Settlement in Byzantine Cappadocia" (PhD diss., New York University, 2000); Veronica Kalas, "The 2004 Survey of the Byzantine Settlement at Selime-Yaprakhisar in the Peristrema Valley, Cappadocia," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 60 (2006): 271–93. For Gökçe (Mamasun), see Rainer Warland, "Byzantinische Siedlungsspuren in der Region zwischen Gökçe/Momoasson und Gökçetoprak in Kappadokien (SURVEY 2009)," in *28. Araştırma Sonuçları Toplantısı*, eds. A. Naci Toy, and Candaş Keskin, vol. 1 (Ankara: T. C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2011), 243–60; Rainer Warland, "Die byzantinische Höhlensiedlung von Gökçe/Momoasson in Kappadokien: Gehöfte, Grabkapellen mit Wandmalerei und ein vermögender Salbölhändler," *İstanbuler Mitteilungen* 58 (2008): 347–69.

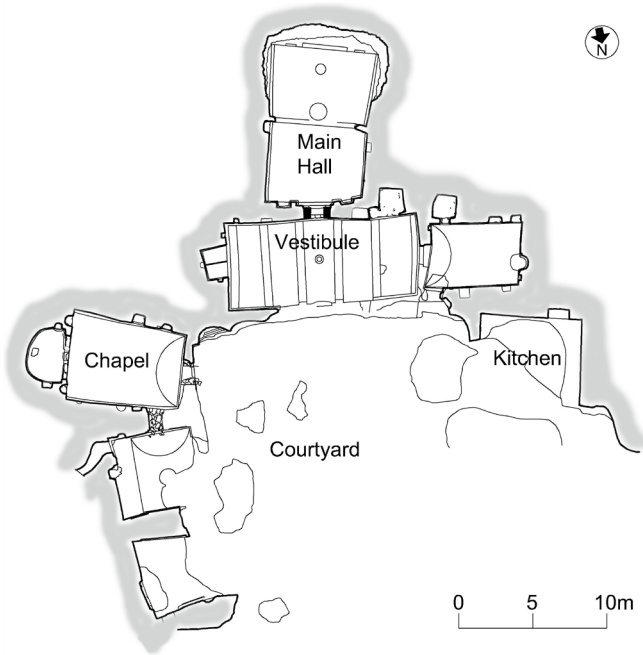

FIG.4.

Açıksaray, plan of courtyard house Area 5 (survey/drawing: author and Aykut Fenerci).

FIG.5.

Açıksaray, courtyard house Area 5, the vestibule (photo: author).

courtyard house. A small barrel-vaulted room (less than half the size of the vestibule) laterally opens off the vestibule. Other spaces are directly accessible from the courtyard. On the eastern arm of the courtyard, there are a barrel-vaulted, single-aisled church and two small barrel-vaulted rooms. On the opposite side, on the western arm of the courtyard, a severely damaged kitchen is noticeable.

Due to their distinctive plan, remarkable rock-cut façades, and fine carving and decoration, courtyard houses stand out among the haphazardly carved and organically grown rock-cut architecture in the region. This fact initially led early scholars to identify courtyard houses as monastic establishments, for which Lyn Rodley offered a classification and made a distinction among "courtyard monasteries," "refectory monasteries," and "hermitages."[5] However, since the 1990s, scholars who have been conducting extensive architectural surveys on Byzantine settlements in Cappadocia have argued for a domestic, that is, residential, rather than a monastic use of Rodley's so-called "courtyard monasteries." Accordingly, they are referred to alternatingly as courtyard complexes or courtyard houses in the more recent literature.

AÇIKSARAY: THE SETTING

Açıksaray, located north of the modern city Nevşehir a few kilometers south of the Kızılırmak (Red River, ancient Halys), was on an important Byzantine military road that led to the Cilician Gates in the south. The nearby small town, Gülşehir, was known in antiquity as Zoropassos in the Cappadocian Strategia Morimene.[6]

Nine courtyard houses identifiable as independent units have been recorded at Açıksaray, where apparently a predetermined site organization took account of processional axes and visual connections. Courtyard houses are carved in two opposing outcrops that mark the eastern and western boundaries of the valley. Accordingly, seven courtyard houses are recorded in the east and two courtyard houses in the west. A stream runs through the valley that floods in the spring and dries in the summer.

An apparent parish church and a large cemetery carved on top of it are located at the center of the settlement, while several free-standing churches mark the northern and southern limits of the settlement. At the southern end of the settlement, irregular spaces, including agricultural installations, accumulate. All these, with the core comprising courtyard houses and outlying structures, occupy an area of approximately 500 × 500 m (Fig. 6).

Despite several intricately carved examples of her courtyard typology in Açıksaray, Rodley did not list the site as a monastic establishment. She pointed out several stables that could house many horses at one time and the apparent scarcity and low status of churches in Açıksaray. According to her, these features speak against monastic identification. Instead, she proposed three alternatives—military camps, summer palaces, and caravanserais—as the possible initial purpose of the courtyard houses in Açıksaray.[7] Nevertheless, the results of extensive fieldwork conducted over several years have proved that Rodley's idea about the functions of these structures may not be correct, and the picture of Byzantine settlements is more complex. During our survey, we explored previously unnoticed structures on the site, including a courtyard house (Area 9), many

5 Lyn Rodley, *Cave Monasteries of Byzantine Cappadocia*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

6 William Mitchell Ramsay, *The Historical Geography of Asia Minor* (1890; repr., New York: Elibron Classics, 2005), 220–21; Hild and Restle, *Kappadokien*, 308–9. In 1999, Açıksaray was recognized as a Natural and Archaeological Heritage Site of the First Grade by the Regional Conservation Committee for the Cultural and Natural Heritage of Nevşehir. The modern Turkish name of the site means "open palace."

7 Rodley, *Cave Monasteries*, 121–50.

free-standing churches, a probable refectory, a hermit's cell, a large medieval cemetery, outlying agricultural installations, ensembles of interconnected irregular spaces, and a Roman necropolis.

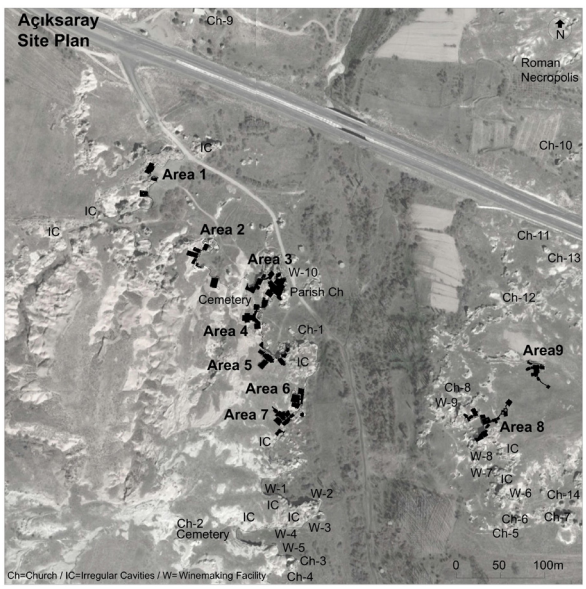

FIG.6.

Açıksaray, general site plan (survey/drawing: author and Aykut Fenerci; aerial photograph from Google Earth, accessed 19.03.2009).

Two of the largest and finest courtyard houses, Areas 4 and 5, occupy a high central location in the settlement. In fact, Area 5, described above, is one of the best preserved and most elaborate examples of the courtyard house typology. Comprising a set of intricately carved halls—the finest in the settlement—behind elaborate façades, Areas 4 and 5 suggest primarily a formal and ceremonial use. Each having its own Ushaped courtyard, together they were carved side-by-side along a natural setback, along the concave curve of the western outcrop. Courtyard houses here occupy the center, while two churches (not directly related to any courtyard house) were carved at the opposite arms of the curve to flank the entrance to this "piazza." The church in the north, the largest church in the settlement, is noteworthy. With its atypical plan, it was at one point probably the parish church of the settlement. Moreover, up to 100 graves cut in the plateau above it were recorded by us during our survey. The Roman habit of locating the necropolis outside the city was abandoned long before the Middle Byzantine period.[8] Thus, having a cemetery at the center of the settlement may not be that much of a surprise. Similarly, rock-cut graves are found in and around the churches throughout Cappadocia, yet the accumulation of a considerable number of burials in one place is peculiar to the Açıksaray settlement. On the other hand, the lack of funerary chapels and the scarcity of burials carved in the narthex or naos of churches are also peculiar to Açıksaray. Instead of private burials, as found in abundance elsewhere in Cappadocia, in Açıksaray, there is a common cemetery at the core of the settlement.[9] Apparently, this prominent site, the "piazza," comprising Areas 4 and 5, the parish church, and the common cemetery, were both a public stage to receive guests and conduct ceremonies and a place to gather for communal congregations and commemorations. It is striking that only a few hundred meters north of this area of secular and religious gatherings, the retreat of a hermit was found during our survey. The hermit's cell was carved in an isolated cone which also houses a small barrel-vaulted church (church no. 10) below the hermit's cell. Many other outlying small churches and inaccessible carved spaces observed on top of

8 Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community*, 372.

9 For burial practices in Cappadocia, see Natalia Teteriatnikov, "Burial Places in Cappadocian Churches," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 29, no. 2 (1984): 141–74; Natalia Teteriatnikov, *The Liturgical Planning of Byzantine Churches in Cappadocia*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 252 (Rome: Pontificio istituto orientale, 1996), 165–82; Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community*, 372–85; Robert G. Ousterhout, "Remembering the Dead in Byzantine Cappadocia: The Architectural Settings for Commemoration," in *Architecture of Byzantium and Kievan Rus' from the 9th to 12th Centuries*, eds. O. Ioannisian, and D. Jolshin (St. Petersburg: The State Hermitage Publishers, 2010), 89–100. See also Marinis Vasileios, "Tombs and Burials in the Monastery tou Libos in Constantinople," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 63 (2009): 147–66, esp. 152; Veronica Kalas, "Sacred Boundaries and Protective Border: Outlying Chapels of Middle Byzantine Settlements," in *Cappadocia, Sacred Landscapes in Anatolia and Neighboring Regions*, BAR International Series 2034, eds. Charles Gates, Jacques Morin, and Thomas Zimmermann (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2009), 88.

them suggest the existence of several hermitages in the vicinity of courtyard houses.

In Açıksaray, in addition to courtyard houses and religious and spiritual spaces, there are ensembles of irregular cavities, especially on the southern outskirts of the settlement. Unlike courtyard houses, the relationship between them does not indicate any predetermined organizational principles. They appear to have been opened haphazardly and have developed organically. Their number, location, form, and size appear to be determined merely by day-to-day necessities. Some of these cavities are agricultural installations, such as winemaking facilities and cellars. Others may have been houses of the dependents of the patrons of courtyard houses.

AÇIKSARAY: FORMAL AND CEREMONIAL SPACES

Obviously, in the courtyard houses, primary importance was given to formal and ceremonial spaces located centrally in the core of the house. Courtyard, monumental rock-cut façades and hall(s) behind the façade are usually all aligned along a central axis.
Five of nine courtyard houses in Açıksaray have monumental façades that have survived (Areas 1, 2, 5, 7, and 8). Six of the nine courtyard houses (Areas 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9) have a transverse vestibule preceding the main hall and carved parallel to the façade. Areas 4, 5, and 8 have vestibules that are almost identical and covered by banded barrel-vaults. Area 8, with its upstairs vestibule and arched openings therein, is exceptional in Cappadocia, where most of the courtyard houses have spaces carved only on the ground floor. The plan of the main halls in the courtyard houses varies, being cruciform (Area 4), three-aisled (Area 6), barrel-vaulted longitudinal (Areas 2 and 5), flat-ceilinged transverse (Areas 1 and 3), and flat-ceilinged longitudinal (Areas 7, 8, and 9) (Figs. 7 and 8).

As noted above, Areas 4 and 5 at the very center of the settlement have a formal and ceremonial core organized according to the inverted T plan, such that a transverse vestibule precedes the perpendicular main hall. Furthermore, in Areas 4 and 5, the hierarchical order between the spaces is the most obvious. On the other hand, the organization of Areas 1 and 2 does not follow the typical inverted T plan. Instead, in Areas 1 and 2, there is a variety of halls, varied in size and decoration and opening directly to the courtyard. Area 3 also has a substantial transverse hall directly opening off the courtyard. This is the only hall here, and it resembles the central halls in Areas 1 and 2. These are finely carved, flat-ceilinged transverse halls. The upper one-third of their interior walls features rows of keyhole-shaped blind niches. In Areas 1 and 2, the flat ceiling of the hall is further decorated with a carved cross. Areas 6, 7, 8, and 9 also have central halls organized according to the inverted T plan. It is noteworthy that Areas 7 and 8, behind their partly surviving monumental façades, have either unfinished or severely modified spaces.

AÇIKSARAY: RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL SPACES

Although only three of the nine courtyard houses in Açıksaray have attached churches (Areas 5, 8, and 9), 14 churches carved in isolated cones in the vicinity have been recorded to date. Only two of these free-standing churches (churches nos. 1 and 8) are located between the courtyard houses at the center of the settlement. More than half of the remaining churches (churches nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 14) are aligned along the southern outskirts of the settlement, carved laterally on both sides of the valley.[10] The remainder (churches nos. 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13) are aligned at the north of the settlement.

10 See Kalas, "Sacred Boundaries," esp. 88 for a discussion on the "sanctified boundary" and "defining the settlement's outer limits" in Selime-Yaprakhisar. In Selime-Yaprakhisar, churches or chapels that formed the boundaries of the settlement often had a funerary function. Likewise, Ousterhout, "Çanlı Kilise," 304, notes "a sort of sacred axis" where several churches—both rock-cut and mason-crafted—in Area 12 at Çanlı Kilise were located on different levels but more or less on the same line.

The plan of the churches varies, being barrel-vaulted, single aisled (churches nos. 1, 4, 8, 9, 10, and 14), barrel-vaulted, double aisled (churches nos. 5 and 13), domed Greek cross plan (churches nos. 2, 3, 11, and 12), and cross-in-square plan (church no. 7). In rare cases, a small narthex or porch precedes the naos. None of the attached churches in the courtyard houses have wall paintings, while three of the free-standing churches bear traces of painting.

Apart from the free-standing church no. 7, only a few burials were securely identified as such in and around the churches. This is unusual, since a majority of the churches in other courtyard settlements contain different forms of burial. Narthexes and annexed chambers of the churches were commonly used as burial spaces during the Middle Byzantine period. Obviously, in Açıksaray, the churches did not primarily have a funerary function. On the other hand, as already noted, there is a large rock-cut cemetery in the plateau above the parish church in Area 3 at the center of the settlement. While revisiting the site in the summer of 2021, several burials similarly cut into the plateau were observed in the southern outskirts of the settlement in the vicinity of the free-standing church no. 2.

FIG.8.

Açıksaray, courtyard house Area 1, the flat-ceilinged transverse hall (photo: author).

FIG.7.

Açıksaray, courtyard house Area 4, the main cruciform hall (photo: author).

A rock-cut L shaped bench with a niche carved on the wall at one end was discovered in 2013 in Area 8 above the annexed chamber—a possible burial chamber—to the attached church here.[11] This may be a small refectory that may have been used for private commemoration of the deceased rather than as a monastic refectory.[12]

11 Since this room has been filled with earth up to one-third of its height, its identification as a burial chamber is uncertain; yet, niches in the walls and the fact that it was only accessible through the narthex still suggest a funerary function.

12 Ousterhout, "Remembering the Dead," points out the emphasis on burials in the vicinity of refectories in Cappadocia, questions their monastic identity, and proposes that they could be places where refrigeria meals were sometimes taken to commemorate the deceased. See also Fatma Gül Öztürk, "The Unusual Separation of Cappadocian Refectories and Kitchens: An Enigma of Architectural History," *METU Journal of the Faculty of Architecture* 29, no. 1 (2012): 153–69.

The hermit's cell found on the northern outskirts of the settlement is identified as such because of its location above church no. 10 in an isolated cone and because of the rock-cut furnishing found therein (Fig. 9).[13] The single-naved small church here bears traces of paintings that were tentatively dated to the thirteenth century and are more likely a later addition, post-dating both the hermit's cell and the church.[14] An arched recess in the southern wall of this church is a probable *arcosolium*, which might be a privileged burial place for the "holy man" or the patron who commissioned the church in the first place. Similarly, several isolated cones, many having a church at the ground level, have window-like small openings on the upper levels, revealing inaccessible small cavities in the back. The openings of churches nos. 3 and 7 were engraved with arches in a very similar way (Fig. 10). More strikingly, the central domes of both churches have openings revealing the inaccessible cavity above in exactly the same way (Fig. 11). It is noteworthy that the hermit's cell above church no. 10 also has a hole in its floor that allows a visual and auditory connection with the church below. The southern wall of the naos in church no. 7 also contains a privileged burial place, an *arcosolium* that faces the door leading from the narthex in which there are rock-cut burials, a few of which are recognized as such with certainty in Açıksaray.

As can be deduced from all these factors, it is likely that in Açıksaray there was more than a single hermitage. The possibility of an ensemble of hermitages at Açıksaray is remarkable when compared with the scarcity of hermitages so far recorded in Cappadocia. Rodley, in her book first published in 1985, listed six sites that were associated with hermitages, while admitting this number cannot be the total number.[15] Nevertheless, in the most recent and comprehensive publication on Cappadocia by Robert G. Ousterhout, the number of listed hermitages did not increase much. There are fewer than ten sites mentioned as probable hermitages, and only a few of them are securely identified as such thanks to inscriptions.[16] As Rodley stated, "the hermit who succeeds best at removing himself from the world leaves no trace."[17] This fact and the lack of further studies complicate their secure identification.[18]

On the northern outskirts of the settlement in the vicinity of the hermitage in church no. 10, several Roman rock-cut graves—some featuring Ushaped benches (klines)—were identified in isolated cones during our survey. Proximity between the Roman necropolis and the secular as well as monastic settlements from the medieval period has also been attested elsewhere in Cappadocia.[19]

AÇIKSARAY: UTILITARIAN SPACES AND AGRICULTURAL INSTALLATIONS

In Açıksaray, in addition to formal and ceremonial, religious and spiritual spaces, there are also utilitarian spaces and agricultural installations. Some

13 Cappadocian hermitages carved on top of volcanic cones are commonly associated with the column of St. Symeon the Stylite, a Syrian ascetic who became well-known for living on top of a column. See Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community*, 402.

14 I thank Dr. Nilüfer Peker for her preliminary suggestion of dating here. According to Rodley, *Cave Monasteries*, 252–54, it is likely that the pre-existence of the "holy men" in Cappadocia gave rise to the pilgrimage and the succeeding patronage of numerous churches and supposed "monasteries" in the region.

15 Rodley, *Cave Monasteries*, 184.

16 Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community*, 402–11.

17 Rodley, *Cave Monasteries*, 184.

18 Spiro Kostof, *Caves of God, Cappadocia and Its Churches* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 47; Rodley, *Cave Monasteries*, 184.

19 Peker, "Agricultural Production," 42, mentions "a great number of rock-cut burial spaces with *kline*, dating from the late Roman period" in the agrarian village Mavrucandere in southern Cappadocia. Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community*, 372, noticed that "many of the monasteries were founded in older cemeteries dating to the Hellenistic and Roman periods."

FIG.9.

Açıksaray, hermit's cell on top of the free-standing church no. 10 (photo: author).

FIG.10.

Açıksaray, exterior openings at the top of the free-standing churches no. 4 (left) and no. 7 (right) (left photo: Aykut Fenerci, right photo: author).

FIG.11.

Açıksaray, openings in the interior in the domes of the free-standing churches no. 4 (left) and no. 7 (right) (left photo: author; right photo: Aykut Fenerci).

were designed as part of the initial courtyard houses, while others are located on the outskirts of the settlement. Since, in Cappadocia, the traditional agrarian lifestyle continued without a significant change until the 1950s, the dating of these spaces becomes challenging and requires more intense and comprehensive studies for comparisons.

Within the courtyard houses, utilitarian spaces and additional rooms without a certain identifiable function are set off-axis. Five of nine courtyard houses in Açıksaray (Areas 3, 4, 5, 8, and 9) contain a kitchen, usually carved in one of the lateral arms of the courtyard, not far from the core. The kitchens are recognizable as such due to their conical, pyramidal, or domed ceiling with a chimney opening at their summits.[20] Since they are open to the elements, many are severely damaged. Kitchens often have two forms of hearths: one carved in the floor (tandır) and the other in the wall. A pit-loom was carved in the corner of the kitchen in Area 3 in Açıksaray. Pit-looms similar in size, shape, and location are also found in the kitchens of Selime Kalesi and Eski Gümüş.[21]

Five stables with laterally carved high mangers have been identified in the courtyard houses in Areas 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7. They were carved further away from the formal and ceremonial core. The stables in Areas 1, 2, and 4 were designed with similar barrel-vaults springing from the cornices (Fig. 12). These resemble a number of formal spaces and were cer-

20 For more on kitchens, see Veronica Kalas, "The Byzantine Kitchen in the Domestic Complexes of Cappadocia," in *Archaeology of the Countryside in Medieval Anatolia*, PIHANS 113, eds. Tasha Vorderstrasse and Jacob Roodenberg (Leiden: NINO, 2009), 109–27; Öztürk, "Refectories and Kitchens."

21 For the identification of pit-looms and examples found in Selime-Yaprakhisar, see Veronica Kalas, "The 2004 Survey at Selime-Yaprakhisar in the Peristrama Valley, Cappadocia," in *23. Araştırma Sonuçları Toplantısı*, eds. Koray Olşen, Fahriye, and Adil Özme Bayram, vol. 1 (Ankara: T. C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2006), 253–66; Kalas, "Selime-Yaprakhisar," 288. See also Kalas, "The Byzantine Kitchen," 114; Fatma Gül Öztürk, "A Comparative Architectural Investigation of the Middle Byzantine Courtyard Complexes in Açıksaray-Cappadocia: Questions of Monastic and Secular Settlement" (PhD. diss., Middle East Technical University, 2010), 230.

FIG.12.

Açıksaray, courtyard house Area 2, stable with mangers carved in lateral walls (photo: author).

tainly part of the initial planning of the courtyard houses. Thus, they were apparently not only functional but also designed to impress guests. All three together could house more than fifty horses at one time.[22] The high number of stables and elaborate design of some allow Açıksaray to stand out among the courtyard settlements in Cappadocia.[23]

Partly damaged ceilings and façades reveal rough upstairs cavities in some courtyard houses. These hidden spaces are accessible only by ladder were utilized for the collection of pigeon guano, which was used as fertilizer until very recently. Some of these dovecotes may be medieval, while others, having destroyed the original façade design, must be later additions post-dating the initial design. Evangelia Balta notes that pigeon guano was used primarily as a fertilizer for viticulture.[24] In fact, there is a long tradition of wine production in Cappadocia, and hence a dozen winemaking facilities were counted in Açıksaray. Many were finely carved and have common architectural features, such as arched recesses (basins) that functioned as treading floors. The majority, likely, was contemporary with the medieval settlement in Açıksaray. Nevertheless, none have been designed as part of the initial courtyard houses.[25] Instead, winemaking facilities are found as part of the irregular cavities in Açıksaray. Many are close to the free-standing churches. Especially in the southern outskirts, where several free-standing churches and probable hermitages are aligned, there is also a concentration of winemaking facilities. This is noteworthy, for winemaking facilities have been observed to be in close connection to some hermitages elsewhere in Cappadocia.[26] Except for two large examples, the size and shape of the facilities in Açıksaray vary very little. The installation usually consists of two recesses (basins) in the wall—a treading floor

22 Alexander Kazhdan and John Nesbitt, *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), s.v. "Horses," point to the late Byzantine *praktika*: "only the richest peasants could afford horses" while "less well-to-do villagers might have 'half of a horse.'"

23 See Öztürk, "A Comparative Architectural Investigation," 231–33. As noted in Öztürk, "Negotiating Between," 846, "ten of the thirty-one courtyard complexes in Cappadocia have stables. It is remarkable that almost the half of them is in Açıksaray. It is also noteworthy that from the rest of the stables in the corpus, only two found in Area 1 and Area 15 in Çanlı Kilise are similar to the elaborate stables of Açıksaray." See Ousterhout, *A Byzantine Settlement*, 178–79. For more on Cappadocian stables, see Filiz Tütüncü, "The Land of Beautiful Horses: Stables in Middle Byzantine Settlements of Cappadocia" (MA thesis, Bilkent University, 2008). Tütüncü, conducting a comparative architectural study of stables in Cappadocia, considers the size and height of individual mangers while differentiating between stables for horses and those for other animals. Accordingly, she classifies deeply carved mangers at around 80 cm height as mangers for tall transportation animals, such as mules or agricultural horses, and those higher than 80 cm as used for special horses, such as those serving the military. Tütüncü measured the height of mangers at Açıksaray as 90–120 cm.

24 See Evangelia Balta, "The Underground Rock-Cut Winepresses of Cappadocia," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 32, no. 1 (2008): 61–88. For further reading on dovecotes found in courtyard complexes and for a discussion on their dating, see Ousterhout, *A Byzantine Settlement*, 179–181; Kalas, "Society and Settlement," 98–100, 127; Öztürk, "A Comparative Architectural Investigation," 235–36.

25 Within the courtyard houses, the stand-alone complex in Erdemli is particularly remarkable for the evidence it provides of the intensity of wine production. Nilay Karakaya, "Erdemli'de Ekmek ve Şarap," *Anadolu ve Çevresinde Ortaçağ* 2 (2008): 33–53, claiming their contemporaneity with the medieval settlement, counts 44 winemaking facilities around the main complex. For Erdemli, see also Nathalie Aldehuelo, "Le monastère byzantine d'Erdemli," *Dossiers d'Archéologie* 283 (2003): 72–79. For more examples of medieval Cappadocian rock-cut winemaking facilities and for a discussion on their dating, see Peker, "Agricultural Production" and Nilüfer Peker and B. Tolga Uyar, "Güzelöz-Başköy ve Çevresi Bizans Dönemi Yerleşimleri 2011," in 30. *Araştırma Sonuçları Toplantısı*, ed. Adil Özme, vol. 2 (Ankara: T. C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2013), 147–56.

26 See Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community*, 407.

FIG.13.

Açıksaray, winemaking facility no. 2 (photo: author).

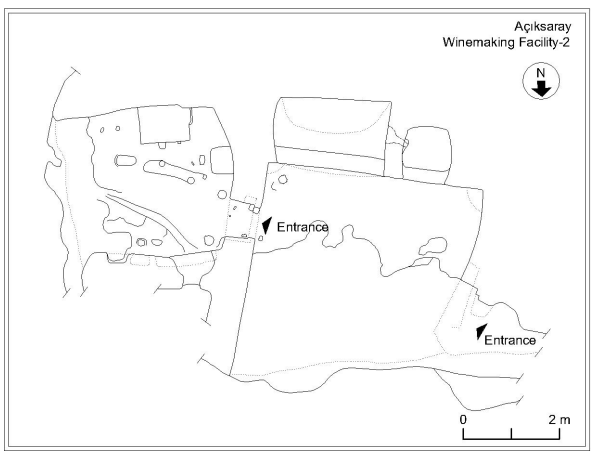

FIG.14.

Açıksaray, plan of winemaking facility no. 2 (survey/drawing: author and Aykut Fenerci).

on which the grapes are trodden, a collecting vat in which the juice is collected, and the channel connecting them. The rectangular treading floor is usually larger than the collecting vat, with the former being located higher than the latter. The collecting vat is either circular or rectangular in shape. Traces of plaster are observed in some collecting vats. Facility no. 2 in Açıksaray is a relatively well-preserved example (Figs. 13 and 14). Here, both the larger and higher recess for the treading floor and the smaller and lower recess for the collecting vat are arched and rectangular. The front wall of the room is entirely collapsed. On the side wall, there is a doorway topped with an engraved arch that leads to a side room. Circular and rectangular carvings in the floor indicate usage as a cellar where amphorae may have been stored.[27] In a larger facility (no. 1), two large rectangular and arched basins for treading floors survive. Due to the degree of deterioration, the collecting vat cannot be identified with certainty. One of the treading floors has a small niche carved in the center of the lower part of its wall. Nilüfer Peker likewise mentions similar holes in similar locations in the larger and complex winemaking facilities in Mavrucandere in southern Cappadocia. She suggests that these niches could be a part of a pressing mechanism.[28]

On the southern outskirts of the courtyard settlement in Açıksaray, there are multi-storied, interconnected cavities. This area seems to have been used over a long period, and accordingly, it is highly modified. There is a network of tunnels and shafts that connects spaces in different levels, some of which were once blocked by rolling stones. It is plausible that at some point this area may have been occupied by the dependents of the patrons of Açıksaray.[29] Nevertheless, the accumulation of cellars and winemaking facilities here indicate a primarily utilitarian function. Especially remarkable is a central hall of moderate size with a dozen smaller rooms and recesses opening off it. Even the floor of this hall is

27 Peker, "Agricultural Production," 51, defines similar pits found in the floor of the winemaking facilities in Mavrucandere, in southern Cappadocia as pits for amphorae. See also Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community*, 363–64.

28 Peker, "Agricultural Production," 48.

29 Ousterhout, *A Byzantine Settlement*, 94, likewise interprets some of the irregular spaces carved next to Area 1 in Çanlı Kilise as the probable accommodations of the dependents.

FIG.15.

Açıksaray, cellar in the irregular settlement on the southern outskirts of the courtyard settlement (photo: Aykut Fenerci).

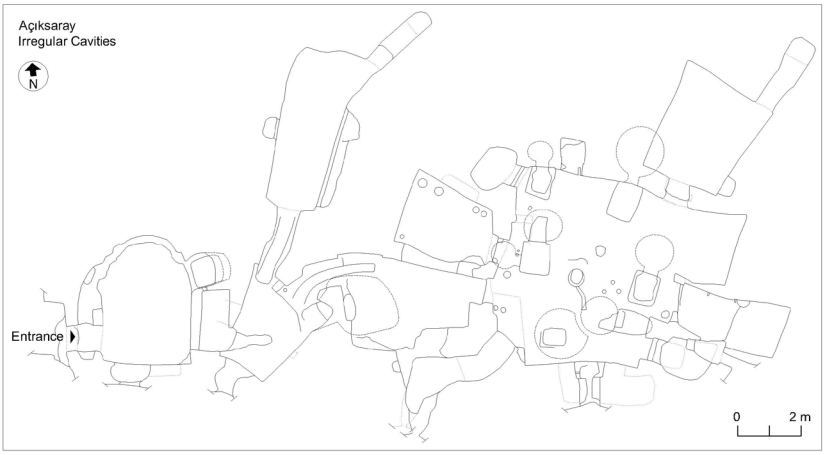

FIG.16.

Açıksaray, plan of the cellar in the irregular settlement on the southern outskirts of the courtyard settlement (survey/drawing: author and Aykut Fenerci).

replete with carvings (Figs. 15 and 16). Small circular pits similar to those found in the winemaking facility (no. 2) were probably for amphorae. What is more striking are the several small, circular spaces carved directly under the floor. Their diameters vary between approximately 80 and 150 cm. These cavities, being no higher than a meter, are accessed through rectangular openings that were reached from the rectangular hollows cut in front of them. To our knowledge, the installations here are unique not only in Açıksaray but also in Cappadocia, and for now any suggestion for their initial use would be speculative.

CONCLUSIONS: QUESTIONING CONTEMPORANEITY AND INTERDEPENDENCIES

Cappadocian families belonging to the landowning aristocracy are now widely accepted as the initial patrons of courtyard houses. Although some courtyard settlements appear to have been inhabited until the thirteenth century, the main period of occupation by those who initially commissioned the courtyard houses was more likely from the tenth–eleventh centuries.[30] In Açıksaray, the emphasis on formal and ceremonial cores adorned by monumental façades and the existence of large stables suggests prospering and elite patrons with some military connections. This is further supported by its strategically important location on the Byzantine military road.

The utilitarian spaces, such as the kitchens and stables attached to the courtyard houses show a coherent design with the formal and ceremonial spaces. Thus, these were certainly part of the initial courtyard houses. In Açıksaray, as can be deduced from the intensive horse breeding activity, the patrons may have supplied military cavalry with horses.[31]

Proving contemporaneity of courtyard houses and agricultural installations such as winemaking facilities, dovecotes, and cellars is more complicated, since the agricultural traditions have continued without significant change for centuries. Nevertheless, as can be deduced from the finely carved arched recesses (basins) of the treading floors and collecting vats, many winemaking facilities were likely Byzantine.

A substantial number of people must have served the patrons, their families, and guests to assure the continuity of daily life. Daily and seasonal work in houses and fields must have been accommodated by these people. Based on sound physical evidence, we can with certainty say that breeding horses and wine production must have been among their major duties. Some of the subordinates or dependents may have lived next to the patrons, likely in the outlying irregular settlement on the southern outskirts of Açıksaray. Others may have come from the cliff settlement at Karşı Kilise, another medieval site less than three kilometers north of Açıksaray.[32]

The scarcity of private or privileged burials is noteworthy in Açıksaray. Most of the inhabitants were buried in the common cemetery at the center of the settlement above the parish church in Area 3. We may speculate that the settlement in Açıksaray may have been ruled by a single magnate, to whom the only securely identified privileged burial—in the

30 For suggestions of the thirteenth-century occupation of the sites, see Ousterhout, *A Byzantine Settlement*; Warland, "Die Byzantinische Höhlensiedlung."

31 See nn. 22 and 23 above.

32 For a detailed discussion on the relation of the two sites, Açıksaray and Karşı Kilise, see Fatma Gül Öztürk Büke, "Questioning Boundaries in Byzantine Cappadocia: Secular Spaces, Sacred Spaces, and Interfaces In Between," in *Architecture and Visual Culture in the Late Antique and Medieval Mediterranean*, Architectura Medii Aevi 14, eds. Vasileios Marinis, Amy Papalexandrou, and Jordan Pickett (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020), 223–37.

form of an *arcosolium* in the free-standing church (no. 7)—belonged. Areas 4 and 5, in a prominent central location, stand out among the courtyard houses in Açıksaray. Next to the parish church and with a "piazza" in front of them, Areas 4 and 5 may have been the main headquarters of the magnate and the ruling family. Likewise, in other courtyard settlements such as Çanlı Kilise and Selime-Yaprakhisar, one or two households appear two have dominated the settlement.[33]

Monasteries have not been found in Açıksaray. A probable small refectory, found above the attached church in Area 8, may have been used for private commemorations. On the other hand, hermitages—one identified with certainty and two others with high probability—were found on the northern and southern outskirts of the settlement. In Cappadocia, there are very few hermitages recorded so far, and none have been securely dated. Rodley suggests a date from the late ninth–tenth century in general for the settling of the hermitages, which may have continued to be occupied throughout the eleventh century.[34] In Açıksaray, the paintings found in church no. 10, on top of which a hermit's cell was carved, are tentatively dated to the thirteenth century. However, it is plausible that the church and the hermitage may predate the paintings. Church no. 7, the cavity above which may have been the retreat of a hermit, has wall paintings dated differently by scholars, ranging between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries.[35]

It appears that in Byzantine Cappadocia, extreme opposites of lifestyles, lives between ostentation and austerity, co-existed side-by-side. Although the contemporaneity of courtyard houses with hermitages and agricultural facilities at the site will probably never be proved with certainty, it makes sense that at least at some point during the habitation of Açıksaray, laypeople and hermits formed a community of interdependence such that patrons of courtyard houses—mostly with the help of their dependents—accommodated the hermits' physical needs, with the hermits assuring spiritual protection of the site and its inhabitants, who were the patrons, their families, and any dependents.

33 For Çanlı Kilise, see Ousterhout, *A Byzantine Settlement.* For Selime-Yaprakhisar, see Kalas, "Society and Settlement;" Kalas, "The 2004 Survey at Selime-Yaprakhisar."

34 See Rodley, *Cave Monasteries*, 223–24, 252–54.

35 G. P. Schiemenz, "Die Kreuzkirche von Açıksaray," *Istanbuler Mitteilungen* 23/24 (1973–74): 233–62; Hild and Restle, *Kappadokien*, 135; Rodley, *Cave Monasteries*, 150; Catherine Jolivet-Lévy, *Les Eglises Byzantines de Cappadoce: Le Programme Iconographique de l'Abside et de ses Abords* (Paris: Editions du CNRS, 1991), 227.

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ÖZET

Bizans Kapadokyası'nda birbirine tamamen zıt yaşam biçimleri bir arada var olmuştur. Bunun en dikkat çekici örneklerini Açıksaray'daki avlulu yerleşimlerde görmek mümkündür. Burada bir yanda avluların etrafına oyulmuş zengin ayrıntılarla bezeli konutlar ve anıtsal cephelerin ardındaki kabul salonları, diğer yanda ise mütevazı keşiş hücreleri bulunmaktadır. Buna ek olarak, Açıksaray'daki yerleşim düzeninin kısmen önceden planlandığına işaret eden veriler mevcuttur. Buna göre, yerleşimin merkezini avlulu konutlar oluştururken, yerleşimin çeperinde düzensiz mekân grupları, tarımla bağlantılı yapı öğeleri ve çok sayıda kilise yer almaktadır. Merkezde geniş bir Ortaçağ mezarlığı yer alırken, yerleşimin kuzey sınırında bir Roma nekropolisi bulunur. Açıksaray'daki resmi kabul mekânları ile dini ve ruhani mekânlar, işlevsel mekânlar ile tarımla bağlantılı mekânlar arasındaki günlük yaşamın fiziksel verilerini incelemeye odaklanan bu makale, Ortaçağ sakinlerinin buradaki birlikteliğini ve karşılıklı bağımlılıkları sorgulamaktadır.

ANAHTAR KELİMELER

Bizans avlulu yerleşimleri, kaya mimarisi, avlulu konutlar, Açıksaray, Kapadokya