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Roman

Kathleen Warner Slane (with contributions by Ethne Barnes, David S. Reese and David R. Jordan). *Tombs, Burials, and Commemoration in Corinth's Northern Cemetery* (Corinth Volume XXI). pp. xxix+270, b/w and colour illustrations. 2017. Princeton: the American School of Classical Studies at Athens. ISBN 978-0-87661-022-0 cloth \$150.

Contents of the Volume

Each of us who has experience working within longer-running archaeological projects – of which the American excavations at Corinth is a prime example – is likely at one point or another to be confronted by that particular project's excavation, documentation and/or storage history. One wishes to (re)study, and to have a fresh look at old excavations and the associated finds, motivated for instance by new concepts, or new questions. As it may turn out, the dossier in question is incomplete (finds or records have been lost), which as such hampers the desired complete (re)interpretation. The research for the volume under review here inevitably suffered from such project histories – archaeology within archaeology – albeit this appears to have been limited. Only a few minor typographical errors and omissions were noted.

Following four introductory sections (lists of illustrations and tables, bibliography and abbreviations, and explanatory notes), the volume's core consists of ten chapters. It is richly illustrated by means of numerous plans, sections, tables, photographs (including two large colour plates) and drawings. The majority of these illustrations are found at the back of the book, and largely concern the burials' architecture and the associated finds found within.

The project is introduced and summarised in Chapter 1. The context and architecture of, and finds from the actual graves and burials in the Northern Cemetery, are presented and discussed in Chapters 2 to 5. These comprise individual as well as group burials, as well as both cremation and inhumation burials. Whilst some of these graves presumably were situated in the open air (which originally were likely marked in one way or the other), a total of seven underground tombs (both dug out as well as constructed) is presented. Chapters 6 to 9 discuss the actual remains and artefacts in so far as these were available or accessible for study: the

human skeletal remains (a lengthy and thorough contribution by Ethne Barnes, though mostly of interest to physical anthropologists given the extensive use of specialised terminology), the animal skeletal remains (a contribution by David S. Reese), the architectural layout of the seven tombs, and lastly the artefacts that were retrieved and which could be functionally associated with the burials. An immediate value of the volume of course lies in the synthetic character of chapter 10, in which the different strands of evidence are drawn together. Herein, Slane sketches a diachronic picture of the customs surrounding death and burial in – particularly – Roman Imperial and Late Antique Corinth. The volume concludes with various appendices (including one on the lead tablets, by David R. Jordan), concordances and indexes. Throughout, references to excavated graves and tombs both in the Corinthia as well as beyond offer a broader (regional) context.

In a manner of speaking, there is something for everybody: urban development, population and social build-up, regional identity, behaviour (customs and habits), and material culture (pottery in particular, which considering Slane's extensive research on the Roman-period pottery from Corinth is not surprising). Chapter 10, as such, offers a summary for those interested in a concise overview; the five main conclusions serve a similar purpose.¹

Research Background

These graves and tombs were discovered by accident in the early 1960s, when construction work was being carried out for a new aqueduct. That these graves were 'meticulously recorded and catalogued by Henry Robinson and his colleagues'² through a series of rescue excavations is a factor that must have contributed significantly in facilitating the research for and writing of this volume, if not making it possible. One of the interesting aspects here is the topography that the ancient Corinthians – deliberately – chose for their burials: a scarp that separates the coastal plain from one of two large terraces. It was into this scarp that the tombs were laid out, hewn and/or constructed. This scarp clearly must have been a visible and prominent landmark for the relatives of the deceased, both physically and mentally. This topographical, spatial aspect is identified elsewhere,³ and potentially could serve as one of various guiding tools in detecting burial zones in surface survey (cf. *infra*). At the same time, however, burial customs, just as many other

aspects of (ancient) societies, were characterised by variations that differed from one region to the other. The noted differences – in addition to the numerous similarities – between Corinth and nearby Kenchreai (Corinth's eastern harbour) aptly show the relatively small geographical scale of such variations.⁴

The Graves and the Finds

In total, fifty-five graves are discussed, which contained a minimum of 236 individuals: nine burials are dated to the Classical and Hellenistic periods, four to the 1st centuries BC and AD, 37 to the Roman Imperial and Late Antique periods, whilst 17 remain undated. The number of burials in these graves varies greatly, as does their state of preservation upon discovery and excavation. The number of burials ranges from single graves to as much as the remains of 17 individuals from a sarcophagus in the so-called Painted Tomb, though this represents a later reuse. All seven tombs – originally, all tombs are Early Roman Imperial in date – were in fact reused in the 4th or 5th centuries AD, and this may well reflect a degree of pragmatism, as '[w]e cannot assume, therefore, that the human bone from the tombs belongs to individuals of the same family, class, or social standing as those for whom the tombs were built 250 years earlier'.⁵

It is the architectural remains, the skeletal material and the grave goods that provide clues as to what kind of people were buried here, and which segment or segments of society they represent. Regarding the seven tombs, Slane concludes that 'their original owners were [...] well-to-do but not the highest of the local elite',⁶ which suggests that (parts of) the lower and upper classes were buried elsewhere. Nonetheless, the socio-economic standing of the deceased and their relatives likely also influenced their choice of burial place. As this tied in with factors such as landownership, land use and (urban) organisation, one wishes that these aspects would have received some words of attention – the similarity in tomb layout, for example, prompts the notion of a contractor who may have built several of these tombs.⁷ This is especially interesting given the relatively lengthy use of these areas; Slane's estimate is that the original tombs were in use for some 50 years, so for about two generations. In this spatio-functional respect it is worth noting the presence of bone working debris in the stratigraphy of two of the seven tombs (the Painted Tomb and

¹ Slane 2017: 6–7.

² Slane 2017: 1.

³ Slane 2017: 194–195.

⁴ Slane 2017: 177, 179 (n. 20), 221.

⁵ Slane 2017: 7.

⁶ Slane 2017: 195.

⁷ Slane 2017: 177.

the Chamber Tomb with Sarcophagi), discussed in Chapter 7. Although the origin of this debris is not known, the spatial contemporaneity of burials and artisanal activities is not an uncommon phenomenon in the ancient world: Sagalassos serves as a good case study.⁸ Such evidence offers interesting insights into the spatial organisation of urban areas, as well as aspects of behaviour and mentality.

Concerning the socio-economic background of the people that were originally buried in the various tombs, it is worthwhile to briefly draw attention to the wall paintings from the Painted Tomb (Chapter 3). Noticeable is the sparse use of a blue colour, in these instances used to depict water, and we may hypothesise that this is Egyptian Blue. Prior to, and during Antiquity, several blue hues were available as Egyptian Blue, a collection of synthetic pigments that originated in Egypt, although knowledge of its manufacture later spread. Recent research, however, argues for a more democratic availability, thus opposing the long-held view of it being a very costly pigment, and hence accessible only to the higher or even only the highest echelons of (Roman) society.⁹ Such new insights may indirectly support the socio-cultural context of these tombs.

On various occasions, Slane refers to parallels from Italy: in tomb layout,¹⁰ the custom of cremating the deceased,¹¹ the morphology of urn types,¹² landscape painting,¹³ the inspiration that Italian Sigillata exerted – directly and/or indirectly – on the local manufacture of slipped tablewares, and of course the presence of genuine Italian Sigillata.¹⁴ It is tempting to associate one or more of these aspects with the presence of actual Italian citizens, as well as the interaction between Roman culture and Corinthian society, particularly during the first decades and 1st century or so of the colony, although ‘their Italian ties’ endured beyond Late Antiquity.¹⁵ Surely the presence of Italian citizens (which they were), as well as – on a much broader level – the new provincial and imperial constellations, cranked up and accelerated processes of change (those of a socio-cultural and economic nature, for example). How far and wide such processes penetrated Corinthian society, and with what speed, are matters of debate. Slane is correct in emphasising that the adoption and use of Italian fashions and customs could well

have been translated to non-Italian inhabitants. For the sake of argument, different individuals will have responded differently to new fashions and customs – notwithstanding the obligations that came with the new regime. In this respect, it is not too far-fetched an idea to suppose that during the Early Empire, the Corinthian elite became more fully-fledged Roman than other parts of society, to whom from a socio-cultural and/or economic point of view it mattered less, or even hardly at all, to associate oneself with ‘Rome’. Corinth nevertheless seems to have occupied a particular place in relation to Italian material culture, ideas and customs, as is clearly expressed for example in the presence of Italian Sigillata: ‘Corinth’s Italian sigillata begins half a century earlier than the bulk of Italian sigillata imports to Achaia and the eastern Mediterranean as a whole’.¹⁶ Athens, for example, to some degree moved along different trajectories.¹⁷

It would be incorrect to state that, historically and archaeologically speaking, Corinth finds itself in splendid isolation. On the other hand, however, also because of the geographical proximity to Italy, one wishes that in terms of quantity and quality, more comparative evidence from stratified excavations in West-Central Greece would be available, particularly from places such as Nikopolis, Dyme and Patras, but also from towns and cities that did not have the colonial label. It is (also) from such evidence that we can better understand the materialisation of underlying processes – in terms of impact, speed, direction, and so forth – that came with Rome.

Significance of the Finds

Personal objects (i.e. those that belonged to the deceased) are rare to such an extent, that ‘their absence probably represents a conscious choice rather than poverty’.¹⁸ Most of the material culture that is presented and discussed throughout the volume, reflects and symbolises actions and activities that were performed upon burial of the deceased, or at a later point in time; both obviously held great significance – temporal or otherwise – for the relatives. These finds (predominantly ceramic) mostly comprise closed and open slipped and unslipped tablewares – jug(let)s, mugs, bowls, dishes, plates, cups and oil lamps – that were both imported as well as locally/close-regionally manufactured. Amphorae are rare, and where these occur, they were reused as containers, for instance to hold a cremation urn.¹⁹ The use of the

⁸ Claeys 2016.

⁹ Skovmøller et al. 2016.

¹⁰ Slane 2017: 190–192.

¹¹ Slane 2017: 6–7, 194, 235.

¹² Slane 2017: 6.

¹³ Slane 2017: 49.

¹⁴ Slane 2017: *passim*.

¹⁵ Slane 2017: 235.

¹⁶ Slane 2004: 41.

¹⁷ Rotroff 1997.

¹⁸ Slane 2017: 229.

¹⁹ Slane 2017: 25, Grave 39.

term tablewares here can be misleading. To some degree, it is an artificial construct to describe and classify (ceramic) finds both morphologically and functionally. Their presence in the graves and tombs makes it clear that their purpose and use also depended on their spatial and functional context.

Slane speculates about the exact function and purpose of these tableware vessels, and observes changes in such behaviour between the Classical, Hellenistic, Roman Imperial and Late Antique periods. In terms of this material culture potentially acting as a differentiating tool with regard to social standing, it is noteworthy that oil lamps and terra sigillata dishes were predominantly found in the chamber tombs. Considering the descriptions of how the graves and tombs were laid out, and how the remains of the deceased were accompanied by one or more grave goods and/or personal possessions, one is prone to recall Gavin Lucas' approach to the sequence of acts performed on these occasions of great personal and emotional significance.²⁰

What this ceramic repertoire lays bare is an issue of some significance when it comes to the interpretation of urban sites through surface survey. Generally speaking, the morphological and functional range of much of the pottery finds here of Roman date is such that, as a general repertoire, would not be out of place in a domestic setting. Even if we need to reckon that material customs varied quantitatively and qualitatively because of social, cultural, regional and other factors, and even if admittedly this does no justice to that variation, one cannot help but notice an overarching preference for a limited range of basic shapes used in graves.²¹ Given this situation, it remains problematic for survey archaeologists to properly identify burial zones in urban surveys. We simply know that cities must have had fairly extensive necropoleis, which were partly concentrated along the roads that lead in and out of the city – whereby the seven tombs presented here are regarded as 'the eastern equivalent of the house tombs that line the roads leading from Rome and from Ostia',²² but to identify burial zones – those of the Roman Imperial and Late Antique periods in particular – more generally from surface finds remains a challenge.

The Ancient Cities of Boeotia Project, which has carried out intensive and extensive survey for nearly forty years, unfortunately has barely been able to properly identify, through surface finds, a good portion of the Roman-era burial zones that

must have surrounded the various urban sites (in contrast, due to its distinctive burial ceramics, this is far less a problem for the Greek era). In the recently published results of the intensive urban survey at ancient Thespieae, for instance, the location of one or a few Late Antique burial zones could only be discussed conjecturally, through an analysis of particular aspects of the distribution of material culture, other identified remains (cut chamber tombs), as well as a thorough diachronic analysis of the urban spatial development of Thespieae.²³ A recently excavated trench of several hundred meters long at ancient Thespieae, on the other hand, showed ample evidence of burials belonging to different historical eras, and included a large platform in *opus caementicium*;²⁴ these excavations either confirmed or assisted in the identification of burial zones. Even if we may suppose that identifying (Roman-period) burial zones will remain a difficult issue using only surface finds, Slane's volume makes it clear (albeit implicitly) that a combined effort – topography/landscape, surface finds, diachronic site development – may contribute to a better understanding and identification of burial zones in surface survey.

These ceramic finds also shed light on another aspect that expresses itself sometimes very clearly archaeologically, or at the very least seems to do so. On several occasions, Slane addresses differences between Corinth and its nearby eastern harbour, Kenchreai,²⁵ for instance in relation to burial customs. In a similar vein, in an upcoming publication Morison and Rife argue that, at Kenchreai, pottery from eastern sources appears to be somewhat more common in comparison to Corinth, even if these – at least in part – different trajectories belong to broader developments.²⁶ Notwithstanding the many similarities between Corinth and Kenchreai, which the various authors do not forget to emphasise as well, it is these differences that draw our attention. In Boeotia too, interesting differences are observed between the various urban sites in terms of the provenance of certain ceramic categories. For example, Late Roman C, a Late Roman red slipped tableware manufactured in various centres in western Asia Minor – though predominantly at ancient Phokaia – occurs more commonly at urban and other sites in eastern Boeotia.²⁷ Even if at present these observations can only serve as snippets of information, they may force us to radically rethink the geographically

²⁰ Lucas 2005.

²¹ Chamilaki 2010; Ürkmez 2014; Morison and Rife forthcoming.

²² Slane 2017: 195.

²³ Bintliff et al. 2017: 183–188.

²⁴ Charami et al. 2017: 196–198.

²⁵ Slane 2017: 177, 179 (n. 20), 221, 235 (n. 71).

²⁶ Rife and Morison 2017: 37.

²⁷ Bes and Poblome 2017: 335–336, table 12.8.

small scale of variation and difference, naturally not only in proportions of ceramic categories, the direction of exchange and to what extent this was influenced by topography, but especially concerning a much broader array of material and immaterial (Roman-period) culture. Weaving together these local and regional differences and variations, discernible within as well as underneath layers of shared elements, offers the opportunity to start understanding responses and adaptations to broader developments and changes in political and cultural structures.

Kathleen Slane, a long-time team member at Corinth – aptly makes clear what fruits can be harvested from a comprehensive (re)study of older excavations. Thus, Slane has succeeded in her objective, and has delivered an interesting and important volume on one of the more profound and intimate aspects of (past) human behaviour, namely death, and how relatives' commemoration and grief found expression – materially and immaterially – in what we have come to call the archaeological record.

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Medieval

Lynn Jones (ed.). *Byzantine Images and their Afterlives. Essays in Honor of Annemarie Weyl Carr*. pp. 304 XX illustrations. 2014. Farnham: Ashgate. 978-1-4094-4291-2 hardback £80.00; 978-1-31526-103-4 e-book £35.99.

This *festschrift* to mark the retirement of Professor Annemarie Weyl Carr as a teacher at the Southern Methodist University at Dallas, Texas, has three distinctive features. One is the extraordinarily effusive tributes to her by the contributors. The second is the high quality of the twelve papers. The third is the full and dense documentation of these papers – there is no waffle. They are written for specialist Byzantinists, who are rewarded with some highly detailed and useful factual accounts. The papers are organised into four themes: *Manuscripts: workshops, subgroups, and influences; Intent and Reception; Cypriot influences; and the Nature of copies*. This organisation reflects Weyl Carr's own career, who for her PhD studied a 'group' of illuminated manuscripts from the 12th and 13th centuries (the so-called decorative style group), which she suggested were produced outside Constantinople, possibly in Cyprus. The first paper by Maxwell asks how far this conclusion is supported by an analysis of the texts of each manuscript rather than the miniatures; her conclusions are ambivalent. Weyl Carr's mature work has been focussed on the arts of Cyprus, particularly wall-paintings and icons.

The contents of the *festschrift* are:

Kathleen Maxwell, 'The afterlife of texts: decorative style manuscripts and New Testament textual criticism'.

Justine Andrews, 'Flexibility and fusion in Eastern Mediterranean manuscript production: Oxford, Bodleian, Laud. Gr. 86'.

Pamela Patton, 'The little Jewish boy: afterlife of a Byzantine legend in 13th-century Spain'.

Diliana Angelova, 'The stamp of power: the life and afterlife of Pulcheria's Buildings'.

Lynn Jones, 'Perceptions of Byzantium: Radegund of Poitiers and relics of the True Cross'.

Ida Sincević, 'Afterlife of the Rhodes Hand of St John the Baptist'.

Michele Bacci, 'Some remarks on the appropriation, use, and survival of Gothic forms on Cyprus'.

Maria Vassilaki, 'Byzantine icon-painting around 1400: Constantinople or Crete?'

Jaroslav Folda, 'The use of Çintamani as ornament: a case study in the afterlife of forms'.

Anthony Cutler, 'Twice is not enough: the biography of a 'Byzantine' Crucifixion ivory'.

Rossitza Schroeder, 'The salvation of the soul and the road to Heaven: the representation of the Ladder of Divine Ascent in the Vatopedi Katholikon'.

Ann Driscoll, 'Death and life: the persistence of sacred imagery from the *Croce Dipinta* of Albert Sotio'.

Two of these papers in particular raise wider questions of archaeological interpretation: Angelova on Pulcheria's patronage and Bacci on architectural styles and choices in Cyprus after the end of Byzantine control. Angelova critically examines the architectural patronage of architecture by Pulcheria (399-453 AD), sister of emperor Theodosios II and wife of the emperor Marcian for three years (450-453 AD). Her question is this: since Pulcheria took a solemn vow of virginity at the age of fourteen, and maintained this vow for life, even when married, and so was famous for her life of religious devotion, did her architectural patronage reflect her piety or did it support her imperial rank? To answer this question, Angelova persuasively reconstructs from texts all her building activities – none of these buildings have survived. They comprise two or three imperial palaces and two cisterns, and only one church (that of St Lawrence). She concludes that her public image was constructed as one of political imperial power and not religious piety. While the archaeological facts are very convincingly set out, for me the conclusion is highly debateable. Can one really from this public profile interpret her inner spiritual mentality? She might have spent the days in religious devotion and worship, while her agents organised her architectural works.

The wide-ranging paper on the architecture of Cyprus by Bacci also tackles a problem issue. He asks how choices were made in architectural style after the period in the 13th and 14th centuries during which the Lusignan rulers had chosen to build massive and impressive 'French' Gothic churches and cathedrals, which of course totally changed the previous Byzantine building landscape. He considers the choices made on Cyprus over the centuries up to the British period. He documents