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Burying at Corinth in Late Antiquity

Evidence from the Late 5th to the Early 7th Century

Introduction

Corinth provides unusually rich documentation for burial practices during Late Antiquity as revealed by more than 700 graves, one of the largest bodies of evidence in Greece, excavated over the course of a century.¹ This paper assesses the mortuary record from the late 5th to early 7th c. AD, a period in which the construction of massive basilicas testifies to Christianity's emergence as the dominant religion at Corinth, additional major building activity occurred in the erection of a Late Antique city wall, and both earthquakes and the plague presented significant challenges.² After an overview of the state of the field for the study of Late Antique burials in Greece, each excavated burial zone at Corinth from the late 5th to early 7th c. AD is summarized, followed by an analysis of the topographic development of Corinth's burial grounds. Lastly, categories of evidence are addressed in regard to tomb types, objects accompanying the dead, and epitaphs, incorporating material from additional sites within the province of *Achaëa* (primarily the southern Greek mainland), of which Corinth was capital, for comparison.

- 1 I thank the organizers for hosting a much needed conference, and extend a special thanks to the staff of Corinth Excavations and the Publications Office of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens for the use of images and assistance in procuring them.
- 2 Most of the Corinthian material presented in this paper was studied within the author's 2016 doctoral thesis, "Mortuary Practices in Late Antique Corinth", which examines burial practices at Corinth from approximately the late 5th to 9th c. AD. Although coinciding with what is often considered the conclusion of the Early Byzantine period in Greece around the beginning of the 7th c. AD, the end bracket of this paper's chronological scope is somewhat arbitrary: A continuous evolution of burial practices of the late 6th and early 7th c. AD. is apparent at Corinth into the 8th c. AD, and on the basis of more limited evidence, even into the 9th c. AD. See SLANE 2017 for Corinthian burial practices of the 1st to 5th c. AD. (in addition to limited 6th c. AD activity) as documented within Early Roman chamber tombs. Overviews of Corinth's Late Antique burials have appeared in SANDERS 2005, 430–437 (incorporating important new chronologies) and IIVISON 1996.

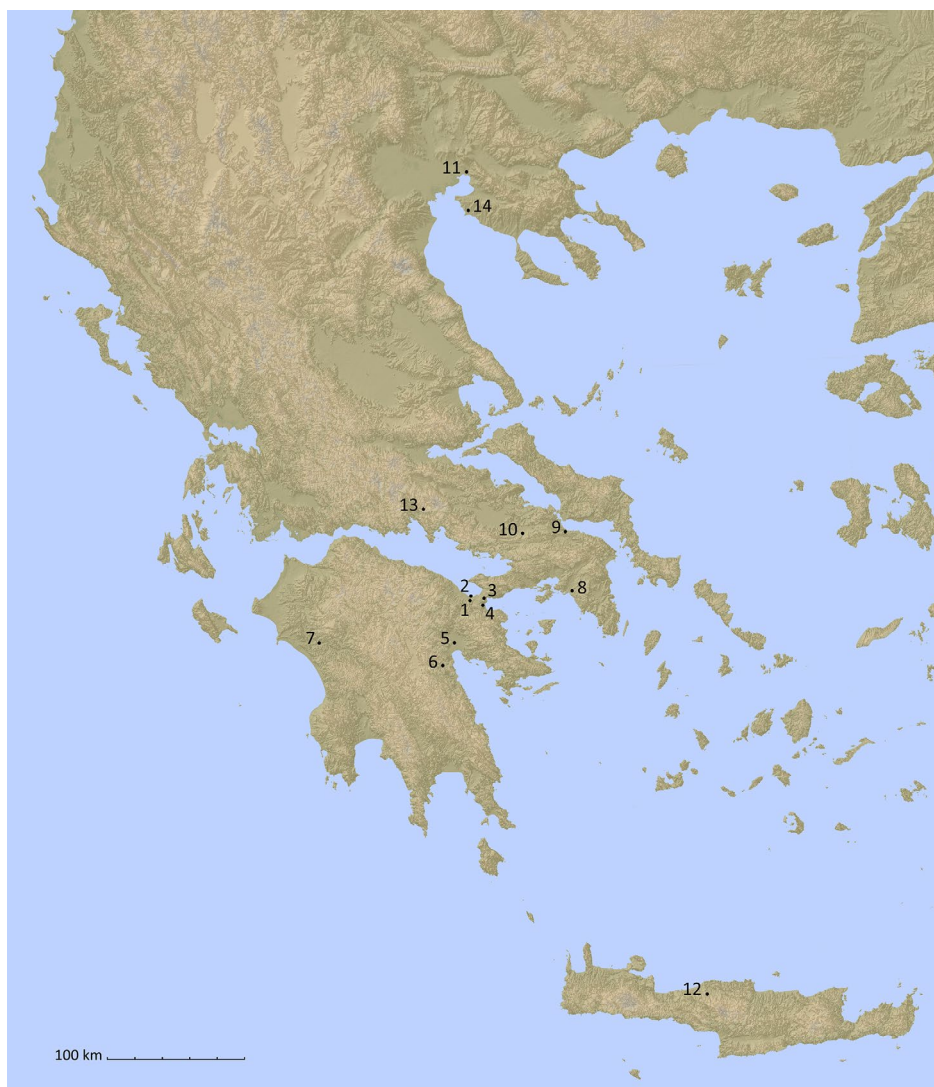


Fig. 1: Map indicating Greek sites mentioned in text. 1. Corinth; 2. *Lechaion*; 3. *Isthmia*; 4. *Kenchreai*; 5. *Argos*; 6. Andritsa Cave; 7. *Olympia*; 8. Athens; 9. *Delion*; 10. Thebes; 11. *Thessaloniki*; 12. *Eleutherna*; 13. *Delphi*; 14. Limori.

State of the Field: Late Antique Burials from Greece

The study of Late Antique burials within the territory of modern Greece has made significant advancements during the past 25 years. Once published inconsistently within archaeological reports and rarely subject to further investigation, or with a focus on solely the most extraordinary tombs, burials of this era are now increasingly treated as contexts worthy of analysis in their own right, and are examined through the same interdisciplinary approaches applied to other periods of research in mortuary archaeology.³

Since the late 1990s, advanced studies on Late Antique cemeteries in long articles and monographs dedicated to them, or analyzing them within the context of site histories, have shed new light on sites including Corinth, *Isthmia*, *Argos*, Athens, *Olympia*, *Thessaloniki*, Limori (Macedonia), and *Eleutherna* (Crete) (Fig. 1).⁴ Although the largest ancient cities on the Greek mainland have historically dominated the scholarly discussion, the picture is therefore becoming somewhat more diverse in regard to site type and location, importantly adding to our knowledge the practices of smaller and more geographically dispersed communities like those at *Isthmia*, *Olympia*, Limori, and *Eleutherna*.

Research in specialized categories of evidence, along with new approaches, is providing further insight into the mortuary sphere. The study of classes of objects from daily life has become an avenue for the investigation and publication of mortuary artifacts; work in Late Antique ceramics is especially prominent in this regard, while less progress has been made in jewelry and clothing accessories.⁵ In addition to traditional approaches for analyzing human skeletal remains, DNA and stable isotope analyses have emerged as promising sources of information, although their application to Late Antique burials so far has been limited.⁶ Across the

3 For the most recent overview of burial practices in Late Antique Greece, see POULOU-PADIMITRIOU/TZAVELLA/OTT 2012. Laskaris provides a useful analysis of evidence published into the 1980s for burials belonging to Late Antiquity and later periods in his 1991 dissertation, which was published in a revised version (LASKARIS 2000).

4 Corinth: BOOKIDIS/STROUD 1997, SLANE 2017; *Isthmia*: RIFE 2012; *Olympia*: VIDA/VÖLLING 2000, VÖLLING/RETTNER 2018; *Eleutherna*: THEMELES 2000; THEMELES 2004; *Argos*: OIKONOMOU-LANIADO 2003, METAXAS 2015; *Thessaloniki*: MARKE 2006; PAZARAS 2009; Athens: TZAVELLA 2008.

5 On ceramics, see especially the many papers in PAPANIKOLA-MPAKIRTZE/KOUSOULAKOU 2010. For jewelry and clothing accessories, the publication of *Argos'* mortuary artifacts (METAXAS 2015) is particularly notable; see also the great breadth of items from mortuary and non-mortuary contexts in PAPANIKOLA-MPAKIRTZE 2002. For glass and jewelry as grave goods in other Late Antique contexts, see the contributions ARDELEANU, BIANCHI, PRIEN and MERTEN in this volume.

6 For the state of research on human osteoarchaeology in Greece across chronological periods, see NIKITA/TRIANTAPHYLLOU 2017. BOURBOU 2010 offers an excellent synthesis of data for the latter years of Late Antiquity and beyond. See also FOX/TRITSAROLI 2019 for an overview of skeletal remains of the 4th to 7th c. AD within the Eastern Mediterranean.

many types of evidence and approaches within the scope of research on Greece's Late Antique burials, coordination amongst researchers, and publication with an aim to integrate results, is increasingly necessary.

Corinth's Late Antique Cemeteries: Distribution and Main Characteristics

The urban center of Corinth, situated on relatively flat, terraced land to the north of the acropolis of Acrocorinth, possessed all of the edifices and amenities one would expect of a major city during the Roman and Late Antique phases of its development (Fig. 2).⁷ The *pomerium* which was laid out upon the foundation of Corinth as a Roman colony would have defined the city's boundaries, probably well within the circuit of the destroyed Classical city wall at east, south, and west, while at north extending to the edge of the lower terrace and approximately coinciding with the northern line of the Classical wall's ruins.⁸ Roman burial grounds, known especially from the northern cemetery, the general vicinity of the amphitheater, and on the roads leading out from the city presumably all lay outside the *pomerium*, which on the basis of tomb locations seems to have been respected until at least the late 4th c. AD and perhaps as late as the early 6th c. AD. Changes in urban space, including the abandonment or repurposing of various parts of the city center, occurred gradually from the late 4th c. AD onward, although there is also clear evidence for the maintenance and renovation of some buildings. Christian basilicas first appeared in the 6th c. AD, when at least four of these structures, two of them holding a cemetery function (the Kodratos and Kraneion Basilicas), were built. Also most likely in the 6th c. AD, a new, reduced Late Antique fortification circuit, protecting only part of the land within the *pomerium* and completely excluding the Forum, was erected; as the space of the living contracted, the burial places for the dead appear to have largely shifted inward to zones at the inner edge of Corinth's vast northern cemetery, and in an inconsistent manner to areas at the periphery of the smaller community. Each cemetery zone of the late 5th to early 7th c. AD is considered below beginning with one of the earliest at the ruined Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore, followed by graves in and

At Corinth, KENNEDY 2016 has recently applied stable isotope analysis to the skeletal remains of 6th to 8th c. AD burials to study migration. DNA analysis of Late Antique individuals in Greece is at a very early stage, as demonstrated by the incomplete results obtained from a pilot study on late 6th to early 7th c. AD burials near *Delphi*: KONIAVITOU et al. 2008.

7 BROWN 2018 provides an extensive consideration of historical and archaeological evidence for Late Antique Corinth. See also ATHANASOULIS 2013 for a useful summary of the archaeological evidence, including recent discoveries, and for issues of Christianization and the interpretation of the archaeological record, SANDERS 2004 and SANDERS 2005.

8 On the relationship between the *pomerium* and Corinth's cemeteries see WALBANK 1997, 107–109.

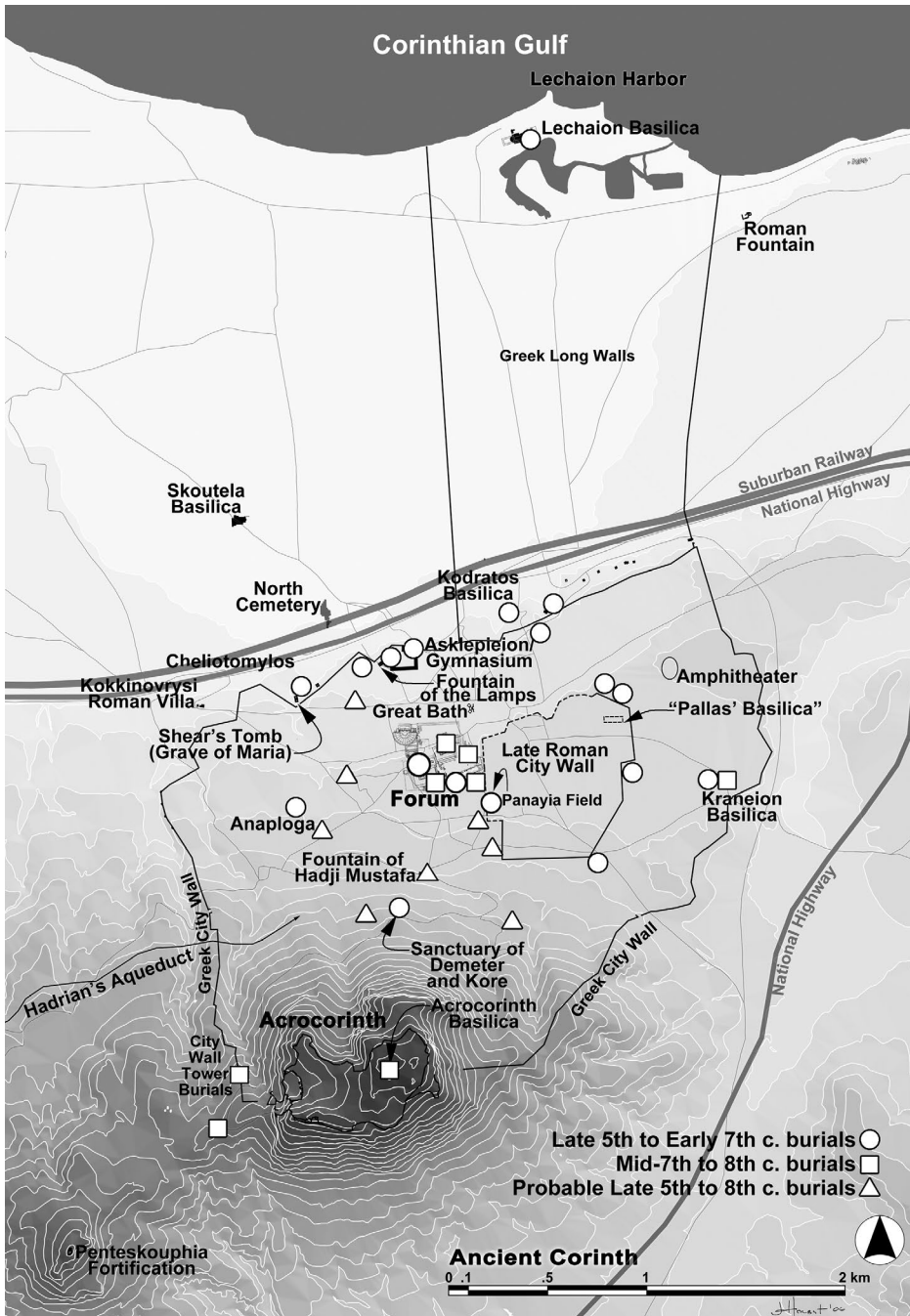


Fig. 2: Map of Corinth.

near Early Roman chamber tombs, burials in the Asklepieion/Gymnasium Area and adjacent mortuary spaces, the cemetery basilicas, graves just beyond the contracted Late Antique city wall, and finally, isolated locations.

Although Hellenistic graves have been documented on the north slope of Acrocorinth, it was only in Late Antiquity when mortuary activity returned to this area; by the end of the 4th c. AD burials occurred at least occasionally on the lower slope.⁹ More significantly, amongst the ruins of the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore, which was destroyed and abandoned at the end of the 4th c. AD, some 25 graves were installed in the late 5th to 6th c. AD as attested by lamps found above them and a glass bottle and lekythos retrieved from two graves.¹⁰ All but one grave (a simple pit) were of tiles pitched in the form of a tent, and all held single interments consisting of adults as well as children. Already in these graves the primary characteristics of the layout of the deceased at Corinth in the 6th to 7th c. AD are evident: An east-west orientation (head at west), and hands typically crossed over the pelvis.¹¹ Although these burials were sited at a ruined sanctuary, the act of burying here seems not to have related directly to the previous religious function of the complex; rather, the availability of space serving no other purpose, level ground and easy access by road would have encouraged mortuary use of this and perhaps other areas of Acrocorinth's north slope in Late Antiquity.¹²

Turning to Corinth's northern perimeter, in multiple locations a short distance north of the cliff of Corinth's southern terrace, and at the southern edge of Corinth's vast northern cemetery, large chamber tombs dating mainly to the 1st and 2nd c. AD were sporadically revisited for burial as late as the 6th c. following periods of inactivity.¹³ A small number of 6th c. AD single burial tile graves were placed within the ruins of these much earlier chamber tombs or close beside them, while the well-made cist grave of Maria, known from her ornately framed epitaph, was inserted

9 BOOKIDIS/STROUD 1997, 390. A two-handled flask of the late 4th c. AD accompanied the dead within an isolated cist grave.

10 For the sanctuary's graves, see BOOKIDIS/STROUD 1997, 381–391 and for revised chronologies, SLANE 2008. A child's grave (BOOKIDIS/STROUD 2008, 383, no. 1) located at a short distance from the main burial clusters produced the only other objects deposited with certainty: a bronze cylinder, two bronze hair rings, and a bronze rattle.

11 BOOKIDIS/STROUD 2008, 382. SLANE 2017, 239 interprets a shift within a reused Early Roman chamber tomb to a burial orientation with head at west in the first half of the 5th c. AD, slightly earlier than the graves at the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore, as evidence for a newly introduced Christian mortuary practice at Corinth.

12 BOOKIDIS/STROUD 1997, 389; SLANE 2008, 492. The suggestion (BOOKIDIS/STROUD 1997, 391) that the sanctuary may have been attractive as a burial ground due to a site-specific memory of spiritual protection for woman and children is now no longer considered tenable by Bookidis due to the presence of adult male burials; I thank Nancy Bookidis for this information (personal communication, 18 November 2015). Alternatively, SLANE 2008, 492 retains the possibility that a belief in a form of numinous protection may have drawn burials to the area.

13 For similarly reused tombs see the contribution CUBAS DÍAZ in this volume.

within one chamber tomb's floor (Fig. 2, within 'Shear's Tomb').¹⁴ Late activity at another Early Roman chamber tomb is indicated by its decoration with painted Christian symbols, which perhaps date to the 5th c. AD.¹⁵ Still farther west, 6th c. AD epitaphs recovered at Kokkinovrysi, where a Roman villa has also been discovered, suggest that additional burials were made either here in the plain, or on the terrace which overlooked the area.¹⁶

Below Corinth's theater and just within the line of the Classical city wall's ruins, the sunken area of Lerna Court along with the Asklepieion on the high ground to its east, and raised land to its southwest which includes a building identified as Corinth's Gymnasium, became used for burial beginning in the early 6th c. AD (Fig. 3). The area had already lost most of its previous character: Following a period of abandonment, in the late 5th or early 6th c. AD Lerna Court was turned into a dumping ground where a layer approximately one meter deep was created through the deposition of refuse along with natural soil accumulation.¹⁷ At about the same time or slightly earlier, the temple terrace became used for the reworking and removal of the temple's architectural members, and probably the turning of some pieces into lime.¹⁸

14 For the eastern group of tombs, see SLANE 2017, 11, 13, 15, 223. The grave of Maria was published in WALBANK/WALBANK 2006.

15 PALLAS 1975, fig. 14.

16 SEG XXIX 310, 316, 325, 326.

17 Although ROEBUCK 1951, 90 considered the dump to have lasted from circa 400 AD until the installation of graves at the site shortly afterward, a later date is preferable on the basis of numismatic and lychnological evidence: Coins of Marcianus (AD 450–457) (Coin 1932-410) and Leo I. (AD 457–474) (Coin 1932-305), the first found resting on the court's gutter and the second on a foundation block beneath a layer of debris and animal bones, and two 'East Greek' lamps (L-2997, L-2999), commonly dated to the 6th c. AD (BAILEY 1988, Q3331-Q3332), discovered close to the floor level of the court and adjacent abaton but not clearly associated with any grave. One of these lamps (L-2997) was specifically attributed by the excavator to a debris-filled layer which is probably the same one that extended across much of the court (Corinth Notebook 0136, 85). Similar dumping activity has been revealed at multiple locations within the Gymnasium in the 5th to 6th c. AD (WISEMAN 1969, 71, 75; WISEMAN 1972, 4 n. 15, 7 n. 24).

18 A *terminus post quem* for the breaking down of the temple's blocks and the reduction of the remains to lime is provided by coins of Arcadius (395–408) (Coin 1931-158, Coin 1931-241) discovered just above the sanctuary's rock surface and beneath a series of burned layers topping a marble chip layer; additional coins of Theodosius II (408–450) were found near rock level at the temple's periphery (ROTHAUS 2000, 44) and may reasonably be associated with this industrial activity. ROTHAUS 2000, 43–44, 48 illustrates some of the terracotta lamps discovered within the chip and burned layers, places them in the late 4th to early 5th c. AD, and interprets them as polytheist votives. Lamps L2700, L2832, L2842, and L2865 are, however, best dated to the middle to late 5th c. AD, and incorporate features that should not be earlier than circa 450 AD including chi-rho and cross monograms on their disks, disks with multiple fill holes, and pierced handles that occur in Attic versions which were both imported and emulated within local Corinthian copies (KARIVIERI 1996, 29, 67). It remains a question as to whether these lamps should

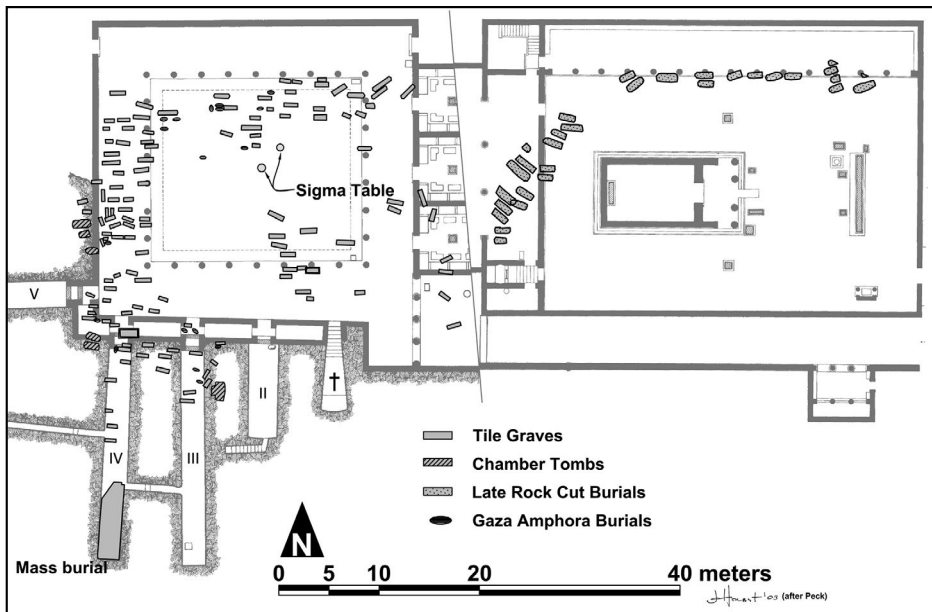


Fig. 3: Plan of Lerna Court and the Asklepieion.

At least fifteen tombs were cut into the rock surface at the north edge of the Asklepieion terrace; in imitation of fully built Late Antique vaulted tombs, this type incorporates a vertical entry shaft at east leading to a small horizontal chamber, and in place of the bricked vault is topped by a superstructure of stuccoed earth and rubble (as in the Gymnasium area, Fig. 4.1–2). Two additional small groups of rock-cut tombs lay close to the terrace's west edge, and more tombs of this type, in addition to simpler horizontal chambers, were carved out of the rock face and softer yellow marl along Lerna Court's east and west sides. Within the fill which lay above Lerna Court, some 100 burials were made in pitched tile graves, and nearly 20 more in amphorae containing infants (Fig. 5); similar burials extended into the sheltered northern portions of Reservoirs III and IV, which extended from the court into the hillside. While not all of the tile graves are well documented, the many graves of this type with lengths of 1.3 m or less, in addition to the amphora burials, suggest that at least half of the court and associated reservoir burials belong to infants and children. A few of the tile graves in the reservoirs were topped at surface by stuccoed mounds like those above the rock-cut tombs, and it is likely that many of the tile graves within the court were marked in a similar way. At the court's center, a fragment of a marble sigma table may provide evidence for offerings related to mortuary cult, although the heavily disturbed fill from which

be considered votives deposited following the removal of the temple's blocks, or if they were employed by laborers and instead offer a date for their work.

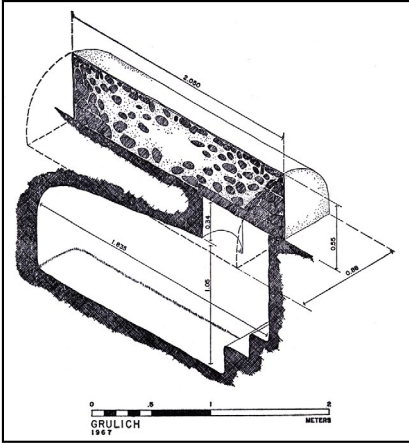


Fig. 4.1: Isometric view of a rock-cut tomb from the Gymnasium area.



Fig. 4.2: View of large cutting containing rock-cut tombs from the Gymnasium area.



Fig. 5: Amphora burials and tile graves in Lerna Court.

it was recovered does not permit a direct association with the cemetery phase of the court, which would become the setting for a Christian chapel in the late 9th or 10th c. AD.

In contrast to the use of the northern portions of the reservoirs for tile graves and amphora burials, the southern area of Reservoir IV became the setting for what appear to be approximately 100 primary burials discovered by the excavator as a mass of human remains, at least some of which were articulated skeletons, rising to a height of 0,4 to 0,6 m above the reservoir's floor.¹⁹ Although the enclosed, cavernous interiors of the reservoirs are not typical burial environments of this era, they do find comparison, and perhaps a source of inspiration, in Corinth's re-used Early Roman chamber tombs.

¹⁹ Corinth Notebook 0136, 105, 125. Reservoir II also yielded burials for which there is little documentation; they might be similar to those at the rear of Reservoir IV, or of significantly later date. Still less documentation exists for possible burials discovered within Reservoir V.

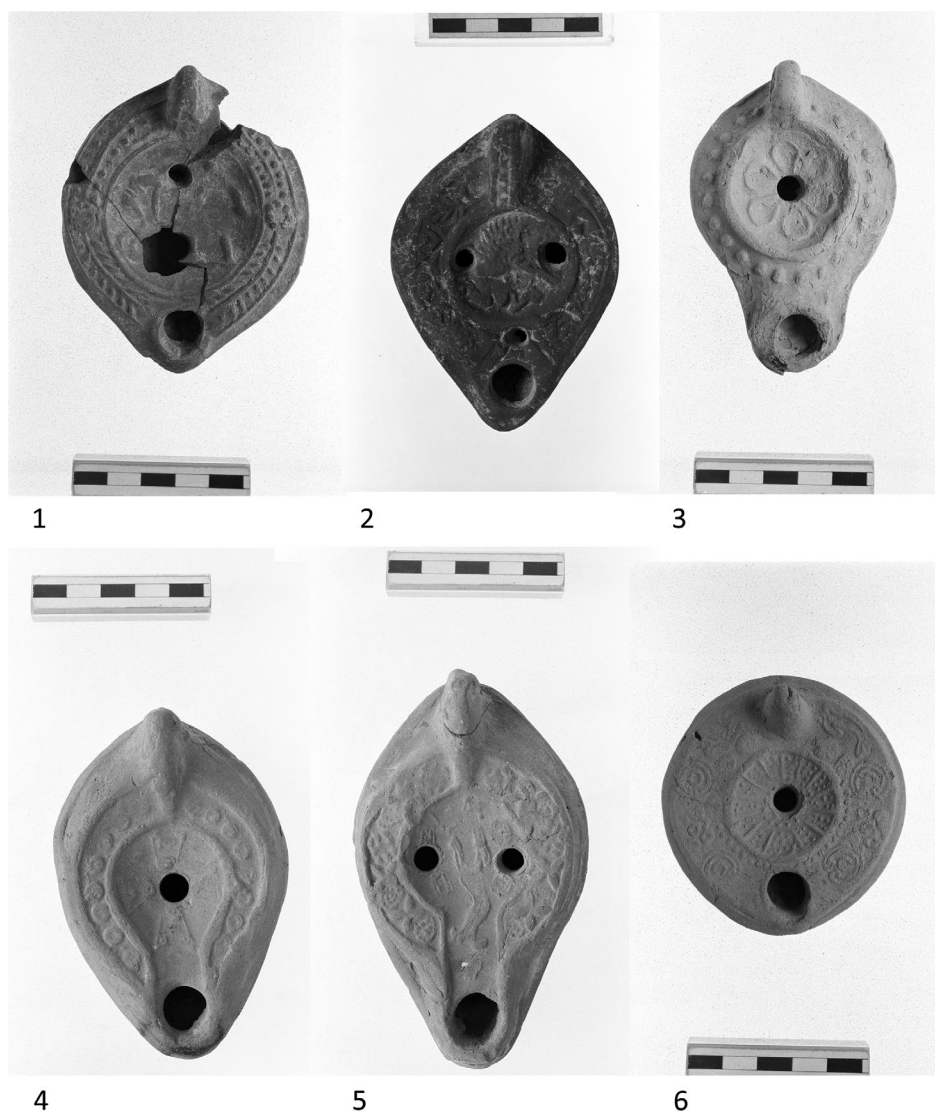


Fig. 6: 1–3. Lamps from approximate surface level in vicinity of graves within northern part of Lerna Court Reservoir IV; Fig. 6.4–6. Lamps discovered beside Asklepieion rock-cut tomb (Grave 1931-031).

Objects excavated in relation to the burials of this complex consist chiefly of ceramic vessels and terra cotta lamps; only a few items of jewelry and clothing accessories were discovered. A small number of lamps preserved *in situ* above graves in the reservoirs and also beside rock-cut tombs on the Asklepieion terrace provide evidence for what must have been a ubiquitous practice (Fig. 6).

Many more lamps, at least some of them probably mortuary offerings, were recovered within the disturbed fill above Lerna Court, and in a few cases seem to have been placed directly beside or above tile graves within the dug pit. Ceramic



Fig. 7: 1–9. Mug, lekythoi, and pitchers from Asklepieion rock-cut tombs (Grave 1931-026, Grave 1931-028, Grave 1931-029, Grave 1931-048, Grave 1931-052); Fig. 7.10. Mug from Lerna Court tile grave (Grave 1933-060).

vessels, the vast majority of them pitchers and lekythoi, were deposited in approximately half of the rock-cut graves (Fig. 7, Objects 1–9); some 50 similar vessels were recovered from the burials in the southern part of Reservoir IV (Fig. 8, Objects 1–6). In contrast, the only pottery associated with tile graves consists of a single mug (Fig. 7, Object 10) and a broken jug.²⁰ Although it is possible that excavation standards of the 1930s may have overlooked small pieces of jewelry and clothing ac-

²⁰ The field notes for one tile grave (Grave 1933-060) state that the mug was found at the grave's southwest corner; whether this vessel was inside the grave or outside, against its tiles, is not clear (Corinth Notebook 0136, 74). The broken jug, from Grave 1932-036, was not saved.

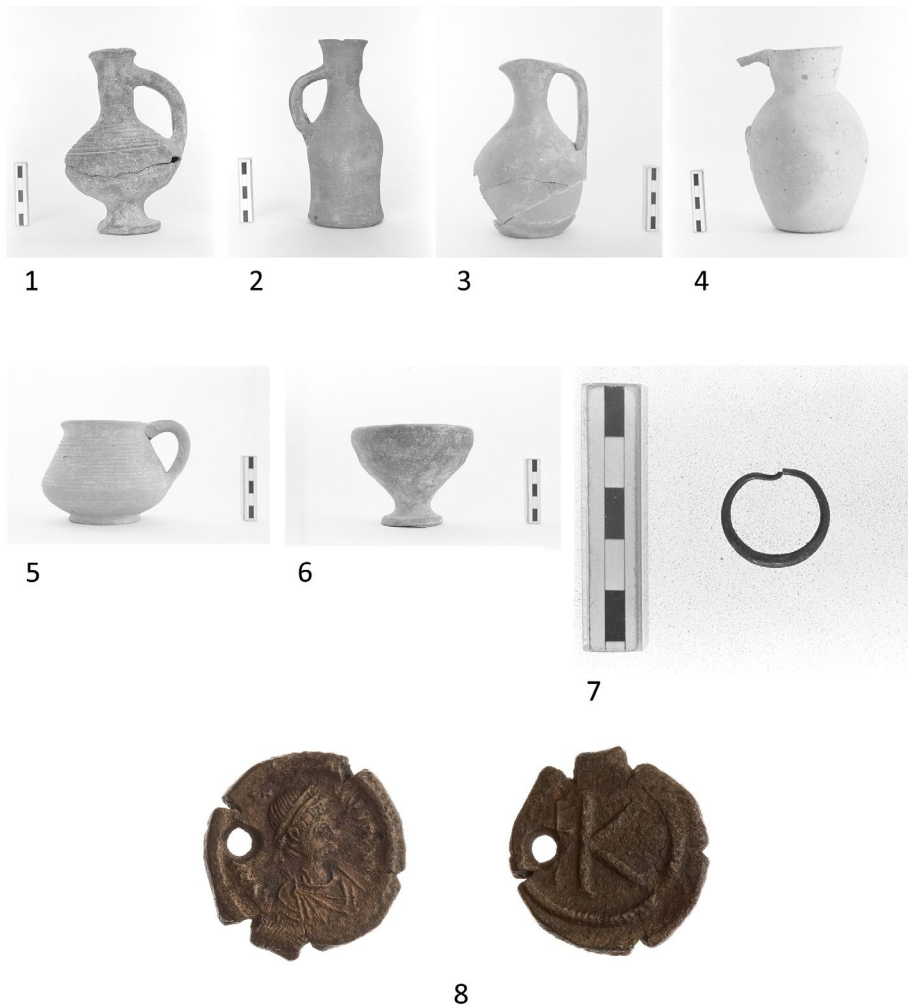


Fig. 8: Selection of objects from burials at rear of Lerna Court Reservoir IV: 8.1–6 lekythoi, pitcher, mug, cup or bowl; 8.7 bronze earring; 8.8 bronze half follis of Anastasius I. (collectively Grave 1933-111).

cessories, their near total absence in the graves here is notable: Bronze earrings were discovered in only two of the court’s tile graves, and one bronze earring, in addition to a pierced coin of Anastasius I. which was probably worn on a necklace, were the sole pieces recovered amongst the large number of burials at the rear of Reservoir IV (Fig. 8. Objects 7–8).²¹

21 The coin of Anastasius I. appears to have been pierced in such a way as to bring the cross on its reverse to the top when suspended, presumably for supernatural protection. During the author’s study of the ceramics of Reservoir IV within Corinth’s museum, a bronze belt buckle in the form of a flattened oval was found to have been placed within one of the saved pots, although a lack of documentation does not permit a secure attribution to these burials.

While the vast majority of tile graves in the court and its reservoirs cannot be directly dated, many of the burial amphorae are of the Gaza type, predominant at Corinth in the late 5th to 6th c. AD,²² and the various lamps occasionally recovered in association with tile graves offer dates not before the late 5th c. at earliest, and in most cases belong fully to the 6th c. AD. Ceramic vessels, deposited with the inhumations at the rear of Reservoir IV and also found in rock-cut tombs, are of widely distributed types of the 6th to early 7th c. AD; a relatively late chronology for at least some of the Reservoir IV inhumations, once thought to be a mass burial resulting from the Justinianic plague, is confirmed by re-dated coins of Justin II. (AD 565–578) retrieved from that space.²³ A displaced epitaph from AD 524 which was discovered in the area of the court and most likely belonged to a rock-cut tomb provides the earliest clear date of mortuary activity in the area, and suggests some degree of parallel development of rock-cut tombs and tile graves in this complex.²⁴

Lamps that can be bracketed within the late 6th to mid-7th c. AD, in addition to pottery of the late 6th to early 7th c. AD, enable the rock-cut tombs on the Asklepieion terrace to be placed alongside the latest inhumations from Reservoir IV and perhaps slightly beyond. The periphery of the Asklepieion's rock surface thus appears to be one of the last spaces used for burial in this area, following after some interval the removal of the temple's blocks. Whether superstitious attitudes toward the former site of the temple caused it to be avoided while burials were made in the court remains a question; it may at least be suggested that the partial exploitation of the terrace that finally takes place represents a common form of cemetery development, beginning at the periphery of an open space, and occurring shortly before the mortuary use of the entire area ceased.²⁵

Finally, trenches dug within the high ground of the Gymnasium, located southwest of Lerna Court and the Asklepieion, revealed dense zones of graves from the cliff edge to a substantial fortification (the 'Epistyle Wall') at south which seems to have been respected as a cemetery boundary and perhaps defined the northern limit of the city in this district when the first graves were laid here.²⁶ These graves display a somewhat different pattern of distribution in comparison to Lerna Court

22 SLANE/SANDERS 2005, 290.

23 SANDERS 2005, 434.

24 KENT 1966, no. 548 = SEG XXXI 288.

25 ROTHHAUS 2000, 52 contends that the burials were made to nullify a threatening presence within the center of the temple area, whereas ROEBUCK 1951, 161 much earlier believed that the temple was avoided out of fear of supernatural forces.

26 Test trenches in the northern area of the Gymnasium (then called the 'Hill of Zeus') which were excavated in 1933 exposed some 50 rock-cut tombs, 17 tile graves, and one infant amphora burial. For the preliminary excavation reports on graves revealed at the Gymnasium from 1965 to 1970 see WISEMAN 1967a; WISEMAN 1967b; WISEMAN 1969; WISEMAN 1972. Still more graves, in what is presumably a continuation of the same burial ground, were uncovered to the west of the Gymnasium in 1896, and were described simply as vaulted tombs containing coarse red pottery (RICHARDSON 1897, 459). For a summary of

and the Asklepieion: Rock-cut chamber tombs with entry shafts and also simpler rock-cut cists, often laid out in rows, and in one case grouped within a large cutting in the rock, constitute a majority of graves alongside small clusters of tile graves and the occasional infant amphora burial (Fig. 4.1–2). The stuccoed mounds above many of the rock-cut tombs are exceptionally well preserved, and lamps unearthed beside the mounds and within them testify to both commemorative ritual and, post-use, the recycling of cemetery debris. Raised “pillows” were at least occasionally carved out of the rock at the west ends of both chamber tombs and cist grave interiors. Although the pottery, primarily lekythoi and pitchers of the 6th to early 7th c. AD, which was recovered from the rock-cut tombs is generally similar to that in the Lerna Court and Asklepieion complex, the modest amount of jewelry and clothing accessories from the Gymnasium graves stands in contrast to the nearly complete absence of these objects at this adjacent site.²⁷

Some 550 m east of the Asklepieion and in the plain, the Kodratos Basilica was built in the 6th c. AD upon an earlier burial ground which may have been believed to hold the remains of the 3rd c. AD martyr Kodratos and his followers; graves were installed within and beside the building including, unusually, the floor of its nave.²⁸ Although most of these cannot be closely dated, the cist graves, lined with fine marble slabs in multiple colors and often possessing built pillows at their west ends, are clearly of Late Antique origin on the basis of their epitaphs, which include such notable individuals as the *lamprotatos* Gratos and also the bishop Eustathios, who lay within an unusually well-appointed tomb incorporating an elaborate pipe installation for libations at its west end. At least some of the graves were altered after their original construction: The letter style of the first line of bishop Eustathios’ epitaph seems unusually early, possessing some characteristics closer to the 4th or 5th than the 6th c. AD; relocation of the bishop’s remains, and an addition to his epitaph, may offer an explanation.²⁹ Libation holes were provided for at least two more graves in the basilica, one an anonymous child’s grave, and the other crudely drilled through the epitaph of a young woman

scholarship on the Epistyle Wall, see BROWN 2018, 156. WISEMAN 1967b, 418 suggests the potential role of this wall as an urban and cemetery boundary.

- 27 In addition to terracotta lamps and some miscellaneous jugs, there are a very small number of mugs, plates, and unguentaria. A single metal vessel was recovered from one rock-cut tomb during the course of the 1933 ‘Hill of Zeus’ excavations in the Gymnasium area, but unfortunately it could not be located within Corinth’s museum storeroom. Improved excavation practices in the 1960s may play some role in the apparently more frequent occurrence of jewelry and clothing accessories within the Gymnasium’s graves.
- 28 For the basilica’s excavation reports: STIKAS 1964; STIKAS 1966. BROWN 2018, 132–133 offers a useful overview of the evidence for a possible dedication of this basilica to St. Kodratos.
- 29 For the dating of the bishop’s epitaph and potential tomb relocation, see SIRONEN 2018, 206 and WALBANK 2010, n. 54. The epitaph was inscribed on two large, coffered ceiling panels which STIKAS 1964 attributed to a nearby mausoleum.

named Paulina, potentially at a significant interval following the inscribing of her tomb marker.³⁰

On the terrace overlooking the Kodratos Basilica, a dense cemetery area, which probably developed in response to the basilica's presence, was primarily uncovered during rescue excavations in the 2000s.³¹ Nearly all of the more than 200 graves are slab-covered, rock-cut cists, a type seen in the Gymnasium area but made more elaborate here through the use of plastered interiors on all tombs except for those furnished even more luxuriously with partial linings of terracotta or marble plaques and tile floors, seemingly emulating highly ornate cists like those installed within the Kodratos Basilica. Pillows built from plaques or simply carved from the natural rock lie at the west end of the vast majority of tombs, nearly all of which received multiple burials. Approximately one third of the tombs contained objects including pitchers, jugs, and lekythoi of the 6th to early 7th c. AD typically deposited as one or two vessels per tomb; a small amount of jewelry and clothing accessories was also recovered from these graves.

Corinth's other cemetery basilica, the 6th c. AD Kraneion Basilica, was constructed some 500 m east of the contracted Late Antique city wall within a neighborhood famous for its burial ground since the classical period.³² Funerary chambers attached to the basilica's outer walls became the setting for numerous built tombs of both cist and vaulted types, many of them revetted with marble slabs or plastered on the interior; the vaults were topped by marble-lined, platform-like projections which rose slightly above floor level and may have received terracotta lamps or provided a surface for commemorative meals.³³ The most conspicuous mortuary space was, however, a triconch room on the basilica's south side which contained a vaulted tomb that was likely used by one of Corinth's elite families.³⁴ North of the basilica's apse, a large vaulted room pre-dating the basilica and containing a brick cist continued to be accessible, receiving an additional cist grave and a grave cut into hardpan.³⁵ At least some of the other funerary chambers similarly remained in use, or were re-used, until at least the late 7th c. AD.³⁶

30 For other examples of Late Antique libation holes, even on Christian epitaphs, see the contribution ARDELEANU in this volume.

31 MELETI 2013, 208 graves were excavated by the Greek archaeological service in the 2000s; in 1964, rescue excavations conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens had revealed a small number of graves directly north of this area.

32 The excavation of the basilica is documented in a series of excavation reports: SHELLEY 1943; PALLAS 1970; PALLAS 1972; PALLAS 1976; PALLAS 1977.

33 PALLAS 1959, 205.

34 SHELLEY 1943, 181 noted that the vaulted tomb in the triconch room "had quite a number of burials," and PALLAS 1990, 783 considered it to be most likely a family tomb.

35 SHELLEY 1943, 176–178.

36 For late 7th c. AD activity, see the Syracuse type belt buckle, iron light striker, and two coins of Constans II. noted in PALLAS 1981.

The densest, and most extensive, known burial ground located within the vicinity of Corinth's Late Antique city wall lies outside the wall's northeast segment, where excavation in multiple areas has exposed numerous cist graves along with a small number of vaulted tombs, tile graves, and infant amphora burials.³⁷ The outlines of many more unexcavated graves are visible at surface level, creating the image of a vast zone packed with burials, likely in response to the presence of an unexcavated *martyrium* or Christian basilica, commonly known as 'Pallas' Basilica', just within the line of the city wall.³⁸ The status of this place as an especially desirable burial location in proximity to a holy site is further supported by the retrieval of gold thread belonging to an ornate burial garment from one grave, and the discovery of an epitaph from the general area stating a tomb's unusually expensive purchase price of two *solidi*.³⁹ Roughly half of the cist graves here produced pottery of the 6th to early 7th c. AD consisting primarily of lekythoi, pitchers, and mugs. Glass vessels and jewelry were noted to be within some tombs, while terracotta lamps were dispersed throughout the area of the cemetery.

Outside the approximate midpoint of the Late Antique city wall's eastern segment, test trenches in the 1930s revealed 22 graves, primarily of the pitched tile type, close to and sometimes abutting the wall's external face.⁴⁰ Although these burials are not directly datable, the terracotta lamps that were frequently found in the earth around the graves, whether objects of mortuary ritual or deposited in the fill preceding the burials, are generally of types dating broadly from the late 5th to 6th c. AD; if the city wall is indeed Justinianic then a slightly later *terminus post quem* of AD 527 for these graves would apply. Of 20 graves with known lengths, 15 possess lengths of 1,3 m or less, indicating a relatively high percentage of child burials which include a few instances of infant burial in amphorae.

Land near ruined structures which probably lay outside the southeast and southwest segments of Corinth's Late Antique wall was at least occasionally used for burial, as evidenced by an infant amphora burial, likely of the late 6th c. AD, inserted within waterworks just beyond the circuit's southeast corner, and the placement of three infant amphora burials of perhaps slightly later date against the external wall of a Late Antique structure at the Panayia Field site.⁴¹ To the north of these last burials,

37 SKARMOUTSOU 2010.

38 For this Christian building see the summary in BROWN 2018, 139.

39 The gold thread: SKARMOUTSOU 2010, 714. The epitaph (SEG XXIX 319) belonging to Polychronios the *singoulios*, was found to the northeast of the *martyrium* or basilica, and to the south of the Amphitheater, and likely originates from a grave somewhere in this area.

40 These burials were first mentioned briefly in GREGORY 1979, 273 in connection to a 6th c. AD coin hoard. Proximity to the Late Antique city wall, and perhaps even to a specific grave, would have provided the hoard with an easily remembered location.

41 The infant burial in a Gaza amphora at the Kakavi Spring was inserted within a cutting in the corner of a vaulted chamber which may have reminded Late Antique Corinthians of a vaulted tomb. That amphora is an advanced version of MAJCHEREK 1995, 168 Form 3, which ends in the late 6th c. AD, and arguably belongs near the end of this form. The Gaza

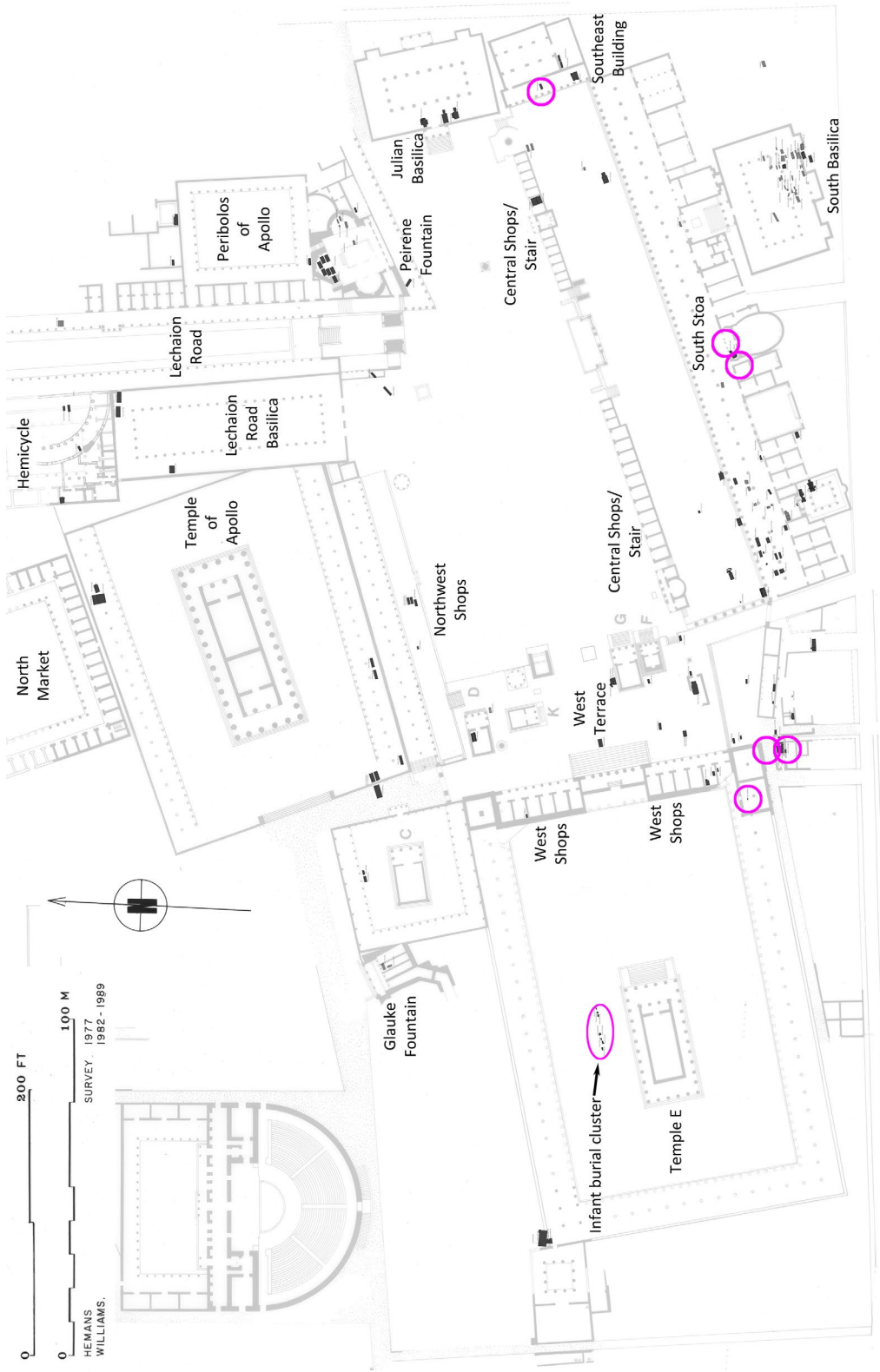


Fig. 9: Plan of the greater Forum area with Late Antique graves. ○ = identifiable late 6th to early 7th C. burial subset.

another amphora burial, two child graves (one a cist and the other an irregular tile grave) containing lekythoi, and an adult tile grave were made at about the same time.

Northwest of Panayia Field, the greater Forum area, which by the 8th c. AD was home to numerous grave clusters along its periphery, appears to have been used only sporadically for burial during the late 6th to early 7th c. AD (Fig. 9). The earliest burials, located immediately west of the Forum on the north side of Temple E, constitute an unusual cluster of infants deposited in five amphorae and three small tile graves; the one saved amphora is of the Gaza type and belongs to the 6th c. AD, probably its latter part.⁴² A similar Gaza amphora burial was excavated at the temple precinct's southeast corner.⁴³

Probably later than these infant burials are five multiple burial tombs scattered along the southern edges of the Forum.⁴⁴ Two tombs, cut into the rock at the center of the South Stoa, resemble the rock-cut chamber tombs with entry shafts in the Asklepieion/Gymnasium area but are far rougher in form and reveal no preserved trace of stuccoed superstructures.⁴⁵ At the Forum's southeast corner a drain was turned into a simple cist grave,⁴⁶ while at the southwest corner a pair of built vaulted tombs was installed; the vaulted tombs possessed platforms or rooms above which generally recall those in the Kraneion Basilica and may likewise have served for the deposition of objects or for commemorative meals.⁴⁷ Assemblages of lekythoi and other vessels (Fig. 10) recovered from most of these graves are similar to those from late 6th to early 7th c. AD burials in the area of the Asklepieion and

amphorae at Panayia Field possess late torpedo-shaped bodies and fall at the intersection of Forms 3 and 4 (MAJCHEREK 1995, 168f.); they likely date to the late 6th to early 7th c. AD. For the Panayia Field burials, see the summary in SANDERS 2005, 428. Although the position of the Late Antique city wall in relation to Panayia Field is not certain, it seems most likely that this site lay outside the wall due to the presence of multiple graves.

42 Amphora C-1938-713 appears to be a relatively advanced version of MAJCHEREK 1995, 168 Form 3. Unfortunately, it is not possible to date the numerous graves cut into Temple E's podium to the south of the infant burial cluster; they could be of Late Antique or much later date.

43 Grave 1990-018. A few additional infant burials were made along the western edges of the Forum, but can be placed only generally within the 7th c. AD.

44 An additional tomb group located in the northeast area of the temenos of the Temple of Apollo was published (ROBINSON 1976, 222) as belonging to the first half of the 7th C. AD based on its perceived contemporary construction with a church on the same site together with a trefoil pitcher and a fragment of an African Red Slip plate found in two of these tombs. However, the church is now believed to be a Frankish construction, the pitcher is unlike any known from Corinthian graves of the late 6th to early 7th c. AD and is likely somewhat later, and it is not certain that the plate fragment is to be associated with the original use of the tomb. It is at least clear that these tombs were installed by the end of the 7th c. AD due to clothing accessories and jewelry found within them.

45 Grave 1936-006, Grave 1948-001.

46 Grave 1915-003.

47 Grave 1974-005, Grave 1974-006. For the excavation reports, see: WILLIAMS/FISHER 1976, 118; WILLIAMS/FISHER 1975, 15.



Fig. 10: Lekythoi and pitcher from Forum area burials (Grave 1915-003, Grave 1974-005, Grave 1936-006).

Lerna Court but lack the imported fine wares present in these and other cemeteries at Corinth; this difference might be based on wealth, but seems more likely to be chronological, potentially placing the Forum vessels and their tombs toward the end of the import of better versions in the early 7th c. AD.

While nearly all known late 5th to early 7th c. AD burials belong to one of the above locations, isolated grave clusters were at least occasionally made within Corinth's suburbs, and larger zones of undated graves which might be assigned to Late Antiquity exist. Standing out in its apparent isolation is a group of three rock-cut cists situated at the edge of a cliff more than 500 m southwest of the Forum at the site of *Anaploga*. A single roughly made pot accompanied the dead in one cist, while above the central grave an epitaph, probably of 6th c. AD date, appears to have marked the tomb group, which may have belonged to a family living in this suburb of Corinth.⁴⁸ Also in this general district, a large number of tile graves was exposed to the west of the Forum, although their chronology is not clear; likewise, undated tile graves were uncovered by floods south of the city center by the fountain of Hadji Mustafa.⁴⁹ Lastly, at Corinth's northern port of *Lechaion*, an enormous Christian basilica seems to have been used by a small number of clergy as evidenced by three well-built cist graves bearing Christian imagery and containing ceramics including a mug from circa AD 600 inscribed with the name of Thomas the *presbyter*.⁵⁰

48 ROBINSON 1962.

49 BOOKIDIS/STROUD 1997, 383, 390.

50 SANDERS 2005, 440. For the excavation reports of the basilica's graves, see PALLAS 1956.

The Topographic Development of Corinth's Late Antique Burial Grounds

The locations of Corinth's Late Antique burial grounds reveal a contraction from the expansive cemetery area located in the plain to the city's north, a process which was accelerated due to the construction of a new, reduced city wall probably in the reign of Justinian. To the extent that these burial areas and Late Antique topography are known, the most heavily used zones occur within the general vicinity of Christian basilicas and other holy sites, suggesting a widespread trend toward *ad sanctos* burial, and burial in connection to sacred locations more broadly, which develops over the course of the 6th c. AD, while largely keeping intact the tradition of burying on land to the north of the city until the abandonment of these northern areas after the early 7th c. AD.

The clearest evidence for 5th c. AD mortuary activity at Corinth's northern periphery is found in Early Roman chamber tombs located in the plain at the southern edge of the city's northern cemetery, a practice which reappears, after a break in use, during the 6th c. AD; Roman chamber tombs were similarly reemployed in the 5th to 6th c. AD at the nearby port of *Kenchreai* after a marked hiatus.⁵¹ The 6th c. AD construction of the Kodratos Basilica, likewise positioned in the plain below Corinth's northern terrace and on the site of a pre-existing burial area which may have been thought to hold the namesake martyr's tomb, brought increased mortuary prestige to this area, and, in addition to the graves located within the basilica's immediate vicinity, surely attracted the many rock-cut cists on the terrace overlooking the building, and perhaps also leading to 6th c. AD burials at the site of an Early Roman chamber tomb slightly farther east.⁵² The Late Antique cult site known as the Fountain of the Lamps may have played a similar role in drawing burials to the Asklepieion/Gymnasium area.⁵³ Other known burial grounds include the 6th C. AD Kraneion Basilica to the east of the city in a longstanding cemetery district, and to the south, scattered late 4th to 6th c. AD graves on the north slope of Acrocorinth. While these last two areas, although not far from the urban center, presumably lay beyond Corinth's *pomerium*, the relationship between that boundary and the 6th to early 7th c. AD graves in the Asklepieion/Gymnasium area and the similarly dated graves above the Kodratos Basilica remains a question; in any case, the apparent use of the 'Epistyle Wall' as a southern boundary for the

51 For the chamber tombs at *Kenchreai*, see RIFE et al. 2007, 174.

52 For late activity at the chamber tomb, see SLANE 2017, 15 "Chamber Tomb with Sarcophagi".

53 On the Fountain of the Lamps, see WISEMAN 1972, 9–42. JORDAN 1994 provides corrected readings of the lamp inscriptions, while a syncretic interpretation of the cult is offered by ROTHHAUS 2000 126–124 and followed, with additional points of comparison, by CLINE 2011 118–125.

Asklepieion/Gymnasium burials suggests that by the early 6th c. AD, this area was considered to lie outside the city.

The contracted Late Antique city wall's construction brought mortuary areas even closer to the community of the living as, on a very uneven basis, burials were made on the land beyond it, and in some cases directly against its external face. The graves excavated on the east side of the Late Antique city wall and to its west, including the Forum, consist of small scattered clusters, some of them belonging primarily or exclusively to infants, and a few isolated tombs. In marked contrast, the densely packed zone of built tombs to the northeast of the wall is probably to be attributed to the presence of a Christian holy site ('Pallas' Basilica') near the wall's opposite face. The location of this cemetery, which extends northward almost to the terrace edge, additionally recalls the siting of the other large 6th to early 7th c. AD burial zones near the Kodratos Basilica and in the Asklepieion/Gymnasium area on the terraces to its north, and might also be considered to continue the tradition of mortuary activity in the northern district of Corinth. The evolution of cemetery topography is therefore not a straightforward case of a transition to a new urban boundary in the form of the Late Antique city wall, but relies in part upon the availability of land in the Forum and nearby areas that had become abandoned over the course of the 6th c. AD, and is particularly influenced by long term trends in cemetery location in addition to the emerging landscape of Christian landmarks. Our relatively limited knowledge of the use of land beyond these areas must also be acknowledged: If the tile graves exposed at some distance west and south of the Late Antique city wall belong to this period, then we may imagine a broader exploitation of land outside the city and less of a focus on the immediate periphery of the wall.

A somewhat similar situation is apparent at other cities, including Athens, where the nearer areas of some of the old extramural cemeteries which lay beyond its greater city wall (renewed under Justinian) continued to function into the 7th c. AD in addition to three extramural basilicas with corresponding cemeteries.⁵⁴ On the other hand, 4th to 6th c. AD burial grounds, in most cases associated with churches, developed within Athens' contracted post-Herulian wall but not on nearby land outside it; these settings are nonetheless still peripheral and avoid encroaching on the Roman Agora, which also lay within the post-Herulian circuit.⁵⁵ Liminality, preceding traditions of cemetery siting, and proximity to holy sites thus

54 TZAVELLA 2008. *Argos* reveals variations on these trends: Its extramural north cemetery, the primary mortuary zone of the late 5th to early 7th c. AD, appears to have been a new development following the abandonment of Roman cemeteries located elsewhere; additional graves which may be of Late Antique date lie within the city wall near a baptistery and multiple churches (METAXAS 2015, 380).

55 Although a similar burial distribution within the largely unexcavated zone which lay within Corinth's Late Antique city wall cannot be completely ruled out, the mortuary use of land directly outside that wall suggests that until at least the beginning of the 7th c. AD it was respected as a mortuary boundary

all seem to be significant factors in the topographic development of Late Antique cemeteries at Athens, Corinth, and elsewhere.

Trends in burial location based on social class, age, and religion are apparent to some degree within Corinth's cemeteries, although with the exception of Christian basilicas some degree of mixing amongst groups is likely. Basilicas, and probably land close to them, were employed by the Christian elite and upper class and include the Kodratos Basilica, the Kraneion Basilica, and perhaps the cemetery zone northeast of the Late Antique city wall. In contrast, the large burial zone of the Asklepieion/Gymnasium area was clearly used by the middle class on the basis of professions stated within its epitaphs, and may have included poorer residents as well due to the large number of tile graves in Lerna Court. The age of the dead may also have been a factor for those burying in Lerna Court considering the relatively high percentage of infants and children that seem to be present, a phenomenon further visible in the more scattered burials, primarily tile graves and amphorae, located outside the remainder of the line of the city wall, and suggestive of differential treatment and even exclusion from larger cemeteries due to age, social status, and potentially other factors.⁵⁶ The especially late built and rock-cut tombs of the Forum are clearly not, however, the graves of children or of the poor, but may instead reflect the long term trend of putting abandoned zones to use as burial sites together with a growing recognition of space just beyond the wall as suitable for mortuary development, continuing a process which had already begun at the zone northeast of the Late Antique wall and which also included the more humble burials scattered elsewhere along the wall's circuit. Lastly, aside from burials associated with Christian basilicas, the identification of religious identity for specific graves and larger cemetery zones is problematic: While signs of a Christian identity, or at least an inclination toward Christianity, are apparent in some deposited lamps, on epitaphs, and in rare incised or painted symbols on tombs, most graves are ambiguous as to the religious identity of those buried within, and the lack of positive evidence for the last Polytheists, Jews, and others should not lead us to assume that such burial grounds were fully 'Christian' cemeteries.⁵⁷ For the Asklepieion/Gymnasium area in particular, the practice of a Late Antique cult bearing syncretic aspects until

56 The consequence of this kind of differential treatment, an underrepresentation of infants and children within main cemetery areas, was identified by WESOŁOWSKY 1973, 345–347 for the Gymnasium's graves; see also KENNEDY 2016, 162–163.

57 The area of the Asklepieion/Gymnasium in particular has long been referred to as a 'Christian' cemetery; see, for example, WISEMAN 1969, 84 fn. 36. The use of Christian symbols on or within tomb structures from this era is extremely rare at Corinth, consisting of, in addition to staurograms painted within an Early Roman tomb (PALLAS 1975, fig. 14.), crosses and vegetal imagery painted on the interior of a cist grave at the Lechaion Basilica (PALLAS 1956, Pin. 73b), and in the Gymnasium area a cross and additional designs or letters painted within a rock-cut tomb's entry shaft (WISEMAN 1972, 8), an unpublished cross incised in the rock of another, and, finally, crosses incised on the stuccoed rubble mounds topping two rock-cut tombs (WISEMAN 1967b, 419 Fig. 7; WISEMAN 1969, 85).

at least the late 6th c. AD directly below this cemetery area at the Fountain of the Lamps raises the possibility that at least some individuals buried here held beliefs far outside orthodoxy and may not have considered themselves Christian at all.

Tomb Types

A wide range of tomb types was used by Late Antique Corinthians, from pitched tile graves and infant amphora burials to cist graves and vaulted tombs occurring in both built and rock-cut versions. Tile graves and cist graves both follow local Roman precedents, while vaulted tombs are a development of the 6th to early 7th c. AD.

Tile graves, in addition to amphora burials, are the simplest burial structures and typically accommodated a single individual (Fig. 5).⁵⁸ The most common version of this type at Corinth consists of two pitched Laconian roof tiles over the body, topped by cover tiles at the ridge and closed at the ends by tiles laid upright; minor variations include an absence of cover tiles and, apparently more rarely, a lack of end tiles, leaving the grave open at one or both ends or using stones instead to block off the grave at foot and head.

A widely occurring tomb type, tile graves exist in the province of *Achaëa* at sites large and small, but at major urban centers, where they also tend to represent a minority of buried individuals, they rarely contain pottery and may possess lower quality jewelry and clothing accessories than are present in other tomb types.⁵⁹ Their relative ease of construction and poverty of finds suggest that at Corinth and some other sites they were used to a large degree by the lower class, although they would also have been convenient structures more generally for anyone who needed to bury and lacked access to a multiple burial tomb.

Infant amphora burials, enabled by the breakage and removal of one end of the amphora and the insertion of the infant within the vessel, tend to occur in isolation or within areas of tile graves at Corinth (Fig. 5). Gaza amphorae appear to be used most frequently. Although amphora burials are a common tomb type, the many small tile graves that exist in Lerna Court and elsewhere, and the documented pres-

⁵⁸ For tile graves in the eastern Peloponnese generally, see RIFE 2012, 175–6.

⁵⁹ At *Argos*, considering the potential for multiple burial within cist graves, those buried in tile graves may be just as likely to wear jewelry and clothing accessories as those buried in cists; however, the items within tile graves are of lower quality, and pottery is completely absent (METAXAS 2015, 406). A similar pattern exists at Corinth at least in regard to the general lack of ceramics in tile graves, although the current state of publication does not permit a close comparison of jewelry and clothing accessories. At the cemetery belonging to *Olympia's* small Late Antique settlement, taking into account multiple burial within that site's many stone-lined cist graves, not only is an individual probably just as likely to be buried with jewelry and clothing accessories in a tile grave as in a cist grave, but there is also not a marked distinction in the quality of objects at what was surely a far less stratified society than at *Argos* or Corinth (VÖLLING/RETTNER 2018, 55–56 Tab. 2, 64).

ence of infants in a minority of rock-cut cists and vaulted tombs, suggest that most infants were provided burial in formats other than amphorae. Beyond Corinth, amphorae seem to be employed as burial containers no more frequently, and in small communities in particular they may not have been used at all.⁶⁰

Of excavated graves of the late 5th to early 7th c. AD, cists are the most common type at Corinth, and especially in consideration of the typical use of cists for multiple burials, they most likely housed the remains of more Corinthians than any other. Cists offered a range of possibilities in accordance with desired cost and personal preference, including slab-covered rock-cut versions with multiple lining options, fully built rubble masonry tombs, and tombs with walls of brick masonry and marble revetment. The finest versions of this tomb type were clearly used by leading members of society: While potentially including some relocated graves, the cists incorporating epitaphs at floor level within the Kodratos Basilica would have been a particularly memorable sight.⁶¹ For built cist tombs, a difference in quality of construction is apparent between Corinth and larger cities, in which a wide spectrum exists, and most smaller communities, which rely more heavily on spolia and fieldstones and may lack the upper tier of brick-built graves.⁶²

Although vaults do occur in some of Corinth's Early Roman tombs, these sepulchers are different in form and size from the smaller Late Antique vaulted chamber tombs, which emerge at Corinth during the 6th c. AD and follow a line of development already evident in *Thessaloniki* and other cities in Northern Greece and the Balkans broadly since at least as early as the 4th c. AD.⁶³ Well-documented 6th to

60 Amphora burials are rarely well published. At *Argos'* expansive north cemetery, in addition to the 400 tile and cist graves there were at least a few scattered amphorae (METAXAS 2015, 381), and in the east cemetery three amphora burials of the 4th to 5th c. AD century were made in the antechamber of a funerary complex (OIKONOMOU-LANIADO 2003, 31). The graves at *Isthmia's* fortress did not include any amphorae at all (RIFE 2012, 180), while a few examples of alternate containers exist at other sites such as a pithos at *Olympia* (VÖLLING/RETTNER 2018, 81 no. 175) and two beehives at *Delion* (XAMELAKE 2009, 1175). Lower availability of amphorae outside large cities may contribute to their limited repurposing, or lack of use altogether, as burial vessels at smaller sites, although differing attitudes regarding the level of formality of infant burial should not be discounted as an additional factor.

61 As RIFE 2012, 111 notes, the bishop Eustathios' cist (unlike the others) incorporates a layer of fill between the inscribed cover at surface level and a secondary secondary cover which tops the actual built tomb chamber below the fill, and is actually a special compartmentalized form of tomb known in simpler versions elsewhere in the *Corinthia*.

62 See the observations by RIFE 2012, 175 on the difference in quality between *Isthmia's* cist graves and those at Corinth. The scarcity of well-built cist graves at smaller, relatively isolated sites is especially pronounced at *Olympia's* 5th to early 7th c. AD cemetery, where, in addition to 166 cists made in a simple manner from large spolia blocks, only one tomb was constructed using brick masonry (VÖLLING/RETTNER 2018, 54).

63 For *Thessaloniki's* Late Antique cemeteries, which possess numerous vaulted tombs, see MARKE 2006; for vaulted Late Antique tombs from the Balkan region, see the contribution VALEVA in this volume.

early 7th c. AD vaulted tombs in Athens and a few smaller sites demonstrate that this tomb type, incorporating a rectangular subterranean chamber accessed by an entry shaft, appears in significant numbers at a relatively late date in *Achaea*; it seems to have become, along with the most elegant cist graves, a preferred form of mortuary architecture at the limited number of sites where it appears.⁶⁴ The high status of built vaulted tombs at Corinth is made clear through their presence at both of Corinth's cemetery basilicas, although these examples cannot be closely dated, in addition to the dense burial ground northeast of the Late Antique city wall and relatively late examples dating to circa 600 AD and beyond at the Forum. Corinth's rock-cut versions of vaulted tombs (Fig. 4.1–2), topped by vault-like mounds of stuccoed rubble, first appear in the Asklepieion/Gymnasium area in the 6th c. AD and are used until the early 7th c. AD if not slightly later; based on the epigraphic evidence for the middle-class occupations of those burying in them, the earliest rock-cut tombs might be regarded as ambitious emulations of the finer, built type known from other sites if not already Corinth itself. These rock-cut versions are unusual within the mortuary landscape of *Achaea*, but do find general points of comparison in nearby *Kenchreai* and *Isthmia*, which were surely following Corinth's example.⁶⁵ In addition to the visible superstructures of vaults, which may have conveyed a sense of prestige within the mortuary landscape, their function as settings for epitaphs and even platforms for deposited objects would have made this tomb type especially desirable.⁶⁶

Although topography and geology did impact the conduciveness of a site for the use of a particular tomb type, most noticeably in the placement of rock-cut tombs within the expansive zones above the plain where rock lay close to the surface, the deciding factor in choosing a type of tomb for burial seems overall to have been an economic one. In terms of material cost (and labor cost, if any) tile graves and amphorae must have been relatively cheap in comparison to the typical price of one and a half *solidi* for both built and rock-cut cist and vaulted tombs. That this was not a simple difference in preference is implied by the provision of vault-like stuc-

64 For the best documented vaulted tomb in Athens, see THREPSIADES 1971. *Delion* offers an example of vaulted tombs built at a smaller site; see XAMELAKE 2009, 1172. Beyond Corinth, this tomb type seems to be extremely rare within the Peloponnese; *Argos* has yielded only a single vaulted tomb of potential Late Antique date (OIKONOMOU-LANIADO 2003, 33).

65 RIFE et al. 2007, 154 provides an example of a rock-cut tomb with entry shaft, but lacking any surviving superstructure, at *Kenchreai*. Although essentially cist graves, two rock-cut tombs at *Isthmia* were topped by stuccoed mounds; see RIFE 2012, fig. 2.26, 2.30.

66 WISEMAN 1972, 8 suggests such a platform function for the west end of a mound above a grave in the Gymnasium area; the notebook sketch (Corinth Notebook 0122, 80) of a grave (Grave 1931-031) cut into the Asklepieion terrace appears to reveal a similar feature. Parallels within built tombs might be seen in the ornate superstructures above the vaulted tombs of the Kraneion Basilica, and the room-like space built above the pair of vaulted tombs in the southwest corner of the Forum. For potential comparanda at *Isthmia*, see two stuccoed superstructures, one incised with a cross at its raised west end: RIFE 2012, 47–54.

coed rubble mounds at surface level above at least some tile graves in emulation of those above rock-cut vaulted tombs; presumably, at least some burying in tile graves would have preferred more substantial tombs with vaults. Probably even more important than the presence of a vault or any perceived structural superiority for vaulted tombs and cists, however, was the potential for multiple burial that these tomb types allowed, and which lead to such heavy use of cists during this period: Since at least the beginning of the 5th c. AD the deposition of multiple individuals within a single tomb was a common practice, and cists along with the more structurally complex vaulted tombs, through their provision of burial chambers accessible through the removal of cover slabs or, for the latter tomb type, reached by a vertical shaft, enabled members of family groups to bury together, and be commemorated together, in a way that graves containing single occupants could not reliably allow.⁶⁷

Objects from Late Antique Funerary Contexts

Objects associated with Corinth's Late Antique burials consist primarily of pottery deposited within the grave, lamps placed within the grave pit or at surface level, and, only occasionally, jewelry and clothing accessories. Pottery seems to have been deposited in slightly less than half of cists and vaulted tombs overall, but almost never in tile graves. Ceramic assemblages of the late 5th c. AD and beyond continue the 4th to 5th c. AD tradition of a single pitcher or mug in association with a burial, adding as an alternative vessel the Late Antique lekythos, which appears in the 6th c. AD and likely continues until at least the early 7th c. AD (Fig. 7, 8.1–6, 10).⁶⁸ Lekythoi, in cylindrical, piriform, and spherical varieties, become the most common mortuary ceramic vessel at Corinth, constituting well over half of all pottery recovered from the Lerna Court/Asklepieion area and slightly less than half of all pottery from burial zones at the Gymnasium area (1933 'Hill of Zeus' excavations) and outside the Late Antique city wall's northeast segment. Pitchers occur at a somewhat lower frequency, while mugs and other vessel types are only occasionally deposited.

Corinth's mortuary ceramics, although in most cases belonging to broadly distributed types, find their best points of comparison in pottery from the cemeteries of

67 On the phenomenon of multiple burial, see SLANE 2017, 224, 239–240. It remains a question as to whether multiple burial develops under Christian influence, or if it should be regarded more generally as an evolving form of Roman practice. Groups of burials, some of which may represent families, are also identifiable within areas of tile graves and amphora burials including Lerna Court. It seems unlikely, however, that family members would have been consistently buried in close proximity to one another if a long interval existed between their deaths, a problem overcome by multiple burial cists and vaulted tombs.

68 SLANE 2017, 233.

Athens, *Delion* (Boeotia), and especially *Argos* in addition to late 6th to early 7th c. AD vessels retrieved from Andritsa Cave (Argolid) and 6th to 7th c. AD pottery excavated at *Delphi*.⁶⁹ As at Corinth, both the 6th to 7th c. AD cemeteries of *Argos* and a small number of well-published late 6th c. AD graves from Athens reveal high percentages of lekythoi.⁷⁰ Starting circa 600 AD, however, the Athenian evidence suggests that the percentage of lekythoi drops precipitously in favor of pitchers, a widespread phenomenon which may occur slightly later at Corinth.⁷¹ At *Delion*, the low percentage of lekythoi in 6th to early 7th c. AD graves along with the absence of cylindrical lekythoi further suggests regional differences in the use of these vessels.⁷²

The graveside anointing of the body with wine and water, a practice occurring in Antiquity and also contemporary Greek tradition, may explain the presence of the pitchers, lekythoi, and mugs, which to some extent could have been used interchangeably. However, mugs appear in such low numbers at Corinth and other sites, and are nearly non-existent in Athenian graves of the late 6th to early 7th c. AD, that a different role may be suggested for these vessels. The holding of 'kalyva', consumed by mourners at the funeral,⁷³ is one possibility, and may have led to a less frequent deposition of mugs in graves than vessels which came into closer contact with the dead; the plates and bowls recovered only rarely from graves are likewise to be associated with funerary or commemorative meals.⁷⁴ For graves lack-

69 *Argos*: OIKONOMOU-LANIADO 2003, 27 (Panagopoulou property), 28 (Kouya property), 29 (Pilioukou property). Athens: TZAVELLA 2010. *Delion*: XAMELAKE 2010. Andritsa Cave: KORMAZOPOULOU/XATZELAZAROU 2010; *Delphi*: PETRIDIS 2007, fig. 1, 6. On Corinth's Late Antique ceramic trade networks, see HAMMOND 2018.

70 For the subset of Athenian late 6th c. AD graves, see TZAVELLA 2010, 653 (Kynosarges cemetery: Kallirrois Street 5, graves I, II; Vourvachi Street 21, grave XII), 654 (Kerameikos cemetery: Plataion Street 30–32, grave I).

71 Athenian graves from circa 600 AD and the early 7th c. AD: TZAVELLA 2010, 653 (Kynosarges cemetery, Kokkini Street 4–6, graves I, IV, V, VI), 653 (South Gate cemetery: Zacharitsa Street 38, graves II, III). In addition, Grave IV at Kerameikou Street 93 is dated to the late 6th c. AD or circa 600 AD and contains only three lekythoi out of 10 vessels. The transition to assemblages consisting of primarily pitchers and similar jugs cannot be closely dated at Corinth. The likely continuation of Corinth's lekythoi into the early 7th c. AD based on accompanying pottery which is produced into the 7th c. AD, and the absence of lekythoi in graves of the Forum area which possess ridged pitchers of clear 7th c. AD date, suggest that at Corinth this change in practice might occur around that century's midpoint.

72 XAMELAKE 2010. Recent excavations at Thebes' Ismenion Hill should provide an improved perspective on vessel deposition in Boeotian graves; for illustrated preliminary reports see: BOURAS 2013; BOURAS 2014.

73 SANDERS 2005, 436

74 Plates and bowls, and perhaps also mugs, might in some cases have been used to contain aromatics (for potential evidence of the early 5th c. AD and before, see SLANE 2017, 232). While the low numbers of these vessels suggest that this was not a common practice in the late 5th c. AD and beyond, less expensive woven baskets and other containers which would not normally survive in the archaeological record might also have been used. On

ing pottery of any kind, a similar funerary tradition of anointing the dead may still have been followed, but concluded with the breaking of vessels outside the grave rather than their deposition within the tomb.⁷⁵ The number of vessels retrieved from multiple burial tombs further complicates the picture of vessel use because it tends to be approximately equal to the number of dead, or to consist of only one or two vessels in comparison to the three or four individuals typically buried;⁷⁶ the practice of both internal and external ceramic deposition for the dead within a tomb, and the re-use of pottery already within the tomb, are both possible explanations for this discrepancy. Lastly, although cooking pots, plates, bowls, and other items which may have been employed within funerary or commemorative meals are rarely found within Corinth's Late Antique cemeteries, the discovery of three pits full of dining ceramics, lamps, and other material beside the graves in a 6th c. AD cemetery at *Argos* suggests that these kinds of objects may have been left behind at surface level, and eventually collected and buried, within a cemetery or at its fringes.⁷⁷ Lastly, fragile glass unguentaria, bearing scented oil, were also occasionally deposited within tombs, probably at least slightly more frequently than the few recovered examples suggest.⁷⁸

Terracotta lamps, lit at the funeral or within the context of later commemoration, are abundant in cemeteries, but are such easily displaced objects that they are only occasionally recovered *in situ*. The best examples include lamps beside the stuccoed mounds of rock-cut chamber tombs on the Asklepion terrace and in the Gymnasium area, at what was presumably surface level near tile graves in the protected space of Lerna Court's reservoirs, on the cover of a cist grave within an Early Roman chamber tomb, and within the cuttings dug for tile graves in Lerna Court in close proximity to the tile covers (Fig. 6).⁷⁹ Both main types of placement, at sur-

the practices of commemorative meals and their material evidence see also the contributions ARDELEANU, BIANCHI, MERTEN, PRIEN and VALEVA in this volume.

75 The Gymnasium excavations present valuable evidence for deposition outside the grave, including a jug found shattered at surface level (WISEMAN 1969, 84, n. 36), and the re-use of a lekythos and lamps as part of the fill within the stuccoed mounds that covered a rock-cut tomb (WISEMAN 1969, 83). At *Isthmia*, a cooking pot smashed outside a late 6th to early 7th c. AD grave must have played some role within funerary ritual or commemoration (RIFE 2012, 196).

76 WESOŁOWSKY 1973, 348 found a median number of between three and four individuals per tomb in his study of the skeletal remains from the Gymnasium area.

77 OIKONOMOU-LANIADO 2003, 31f.

78 The few excavated examples of glass unguentaria include one from a child's grave at the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore (BOOKIDIS/STROUD 1997 385 no. 17), three vessels from a re-used Roman chamber tomb (SLANE 2017, 204), another three from the cemetery above the Kodratos Basilica (MELETI 2013, 164), and a vessel from the graves at the northeast segment of Corinth's Late Antique city wall (SKARMOUTSOU 2010, 714, 738 Eik. 2); additional glass fragments from the last site indicate the presence of at least a few more vessels.

79 The Gymnasium area: WISEMAN 1972, 8; WISEMAN 1969, 82. The cist grave of Maria within an Early Roman tomb: WALBANK/WALBANK 2006.

face or on a grave's tile or cover slab, follow practices of the 4th c. AD and earlier.⁸⁰ For the few cases in which a specific location is mentioned, the western end of the grave seems to be the preferred place of lamp deposition. This directional emphasis, above the head of the deceased, may be at least occasionally embodied within tomb architecture at Corinth and also *Isthmia* through the provision of flattened western ends of stuccoed mounds, which could have served as platforms for lamps and other objects. Following more general trends of lamp use, Athenian lamps, and Corinthian versions of them (Fig. 6. Objects 1–2), are the most common type deposited in connection with graves of the late 5th c. AD and extend well into the following century, while copies of North African lamps (Fig. 6. Objects 4–5), popular in the 6th c. AD, are deposited until at least the end of that century and likely into the early 7th c. AD.⁸¹ A circular lamp (Fig. 6. Object 6) provides an especially late date, potentially into the early or even middle 7th c. AD, for one of the last graves to receive this kind of object at Corinth.⁸²

Jewelry and clothing accessories, including bronze earrings, bronze and iron finger rings, glass and stone beads, bronze belt buckles, and bronze pins and ear spoons, appear only occasionally in late 5th to early 7th c. AD graves at Corinth, and when documented elsewhere similarly occur in low numbers (Fig. 8.7–8).⁸³ When worn by the dead, these objects would likely have been partly visible, catching the gaze of mourners, due to the exposure of the deceased's face during the funeral as occurs in modern Greek tradition.⁸⁴ While cist graves and vaulted tombs are more likely to possess jewelry and clothing accessories than are tile graves, in which they are extremely rare, the presence of multiple burials within built and rock-cut tombs renders the rate of occurrence of these objects per individual low within even these sometimes elaborate graves. The provision of jewelry and cloth-

80 SLANE 2017, 231f.

81 For a chronological overview of Late Antique lamps at Corinth, see SLANE/SANDERS 2005, 282–283. KARIVIERI 1996, 59 addresses the continuation of the Athenian lamp industry into the 7th c. AD at a diminished level.

82 On circular lamps: WOHL 2015. Circular lamps and late versions of North African lamps are now placed in the late 6th to early 7th c. AD at *Delphi* (PETRIDIS 2012, 21 Fig. 14–16).

83 Excavations in the Gymnasium area produced the majority of published jewelry and clothing accessories from Corinth's cemeteries; see WISEMAN 1967b, 418, 420, pl. 88, 91, WISEMAN 1969, 79f., 83, pl. 25, WISEMAN 1972, 8. Although these classes of objects are rarely well documented, they do seem to occur broadly at low levels; at *Argos'* North Cemetery, they were recovered from only 39 of 400 graves (10%), while additional small finds unattributed to specific tombs may raise the percentage at that site to circa 15% (METAXAS 2015, 382), at *Olympia* from 75 of 337 documented graves (22%) (VÖLLING/RETTNER 2018, 54), and at *Delion* from 10 of 48 graves (21%) (XAMELAKE 2009).

84 DANFORTH 1982 provides an excellent, vividly photographed case study of modern Greek traditions related to death and burial. In addition to the face, the hands of the deceased are sometimes exposed in modern practice. It seems likely that the face was also left uncovered in burials of the Roman period at Corinth (SLANE 2017, 229).

ing accessories to only a small minority of burials continues the low levels of deposition occurring in the 4th to 5th c. AD and earlier, although the types of items worn by the dead change over time: Belt buckles, pins, and ear spoons, known in graves of the late 5th to early 7th c. AD, are absent in earlier burials; their presence in later graves may relate both to changes in fashion and preparation of the body.⁸⁵ For burials in otherwise well-constructed tombs, the absence of jewelry thus bears no clear relation to the relative wealth of the deceased: In most cases these items, especially pieces of high material or sentimental value, would have been inherited by family members.⁸⁶

Epitaphs

Corinth boasts the largest number of Late Antique epitaphs of any site in Greece, although they are also the most fragmentary.⁸⁷ The uncovering of the vast majority during early excavations in the Asklepieion, Lerna Court, and Forum areas permitted their inclusion within the catalog of two mid-20th c. volumes dedicated to Corinth's inscriptions; subsequent studies, and especially Sironen's recent corpus of material from the 4th to 6th c. AD, provide corrected readings, incorporate a modest number of epitaphs unearthed after 1950, and shed new light on this body of evidence as a whole.⁸⁸

Inscribed on rectangular marble plaques, epitaphs are almost never found *in situ*.⁸⁹ Rare examples that may be securely associated with specific tombs include

85 SLANE 2017, 212–215, 229. Belt buckles of the 6th c. AD and beyond clearly indicate that clothing was at least sometimes worn under any burial wrapping, while in earlier centuries it seems that only a shroud enclosed the body.

86 Such an inheritance was received by Gregory of Nyssa upon the death of his sister Macrina: Greg. Nyss. vit. Macr. 30, 8–21.

87 SIRONEN 2018, 201.

88 For a helpful overview of the publication of Corinth's Late Antique inscriptions, see MILLIS 2017. The inscriptions excavated through 1950 were published in MERITT 1931 and KENT 1966. In their study of Byzantine inscriptions from across the Peloponnese, FEISSEL/PHILIPPIDIS-BRAAT 1985 offer a number of corrections and comments on Corinth's epitaphs, including those revealed in the 1960s and 1970s at the Kodratos Basilica, the Kraneion Basilica, and in the Gymnasium area. Sironen analyzed Corinth's epitaphs within an appendix of his dissertation (SIRONEN 1997b) on Late Antique Attic inscriptions, reworking this section as a conference paper (SIRONEN 1997a), before finally returning to this material in IG IV² 3, the main findings of which are summarized in SIRONEN 2018. WALBANK 2010 considers the names and professions inscribed on the epitaphs, and provides a helpful overview of the state of the epitaphs and their publication history. For dating criteria of Corinthian epitaphs, see SANDERS 2005, 434; WALBANK/WALBANK 2006, 285.

89 Aside from marble plaques, an exceptional rectangular tile (KENT 1966, no. 553) bearing a short inscription was retrieved from the area east of the Asklepieion.

the epitaph for Maria set into the west end of a cist grave's cover in an Early Roman chamber tomb, a pair of epitaphs, one of them apparently still attached to the remains of a stuccoed mound, belonging to two rock-cut tombs at the Asklepieion, and the epitaphs forming part of the covers of cist graves within the Kodratos Basilica, although at least some of these last tombs were subject to modification following their initial construction.⁹⁰ Many additional epitaphs, including the well-preserved marker of a tomb bought by Eusebios the Anatolian, a seller of shoes and buyer of secondhand clothes, from Leonidios the stucco renderer (Fig. 11), were uncovered on the Asklepieion terrace near rock-cut tombs, scattered throughout Lerna Court, and uncovered within post-antique contexts in the Forum; the presence of multiple tombs within their vicinities does not permit a secure association with any specific grave.⁹¹ An exceptional case is the inscription bearing the name of Tasios the *presbyter*, which was carved into the face of bedrock beside a cutting packed with chamber tombs in the Gymnasium and presumably associated with the grave nearest it.⁹² Based on this limited evidence, and additionally the nearly exact correspondence between the number of rock-cut graves in the Asklepieion and Lerna Court area and the number of epitaphs recovered there, it seems that while epitaphs were frequently provided to built and rock-cut tombs, tile graves did not usually receive them.

As Sironen's analysis of the epitaphic *formulae* demonstrates, the texts at Corinth are lengthier than those anywhere else in Greece.⁹³ The most frequently used word for the tomb, as at most Greek sites, is *κοιμητήριο*, while inclusion of the profession of the tomb's owner, and the date of death of the owner or another named individual, are particularly Corinthian epigraphic features. Although a spouse is sometimes named as an occupant of the tomb, the identification of chil-

90 Epitaph of Maria: WALBANK/WALBANK 2006; epitaphs associated with a pair of tombs at the Asklepieion: KENT 1966 no. 531, 552; Kodratos Basilica epitaphs: STIKAS 1964; STIKAS 1966. A small amount of ambiguity remains for the two epitaphs from the Asklepieion: One (no. 531) was discovered intact on the north side of the southern tomb, built into what the excavator described as a loose cement floor (Corinth Notebook 0122, 77) at a level of 0,6 m above the rock surface; this feature is likely a poorly preserved rubble mound above the northern tomb, which was otherwise not documented. The southern tomb possessed a mound but lacked an *in situ*-tombstone, which is probably to be found in the broken tombstone (no. 552) discovered near the intact one, and which may have slipped a short distance from its original position on one tomb's mound to the other.

91 For the epitaph of the tomb owned by Eusebios, which was the burial site of an individual named Noumenis, see WALBANK 2010, 285 n. 100, although WALBANK, following KENT 1966, no. 522, was incorrect to associate the epitaph with a specific tomb. It was recovered in a displaced state at or near the level of the rock surface to the east of the northernmost of a pair of rock-cut tombs and less than 3,0 m from a third tomb.

92 Although the given interpretation (WISEMAN 1969, 85) of this inscription as an epitaph is likely, one might wonder alternately if Tasios was in some way responsible for the administration of this discrete burial zone.

93 SIRONEN 1997a, 743.

dren or other individuals is rare. The frequency of named individuals, thus usually only one or two, stands in contrast to the skeletal remains of three to four persons typically uncovered within the rock-cut tombs with which many of the epitaphs are to be associated, and who would have remained partially anonymous within the epigraphic record.

Frequent use of the word *διαφέρων* to indicate possession by the tomb owner, the unusual inclusion of statements of tomb purchase for a significant minority of epitaphs, and the omission of the age of the deceased or any other biographical details⁹⁴ in most cases all point to Corinthian epitaphs as primarily serving to identify ownership of mortuary real estate.⁹⁵ Moreover, the inclusion of the owner's or deceased's profession, as well as the date of death and tomb purchase (and for those epitaphs mentioning tomb purchase, the profession of the seller and the price paid), are not merely features of a relatively elaborate Corinthian epigraphic culture, but may also be viewed as supporting rightful tomb ownership while countering unauthorized use through the creation of a unique and detailed record akin to a basic contract.⁹⁶ Particularly given the substantial cost of built and rock-cut tombs which, when indicated, was one and a half *solidi* (in a single exceptional case, two *solidi*), safeguarding this investment would have been crucial to the individuals, who seem to have largely belonged to the middle and upper classes, who made it.⁹⁷ From this perspective, the apparent lack of epitaphs for tile graves is at least partly explained: They were unlikely to be subject to re-use, and stuccoed mounds or other markers above them would have helped to prevent accidental disturbance.⁹⁸

94 On epigraphic evidence with similar characteristics, e.g. in *Cilicia*, see the contribution CUBAS DÍAZ in this volume.

95 SIRONEN 1997a, 743. On epitaphs as statements of ownership see WALBANK 2010, 295.

96 For epitaphs as “legal documents” and the corresponding use of indiction years for dating, see SANDERS 2005, 434–435. Tomb sellers' professions, as given on epitaphs, are varied, and these sales are at least in some cases for pre-existing tombs, perhaps made available by the financial need of the seller, rather than empty plots. For a tomb restored “good as new” following its sale, see KENT 1966, no. 551; it is unclear whether any pre-owned tombs had been already used for burial.

97 The epitaph (SEG XXIX 319) which states the payment of two *solidi* was found in the eastern suburb of Corinth somewhere to the northeast of the *martyrium* or basilica (‘Pallas Basilica’) located within the Late Antique wall, and to the south of the Amphitheater, it likely belongs to a grave within the extended cemetery zone northeast of the Late Antique city wall, and may be unusually expensive due to its proximity to the Christian holy site. SIRONEN 1997a notes the extreme scarcity of curses against tomb violation within Corinthian epitaphs; the inclusion of details of ownership and purchase might be considered a more effective alternative.

98 Non-surviving epitaphs on cheaper materials, such as wood or tile, can of course not be ruled out for tile graves. It is striking, however, that only a single epitaph on tile (KENT 1966, no. 553) was retrieved from the broader area of the Asklepieion, suggesting that alternative materials were rarely used.



Fig. 11: Epitaph from tomb owned by Eusebios the Anatolian discovered near rock-cut tombs on Asklepieion terrace.

Alongside protection of ownership, epitaphs would have played a basic role of identification for tombs that were otherwise nearly identical to many others in their immediate vicinities, allowing family members to more easily locate the appropriate grave for commemorative activities or the interment of additional individuals. This function may have been particularly poignant at times of commemoration: Sited at the west end of cist graves (and potentially attached to the same area of mounds or vaults topping chamber tombs), epitaphs would in many cases likely have rested directly above the heads of the dead in the midst of an area that seems to have been a focus for ritual including the laying of lamps, perhaps the pouring of libations, and surely, prayer.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Although the position of epitaphs and objects deposited upon the tomb demonstrates some variability in modern practice in Greece, an emphasis on the west end is frequently still apparent.

Corinth's epitaphs, and the broader mortuary culture which they represent, appear to have exerted an influence beyond the periphery of the city. At *Argos*, many epitaphs incorporate the profession of the tomb's owner, a feature common at Corinth but occurring less frequently at Athens.¹⁰⁰ Two of the Argive epitaphs are also unusual within the broader corpus of Greek inscriptions in their statement of tomb purchase at one of the two prices known from Corinth; an additional epitaph discovered 16 km west of Corinth at Stimanga also notes tomb sale at a Corinthian price.¹⁰¹ At the very least, a mortuary real estate market like that at Corinth seems to have existed more widely in the northeast Peloponnese and was potentially driven by Corinthian pricing; it is not inconceivable that some form of price regulation occurred. The use of epitaphs was weak, however, beyond the sphere of the largest cities: Within the Peloponnese, aside from the regions of *Corinthia* and *Argolis*, only some 25 Late Antique epitaphs in total have been discovered and published across a small number of sites.¹⁰²

Conclusion

Mortuary practices of the late 5th to early 7th c. AD at Corinth generally follow an evolving local tradition and resemble those of the larger cities (and some smaller ones) within the province of *Achaëa*. Cist graves, tile graves, and infant amphora burials, all used since the Roman period and even earlier, are joined at Corinth in the 6th to early 7th c. AD by rock-cut and built versions of Late Antique vaulted chamber tombs. Corinthian graves vary from those at smaller sites primarily in the higher quality of construction and variety of types present, especially vaulted tombs that are also well represented at Athens but much rarer elsewhere, and in their forms and the varied burial grounds at which they occur seem to reflect the ambitions of a highly stratified society. In its epitaphs and, in a more limited manner, its rock-cut chamber tombs, Corinth's influence on other sites in the northeast Peloponnese is apparent. Within the grave, as at *Argos*, Athens, and other cities, ceramics are common, while jewelry and clothing accessories are rare. Pottery, con-

100 The high rate of curses on Argive epitaphs, however, does not resemble Corinth; SIRONEN 1997b, 399 sees the Argive corpus as displaying a mix of Corinthian and Athenian traits. On the mention of professions in other regions see the contributions ARDELEANU, CUBAS DÍAZ and ZIMMERMANN in this volume.

101 *Argos* (both two solidi): OIKONOMOU-LANIADO 2003, 55 no. 16, 20. Stimanga (one and a half solidi): IG IV 437.

102 SIRONEN 2018, 211–214. While this data is surely affected by the unequal degree of excavation (and publication) from one site to another, the relative scarcity of epitaphs beyond the environs of the largest ancient cities is clear. The total absence of these markers at *Olympia* (VÖLLING/RETTNER 2018, 53), despite that site's extensive excavation, suggests that the inhabitants of this and other small, remote communities did not employ epitaphs at all.

sisting primarily of pitchers and Late Antique lekythoi, the latter a new product of the 6th c. AD, was deposited inside both built and rock-cut tombs, or left behind in a broken state at surface level, and varies mainly in the proportions of these vessel types. The dead were only occasionally accompanied by jewelry and clothing accessories, which were usually of bronze or iron; most individuals seem to have worn nothing more than a simple garment. Lamps were commonly placed within the grave pit, or on the surface at the time of burial or subsequent commemoration.

The topographic distribution of Corinth's Late Antique burial grounds reveals a gradual contraction and the intensified exploitation of zones close to the lines of the city's evolving boundaries, the simultaneous use of multiple areas, and the influence of holy sites. In the 6th c. AD, following the appearance of scattered grave clusters on the north slope of Acrocorinth in the late 4th and 5th c. AD, burials at Corinth's expansive northern cemetery appears to have become limited to the southern edge of this zone at the 6th c. AD Kodratos Basilica and a few tombs beyond, while areas of the terrace edge above were for the first time put to mortuary use in the early 6th c. AD, continuing until at least the early 7th c. AD. East of the city, the construction of the 6th c. AD Kraneion Basilica, which included a monumental triconch tomb chamber, suggests a continuing role for this old cemetery district. At the city center, a landscape that had already evolved far from its Roman form was redefined further through the erection of a contracted Late Antique fortification circuit within the space of the *pomerium*, resulting in the mortuary use of the land just beyond this wall on an inconsistent basis by the end of the 6th c. AD. In addition to the graves within the Kodratos and Kraneion Basilicas, the presence of major excavated burial areas within the general vicinity of holy sites, including a possible *martyrium* within the Late Antique city wall and the religiously ambiguous Fountain of the Lamps near the Asklepieion/Gymnasium area, further demonstrates the impact of these sacred structures within the mortuary landscape, and perhaps not only for Christians.

Despite the multiple tomb types in use, the remains of the Asklepieion/Gymnasium area reveal some degree of uniformity at ground level in the 6th to early 7th c. AD which might be more broadly representative of Corinth's burial grounds of this era. The lack of disturbance of most tile graves here indicates that they were all marked in some way, probably by the mounds of stuccoed rubble that survived above a few of them and which were surely inspired by the stuccoed vaults, at least occasionally incorporating platforms, which rose above rock-cut chamber tombs. The picture that emerges on the surface of large cemeteries and perhaps also small burial clusters at Corinth is thus one of marked plots, likely including many mounds and platforms, whether stuccoed rubble or masonry-built. Within this setting, a variety of rituals during and after the funeral would have occurred as evidenced by the pottery within tombs or broken outside them, and the lamps left behind within the pits of tile graves, at surface, and perhaps even on top of graves' superstructures. Although corresponding ceramic remains are scarce, meals at the tomb site

probably also occurred widely, while the provision of libation holes within graves of the Kodratos Basilica suggest that more simple liquid offerings may have commonly been made at surface level. Larger burial grounds in particular must have been extremely cluttered places, and it is possible that periodic cleaning of the surface debris of mortuary rituals, as seems to be visible at *Argos*, also occurred at Corinth in addition to the incorporation of some ceramics within the rubble mounds.

The essential questions confronting families as they planned for the burial of their dead would have related to the location of the grave, the type and quality of tomb construction, the composition of the funerary procession, and the corresponding financial burden. Corinth possessed a variety of burial grounds, some more privileged than others: At the uppermost tier, elaborate graves within the Kodratos, Kraneion, and Lechaion Basilicas appear to belong primarily to the Christian social elite and some members of the clergy; rock-cut cists, some of them ornately lined, above the Kodratos Basilica should belong to the upper or middle classes, while the Asklepieion/Gymnasium area was used by a wide range of individuals from the middle class as revealed through its epitaphs, and perhaps the lower class as well. The extensive mortuary zone to the northeast of the Late Antique city wall seems to have been unusually desirable, and correspondingly expensive, due to its proximity to a Christian holy site. The other graves around the periphery of the Late Antique fortification circuit, located in isolation or in small clusters and including many infant and child burials, tend to be simple, and may in large part represent those effectively excluded from the larger cemetery zones based on age, class, or other reasons. While the cost of burying in a humble tile grave beside the Late Antique city wall, or in a space like Lerna Court, is unknown, it was presumably much less than the substantial price of a multiple burial tomb; the availability of funds, and also family traditions in burial location and tomb use, would have guided the choices of most Corinthians. Not surprisingly, those who did purchase built and rock-cut tombs, including the many middle-class Corinthians who invested substantial sums in structures which emulated the finest examples they knew, maintained an unusually strong practice of stating their ownership on epitaphs, safeguarding these investments from illicit use and providing secure sites where graveside ritual might contribute to the spiritual wellbeing of the dead.

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